INTRODUCTION


4. It is noteworthy that the one cliometric exercise that drew heavily on the experiences of individual firms concluded that entrepreneurial performance was deficient in the Victorian chemicals industry and that profitable opportunities were missed. See Peter H. Lindert and Keith Trace, “Yardsticks for Victorian Entrepreneurs,” in *Essays on a Mature Economy*, ed. Donald N. McCloskey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 239–74.


7. An important exception among institutionalist studies is Steven Tolliday, *Business, Banking and Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987). This valuable work is deeply grounded in the histories of individual steelmaking companies. Unfortunately, it is concerned only with the barriers to the rationalization of the steel industry and does not probe the assumptions about the primacy of institutional configurations.


10. Historians disagree as to whether a "recognizable core of inefficiency" was apparent in the structure and equipment of the coal industry before 1914. For the view that there was, see Taylor, "The Coal Industry." The contrary position is argued in Buxton, *The Economic Development*, chap. 5 and 6; Donald N. McCloskey, "International Differences in Productivity: Coal and Steel in America and Britain before World War I," in *Essays on a Mature Economy*, pp. 285–304; and Barry Hirsch and William J. Hausman, "Labour Productivity in the British and South Wales Coal Industry, 1874–1914," *Economica* 50 (May 1983), pp. 45–57.


13. On 30 January 1961 a meeting of the Ashington Coal Company passed the following extraordinary resolution: "That the books, accounts and documents of the Company and the books, accounts and documents of the Liquidators thereof be retained by the Liquidators for two years from the dissolution of the Company, after which they shall be destroyed." Throckley passed an identical resolution, and Briggs instructed its liquidator to retain its books and records for one year and then to dispose of them "as he shall think fit." Copies of the resolutions can be found in Files #58660 (Ashington), #34478 (Throckley), and #2026 (Briggs), Companies Registration Office, Companies House, London.


15. I should say a word or two here about the chronology and terminology employed in this book. I consider 31 March 1921, the day the British government terminated the control over the coal industry that it had acquired in the course of World War I, to be the beginning of the coal industry's interwar history and December 1938 to be its end point. I use the term coalowners to refer to the owners of the enterprises that mined coal. Those who owned the rights to the coal and who leased them to the undertakings that did the mining are called royalty owners or royalty holders.
CHAPTER 1


2. Wartime control of the industry developed in piecemeal fashion; and it was only in March 1917 that the government took full control of the output of all mines in Britain and of coal distribution, establishing a coal controller at the head of a new department in the Board of Trade for these purposes. This control outlasted the war, and the industry returned to private control only on 1 April 1921. The most comprehensive account of the evolution of the state’s regulation of the industry in this period remains Sir R. A. S. Redmayne, *The British Coal-Mining Industry During the War* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923).


9. In 1913 the members of the Northumberland Coal Owners’ Association produced 95 percent of the tonnage raised in the county and employed 93 percent of Northumberland’s miners.


15. Ibid., vol. 3, appendix 1, table 2, p. 3 and appendix 18, table 1, p. 152; and McCord, North East England, pp. 112 and 117.


22. Arnott, The Miners, pp. 61 and 75; and Daunton, “Down the Pit,” pp. 593–94.


Notes to Chapter 1


28. Ibid., vol. 3, appendix 1, table A, p. 3, and appendix 18, table 1, p. 152. That is to say that the average value per ton of coal was 6s. 7.08d. for Northumberland in 1889–93 and 7s. 4.2d. for Britain. Throughout this study monetary values will be expressed in the form used in the text.


39. A description of the concern in 1878 stated that Ashington’s “chief place of shipment is the Tyne Docks.” A calculation of Ashington’s transport costs in 1897 assumed that most of the company’s coal was shipped from Blyth. The relevant documents are “Particulars & Conditions of Sale of Ten 1/32 Shares in the current-going, sea-sale Colliery called the Ashington Colliery . . .” 18 September 1878, p. 2, NRO/ZMD 54/25; and “Valuation of the Ashington Coal Company’s Collieries and other Properties belonging to them,” by John B. Simpson, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 11 January 1898, p. 9, NRO/NCB/AS/18/1.


42. Ibid., pp. 4–5 and 9; and *The Ashington Coal Company, Ltd.* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1912), p. 11, NRO/NCB/AS/3.

43. “Memorandum of Association” and “Articles of Association of the Ashington Coal Co. Ltd.,” 2 July 1898, pp. 13–15. Both documents are in File #58660, Companies Registration Office.

44. “Annual List of Members and Summary of Capital and Shares,” 23 December 1898 (and succeeding years), File #58660, Companies Registration Office. The paid-up capital of £517,120 conformed closely to Simpson’s estimate of the firm’s value as of 31 October 1897: £513,540. Though calculated in different ways, the Accountants Report of the firm’s worth as of 24 January 1853 (as reported in 1855), the Forsters’ valuation of 1868, and Simpson’s accounting give a rough idea of the increase in the concern’s value under the partnership. In 1853 Ashington was valued at £5,331, in 1868 at £58,431, and in 1897 at £513,540.

45. P. L. Payne has maintained that the private form of company organization retarded the development of British enterprises. The prohibition against issuing shares restricted growth to the extent permitted by the capital of the sharehold-

46. "Annual List of Members," 23 December 1898, File #58660, Companies Registration Office; and Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, No. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, pp. 287, 289, and 291–92 and No. 9, NRO/ZMD 54/12, p. 78.

47. Information about Warham's career was gleaned from various editions of *The Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory* and a feature about him in the "Men of Note in the British Coal Industry" column of the *Colliery Guardian*, 12 June 1925, p. 1439. To join Ashington's board, Warham had to acquire stock in the company with a nominal value of £5,000. "Articles of Association," p. 2, File #58660, Companies Registration Office.


50. Northumberland Miners' Association Minutes, 1913, NRO. 759/68.

51. Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCO/C. 366. The population of the town of Ashington and the districts of Ellington, Linton, and Lynemouth was said to have numbered "some 33,000" by the 1930s. "The Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Estimate of Value . . . General Description," p. 2, PRO/COAL 37/4.

52. Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCO/C. 303, 313, and 316.

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57. “Ashington Group Collieries Statistics,” NRO. 538/8; and Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, no. 4, NRO/ZMD 54/7, p. 232; no. 5, NRO/ZMD 54/8, pp. 36, 146, and 249; and no. 6, NRO/ZMD 54/9, pp. 62, 170, and 274.
58. Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 313, 322, 323, 327, 330, 334, 346, 348, 350, 357, 372, 375, 383, and 386. No data on days lost to strikes by the entire membership of the NCOA were available for 1915, a year during which Ashington suffered no strikes.
59. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, no. 4, NRO/ZMD 54/7, p. 244; no. 5, NRO/ZMD 54/8, pp. 50, 190, and 273; no. 6, NRO/ZMD 54/9, pp. 77, 183, and 291; and no. 7, NRO/ZMD 54/10, p. 1.
66. Presumably Boyd, a mining engineer, was the son of E. J. Boyd.
67. Letter from Throckley Coal Co. Ltd., p. 1, PRO/COAL 12/17; “Articles
of Association of the Throckley Coal Co. Ltd.,” pp. 3–6 and “Annual List of Members and Summary of Capital and Shares,” both in File #34478, Companies Registration Office; and Williamson, “Class, Culture and Community,” p. 160.

68. This is a rough estimate based on a chart presented by Williamson in “Class, Culture and Community,” p. 202.


70. These additions to capital are documented in the “Annual List of Members” and other materials collected in File #34478, Companies Registration Office.

71. Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 313.

72. Ibid.

73. The six seams Throckley worked were exceptionally shallow. The most accessible was only 54 yards below the surface, and the deepest was only 112 yards below ground. William Armstrong and Sons Papers, NRO/725/C54/1/239.

74. Throckley's failure to introduce mechanical coal-cutting before the mid-1920s cannot be ascribed to the susceptibility of the company's pits to flooding. There is every indication that Throckley had the water problem well in hand by the turn of the century. Moreover, nothing about the technology of machine-mining made flooding an especially threatening problem. The coalowners of Lanarkshire succeeded in making that coalfield the most mechanized of all Britain's coalfields before 1913 despite the fact that "inrushes of water were a persistent problem." Buxton, *The Economic Development*, pp. 113–14.

75. Armstrong Papers, NRO/725/C54/1/239.

76. The dividend estimate derives from the data presented graphically in Williamson, “Class, Culture and Community,” p. 202 and the profit figures from the Armstrong Papers, NRO/725/C54/1/239. In the period 1909–13 the coal industry of the United Kingdom recorded average annual profits of 11.53d. per ton raised and 1/0.48 per ton commercially disposable. *Report of the Royal Commission* (1925), vol. 1, Cmd. 2600, p. 218, table 21 and vol. 3, appendix 1, table A, p. 3.

77. Williamson suggests that the public utility undertakings that purchased coal from Throckley included companies upon whose boards Throckley's directors sat. Williamson, *Class, Culture and Community*, p. 82.

78. Ibid., pp. 9, 61, and 81–82; Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 303 and 316; and Northumberland Miners' Association Minutes, 1913, NRO. 759/68.


80. Williamson, *Class, Culture and Community*, p. 60.
Notes to Chapters 1–2

81. Both the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle and the medical officer of health were quoted by Williamson in Class, Culture and Community, p. 60.

82. Armstrong Papers, NRO/725/C54/1/239; and Report of the Royal Commission (1925), vol. 3, appendix 1, table A, p. 3.

83. Armstrong Papers, NRO/725/C54/1/239.

84. Between 13 December 1918 and 6 January 1921 Throckley added £101,951 to its current account and £10,000 to an interest-bearing deposit account and invested £20,000 in treasury bills. Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, NRO. 407/9, pp. 10, 31, 42, and 103.

85. Ibid., pp. 10, 12, 28, 37, 47, 52–53, 74, and 103.


CHAPTER 2


2. Ibid.


4. Ibid., appendix 18, table 1, pp. 155–56.

5. West Yorkshire Coal Owners’ Association, Statement Shewing Outline of History and Development of the Coal Industry in West Yorkshire 1875–1913, October 1925, p. 1, Currer Briggs Family and Business Papers, Leeds District Archives, Acc. 1708, no. 12; and Rowe, Wages, pp. 74–75. From the historian’s point of view, government recognition of the separation of the West Yorkshire from the South Yorkshire coal industry was both late and incomplete. Prior to 1906 government output statistics lump the two Yorkshire coalfields together. The few data that the West Yorkshire Coal Owners’ Association collected for the years before 1906 are inaccurate, as the association admitted. Consequently, very little of a reliable quantitative nature can be said about the West Yorkshire coal industry of the nineteenth century. When it came to the compilation of regional cost and profit statistics, the government agencies charged with the task either included the two Yorkshire coalfields in a single category or, even worse, combined them into a “Federated Area” that also included Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Cannock Chase. These practices make it impossible to determine how mining costs and profits in West Yorkshire compared with those of other districts (e.g., Northumberland) or with those of the British coal industry as a whole.

8. Ibid., pp. 2, 4–5, and 8.
12. Ibid., appendix 18, table 1, pp. 154 and 156. West Yorkshire drew 73 percent of its coal from depths of less than 500 yards and the British coal industry as a whole 81 percent. Fifty-five percent of Britain’s coal came from seams four or more feet thick but only 37 percent of West Yorkshire’s output. See Ibid., appendix 18, table 10, pp. 184–86 and table 11, pp. 188–91.
13. WYCOA, *Outline of History and Development*, pp. 9–11 and 13. In 1913 the members of the West Yorkshire Coal Owners’ Association raised 96 percent of the tonnage produced in West Yorkshire.
21. Ibid., pp. 5–6; and Colliery Guardian, 22 April 1932, p. 806.
24. Church, “Profit-Sharing,” pp. 6–7; Briggs, *A Merchant*, p. 7; Briggs, Son
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& Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, p. 3; and Colliery Guardian, 22 April 1932, p. 807.

25. Church, “Profit-Sharing,” pp. 7–8; and Briggs, A Merchant, pp. 10–11.


27. Included among the insiders is Walter Geoffrey Jackson. A mining engineer who “in his earlier years had been employed by the Central Argentina Railway Company,” Jackson was married to Marion Briggs, daughter of Henry Currer Briggs and sister of Arthur Currer Briggs. Jackson joined Briggs's board in 1881, and upon the death of his brother-in-law in 1906 assumed the posts of chairman and managing director. He relinquished the managing directorship to Walter Hargreaves in 1919 and the chairmanship in 1924. See Briggs, A Merchant, pp. 9, 11, and 17; and a photocopied article titled “A Century in the Coal Industry” from an unidentified newspaper, ? April 1932, in Currer Briggs Family and Business Papers, LDA Acc. 1708, no. 2.

28. Hargreaves came from a family that was intimately involved in the West Yorkshire coal trade. The family owned the Newmarket Colliery near Leeds, and his father was general manager of J. and J. Charlesworth's colliery operations from 1889 to 1901, when Charlesworth was the largest producer on the coalfield. Walter followed in his father's footsteps by qualifying as a mining engineer and going into Charlesworth's employ. See Goodchild, Coal Kings, pp. 124–25; Briggs, A Merchant, pp. 11–12; and Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, p. 4.


30. “Registers of Directors and Managers,” File #2026, Companies Registration Office.


32. Briggs, A Merchant, pp. 7 and 18–19; and Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, p. 4.

33. Briggs, A Merchant, pp. 11–12 and 19; Jevons, The British Coal Trade, p. 318; Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, pp. 4–5; and Colliery Guardian, 22 April 1932, p. 806. Briggs, Son & Company chose to forego the biggest expansion opportunity of the prewar years. In 1914 W. G. Charlesworth approached Briggs about an amalgamation of the two firms, then the two largest on the coalfield. The composite firm would have controlled upward of 16 percent of West Yorkshire’s coal production. Briggs, perhaps fearful that the Charles-
Notes to Chapter 2

worth empire was in disrepair after a period of mediocre management, replied that "it was rather late in the day for such a project to be mutually advantageous" and that its "operations were sufficiently extensive and did not warrant any extension in the manner suggested." Henry Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. Minute Book, vol. 2, p. 249, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS. 160. The case against Charlesworth's management is set out in Goodchild, Coal Kings, pp. 147–49.

34. Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, p. 4; and Briggs, A Merchant, pp. 7 and 19.

35. "Miscellaneous Material on the Yorkshire Coalfield Including Survey of Sections of Strata, c. 1913," MS. 271/1/1–2, D. 6–8, Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. There is no way of knowing how much of Briggs's total output was extracted from particular seams.


38. "Revised Estimate of the Cost of New Work," 24 November 1909, Curver Briggs Family and Business Papers, LDA Acc. 1708, no. 9. Of the anticipated expenditure, £85,000 was intended to meet the costs of sinking and equipping the Water Haigh pits at Woodlesford. The remainder was to be spent on refitting the shafts, installing new winding gear, mechanizing coal extraction and haulage, putting in new power plants, altering screens and railways, and driving new drifts and headings at the company's other collieries.


40. In 1929 Waterloo Main was the eighteenth largest of West Yorkshire's eighty-five colliery undertakings. Three years later it was still in eighteenth place, though the number of companies in the district had fallen to sixty-nine. "West Yorkshire," PRO/COAL 12/115, a one-page typed sheet listing the twenty-three
Notes to Chapters 2–3

largest West Yorkshire producers and their outputs in 1929; and “West Yorkshire,” PRO/COAL 12/114.


42. File #123663, Companies Registration Office; and The Colliery Year Book, various volumes.


44. Percy C. Greaves, Black Diamonds: Gleanings of Fifty Years in the West Yorkshire Coalfield (Wakefield: ?, 1938), p. 88; and Memorandum of Agreement Between George Edward Stringer and the Waterloo Main Colliery Company, 17 August 1912, File #123663, Companies Registration Office.

CHAPTER 3


2. The profitability assessment of the coal industry is at current prices. When the figures for net profit per ton are converted into constant prices (those of 1909–13), the record of the interwar coal industry compares even more unfavorably with that of the prewar period. The disparity between the industry's wartime proceeds and the profits it earned in the postwar years diminishes when the comparison is made in constant prices, though a sizable gap remains.

3. Unfortunately, neither the Department of Mines nor any other agency whose records survive calculated profits and losses for West Yorkshire alone. The figures for Yorkshire may overstate the profitability of the West Yorkshire coal industry because they include the results attained by the South Yorkshire coal industry. The seams worked by the latter were thicker and more uniform than those of West Yorkshire, the firms that worked them were larger than the
average concern at work in West Yorkshire, and the mines there were of more recent origin. All else being equal, these differences ought to have made for greater profitability.


6. The Throckley Coal Company, the misfortunes of which are described below, was not the only colliery company to fall behind in the payment of its preference dividend. As of February 1931 the Askern Coal and Iron Company had paid its preference dividend only up to 31 December 1919; the Blaenavon Company to 20 June 1924; the Edinburgh Collieries Company to 31 January 1927; Old Silkstone Collieries Ltd. to 20 September 1924; and the Wharncliffe Silkstone Colliery Company to 20 June 1926. *The Mining Year Book*, 1931.


8. It was Throckley’s relatively strong financial performance during the slump that enabled the staff of the Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission to report in October 1931 that the company was "just about paying its way." "Minutes of the Commission’s Visit to Newcastle on Wednesday and Thursday, 7th and 8th October 1931," p. 5, PRO/COAL 12/17.


13. Of a sample of twenty-two coal companies that published accounts in 1928, fifteen failed to pay a dividend. Of a sample of fifty-four that published accounts in 1932–34, thirty-three failed to pay a dividend in 1932–33, and nineteen failed to pay one in 1933–34. The *Colliery Guardian*, 17 April 1930, p. 1485; and 19 October 1934, p. 727.


17. The argument over the alleged advantages of large-scale mining has been lengthy and heated. The virtues of large-scale operations were championed in the Report of the Royal Commission (1925), vol. 1, Cmd. 2600, pp. 49–58; and in Ministry of Fuel and Power, Coal Mining. Report of the Technical Advisory Committee (1945), Cmd. 6610, pp. 137–39. Neither of these documents denied that individual small firms could prosper even in the difficult circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s. The supposed gains from large-scale operations were subjected to rigorous scrutiny in Buxton, "Entrepreneurial Efficiency," pp. 479–87 and then debated in the comments of M. W. Kirby and W. Johnston and the replies by Buxton in the Economic History Review, 2d series, 25 (November 1972), pp. 655–73. For an agnostic approach to the question of scale economies in interwar coalmining see Supple, The History of the British Coal Industry, pp. 230–31, 312–14, and 399.

18. The belief that location—both as regards the quality of available coals and the buoyancy of accessible markets—was all important in interwar British coalmining found expression in Buxton, "Entrepreneurial Efficiency," p. 487. Buxton's concern was to explain the differences in the performances of Britain's various coalfields, not to account for the records of individual companies within particular districts.

CHAPTER 4


2. K. G. J. C. Knowles, Strikes, pp. 197, 203, and 207; and James A. Bates, "Investment in the Coal Mining Industry, 1919 to 1939," Ph.D. Diss. University of Nottingham, 1955, p. 270, table 1. Major strikes include all disputes involving ten or more people and lasting more than one day and those involving fewer than ten people but lasting more than one hundred days.

3. The number of days lost to strikes in Northumberland and West Yorkshire were taken from the strike statistics in The Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1921–40. In calculating the districts' propensities to strike, I excluded the national stoppages of 1921 and 1926.

5. Deputies were employed in the setting of roof supports for the safety of the underground work force. Onsetters placed the loaded tubs of coal in the cages at the bottom of the mineshaft so they could be raised to the surface and removed the empty tubs when they were sent back down. Putters moved the tubs of coal from the coalface to the main haulage roads. Stonemen drove drifts in the bands of stone for the purposes of exploration, ventilation, and/or the cutting of particular seams; and they were responsible for taking up bottom stones and taking down top stones in order that underground passageways remained at the requisite heights. Shifters performed miscellaneous jobs underground such as timbering and removing waste materials, and they were paid by the shift.


12. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, no. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, pp. 80, 87, 184, 227–28, 236, and 244–45; no. 9, NRO/ZMD 54/12, p. 166; and no. 10, NRO/ZMD 54/13, pp. 23, 133, and 138.


15. Colliery Guardian, 9 March 1923, p. 579; and Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 6, NRO/ZMD 54/9, pp. 238 and 255.

16. Colliery Guardian, 9 March 1923, p. 580 and 23 May 1924, p. 1333; Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1924), p. 65, NRO/538/250/1; Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1937), p. 56, NRO/538/250/2; and Ashington Collieries Magazine, July 1926, pp. 209–10. Football enthusiasts will know that among the participants in the Ashington Welfare Club's football competitions were three men who between them made 154 international appearances for England and scored 65 goals. They were of course R. Charlton, J. Charlton, and J. Milburn.


18. A few figures will place Ashington's educational endeavors in the proper perspective. In 1924 members of the Northumberland Coal Owners' Association contributed £265 7s. to mining education and research. Ashington contributed £249 of this total. Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 466.


22. The quotation is from the editorial column of the first issue of the Ashington Collieries Magazine, January 1921, p. 2.

23. Ashington Collieries Magazine, January 1925, p. 457; and Colliery Guardian, 9 March 1923, p. 579. The magazine's sale price was 2d. to employees and 2.5d. (later 3d.) to those not in the company's employ.


25. "The Coal Position" was entirely Warham's work. When illness or absence abroad prevented him from writing it, the column did not appear. Ashington's other directors expressed no interest in the column until June 1938 when they decided that "wherever possible" a draft should be submitted before pub-
lication. No reason was given for this decision, but it seems likely that Warham’s withdrawal from Ashington’s affairs and his elevation to the chairmanship of the NCOA explain the move. Certainly one searches the column in vain for any words that might have given offense or compromised the company. For the directors’ action see Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 10, NRO/ZMD 54/13, p. 194. The Colliery Guardian considered Warham’s comments to be of sufficient interest to republish them, frequently wholly, in its weekly report on the Northumberland and Durham coalfields.

26. The Ashington Collieries Magazine refused to print letters submitted anonymously, but it professed that it would publish letters under pseudonyms as long as the correspondents sent in their real names and addresses as evidence of good faith. Were critics of the ideals and policies set forth in the magazine thereby deterred?

27. Warham suggested changes in cavilling procedures in the “The Coal Position” column of February 1922. His remarks can be found in the Colliery Guardian, 10 February 1922, p. 360. Ten years later the NCOA attempted to codify and revise the rules governing cavilling in Northumberland. One of the coalowners’ primary objectives was to exclude fillers who loaded onto conveyors from participating in the cavilling system. The Ashington Mineworkers’ Federation rejected the proposal, thereby contributing in no small measure to its ultimate defeat. See the documents bearing upon the revision of cavilling arrangements in NRO/NCB/AS/120 and 145 and Colliery Guardian, 9 November 1932, p. 1104.

28. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, pp. 100 and 102; and Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 455.


33. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, pp. 78 and 82–83. There were limits to the company’s willingness to succor its workmen during this time of need. When the quantity of free house coal allocated at the beginning of the strike ran out in mid-June, Ashington’s directors declined to allot more. The company also saw to it that miners working the outcrop in its royalty area were ordered off the property. In this matter it had the support of the Ashington Mineworkers’ Federation which, while it tolerated men working
the outcrop to acquire coals for their own use, rejected the sale of winnings from outcropping. See ibid., pp. 84, 88, and 91–92; and Ashington Mineworkers’ Federation Minute Book, NRO. 1286/1, pp. 164–65 and 172.

34. Ashington Mineworkers’ Federation Minute Book, NRO. 1286/2, unpaginated (minutes of meetings of 30 November 1926 and 5, 12, 19, and 25 December); and *Ashington Collieries Magazine*, December 1926, p. 397 and January 1927, p. 3.


36. Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 396–582. No returns concerning strikes were available for 1923 and 1934–37.


39. A comparison of wages and allowances paid at Ashington and in Northumberland during the second quarter of 1929 shows that “earnings plus subsistence” at Ashington were 4.05d. higher than in the county and that “allowances in kind” were 1.10d. higher at Ashington. Altogether earnings at Ashington were 5.2 percent higher than county level. If these data were calculated on a per ton basis, they would show that Ashington’s cost disadvantage was not solely a feature of the late 1930s. Unfortunately, one cannot be certain that they were not calculated on a per shift basis. See “Comparison of Wages and Allowances for the Quarter ended 30th June 1929,” dated 31 December 1929, in NRO/NCB/AS/103.


41. Banksmen removed the full tubs of coal from the cages when they arrived at the surface and replaced them with empty tubs to be sent down to the pit bottom.

42. NCOA Minute Books, no. 18, p. 282; no. 19, pp. 168–69; no. 20, p. 297; and no. 21, p. 151, all in NRO. 263.
43. Reductions in officials’ earnings were made only in 1922 when there was a cutback in their “War Bonuses” and in 1935 when salaries were reduced by 10 percent for those earning over £250 per annum and by 5 percent for those earning less than £250 from September through December. In 1923-24, when expenditures on labor and welfare were being cut, bonuses totaling £2,010 were paid to officials. Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, NRO. 407/9, pp. 165 and 219; NRO. 407/10, p. 42; and NRO. 407/12, pp. 197, 209, and 233.

44. Ibid., NRO. 407/10, p. 74; and NRO. 407/11, p. 175; Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 466; and Colliery Guardian, 15 May 1925, p. 1213.


47. NCOA Minute Book, no. 22, NRO. 263, pp. 38–39, 48–49, 56, and 64–65; and Williamson, Class, Culture and Community, pp. 200–1

48. Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, NRO. 407/10, pp. 161, 170, and 183; and Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 455. Throckley’s current account remained in the black only until 11 August 1927.

49. Union density at Throckley was calculated from membership data in the Northumberland Miners’ Association Minutes, NRO. 759/68 and the employment data in Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 396–581.

50. NCOA Minute Books, no. 23, p. 316 and no. 30, p. 98, both in NRO. 263; Colliery Guardian, 22 December 1938, p. 1146 and 30 December 1938, p. 1192; and Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 396–582.

51. The percentages given in the text underestimate the disparity between the company’s labor costs and the district’s because the latter are based on tons commercially disposable and the firm’s on total tonnage raised.


62. Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, p. 3.

63. The Yorkshire Post, 27 September 1922, p. 13; 22 August 1923, p. 2; 10 October 1924, p. 3; 22 August 1930, p. 7; and 18 August 1939, p. 15; and Colliery Guardian, 16 October 1925, p. 932 and 25 August 1933, p. 320.

64. “Annual Return . . . Form 23,” 1921; and “Annual Report on Output,” 1929–38, both in LDA/NCB/Waterloo Main Colliery Co. Ltd.


CHAPTER 5

Notes to Chapter 5


5. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, no. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, p. 229 and no. 9, NRO/ZMD 54/12, pp. 157 and 173. It is unclear whether Captain Puleine, the eleventh royalty owner, agreed to the reduction.


19. Ibid., NRO/NCB/C. 511 and 581.

20. Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, NRO. 407/11, pp. 105, 134, 234, and 243; NRO. 407/12, pp. 6, 37, 103, 153, and 170; and NRO. 1276/1, p. 6; and Annual Reports of the Secretary for Mines, 1929 and 1938, PRO/POWE 7/63 and 72.


22. In the course of the 1920s Throckley secured leases, undoubtedly for small areas, from the Bates Estate and the Estate of R. O. Lamb. A list of Throckley’s royalty owners can be found in Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 493.

23. In December 1935 the duke granted Throckley a 10 percent reduction in the rents it owed him for the year to September 1933. See the Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, NRO. 407/12, p. 209.

24. The details of Throckley’s leases with its three principal royalty owners are available in the Armstrong Papers, NRO/725/C54/1/239, and additional information about changes in Throckley’s leases with the Duke of Northumberland can be found in the Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, NRO. 407/9, p. 165 and NRO. 407/10, p. 136. My estimates of the burden of royalty obligations on the company are based on the cost data in ibid., NRO. 407/9–12 and NRO. 1276/1.

25. Ibid., NRO. 407/9, p. 10.

26. In February 1929, with its current account showing a deficit of more than £27,000, Throckley began negotiations with Martins Bank over a mortgage debenture to cover its overdraft. According to an agreement concluded in March 1930 the firm was to execute such a debenture in the banks’ favor or “provide other security equally satisfactory to the Bank” if its overdraft reached £25,000. Prior to the start of the talks that resulted in this agreement, Throckley’s overdraft had run as high as £33,000. For the terms of the agreement, see the letter from J. Voyce, assistant district manager of Martins Bank Ltd., Newcastle, to
Notes to Chapter 5


29. Ibid., NRO. 407/12, pp. 197 and 214.

30. The disparities between Throckley’s costs and the district’s were actually greater than the figures in the text indicate because the firm’s costs were computed on the basis of total output while the district’s were calculated on the basis of tons commercially disposable.


32. Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. New Work Done Book 1919–1931, LDA/NCB/A2/25; The Yorkshire Post, 27 September 1922, p. 13; and Colliery Guardian, 4 April 1924, p. 864. The immediate postwar period also saw Briggs add to the diversity of its activities. In October 1921 the company agreed to take over the gas plant and gas distribution business of its subsidiary the Whitwood Chemical Company Ltd., and two years later it decided “to restart the Coking and Recovery Plant” it had acquired as part of the agreement. Between December 1923 and June 1925 Briggs spent £6,958 on setting the coke ovens in order again (2.6 percent of total new work expenditure between December 1921 and June 1925). The project was not worth the money. Hargreaves reported in April 1925 that “the condition of the Coke & By-Products trade is equally bad, if not worse” than the coal trade. Even with carbonization reduced by one-third, the profit on coke and by-products was still less than the firm could earn by selling the coal outright. See Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. Minute Book, vol. 4, pp. 113 and 169; Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. New Work Done Book 1919–1931, LDA/NCB/A2/25; and Letter from W. Hargreaves to W. Geoffrey Jackson, 8 April 1925, W. Hargreaves Letter Book, p. 973, LDA/NCB/A1/5/10.


35. Letter from W. Hargreaves to W. Geoffrey Jackson, 21 September 1925, Three Letter Books, p. 40, LDA/NCB/Additional Deposit no. 8. The coal commission to which Hargreaves referred was the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry that was convened in September 1925 and that Sir Herbert Samuel chaired.

Notes to Chapters 5–6

A2/25; Letter from W. Hargreaves to W. Geoffrey Jackson, 6 January 1923, W. Hargreaves Letter Book, pp. 782–83, LDA/NCB/A1/5/10; Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. Tonnage Book 1924–1929, unpaginated, LDA/NCB/A4/9; and Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. Minute Book, vol. 4, p. 282. Briggs did carry out a comprehensive alteration of its power transmission plant between June 1925 and December 1931. At Whitwood new equipment, including a backup service, was installed that made it possible to close down the antiquated power plant at the Savile Colliery. It is doubtful whether the company had an alternative to comprehensive renovation in this case. Letter from W. Hargreaves to W. Geoffrey Jackson, 28 October 1926, Three Letter Books, pp. 95–96, LDA/NCB/Additional Deposit no. 8.

37. “Historical Record,” April 1946, p. 7, Currer Briggs Family and Business Papers, LDA Acc. 1708, no. 6; and Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, pp. 7–8.


CHAPTER 6


2. Ibid., pp. 166–68; and Annual Reports of the Secretary for Mines, 1934–38, PRO/POWE 7/68–72. The German, Polish, and Dutch coal industries also had to contend with French tariffs and the self-sufficiency of Soviet Russia; and yet they increased their exports at the expense of the British coal industry.

3. Buxton, The Economic Development, pp. 166 and 174; Annual Reports

4. P.E.P., Report on the British Coal Mining Industry, p. 10; and Ministry of Fuel and Power, Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, p. 34. In a book published in 1932 an experienced British coal merchant wrote that “practically all of the trade in sized washed coals is now done on the basis of guaranteed analysis, for although exporters were for many years disinclined to give any guarantees at all, the conditions accepted by our European competitors have finally forced us to come into line and to accompany the sale of our own sized coals with a definite undertaking as to their physical and chemical composition.” See H. H. Merrett, I Fight for Coal (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd., 1932), p. 90.

5. Political and Economic Planning first drew the distinction between coal-mining as an extractive industry and as a manufacturing one. See its Report on the British Coal Industry, p. 130.


7. Ministry of Fuel and Power, Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, pp. 34, 98, and 134. The committee pointed out that the archaic marketing practices of British coal companies not only put them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis domestic consumers and foreign competitors, they also had “unfortunate effects upon the efficiency of mining operations.” By selling coals under the names of the districts, collieries, and seams from which they came, firms created distinctive demands for coals that differed in no essential ways and put themselves in the position of having to mine a greater array of coals than could be justified by considerations of coal use. The popularity that some of these coals acquired led to the exploitation of the seams from which they were mined without due regard for the future working of other seams. By meeting customers’ demands for intermediate sizes and special qualities, companies needlessly multiplied the number of sorting operations that had to be performed on the surface.


16. Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, NRO. 407/10, p. 234 and Annual Reports of the Secretary for Mines, 1932–38, PRO/POWE 7/66–72. It is probable that the coal-cleaning plant at the Maria pit, like so much other new equipment at Throckley during the interwar period, was not employed in the most efficient manner. In its 1945 report, the Ministry of Fuel and Power’s Technical Advisory Committee estimated that the minimum tonnage that the economical operation of a coal washery required was 1,000 tons daily or roughly 260,000 tons per annum. The annual output of the Maria pit throughout the 1930s barely exceeded half that figure. The tonnage available for washing could have been brought to the requisite level with shipments from Throckley’s other collieries. Such shipments would only have been economical if they did not require recourse to commercial railways, but Throckley did not link its mines by private railways during the 1930s.


18. Letter from W. Hargreaves to W. Geoffrey Jackson, 11 September 1925, p. 25, Three Letter Books of W. Hargreaves, LDA/NCB/Additional Deposit no. 8. Hargreaves was not the only one who derided the marketing side of the British coal industry. In its Report on the British Coal Industry P.E.P. charged that “in coal mining, unlike many manufacturing industries, efficiency in selling has definitely been subordinated to efficiency in production.” The report continued, “The [colliery] sales manager, being the ‘under dog,’ usually has little voice in the matter of output and has to sell whatever he is given.” Consequently, “sales management in the coal-mining industry” received “less attention,” carried “less prestige and, owing to the remuneration offered . . . generally attracted less competent personnel than the production side of the industry.” For the full measure of P.E.P.’s censure, see Report on the British Coal Industry, pp. 13–14 and 131–32.

19. Letter from W. Hargreaves to W. Benton Jones, 9 February 1928, p. 830,
Three Letter Books, LDA/NCB/Additional Deposit No. 8; *Colliery Guardian*, 21 June 1929, p. 2432; and Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., *Description of Collieries*, p. 4.


21. "Historical Record," April 1946, p. 2, Currer Briggs Family and Business Papers, LDA Acc. 1708, no. 6; *Annual Reports of the Secretary for Mines*, 1930 and 1935, PRO/POWE 7/64 and 69; and Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., *Description of Collieries*, pp. 6–7. I have been unable to find any record of the percentage of output that was mechanically washed at Briggs's Savile Colliery.


24. Waterloo Main Colliery Co. Ltd. Sales Journal, pp. 1–48, LDA/NCB/Waterloo Main Colliery Co. Ltd. The importance of household coal sales to Waterloo Main's total sales proceeds cannot be dismissed as a chance occurrence due to an unusually cold winter. The importance of household coal sales was equally apparent during the summer. Sales of domestic coal accounted for 37 percent of the total tonnage sold by Waterloo Main in July 1938 and 47 percent of total proceeds; in June 1939 household coal accounted for 32 percent of the tonnage sold and 41 percent of total proceeds.


27. See Buxton, *The Economic Development*, p. 185. The argument is also elaborated in his article on "Entrepreneurial Efficiency," pp. 486–87.

**CHAPTER 7**

1. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, p. 118; *North Mail and Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1928, p. 11; 5 March 1930, p. 6; 17 April 1930, p. 10; 21 April 1930, p. 8; and 30 April 1930, pp. 6

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2. Jones et al. provide a comprehensive discussion of the Central Collieries Commercial Association in *The Coal-Mining Industry*, pp. 93–107, and a summary account can be found in Kirby, *The British Coalmining Industry*, pp. 116–18. The CCCA’s output-restriction program was widely known as the Five Counties Scheme.


10. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 8, NRO/ZMD 54/11, pp. 118 and 165.


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14. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Books, no. 9, NRO/ZMD 54/12, pp. 284–85; and no. 10, NRO/ZMD 54/13, pp. 188, 207–8, and 211.
15. Ibid., no. 10, NRO/ZMD 54/13, pp. 257, 277, and 285.
16. “The Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Estimate of Value . . . General Description,” p. 4 and “The Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Estimate of Value . . . Commercial Report by Walter James Drummond,” p. 5, both in PRO/COAL 37/4. Drummond had no doubt that Ashington’s “course was fully justified by subsequent events. . . . The Company was the first to benefit from an increasing demand for British coal, and the whole of its stocks were quickly sold at satisfactory prices.”
20. Ashington Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, no. 10, NRO/ZMD 54/13, pp. 144 and 151. When the revitalization of the Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission in the guise of the Coal Commission gave rise in 1938 to fears that a restructuring might be imposed on the Northumberland coal industry, Ashington contemplated amalgamating with the Bedlington and Cowpen coal companies. Proposals along those lines were nothing more than contingency plans, and they were dropped as soon as World War II rendered the commission impotent once more. Ibid., no. 11, NRO/ZMD 54/14, pp. 23, 25, 32, 45, 50, and 63.
22. A copy of this two-page letter dated “October 6, 7 & 8th” but not signed was affixed to the minutes of the 31 October meeting of Throckley’s board, in Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, NRO. 407/11, p. 249. See also the minutes of the meeting, pp. 247–48.
24. For the purpose of assessing the impact of the 1930 Coal Mines Act on Throckley, 1939 is considered to have ended with the start of war in September.

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27. Throckley Coal Co. Ltd. Minute Book, NRO. 407/12, pp. 86, 91, 139–40, 144, 148, and 228; The Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory, 1933; Northumberland Coal Owners’ Association, Register No. 5, NRO. 263; and Bound Returns to NCOA, NRO/NCB/C. 581 and 603.


30. Ibid., 28 August 1931, p. 735.


36. This account of the formation of Briggs Collieries Ltd. and my description of that company are based on documents in File #2026 and File #354626, Companies Registration Office and on the letter from W. Hargreaves to the shareholders of Henry Briggs, Son & Company, 3 April 1939, in Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd. Minute Book, vol. 5, opposite p. 71. The figure for the combined 1937 output of the collieries subsequently operated by Briggs Collieries Ltd. can be found in Briggs, Son & Co. Ltd., Description of Collieries, p. 5.
Notes to Chapter 7—Conclusion


38. Minutes of the 30 October 1936 meeting of the Executive Committee of the West Yorkshire Coal Sales Association Ltd., p. 5, PRO/COAL 4/236.

CONCLUSION

1. For a professional view of the best mining techniques available to interwar colliery companies see Ministry of Fuel and Power, Report of the Technical Advisory Committee.

2. At Ashton, Briggs, and Waterloo Main the decline in employment during the interwar years was significantly less than on the Northumberland and West Yorkshire coalfields generally. See tables 3.2 and 3.6.

3. Trevor Boyns has shown that bankers in South Wales did not always extend to their colliery clients the same accommodation that Throckley enjoyed. Throckley’s experience, however, may have been more typical. Colliery assets had little alternative use, so foreclosure would have been more expensive in many cases than carrying a coal company. In any event, the low rate of exit from the industry suggests a reluctance on the part of creditors to lean too hard. See Trevor Boyns, “Rationalisation in the Inter-War Period: The Case of the South Wales Steam Coal Industry,” Business History 39 (July 1987), 283–303.

