

## OPEN FOUNDATION HISTORY

### Regional History Assignment

#### History of industrial volatility in Newcastle District coal mines.

The Newcastle District underground coal mining industry has long had a reputation for industrial instability. At least some of this reputation is deserved. A comparison is available with other mines and industries in the first half of this century, for example, from 1914 to 1928, 30% of the total possible man shifts were not worked in Newcastle mines. The corresponding figure of New South Wales coal mining industry was 24%.<sup>1</sup> Average output per manshift in South Maitland in the same period fell by 9.4%. Apart from various go slow practices, the continuing opposition by the Miners Federation to the temporary replacement of absent miners had a significant bearing on productivity.<sup>2</sup> As further evidence of industrial unrest the bitter and bloody North Rothbury riot in 1929 stands as one of the black spots on our nations history and still 60 years later is a source of deep resentment in sections of our community.

The causes for this industrial unrest are very complex and involve many factors. The largest factor would appear to lie back in the very beginning of the industry in Newcastle in the early 1800's. After a shaky beginning mining was officially commenced in 1804 by Lt. Capn. Menzies with a party of rebellious Irish convicts. Mining in these first years was harsh and primitive, and without innovation, for even 20 years later in 1824 water was still being taken out of the mine by bucket. Management of the mines by military personnel using unskilled convicts was proved very inefficient and improvements in work practices were slow to come.<sup>3</sup>

With the possible exception of 8 in 1000 convicts who had mining skills and received double rations, treatment of these men was particularly brutal. Captain Currie of HMS Satellite wrote in 1823 "King Lash is master at the settlement"<sup>4</sup> Ralph Rashleigh, a convict of the time wrote of an overseer 'who set upon the men with a stout cudgel, knocking every man down and continued to beat them until they rose again, and were also used on the lime pits in the district and had lime rubbed into the open lash wounds.'<sup>5</sup> The pain must have been excruciating. This situation of government controlled mines (no private person could open a mine in this period) continued until around 1829 when the Australian Agricultural Company was granted the right to exclusively mine coal for 31 years, and Government mining ceased.

1. New South Wales Report of the Royal Commission on Coal Mining 1929/30.
2. Industrial disputes and structured change. The Case of NSW Black Coal 1900-1960. BLJ Gordon and TS Jilek 1974. P.10
3. Coal Mining in Newcastle 1801-1900. JW Turner. 1982 PP.16,17
4. Newcastle Morning Herald 1.2.1936 (Newcastle Regional Library LHO 622.33 COA.1)
5. Newcastle Morning Herald 1.2.36. Report on book, the Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh. Newcastle Regional Library LHQ. 622.33 COA.1

Thus from these harsh and brutal beginnings did our mining industry evolve. In granting the .A.A.Company lease the special concessions to the company included all possible assistance with provision of convict labour and in 1830 had 346 convicts working there.<sup>6</sup> Free settlers were recruited in mines in England and gradually replaced the convicts. This process was very slow and by 1837 there were still 100 convicts working in A.A.Co. Mines. Convict employment finally ceased in 1841. The effect of this situation also contributes to the industrial situation in the mining industry. The influence of the brutalised convicts aside, Justice C.G.Davidson, in a paper read that "people that came were fiercely dissatisfied with employment, left and filled with hostility to former employers ... Employers' sole aim was to receive best possible return on investment".<sup>7</sup>

So we had the situation of for over 10 years miners with a bitter industrial outlook working with convicts, some who had been treated with incredible cruelty and who must have conveyed deep resentment, coupled with a mine management bent on profits at any costs. Thus the seeds of a negative industrial mentality were sewn.

In spite of the 31 year agreement and winning of 2 court cases, A.A.Co because of public pressure, finally gave up its objection to other mines and J. & A. Brown commenced operations in 1847 at South Maitland. A.A.Co finally gave up its monopoly in 1850 and other mines commenced operations. Around 1850, union activity was restricted mainly to separate organisations of miners within a company called Lodges.

From 1850 to 1855 demand for coal and shortage of labour raised the price paid per ton which was 6/6d. for large coal and 3/6d. for small. Miners were receiving 19/- to 22/- per shift.<sup>8</sup> A large wage indeed in those times.

In March of 1856, Newcastle Coal and Copper men formed their first union, largely brought about by the failure of the companies to increase wages in line with increase in coal prices.

Safety was high on the agenda that prompted the formation of the Coal Miners Association of Newcastle in 1860.<sup>9</sup>

To ensure that work would be shared, earnings of miners were restricted to 11/4d. per day, the earnings above that going into a union fund.<sup>10</sup> The first issues taken up by the new union were adequate ventilation and desire to erase the jurisdiction of the Master and Servants Act.

6. Newcastle Morning Herald. 8.2.1936 in newcastle Regional Library. LHQ 622.33 COA 1/27
7. NRL. LHQ. 622.33 COA.1
8. NRL. LHQ. 622-33 COA/1
9. Coal Mining in Newcastle 1801-1900. JW Turner. 1982 P.67
- 10 Ibid PP68-69

In 1862 Alexander Brown said that, "the men are in such a position now that if they (the mines) were not well ventilated they would have a meeting and stop working". We are completely at the men's mercy and have been for some years back."<sup>11</sup>

In 1861 the mine owners joined together to attempt to collectively force the unions' hand. They resolved to cut the rate per ton. The union disagreed and a 6 week strike resulted.

These first successes for the union were not to continue, as in the early 1868's the gold was giving out in Victoria and an influx of people from the worked-out goldfields issued in Victoria, arrived in Newcastle. To counteract union power, these free labourers were employed and unions were not effective for about 11 years.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in the entrenched 'those and us' spirit of the owners' relationship with the miners and the necessity to resort to union pressure on safety issues, we have two more ingredients to add to the original brutality and resentment and the mixing of bitter former miners with even more bitter convicts.

An additional factor that I believe is often understated in its importance, was the development of small isolated mining settlements around the area of the pits as the number of mines expanded. Settlements such as Lambton, 4 Mile Creek, Wallsend and Minmi became insular parochial centres where a great community spirit was evident but where the negative industrial attitude tended to infect the whole settlement in the absence of outside influences or views. B.L.Gordon and TS Jilek express the view that "the introverted isolationist and deeply solidarist outlook fostered by the highly homogeneous social milieu of the communities which ensured that past wrongs were not forgotten."<sup>13</sup> Indeed on describing Newcastle itself, JW Turner comments that "to this compound of English trade union militancy and colonial independence must be added the rather unsettling experience of migration and of life in the small town atmosphere of Newcastle."<sup>14</sup>

The period up to 1872 witnessed a period of dissent and many industrial stoppages over mainly loss of earnings due to the oversupply of labour and the lowering of the coal price. In 1872 the coal owners vend or cartel to fix the price of coal by mutual agreement ensured a period of unheard of profits for the mine owners. It is interesting to note that this vend got rid of what was described as 'ruinous competition', would today attract fines of \$250,000 for breaches of the Trade Practices Act for an arrangement to prevent fair competition between similar industries. After the vend ended by some of the mines breaking ranks, some of the practices and expectations of the miners was to help in bringing about greater unrest in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. In the period of the vend, output per man fell from 440 tons per man year in 1869 to 310 tons in 1879.<sup>15</sup> The high rate per ton gave impetus to the philosophy that 'darg' or limit of output for each miner would benefit the miners.

11. Ibid P68

12. NRL LHQ 622-33 COA.1

13. Industrial dispute and Structural change. The case of New South Wales Black Coal. 1900 to 1960. BL Gordon & TS Jicek. 1974. P4

14. Coal Mining in Newcastle 1801-1900. JW Turner 1982 P.72

15. Newcastle Morning Herald. 18.11.1895.

This was also used as a weapon to force mine workers into continuing the vend. However, in 1880 the vend collapsed. Miners who had been earning fairly high wages in comparison with other workers were forced to accept a 25% drop in wages.<sup>16</sup>

The vend however, was reconstituted in 1881 and was to last for 12 years. This new vend operated at some realistic prices with a corresponding drop in miners earnings from the previous decade.<sup>17</sup>

Events of this decade were to result in 1882 of another major factor, military or police authority intervention.

The lead up to this was the government reaction to the level of industrial disputes and interference by miners of one mine to miners of another, that did not support a particular action, or where 'blackleg labour' was being used. On 22.9.1879 Henry Parkes issued a proclamation making it illegal to interfere with people going about their calling. With this proclamation came a permanent force of soldiers to Newcastle to help enforce it.<sup>18</sup> In 1888 a crippling strike of 3 months saw the presence of the military with large carriage mounted guns ready to support this proclamation. The miners saw this, quite naturally, as support for the masters and served to strengthen their resolve and their distrust of the mine owners.

Situations I have outlined so far point to another factor against industrial harmony in the industry, that is the general uncertainty of permanent steady work at a regular rate of pay. The 1890's only served to reinforce this as falling demand for coal led to falling miners rates culminating in the bitter strike of 1896 where miners whose rates had dropped to the lowest level since the convict days, were forced back to work with a further reduction of one penny per ton.<sup>19</sup>

So although there are many factors for the volatile industrial history of mining in Newcastle and very complex interactions between these factors, the main root causes of the situation lie in the brutal beginnings of the mining industry with its brutally treated convicts, the later employment of embittered and distrustful men from the English mines and the mixing of this group with the convicts. The distressing conditions of poor ventilation, the isolation of Newcastle and the isolation of its satellite mining towns and the use of the military and police against the miners.

These factors set the stage for many struggles in the first half of the 20th century, the most notable being the bloody Rothbury Riot of 1929.

16. *Ibid* Coal Mining in Newcastle 1801-1900. JW Turner 1982. P.96
17. ~~Coal Mining in Newcastle 1801-1900. JW Turner 1982. P.100~~
18. LHQ 622-33. COA1. No.115
19. Coal Mining in Newcastle. JW Turner 1892. PP117-119.

26 Edward St  
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26 Edward St  
Tenambit 2323  
6-12-89.

Dear Mang.

Herewith is long awaited assignment  
I tried the safety in mine angle but found  
it difficult to gather enough information, so  
I decided to do it on this topic which I felt  
a lot more comfortable with and which will  
relate to further tapes I will do with Wal  
Partridge, who has some very interesting insight  
into industrial activity in the early 1950s.  
The transcript of Wals tape is now being  
typed and I will get it to you ASAP.

I thank you for your patience and  
tolerance and for the excellent material  
you have exposed us to during the year.  
It has certainly opened up new horizons for  
Lea and I.

I hope that you have a happy Christmas  
and a fulfilling new year in your new role.

Thanks again

Chris Dennis.

## SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH WAL PARTRIDGE

BY CHRISTOPHER DURIE

Wal Partridge who was born in 1934 and now lives at Lorn with his family, worked in the mines in the early 1950's. In this tape, which runs for the full 60 minutes, Wal Partridge recalls his days as a wheelman in Stockton Borehole and John Darling pits in those years.

Wal contrasts his employment at age 16 at Stockton Borehole Colliery with the different conditions and organisation at John Darling some 6-10 months later.

Recounting his days at the mines Wal describes the conditions in the mines, some of the organisation of the miners and support staff, and his part in that organisation. The tape is of historical significance because most of the methods Wal describes including the use of pit ponies and hand mining in shallow seams, have now passed into history.

The first part of the tape centres around his days in 1950 at Stockton Borehole Colliery as a contract wheeler. The mining methods described involves the picking out of the bottom of the seam by hand and allowing the weight of the rock above to force the coal out. Wal's job here was to take the coal from the coal face to the next stage of transport. The coal was transported by small railway trucks or "skips" hauled by small horses they called pit ponies, on tracks laid up to the face.

The second half of the tape contains reminiscences of Wal's days at John Darling Mine. Wal talks of the organisation of miners into pairs. Wal's job was to transport coal from the face, using skips, the same function as his job at Stockton but with many differences in how it is carried out. The method of mining is different here in that each miner has his allocation of blasting powder and through the use of a "powder monkey" - a man whose job it was to detonate the charges, the coal face was blasted out for the miner to load onto the skips. Using larger horses here, draft horses as large as 16 hands, and a different method of yoking the horse to the skips, Wal's job was to take the coal from the face to the next stage and ensure that the two pairs of miners were always supplied with empty skips. Wal contrasts the mine conditions and organisation with Stockton Borehole mine.

In John Darling many of the runs between the coal face to the next transport stage where skips were coupled with others and hauled by diesel loco or other methods to the shaft, there were steep slopes where the wheels had to be "spragged" at the start of the slope, with one or two pins thrown into the wheel spokes to prevent the wheel turning. Wal demonstrated great affection and respect for the horses he worked with from <sup>the</sup> rebel horse "Trouper" who would bite him, or stomp on him if he wasn't looking to "Baldy" who was able to do the job with minimal commands even in the dark.

Although his recollections fill this tape, Wal's length of service in the mines is small, by 19 he was on his way to the Queensland cane fields. The circumstances surrounding his departure and many other things that he experienced in his brief time in the mines would be worth capturing on a further tape.

CHRISTOPHER DURIE  
TENAMBIT

20th November 1989



STUDENT: Chris Durie  
 TOPIC: WOMEN IN POLITICS  
 PAPER: Why have so few women been involved in politics in Australia.

*Added one sentence paragraph.*

On examining the reasons for this imbalance these factors have major significance.

The relative rapidity with which women gained the vote after concerted effort commenced and the narrow base of these campaigns.

*has a sentence.*

The timing, sequence and consequence of wars and economic recessions involving Australians this century.

The fact that almost all of the first women elected to parliament in Australia had to achieve their position through the influence of a prominent male relative in parliament and not through campaigning on women's issues, because of the conservative nature of Australian Society. The latter period of last Century is a period in which many groups of women campaigned to give women the right to vote.

Few detailed records exist of these early groups. Although there is evidence of many groups being active at various times in the later part of the nineteenth century. There are however, detailed records existing of a group of women collectively known as the <sup>Womens</sup> Christian Temperance Union. The detailed minutes of their meetings still exist and reveal an unrelenting and tenacious struggle for womens suffrage. The Christian Temperance Union, was, as its name suggests, a group confined to a narrow goal. The goal was of course, womens voting rights but within that narrow goal there was an equally a narrow reason for obtaining these rights. There is little evidence of a broad concern for womens issues and equal status in society - rather the CTU saw womens voting rights as a means to force, through the womens vote, laws which reflect the groups moral values, particularly on alcohol consumption.

*1 Sentence*

*In fact they were concerned with a number of issues*

Most other organisations campaigning for womens rights were also motivated by Christian moral beliefs and not by a desire to incorporate womens unique qualities and outlook into government policy. (1) Women were seen by these groups as having higher moral values than men; these women were needed at the ballot box to raise the moral standard of parliamentary policies and laws.

*Place of publication*

(1) G Merzer (Ed)

The Other Half 1975 P372

A notable exception to this is the Dawn movement formed by Louisa Lawson in 1889. This group maintained its prominence through a newspaper until 1905, a probable result of its broader feminist stand described as "abrasively feminist". (2)

It was perhaps because of the narrow focus of these Christian temperance groups that they achieved such remarkable successes. The right for women to vote was first gained in South Australia in 1894, just 10 short years after the emergence of the first significant suffrage groups. Seven years later the first election of our Federal Parliament in 1901 saw women voting for the leaders of our country. In historical terms such a radical change in a countries policy is remarkable.

It appears that most of the main temperance groups having achieved their goals generally fragmented through lack of clear goals for the future. Some groups carried on with campaigning for moral issues. A plateau effect seems to be evident at that time in the push for womens rights and the groups that advocated broader issues for the status of women which were swept aside and the moral temperance groups now found a general apathy toward their cause.

The second factor which coincided with these events and focused attention away from womens political causes was the series of several major wars that Australians were to be involved in, starting with the Boer War in South Africa from 1899 to 1902.

The focus of this was to draw public attention away from womens issues and served as later wars were to do, that is to categorise the sexes into narrow roles of duty. Men fought for glory of the Empire on the field of battle. Women nursed them, made their uniforms, tried to run the homes and raise children.

The first world war which followed 12 years later, left a great shortage of men of working age in the country. Women still took on the roles of nursing and family raising now were also used in their thousands as labour in munitions and clothing industries as part of the war effort, with the added bonus that industry did not have to pay them as much as men. There is evidence of some very militant womens groups in that period probably assisted by the gathering of large numbers of women in factories. "Women took an active role on both sides of the political war." (3) Many women saw this as a new role, a liberation of women from the traditional closeted role and saw hope in it. Others saw it for what it was - women in their place.

(2) A Summers Damned Whores and God's Police 1975 p350

(3) I Reed and K Oaks Women in Australian Society 1901-1945 1977 p65

*Not related to  
the question.*

Nevertheless, women gained a raise in status by proving they could take on other roles and be successful at it. This advance, however narrow, was short lived, for upon the end of the war thousands of males came back. Males were traditional breadwinners, therefore women were expected to relinquish their jobs for them. Thus, women were thrown out of work in their thousands. It mattered little that a woman might be a sole breadwinner of a family. Jobs were very scarce as munitions and uniforms were no longer required.

Because of the loss of life during the war many women had to fend for themselves without partners. For many of these women the great depression in 1930 just part of their life from 1918. The women with something to say were forced to live week by week on odd jobs and the organised groups that were evident during World War 1 appeared to dissipate.

The great depression, however, did see the greater emergence of politically active groups of women, these groups emerged mainly because women had spare time to themselves, and desire for companionship, while a large percentage of men had to leave home and wander through the state in search of work or to escape from grinding poverty and sometimes the responsibility of family. None of this activity was to lead directly to a woman political candidate to act as a voice for them. They saw the practicalities of the situation and sought reform for them through the ballot box by supporting male candidates who had then a greater chance of election and therefore a voice in government.

In this period between the wars the first woman was elected to Parliament, in South Australia in 1921, but this feat was not to be repeated until the election of Dame Enid Lyons to Federal Parliament in 1941.

However, in common with many others that followed her in the following two decades, Dame Lyons was assisted into Parliament by the fact that she had an influential relative in parliament. (4) Her husband was Prime Minister and she entered parliament a short period after his death. Although she was not a political novice, it was largely on the popularity of his name and her connection with it that gave her enough votes rather than any fresh feminist ideas capturing the imagination of women voters. Once elected however, she did assist in making some notable milestones for womens benefit, such as the introduction of child endowment. Her maiden speech centred on the need to examine all policies in relation to their effect on home and family life. She urged the case for child endowment and a national housing policy.

Party politics, a bastion of male dominance, the members of which are described even today, as "being like a boys boarding school" (5) was also a formidable barrier to all the strongest willed women. This was and still is a deterrent to women in politics and it is only the last 10 years that we have seen the attitude gradually changing.

(4) M Sawyer and M Simms A Womans Place 1984 p72

(5) Interview with C Moore,  
Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend Supplement 26.11.88 p16

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So although now times and attitudes are changing, our conservative nature as a population was brought on by the events in our history and reinforced by our former global isolation and dependence on the Mother Country. It has been a long hard road for women in parliament and although it is now accepted for women to campaign and win seats without influence of popular figures in parliament, we are yet to see women elected by campaigning on purely womens issues.

*Some very good sections in this paper, Chris, after a shaky start*

*6/10 -!*

*5/10.*

*[Faint, mostly illegible text from the original document, possibly bleed-through or very faded print.]*

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Women about the House.      November 1988

WAS AUSTRALIA PEACEABLY SETTLED OR VIOLENTLY CONQUERED

It is a widespread myth among many people that Australia was peaceably settled right from the beginnings of white settlement 200 years ago.

OPEN FOUNDATION HISTORY

I believe that this TERM ONE ASSIGNMENT that is just a valiant and courageous struggle was put up by the Aboriginal people.

"WAS AUSTRALIA PEACEABLY SETTLED OR VIOLENTLY CONQUERED"

The processes of rapid colonization of the land were not initially met with large scale resistance. The white people's inability to share such resistance on covering a small parcel of tribal land

CHRIS DURIE

was shunned off as white ignorance by the Aboriginal people and they attempted to train the new settlers into tribal ways. There were however, in the early periods, some savage attacks by small groups of Aboriginal people on white settlers if/for

CLASS PM THURSDAY

excesses in white behaviour.

WAS AUSTRALIA PEACEABLY SETTLED OR VIOLENTLY CONQUERED

This of course led to armed conflict with soldiers however early attempts at this resistance were not as disastrous for the

It is a belief held among many people that Australia was peaceably settled right from the beginnings of white settlement 200 years ago.

Skilfully thrown spears were more than a match for flintlock rifles.

The military organisation of the soldiers was counted by the  
I believe that this is not the case and that in fact a valiant and  
consistent struggle was put up by the Aboriginal people.

The traditional Aboriginal method of conflict of the blacks, to  
The excesses in rapid colonization of the land were not initially  
met with large scale resistance. The white people's inability to  
share and in resistance on coveting a small parcel of tribal land  
was shunned off as white ignorance by the Aboriginal people and they  
attempted to train the new settlers into tribal ways. There were  
however, in the early periods, some savage attacks by small  
groups of Aboriginal people on white settlers in reprisal for  
excesses in white behaviour.

These guerrilla tactics, in keeping with traditional behaviour were  
This of course led to armed conflict with soldiers however early  
attempts at this resistance were not as disastrous for the  
Aboriginal people as might be supposed.

It was that there was a continuing hostility toward the white  
Skilfully thrown spears were more than a match for flintlock rifles.

The military organization of the soldiers was counted by the  
agility and territorial knowledge of the blacks. 1

The traditional Aboriginal method of conflict ~~of the blacks~~, to  
selectively instigate retaliation to an individual who had committed  
an offence against them or the tribal laws, was more likely to  
be employed against the white settlers. This method of  
individual retaliation was also used to destroy the property  
of the white settlers. The method was developed into sophisticated  
guerrilla warfare tactics that continued for well over 100  
years.



These guerilla raids, in keeping with traditional behaviour were targeted on individual settlers or small groups.

There is ample evidence that this type of activity occurred and that there was a continuing hostility toward the white settlers. In the 1820's a settler told an official enquiry in Tasmania "that the situation of black acceptance had given way to a determined spirit of hostility". In 1858, Mr Wiseman, a Queensland Commissioner for Crown Lands, wrote that "no tribes will allow of the peaceable occupational of their country but will endeavour to check the progress of white men by spearing their sheep and murdering the shepherds". 2

G A Robinson reported in the latter half of last century that the influential members of the black community intended to take "to the mountains and make forays out to kill every white man they found unprotected. Robinson and others tried hard to restrain the blacks and thought they had succeeded. They learned later that the blacks had channelled their anger into working magic to unleash what Aborigines believe is the awesome power of Mindye the Rainbow Serpent. 4

2 *ibid.* The Other Side of the Frontier - Pelecan 1983 P85

4 Ibid P87

As further evidence of this type of behaviour, on a North Queensland station in 1874 a large group of blacks were "seen to make two effigies of white men then attack the effigies cutting them to pieces". 5

It is clear therefore that although a terrible cost was exacted on the Aboriginal population by white military operations, individual massacres, murders and disease introduced by white people, there was continuing resentment manifested in guerilla war activities and sorcery by the black population which enacted a high toll on the white settlers.

Thus it cannot be said that Australia was peaceably settled.

5 Ibid P90

The Other Side of the Frontier Pelecan 1983

*a bit slight, Chris.*

$\frac{5}{10}$

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