

FARMING AND INDUSTRY

FARMING

The annual fat stock sale at Wentworth was an important event; and the relevant article in the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* for Thursday 9 December 1852 was more than just a routine report, it was a commentary on the times, as well as a typical example of the high literary pretensions of the mid-Victorian journalist:

WENTWORTH WOODHOUSE ANNUAL SALE

It was formerly stated on pretty high authority, that he who made three blades of corn grow where only one grew before, was a friend of his country and a benefactor of his species. The same principle may be fairly applied to the fattening of cattle and sheep; and, therefore, those noble men and gentlemen who have pursued the latter course are entitled to no small share of public approbation. But if there has been a striking improvement in the cultivation of the soil, the same beneficial change has also taken place in the production of animal food for the market. The judgment which formerly encouraged excessive obesity has been found to be erroneous, injudicious, and extremely wasteful, not only in production but in consumption. In this respect a new era has dawned; and the conviction appears to be universal, that the best quality of cattle or sheep is not to be obtained by excessive feeding; because enormous bulk does not constitute the most valuable properties of the animal. Indeed, many are disposed to maintain that a beast of comparatively diminutive size is often superior to its largest competitors.

Hence the great object now sought is, to put the largest quantity of serviceable meat upon the smallest bone, preserving at the same time the symmetry of the animal. Symptoms of improvement in this respect are becoming more apparent year by year; because it is found to be far better to produce good, wholesome, nutritious, and substantial food, than enormous masses of fat and offal. This great truth, which is calculated to become of universal acceptance, was manifest at Wentworth Woodhouse on Thursday.

It was gratifying to witness the spirit and anxiety with which the stock were viewed by purchasers, purveyors, and connoisseurs. These annual assemblages, indeed, are becoming a source of great attraction year by year. They are looked forward to with increasing interest. Nor is there the least

likelihood that the quality of the stock will suffer deterioration so long as that feeling continues to abound.

The cattle and sheep offered for competition amounted to one hundred and five Scotch and short-horned heifers and bullocks; two hundred and seventy Leicester and half-bred Southdown sheep; with twenty-one fat pigs. These were remarkably fine animals — some of them particularly so; eliciting the praises of the company from time to time, and showing to what state of perfection they can be made to reach by skill, experience, and attention. Many of them combined the essential qualities to which we have already referred, and raised the reputation of those in whose hands had been placed not the breeding and rearing, but the fattening and general management of the whole lot.

The pigs were also much admired and fetched prices fully equal to what had been expected. With regard to the horses, they consisted of sixteen thoroughbreds, and it is only needful to say that the prices obtained for them fully justified the high reputation of the Wentworth breed, from the famous *Orville* and *Cervantes* downwards to the present day. — Doncaster Gazette.

We have noted the ubiquity of clubs in England (see Chapter 1); and it is no surprise to find that there were also clubs of an agricultural nature in the provinces. The Sheffield *Independent* for Saturday 10 January 1857 reported as follows:

WENTWORTH COW CLUB

On Tuesday evening, the eighteenth annual meeting of the Wentworth Cow Club was held in the Mechanics' Hall, Wentworth, when a very satisfactory report was read, stating that the society continues in a flourishing state, and the cash balance is £43. 10s. 3d.

This society does not give the least encouragement to its members to sell the carcass of a cow which has died from accident or disease for human food, as the owner is paid a certain sum of money, according to the time he has been a member; and it is left entirely to himself to do what he thinks fit with it. Some clubs compel the owner of a dead cow to make as much money as he can of it, which is deducted from the amount allowed by the club. The sum paid for a cow which has died is £3, £6, or £9. The first sum is paid to a member if he loses a cow before he has been in the society one year, the second sum two years, and the third after he has been a member more than two years. Four shillings a year are paid for each cow, in quarterly payments, and an entrance fee of 1s. for each cow, but no additional fee is charged when the cow is exchanged.

According to the statistics of this society, which embraces a period of 18 years, the entrance fees and the quarterly contributions of 1s. for each cow

are quite sufficient to cover all expenses for losses and management. The average annual number of members for the 18 years is $72 \frac{2}{3}$; the average number of cows, $114 \frac{1}{8}$; and the average number of deaths about $2\frac{1}{2}$, the specific intensity of which is over $47\frac{1}{2}$, that is, one cow out of about 48 died every year, according to the 18 years' experience of this club.

Sadly the Cow Club had its 'ups' and its 'downs'. On Saturday 23 January 1886 the *Sheffield Independent* reported:

WENTWORTH COW CLUB

Earl Fitzwilliam, having been asked for a subscription towards making up the deficiency of £81 in the accounts of the club, has kindly forwarded the sum of £10, and promised an annual subscription of two guineas.

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* for Saturday 23 December 1865 reported on the:

WENTWORTH WOODHOUSE POULTRY SHOW

A fine display of poultry was made yesterday, under the auspices of the National Poultry Club, of which the Hon. Henry Fitzwilliam is one of the stewards. The show was held in the Riding School, at the back of Wentworth House, and a finer or more varied collection of birds it has seldom been our fortune to witness. The pens were ranged in double tiers round the school, with double tier in the centre, leaving abundance of room for the visitors to inspect the fowls. The fowls were all enclosed in Turner's patent pens, and the fine bold figures on each of them afforded a ready and correct reference from the catalogue, and the arrangements generally were much admired, reflecting no little credit upon Mr. Potter, the secretary, through whose efforts the exhibition was a success. There were altogether twenty-four classes, in which over 300 specimens were entered, and the birds in each class were so closely matched that it must have taken the eye of a connoisseur to mark the distinction.

During the day, the show was visited by the gentry of the neighbourhood, among whom were the Hon. Earl Fitzwilliam and the Countess, Mr. Vernon and Lady Albreda Vernon, Mr. Thompson and Lady Mary Thompson, Lord Milton, Captain Douglas, Lady Agnes Douglas, Lady Morton, the Hon. Henry Fitzwilliam, the Hon. W. C. W. Fitzwilliam, and Mr. Thelluson, of Brodsworth Hall, near Doncaster. The visitors were hospitably entertained at Wentworth House by Earl Fitzwilliam, and his servants were busily engaged attending to and feeding the poultry. The weather was exceedingly fine, which contributed not a little to the pleasure of the visitors.

It is but right to mention, that the whole of the prizes are given by Earl Fitzwilliam, and amount to a considerable sum, none of them being below 10s. and some of them high as £2.

There was a nationwide agricultural depression in the 1880s and 1890s, which led to a widespread flight from the land. The *Sheffield Independent* for Thursday 18 May 1905 gave details of one local farm failure:

WENTWORTH FARMER'S FAILURE

Borrowing from a Farm Labourer

A meeting of the creditors of John Wood, Harley, Wentworth, and Fiedlhead Farm. Dodworth, near Barmley, was held at the offices of the Official Receiver, Figtree Lane Sheffield, yesterday morning. The receiving order was made on the debtor's own petition and, according to his own statement of affairs, which the Official Receiver stated would have to be amended, owes £2,042 1s 3d. to unsecured creditors, to a creditor partly secured £600, the security being said to produce £500, and for rent, rates and sheriff's charges, £375 8s 5d. He estimates his assets to produce £542 3s 6d, showing a deficiency of £1975 6s 2d.

He commenced business as a farmer about 21 years ago at his present address, on a capital of between £600 and £700. In January 1893, he took the Harley farm at Wentworth, but gave this up in January 1905. In addition, for three years he had been taking an active part in the Jordan Colliery Company of which he was a director. The landlord at Harley Farm distrained¹ before the receiving order, and the landlord of the Fieldhead Farm distrained after the receiving order. He attributed his failure to bad seasons, loss of cattle, and neglect of his business in attending to the colliery, instead of his farming. Several creditors had taken proceedings against him. He has kept no accounts of his receipts and payments, and gives no account of his deficiency prior to twelve months ago, when he estimates that that he was owing £1700. He states, however, that he has known of his insolvency for the past five years. Several creditors questioned the debtor....

In an age when significant numbers of people still worked on the land, and where agriculture was more central to our way of life than it is now, it was very common for the newspapers to report on fires in haystacks. So, for example the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* for Saturday 8 September 1906 reported on:

THE SERIOUS STACK FIRE AT GREASBOROUGH

¹ That is, stepped in to remove goods, in order to satisfy his debt.

In connection with the big stack fire at the farm of Mr. D. Yeardley, Lower Haugh, Greasborough, on Thursday night, it was not until one o'clock yesterday morning that the Rotherham Corporation and Rawmarsh Urban Council fire brigades were withdrawn, the Wentworth House brigade, with motor engine, being left to finally extinguish the smouldering debris. The total damage is estimated at £1,000, of which £750 is covered by insurance. The stacks, eleven in number, contained this year's produce of 47 acres, and are wholly destroyed, together with a Dutch barn measuring forty yards by ten yards. The fire brigades obtained water from the clay-pond at Nether Haugh, and the Stubbin Colliery pond, three-quarters of a mile away.²

INDUSTRY

If Wentworth was at the centre of the Fitzwilliam estates, Elsecar was at the centre of the aristocratic industrial empire built by the Earls in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Forty years ago, Graham Mee painted a vivid picture of this beating heartland:³

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Wentworth Woodhouse estate, situated between Barnsley and Rotherham, can be said to have represented a microcosm of the industrial revolution. Thus, by 1815, a visitor would have been able to see within a few hundred yards of the village green at Elsecar coal pits being worked, iron furnaces being tapped, and coal tar and its chemical by-products being manufactured. There was an internal rail network serving these enterprises, and a canal which provided the link with regional markets and with supplies of essential materials. From the canal wharf were shipped the basic raw materials of the industrial revolution, coal and iron.

Near to the pit head were the rows of substantial stone-built miners' cottages with their adjoining gardens. This physical proximity of collieries and gardens epitomized the contrasts to be found in much industrial development at this time. Thus the-pits were sunk, the winding gear and furnaces erected, and the railways and canals built

² Johnson & Johnson have two dramatic photos of the fire, which they say burned between 6 and 15 September. One photo is stated to have been taken on 10 September. They also reproduce a photo of the Wentworth fire engine and crew (see also the photo of this in the *George & Dragon*).

³ See Mee's essay on *Employer-Employee relationships*, in Pollard. S., ed., *Essays*. Mel. Jones's description of the relevant villages in *South Yorkshire Mining Villages* (2017) is more detailed; but essentially the same picture emerges. Mee had also written about the Fitzwilliam collieries at greater length in *Aristocratic Enterprise* (1975).

in an essentially rural setting. There was, in consequence, an intimate relationship between the new and the traditional, between the industrial undertakings and the activities of a landed estate. In times of bad trade, the miners might be found other work to do, such as road making or repairing, or possibly harvesting. Many of the industrial raw materials, in addition to coal and iron ore, came from the estate. Timber for pit props, patterns, casks and building was cut from the woods. Stone was quarried and bricks were made on the estate for the lining of pit shafts, and for the miners' cottages, engine houses and other industrial buildings.

Although the Rockingham family had worked the minerals, it was the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam who were responsible for most of the industrial development on the estate. In 1795 the 4th Earl had a Newcomen pumping engine erected at the Elsecar new Colliery in order to develop the working of the rich nine feet thick Barnsley seam. In the same year Darwin and Company opened an ironworks close to the pithead and three years later a branch of the Deame and Dove Canal was dug to carry away the coal. Coal sales increased fourfold between 1800 and 1856, from approximately 70,000 tons to over 300,000 tons. Table 1 shows that in the fifty years between 1795 and 1845 more than 500 extra miners were employed. Over the same period the total number of employees on the whole estate rose from 240 to 1,100 which indicates that, besides the growth in mining, other activities expanded, and these included iron mining and iron smelting as well as non-industrial employment. In the decade after 1845 almost 300 miners were taken on.

Mee explains further that many different small collieries were involved between 1795 and 1857, many of them very small, and very near to one another: Elsecar, High, Middle & Low (Hemingfield), Park Gate, Strafford Main, Kent Main, Westwood, Lawwood, Rainber Park, Swallowwood, Brampton, Haugh.

COALMINING

The existence of coal in abundance under Fitzwilliam's estate triggered the development of several other industries. As we have seen, Graham Mee mentioned the 4th and 5th Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar and Milton Ironworks, and their Elsecar Coal Tar Works, although the Earls' control of each was of comparatively minor importance, and short duration, compared with their ownership of the collieries, which both pre-dated and long survived these 'spinoffs'. Thus, the 4th Earl only

assumed control of the (originally separate) Elsecar and Milton Ironworks in 1827, and the two ironworks were only merged in 1842, but the 5th Earl ceased operating at Elsecar altogether in 1849.⁴ As for the by-product of coalmining known as coal tar, it is clear that the 2nd Marquis of Rotherham supervised various experiments into its production; but the coal tar works was not built in Elsecar until after 1814, and the 5th Earl ordered that production be run down in 1818. So, in short, the works there were only ever a large experiment.⁵

Mining also provided an incentive for those who wanted to develop improved means of transport. From the 1840s, the industry expanded greatly as a result of the opening up of new markets, which accompanied the building of the railways. So, on Saturday 25 October 1845, the *Leeds Intelligencer* ran the following advertisement, which provides a fascinating insight into the nature of the South Yorkshire coalfield:

SOUTH YORKSHIRE COAL RAILWAY. (Provisionally Registered.)—

Connecting the Silkstone, Elsecar, Worsbrough and Barnsley Coal Fields, with the Sheffield and Manchester the Huddersfield and Sheffield, the Midlands, and the London and York Railways. Capital £1,201,000—in Shares of £20. Deposit, £2 per Share. PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE. The Earl Fitzwilliam, Wentworth House, Chairman. The Hon. John Stuart Wortley, M. P., Wortley Hall, Vice-Chairman. Sir Joseph W. Copley, Bart., Sprotbro' Hall. F. W. T. Vernon Wentworth, Esq, Wentworth Castle. W. Bennett Martin, Esq., Worsbro' Hall etc etc etc CONSULTING ENGINEER. WILLIAM CUBITT, Esq. ENGINEER. G. BARTHOLOMEW, Esq. SOLICITORS. MESSRS. R. & E. BAXTER, Doncaster. BANKERS etc

The South Yorkshire Coal-field bordering on Worsbro' Dale and the Valley of the Dearne has for many years past furnished through the Barnsley, the Dearne and Dove, and Don Navigations, a proportion of the Coal consumed on the eastern coast and in the towns lying by the tidal rivers and navigations flowing into the Humber. The quality of the coal is excellent; the Silkstone and some of the other beds being house-coal, scarcely inferior to the best Durham Coals, and the Barnsley thick bed, as an engine coal, being equal or superior to any other. The extent and thickness the beds are such as to ensure abundant supply, and at very moderate prices.

The construction of railways, extending into parts of the country hitherto not reached by the coasting and navigation trade, has opened a new and extensive market for this coal, and although the Canals would supply such Railways with coals at low a rate, yet in older to give the greatest

⁴ Mee (1975), Chapter 3.

⁵ Mee (1975), Chapter 4.

possible facility of transit, it was thought desirable that additional means of connection with these Railways should be furnished by one passing through the heart of this coalfield, which would place all the present workings in immediate communication with the Railways. This object attained, the existing Navigations would continue to supply, as heretofore, the coasting and canal trade; and the Railway would form a channel for answering the new demands created by the inland Railways.

The public advantages which will accrue from such arrangements, may be appreciated from the fact, that the price of coal will be reduced more than one-third in all those inland districts to which the new Railways are extending.

The projected Railway will commence at the Sheffield and Manchester Railway, near Penistone, pass down Worsbro' Dale, Silkstone, and Worsbro', joining near the proposed Line from Thurgoland; thence a Branch will be made to Barnsley, and up the Valley of the Dearne, to the Sheffield and Huddersfield Railway, the main line proceeding to the Midlands near Swinton, (from the neighbourhood of which a Branch will be made to Elsecar), and thence to Doncaster, with a Branch to Rossington, or some further point, at which place it will join the London and York Railway, or whatever other Trunk Line may be sanctioned by Parliament.

Things did not go according to plan: the Bill required to authorise the building of the South Yorkshire Coal Railway was defeated in the House of Commons in 1846. However, a second Bill to approve the building of a South Yorkshire Doncaster & Goole Railway was passed the following year, and in 1847 the section between Swinton and Doncaster was opened. Fitzwilliam remained a director of the company for many years, and was Chairman of the Board in 1852, 1854 and 1857.⁶

The *Birmingham Daily Post* for Thursday 29 May 1958 carried the following notice, regarding events in 1848:

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO INTRODUCTION OF GAS INTO A COLLIERY IN YORKSHIRE

Gas has been introduced into the High Elsecar Colliery, Yorkshire, and naked gas lights are burning in all the board gates and stables. This shows the pure air in circulation, and there is now no fear of any explosion occurring. After a trial in the principal parts of the pit has been fairly made, the next step no doubt will be to introduce gas into every part of the workings, and, where it is absolutely necessary, to place it in the Davy lamps.

⁶ Mee (1975) 41-2.

Coalmining was still a developing industry in the early 20th century. Shafts were being sunk to deeper and deeper levels, more coal was being produced and more men employed. Thus, on Thursday 27 September 1906 the *Nottingham Journal* reported:

EARL FITZWILLIAMS COLLIERIES COAL FOUND AT ELSECAR

The workmen employed in the sinking of the new colliery belonging to Earl Fitzwilliam at Elsecar, near Barnsley, have just struck coal a depth of 344 yards 1 foot. The seam is the Parkgate seam, and said to be of very good quality. The seam has a workable thickness coal of 4ft 6in. The present shaft is a 16ft. one, and was commenced a little over twelve months ago. Since Mr. Blackledge took over the contract, sinking has gone on rapidly. It is expected that the second shaft, which is to be 18ft. in diameter, and which will be in the main shaft, will be commenced once, and completion is expected in about 18 months.

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* for 14 November 1913 reported on another development near Wentworth, again involving the Parkgate seam:

A NEW PIT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE FITZWILLIAM ESTATE. THE SOD-TURNING

The colliery developments in the Rotherham district proceed apace. A further step forward was taken yesterday afternoon when the sod-turning of a new venture, of which Earl Fitzwilliam is the promoter, took place under very pleasant and interesting circumstances. To the south of the Low Stubbin Colliery, belonging to his lordship, in Greasborough, and about four miles from Rotherham, preparations have been made for the sinking of a pit to reach the Parkgate seam of coal which lies, it is estimated, about 300 yards below the surface. At Low Stubbin, the Barnsley bed is being gradually worked out. The enterprise is of special importance to Rawmarsh and Greasborough, both of which should greatly benefit from the impetus given to industry. Altogether it is computed that about 2,000 men will be required when the colliery is in full work.

Yesterday's ceremony was witnessed by a large gathering. Earl and Countess Fitzwilliam with their son and heir, Viscount Milton, who is not quite three years old, and their eldest daughter. Lady Elfrida Fitzwilliam. motored over to the site. They were received Mr. Thomas Newbould, the

general manager of the Fitzwilliam collieries, and under whose direction the mine is being laid out and amongst those present were.....

The chief proceedings of the afternoon was arranged for Viscount Milton, a sturdy little fellow, who, under the guidance of his mother, discharged his duty to the great delight of himself and the onlookers. At the outset, Mr. Newbould said was sure he should voice the sentiments of all present when he expressed pleasure at the presence Lord and Lady Fitzwilliam and of their little son. A miniature barrow of polished oak and a silver spade with oaken shaft had been provided, and the baby viscount was soon busy at a spot which had been specially prepared. "Well done, that's the way," shouted a member of the crowd; and there were other interjections such as "That's a good 'un," "Wheel the barrow", and so forth. The spade and barrow, which were presented Mr. Newbould, bore the inscription: "Presented to Viscount Milton the occasion of his cutting the first sod at the new Stubbin Colliery, November 13, 1913."

Proceeding, Mr. Newbould said as there had been an erroneous impression with regard to fires, he should just like to give some information. There had been two distinct fires at Stubbin. There was the old gob fire which occurred in 1824-25, a sum of £325 10s. being spent in fighting it at that time. That gob fire had been burning 89 years, and thought he could explain the reason. Under the system of working in those early days there was left from 10 to 11 per cent. of coal, and when once a fire got going it went along the ribs and pillars, and continued from year to year. He dared say some of the farmers had benefited, by being able to gather two crops of hay in one season; and there were also gardeners to whom it had been advantage. As recently as September last he noticed the gob stink in a hole on the laud not far away. Mr. Newbould mentioned a difficulty of 44 years ago when the fire broke through into the pit shaft, and he detailed the steps which were taken to successfully deal with it. The second fire was in the Barnsley seam itself in 1861. On that occasion furnaces were built to produce carbonic acid gas, which was sent down to the seat of the trouble, and which was very helpful in dealing with the trouble.

The pit they were now commencing would be 18ft in shaft diameter and about 300 yards deep. The coal area was about 3,000 acres, and therefore did not compare with some of the modern pits of 6,000 or 7,000 acres. It was being laid out to do about 2,000 tons per day when fully developed, and from 1,900 to 2,000 hands would be employed. Seeing that the Low Stubbin Colliery was nearly exhausted, Lord Fitzwilliam had told him prepare a sink pit to the lower seam, and this was now being done. The resolution was received with acclamation.

THE EARL'S HOPES

Earl Fitzwilliam replied for his son. He most sincerely hoped Mr. Crowther's prediction would come true —that he would prove to be better man than his father. (Laughter.) He did not think so. (Renewed laughter.) He (the Earl) was brought up amongst the mining population, as his son would brought up, whether the boy liked it or not. If he was like him (his lordship) he would like it, because had got to know something of his job before he was much good it. He started when he was 10, and believed he broke the law going underground before he was 13. (Laughter.) This could not be done now, because there was legislation to prevent it—and a very good thing, too. (Hear, hear.) It was his intention that his son should through the mill in the same way as he had gone through it, and learn as much, or more, than he knew, so that when the time came for going down to the poorer and even the lower seams, he might have a smattering of knowledge and might able to help his general manager—whom he hoped would be Mr. Newbould.

There was one thing they were always very happy to remember. For many, many years they had not had anything in the nature of a really bad accident, like they had had in Wales and at Cadeby, and he prayed God they never would have. (Applause.)⁷

Mee (1976) and Jones (2017) each stress that the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam had a traditional, paternalistic, relationship with their industrial employees (principally, the miners), which 'contrasted sharply with the exploitative attitudes of most colliery owners'. This paternalism manifested itself in many different ways - the provision of housing of good quality, at low rents; schools and almshouses, and Mechanics' Institutes; pensions, of various kinds, and of food in times of scarcity, or on special occasions (e.g. St Thomas's Day and at Christmas); and we could add that, in the 20th century, Fitzwilliam made arrangements for his employees to go on works 'outings', sometimes from his private railway station at Elsecar.⁸ On other occasions, selected guests were invited to visit Wentworth Woodhouse;⁹ but most importantly,

⁷ 91 men had been killed in the Cadeby disaster of 1912. Graham Mee published the following table of major disasters, all involving other coal owners who tried to exploit the same 'gaseous' Barnsley seam:

Year	Colliery	No of deaths ⁷
1847	Oaks (Ardsley Main)	73
1849	Darley Main	75
1851	Warren Vale, Rawmarsh	52
1857	Lundhill	189

⁸ E.g. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 1929 - 'The employees of the Elsecar Skiers Spring and Low Stubbin Main Collieries, owned by Earl Fitzwilliam, left Elsecar and Chapeltown this morning in six special trains to Blackpool for their annual outing. The collieries employ over 3,000 men and the majority of the workmen were accompanied by their wives. Earl Fitzwilliam gave £1,500 towards the cost of the outing.'

⁹ E.g. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 1931: Members of the Yorkshire Branch of the National Association of Colliery Managers, yesterday afternoon, inspected the pit-head baths at Earl

the Earls had a very good record when it came to pit safety. At the same time, these Earls were 'uncompromisingly anti-union, to the point of dismissing employees who defied them on this issue.'¹⁰

Notwithstanding the Fitzwilliams' good record in relation to safety, mining remained an inherently dangerous occupation, and there were many accidents sustained by individuals during the course of their work. For example, the *Sheffield Independent* for Monday 6 September 1869 reported on a:

SERIOUS COLLIERY ACCIDENT AT ELSECAR

On Friday morning, a serious accident occurred at the Simon Wood Colliery, Elsecar, belonging to Earl Fitzwilliam, to a young man named Thomas Hinchcliffe, who resides at Hemingfield. It appears that he was "ramming a drill hole up," which was made for the purpose of blasting. When the coal which was to have been blasted off suddenly gave way, knocking the poor fellow down, dislocating his neck, cutting half of his ear off, and otherwise seriously injuring him. He was removed home, and was attended by Dr. Clarke, of Wentworth.

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* for Saturday 14 May 1892 reported on:

THE FATAL ACCIDENT AT THE ELSECAR COLLIERIES

The Coroner (Mr. Wightman) held an inquest at the Rockingham Arms Hotel, Wentworth, yesterday, concerning the death of George Hobson, 45, who was killed whilst attempting to pass between some waggons which at the time were being shunted on branch line of the M. S. and L. Railway between the Hemingfield and Planting Coal Pit owned by Earl Fitzwilliam. The railway company were represented by Mr. Garter, of Doncaster, and Mr. Berry, of Elsecar; and Earl Fitzwilliam by Mr. Newbold, each then submitting plans of the part of the railway where the accident occurred. - Mr. Charles Hobson, brother of the deceased; Leonard Jacques, a platelayer; and Thomas Hill, who is employed by the M. S. and L. Railway travelling porter, gave evidence, and

Fitzwilliam's Elsecar Colliery, and afterwards with their ladies, visited Wentworth Woodhouse, where they went over the extensive grounds and gardens, and the stately house. The party numbered nearly 500. The members were received at Elsecar Colliery by Mr. H. Danby, agent and general manager, who conducted them over the baths, a splendid and much appreciated product of the Miners' Welfare Fund. At Wentworth 'Woodhouse the party were received by Colonel Diggle who showed them over the various rooms and explained to them the numerous works of art and other treasures for which the mansion is famous. The Hickleton Main Silver Prize Band gave selections. The visitors were entertained to tea in the Riding School, where Mr. John Minnikin, President of the Yorkshire branch of the Association, proposed hearty thanks to Earl Fitzwilliam for his kindness, and paid tribute to Mr. Danby for arranging the visit.

¹⁰ See Mee (1975) Chapter 10 for paternalism.

the jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death." The deceased leaves a wife and eight children, seven of them girls, and the jury presented their fees to her.

The 6th Earl was a generous employer, like his two predecessors; but his attitude to trade unionism was the same: he was adamantly opposed. This was made evident in 1873. In May, there was a dispute between Fitzwilliam and the miners at Low Stubbin colliery. At a time when coal production was booming, the South Yorkshire Miners' Association decided to test the strength of the Union, by petitioning for the removal of a non-union man from their workplace. The 6th Earl swiftly closed the pit; and addressing the men a month later, he made clear his view of the situation:

"In the whole course of my life I have never read a more iniquitous letter than that. You tried to drive that man from his work by this (showing the letter); and what is more, not content with the power that you had there you endeavoured to make me, his master, an accomplice in your acts – an accomplice in your acts, mark you – that I was to use my power upon him because he declined to be of an association in which he had no trust. I say that letter is not an error, it is not a fault – it is a crime. [...]

But this I have to say, and having a great interest and a great stake in this country from minerals and other causes, I wished to identify myself with the labour of those around me, and if there is one thing that I and those who went before me were proud of it was this assurance that throughout our lives hardly a single instance of life was sacrificed from want of due precaution in the pit.

But I will go on to tell you that as much as I prize the position of working coal upon my estate I will not work it upon conditions such as have been attempted to be enforced upon me. Every man who works for me shall work as a free man. He may be a member of these unions if he pleases, he may not be a member if he pleases, but let him understand that so long as he works for me he shall receive at my hands the protection which is due from me to him as his employer. It is yet a matter of consideration with me whether I work my pits again or not. What is there I hope will serve for those who come after me, and it is not really my interest to work it now. You understand that. It will always be a firm bank to me and mine, and I will go and draw a cheque upon it just as I find it pays me."¹¹

¹¹ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1873, cited by www.hemingfieldcolliery.org/the-struggle-owners-and-workers-wages-and-welfare. See also the 6th Earl's obituary, in chapter 1 above.

The following article, which appeared in *Sheffield Independent* on Monday 16 June 1873 indicates the view taken by men of property, which was to support the Earl:

EARL FITZWILLIAM AND HIS COLLIERS.

We hold that if Lord Fitzwilliam's facts be as he stated them, the substance of what he said was not only a sound, but a very desirable lesson to the colliers who had tried to dictate to him unworthy terms; and that the questions of proprietary rights which it raises are quite certain to be ultimately determined by all rational public opinion in Lord Fitzwilliam's favour.

Those of our contemporaries who are so nervous about any public canvassing of the rights of property, have, it seems to us, a very mean opinion of the public benefits which result from the admission of those rights, and of the competence of English common sense to recognise those benefits. No doubt the great owners of wealth of every kind are the subjects of a good deal of vulgar envy. But Englishmen know perfectly well that if you strike at these rights, i.e., of course as interpreted by any moderate view of them, you strike at rights which almost every one hopes, in a greater or less degree, to exercise himself.

If the owner may not determine when he will take the wealth out of his land, it would be difficult to assert for him the absolute right of determining when to put wealth into his land — when to plant, drain, and I manure, and leave land lying fallow — processes by which undoubtedly he must often divert resources from one generation to another, and yet processes which no owner, however small, would consent to give up the right of directing for himself. Lord Fitzwilliam's principles would be defended by every peasant with a property of his own. And while that is so, we do not see the advantage in that policy of mystery and reserve, for deviating from which he has been so much blamed by our timid contemporaries. — Spectator.

The long article in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* for Monday 11 August 1873 from which we have already quoted contains a very interesting, though discursive, comment on the same matter.

EARL FITZWILLIAM AND HIS COLLIERS

From our Special Correspondent.

Many philosophical thinkers who are not usually startled out of their placid equanimity by trifling speeches were disturbed by the words used by Earl Fitzwilliam when, from the "great staircase" of the "pillared hall" at

Wentworth House, he addressed the Low Stubbin colliers... In mercantile circles generally, it was thought a bold thing for his lordship to say that if he felt so minded he might leave his pits unworked—as a mine of wealth for his descendants. The theorists began to discuss seriously the present aspect of the land question, and even those who usually pride themselves on the practical character of their views felt inclined to doubt whether this speech of Earl Fitzwilliam's might not afford Mr. Gladstone sufficient excuse for proposing in Parliament a measure for making coal mines the property of the State.

Was it then any great wonder that when intimation was given the *Sheffield Telegraph* of Saturday that his lordship proposed to entertain some thousands of his colliers at Wentworth House one should feel curious as to this seeming departure from the merely business relations regarding which the man on the omnibus had been so confident.

Your correspondent had never seen Wentworth House (regarding which Ebenezer Elliott has several spirited sonnets), and, combining pleasure with business, he wended his way thither on Saturday afternoon. The morning was not peculiarly charming, save to those who enjoy the beauties attendant on thunderstorm. And let the passenger be the most contented frame of mind that is possible under the circumstances, it is not a soothing experience to wait half hour at a railway station—as your correspondent did on Saturday—for a train to carry him the distance he could have walked in sixty minutes. But "all things are for the man who has patience to wait," and at length Rotherham was reached.

The road from Rotherham and Greasboro' to Wentworth is not of the character which one would recommend to valetudinarian with a difficulty in breathing, but as we near the mansion of the Fitzwilliams, and catch sight of the Mausoleum, of whose solemn beauty Elliott has sung, the aspect of the country changes for the better. By-and-bye the wayfarer finds himself traversing an emerald lawn studded with venerable oaks. The sunshine gleams brightly on the waters, which, if collected for use, are none the less a prime ornament of the park, and here and there we find workmen attired in their holiday clothes, on their way to the scene of the festivities.

Entering into conversation with some of these workmen who come from the Low Stubbin pits I found that they accepted Earl Fitzwilliam's hospitality in the best possible spirit. There had been little difficulty between them on the difficulty caused, they believed, by the misconception of what the men really desired—but now that difficulty over, and there was no idea of any bad feeling being cherished on either side.

To reproduce the dialect in which the information was conveyed I shall not attempt, but what my informants led me to understand was, that while those who had been to blame for the stopping of the pit had received well-deserved "wiggings" from his Lordship, on the other hand, during the interview the representatives of the men had got the opportunity of stating

their mind; and so was believed that matters stood about equal between the employer and the employed.

Perhaps a slight touch of malice prompted me ask of the Low Stubbin collier who pointed out to me the road to the mausoleum whether Mr. Normansell, the South Yorkshire Miners' Association, was likely to be present at the feast which his Lordship was giving; my friend replied that he did not think this very likely, but felt sure that Mr. Normansell was very good fellow, who desired that the colliers should scrupulously do their duty by his Lordship. Another characteristic piece of information was that the men had not made a "play day" for the purpose of enjoying the festivity; till twelve o'clock they had been at work in the pits, and it was not till four of the afternoon that they were expected at Wentworth House.

The men from Greasborough, Rawmarsh, and Low Stubbin met at one side of the house, those from the Elsecar neighbourhood at the other, and while the early birds were waiting for those who were not so great a hurry to pick up the worms, there was ample time for the uninitiated visitor to make a general survey of the mansion and the grounds immediately adjacent.

No experience could be more healthful for those who cherish the insane idea that it would be for the benefit of the people at large were the large estates of this country cut up into potato patches and cabbage gardens—were huge factories and colonies of more or less squalid cottages planted in the situations now occupied by Belvoir Castle, and Chatsworth Hall, and Wentworth House. Let the observant traveller pass from Sheffield to the seat of the Earl Fitzwilliam, and mark how the results of the uncontrolled efforts to be rich contrast with the results of noblesse oblige—let him compare the surroundings of Moneyocracy Attercliffe with the surroundings of Aristocracy at Wentworth, and let him honestly say which of the influences are the most healthful.

This much must be allowed by the most captious of the Earl's guests on Saturday, that every pains had been taken to make then visit to Wentworth thing to be ranked among the pleasures of memory. The Riding School had been arranged as a dining-room for the occasion—fountains and flowers showing that a repast *à la Russe* was not altogether beyond the reach of colliers - as indeed, why should be in days when they can afford to drink champagne? A spacious marquee, with its due allowance of floating flags and parti-coloured pillars, had been erected on the lawn, and profusion of extemporised seats were spread hither and thither across the some two thousand five hundred guests is not a very easy matter, but under the direction of Mr. Massey and other members of his lordship's household this task was accomplished soon after the hour fixed for the meeting. To one who had been accustomed to take his estimate of colliers chiefly from jocular conversation, "sensational" newspaper reports, and from the spectacle of

those of class who cluster noisily about public houses at the hour of closing, the aspect of his lordship's guests was matter of agreeable surprise.

I have seen many large gatherings in many parts of the country—and in several quarters of the world—but very seldom have I seen gathering more respectable in appearance or behaviour than that which on Saturday assembled at Wentworth House. Visions of boisterous, rollicking fellows, who patronised green neck ties, and sham jewellery, accompanied by women who displayed a more than rainbow-like radiance in shawls and ribbons, had been suggested to my mind. The reality showed a large assemblage of grave, sensible-looking men, clad in decent Sunday suits of black or grey, with decently-attired wives or sweethearts hanging upon their arms or walking quietly by their sides. Now and then one could mark a young beau wearing a brilliant waistcoat or scarf of flaming colour, or bedizened with "flash" watchguards or scarf-rings. Here and there might be seen a young woman bedizened in finery which showed in its arrangement utter disregard of the complimentary colours—but these cases were quite the exception.

Good substantial apparel was the order of the day, though it must be admitted that old-fashioned economist might have been shocked by the expensive nature of the dress worn by many of the women. It was, however, good sign that this extravagance was characteristic chiefly of the middle-aged among the ladies; and it is not altogether a bad sign that a collier earning high wages should like to see his wife or his mother have a black silk dress to wear on high occasions. Self-respect was visible in the efforts made by his lordship's guests to do honour to the occasion, and there was perceptible little excess of strong scent and shining pomatum, can we afford to speak severely of such tastes in an age when rouge and bismuth are by no means unknown in a society that plumes itself on knowing no more about the condition of working folks than did the French Princess who, when bread was scarce, asked why the people did not eat biscuits

His guests being present, Earl Fitzwilliam addressed to them a few words of kindly welcome, which had the great merit of brevity, and then, along with his family, led the way to the tables which had been spread for their entertainment. There are among the professed "leaders" of the working class those who could see nothing but matter for ill-natured amusement in the spectacle of a concourse of colliers and colliers' wives waited on at table by the daughters of an earl; [but] as matter of fact, the arrangement seemed very agreeable to both parties. The young ladies in white pique and delicate lace gave their services with unaffected simplicity, and these attentions were accepted with the utmost frankness by the sturdy workmen and their buxom wives.

It is enough to say that the gathering was one which seemed to give great satisfaction to all parties concerned, and that when, as they gathered for the return journey, Earl Fitzwilliam and his guests sung "God save the

Queen," and said "Goodnight," they were animated by mutual feelings of loyalty, respect, and confidence. After all, the relations between the Earl and his colliers are something deeper than merely business relations.

POSTSCRIPT

I have written elsewhere about the Sheffield Simplex Motor Car Company, set up by the 7th Earl; but it would not be right to conclude this section without mention of the great range of goods and local trades on display in Elsecar in 1886.¹² The planning had been done at the beginning of the year, as reported in the *Barnsley Chronicle* for Saturday 20 February 1886:

WENTWORTH AND DISTRICT EXHIBITION

This event, which is come off in Whit week, bids fair to be a success. Since the idea was first mooted, local committees have been formed in each of the respective districts, and the meetings held have been most enthusiastic, each and all of the committees being actuated with a spirit and a determination which augurs well for the success of the venture. We have been favoured with a copy the rules and regulations, from which gather that the exhibition will be divided into two classes (a) working men, in the usual acceptation of the term, and such may be judged to belong to that class, at the discretion of the committee; and (b) amateurs, manufacturers, and tradesmen. The sections in which competition will take place are as follows: Objects of mining interest and local industry, models of all kinds, especially machinery and mechanical contrivances, castings in metals, patterns and tools, ornamental wrought iron work, fossils, antiquities, coins, rare and curious articles of every description, specimens of mineralogy and natural history, chemical products, cabinet work, turning in wood and ivory, fret and inlaid work, old clocks, pottery, china and glass, oil and water colour paintings, drawings, photography, painting on glass and china, ornamental leather work, and needle work every description. There will also be a loan exhibition, to which contributions are invited from all parts of England.

The question as the disposal of the profits was discussed, and the general feeling of the majority of the delegates was that they should be divided between the Sheffield, Rotherham, and Barnsley infirmaries. The Miners' Permanent Relief Fund was also mentioned. — Various suggestions were made as to the prices of admission, and Mr. J. R. Wilson (Hoyland) pointed out that as the exhibition was for the purpose improving art amongst working men, prices should not be beyond their reach, and the suggestion was very favourably received.

¹² See also the reference to this exhibition in the obituary for the 6th Earl in Chapter 1.

Mr. Harrop (Swinton) thought the proper place for the exhibition would be Wentworth Park. His committee believed that it would go a long way towards making it a success.—Lady Fitzwilliam thought the Market Hall, Elsecar, was most convenient: there really was no accommodation at Wentworth. —The Chairman thanked the delegates for their attendance, and intimated that their various suggestions would be duly considered, and in the course of a few days trusted that the entry forms would be in their hands for circulation.

The Market Hall, Elsecar had been built by the Fitzwilliam estate in 1870. It is now known as Milton Hall and is a Grade II listed building.¹³ On Saturday 19 June 1886 the *Sheffield Independent* reported as follows:

THE WENTWORTH EXHIBITION.

The excursion trains to Elsecar yesterday took many hundred of persons to the Wentworth and District Industrial, Fine Art, and Loan Exhibition. In consideration of the depression in trade, and with a desire that the poorer classes should have an opportunity of witnessing the admirable collection which the Market Hall contains, the price for admission was reduced from a shilling to threepence. It computed that over 11,000 persons have visited the exhibition.

On Friday 18 June 1886 the *Sheffield Independent* reported on the prizes which had been awarded:

THE WENTWORTH EXHIBITION DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES

The prizes, medals and certificates awarded at the Wentworth Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition at Elsecar were distributed yesterday, by the Earl and Countess Fitzwilliam. The Duchess of Teck, who opened the exhibition on Monday, left Wentworth House for London yesterday morning. On Saturday, Miss Marie Krauser, of the Girls' High School, Sheffield, and late of the Leipzig Conservatorium of music, was especially requested to attend at Wentworth House and play before the Duchess of Teck, who expressed herself highly pleased with Miss Krauser's playing, and personally complimented and thanked her. There was a large attendance.

Earl Fitzwilliam, who was received with applause, said: Before we proceed to hand out the various prizes to the successful competitors at the

¹³ See photo.

Wentworth exhibition I wish to say a few words. During the winter Lady Fitzwilliam expressed a wish that an association should be formed for the purpose of ascertaining the capacity and readiness of the inhabitants in the neighbourhood of Wentworth to receive what may be termed a higher education. We had to form a large and widely extended committee, and that committee, I am happy to say, has worked with the most complete success up to the present time. (Applause.)

I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that a very (considerable advance is in progress in the minds of the people of this country, and your readiness to come here and take a share in the association which has been formed will prove of the greatest, advantage. Lady Fitzwilliam was very anxious that some member of the Royal Family should come amongst us to open the exhibition, and with that ceaseless kindness which has ever manifested itself in the Royal Family, and in none more than the Royal lady who has recently been with us, Princess Mary consented to come. (Applause.)

The President then distributed the prizes and medals to the various successful exhibitors, the Countess handing the certificates. The list of awards in the industrial section appeared in our issue of Saturday last, and the following shows the awards to amateurs, manufacturers, and tradesmen:

Coins and medals: Mr. T. Newbould.

Pen and ink drawing of interior of St John's Parish School, Barnsley: Mr. F. S. Biram.

Two cases of photographs: Dr. Burman.

Two old Steel engravings: Mr. T. W. Roome.

Portrait of Charles I: Mr. J. Carr.

Patent fire grate: Mr. J. Smith.

Occasional chair: Miss Pullen.

Sideboard: Mr. G. Bower.

Oak sideboard: Mr. W. Asher.

Brown oak sideboard: Messrs. Hovey and Son, Sheffield.

Sundry specimens of tinware: Messrs. Hopkins and Sons, Birmingham.

Sundry wood carvings: Mr. A. D. Shower, Doncaster.

One furnished cottage interior: Messrs. Johnson and Appleyards, Sheffield.

One furnished apartment: Messrs. Johnson and Appleyards, Sheffield.

Chandeliers: Mr. J. A. Horton, Sheffield.

Two engraved teapots: Mr. Carr.

Specimens of silver-mounted pottery, &c Messrs. Walker and Hall, Sheffield.

Viola, by B. Banks: Mr. J. Smith

Lady's Violin: Mr. T. Bennett.

Case of Violins: Mr. W. Dickie,

Music desk: Mr. W. Dickie.

Violoncello: Mr. J. Hargreaves.

Cases of boots and shoes: Mr. J. W. Poles.
 Case of boots and shoes: Mr. A. Parkinson.
 Cooking range and chimney pieces: Messrs. Lax & Sons.
 Specimens of pottery in the course of manufacture: Messrs. Hawley Brothers.
 Iron manufacture in process: The Parkgate Iron Co,
 Samples of candles: West Riding Candle Co., Rotherham.
 Two dogcarts: Mr. T. Charles, Rotherham.
 Hot water apparatus for amateur gardeners: Messrs. W. Badger and Co.,
 Rotherham.
 Artistic metal work: Messrs. White and Sons, London.
 Patent horse shoes: Mr. R. M. Skinner, Wortley.
 Artistic wrought iron and brass work: Messrs. Temple and Crook. London.
 Improved safety lamp: Mr. J. F. Thomson.
 Collection of safety lamps: Mr. C. E. Rhodes.
 Garden and horticultural tools : Messrs. Skelton & Co., Sheffield.
 Joiners' tools: Messrs. Rodgers Bros., Sheffield.
 Hydraulic cartridge, with hose and pump: Rev. Edmund Ware, D.D., Eton.
 Electrical appliances adapted for miners in working order: Tasker, Sons, and
 Co.. Sheffield.
 Model of colliery ambulance: Lady Alice Fitzwilliam.
 Various models and designs: School of Art (Mr. M. J. Thorpe, Sheffield).
 Miniature camera: Rev. J. V. Mahon.
 Wax vase: Mr. E. Hoyland, Sheffield.
 Curtains worked by Miss Burrell: Certificate of merit to Miss Burrell.
 Ornamental leather bracket: Mrs. T. Bennett.
 Ornamental leather-work: Miss S. E. Evans.
 Sample of needlework: Messrs. Howell and James, London.
 Embroidery and painted tapestry: Messrs. Howell and James, London.
 Stuffed birds: Mr. Wm. Gill,
 Painting on china, by Illston: Mr. G. A. Illston.
 Dresden vases: Mr. C. Hawley, Sheffield.
 Bohemian vases: Mr. C. Hawley, Sheffield.
 Vases, jardinieres, &c: Messrs. Goode and Co., London.
 Doulton pottery: Mr. F. J. Burnett.
 Berlin wool work and frames: Mr. George Baker.
 Wire: Mr. J. Shaw, Sheffield.
 Nuts and bolts: Mr. T. White, Thorpe Hesley.
 Iron work: Messrs. T. Andrews and Co., Wortley.
 Five pictures: Miss Pollen, Elsecar.
 Painting of wild roses: Miss Pullen, Elsecar.
 Needlework pictures: Mr T. Bennett, Elsecar.
 Paintings: Mr. T. King.
 Plated goods: Messrs. Howell and James, London.

Quilts: Messrs. Jubb and Co., Barnsley.
 Watches, clocks, etc: Mr. H. L. Brown, Sheffield.
 Needlework: Mrs. Roome, Rawmarsh.
 China: Mr. C. Hawley, Sheffield.
 Violin, copy of Stradivarius, by Lupot: Mr. J. Smith, Wentworth.
 Violoncello, by Lupot: Mr. J. Smith, Wentworth.
 Macramé work: Mrs. W. Oates.
 Sundry umbrellas: Messrs. Parker Bros., Sheffield.
 Chimneypieces: Messrs. Lax and Sons, Elsecar.
 Kitchen range and ornamental castings - Messrs Davy and Co., Elsecar.
 Eight grindstones: Mr. E. Roddis, Wickersley.
 Two casks of pale ale: Mr. S. Whitworth, Wath.
 Manufacture of cigars: Mr. A. E. Law, Sheffield.
 Specimens of miner's tools; Hardy Patent Pick. Co., Sheffield.
 Samples of soap: Messrs. Gray, Smith, and Bennett, Wath.
 Excellence in artistic engraving, colour printing, book-binding, and account book manufacture: Messrs. Pawson and Brailsford, Sheffield.
 Card printing machine: Mr. T. Rodgers, Sheffield.
 Typograph: Mr. T. Rodgers, Sheffield.
 Cabinet work: Mr. T. Tradwell, Rawmarsh.
 Wicker work: York School for the Blind.
 Wringing and mangling machines: Mr. A. Estell, Sheffield.
 Today the pit ponies, harness, &c, will be on exhibition, and will also be judged.¹⁴

¹⁴ The reader will note here, not only the range of locally produced goods and handiwork, but the number of other exhibitors from other parts of the country, including London (and Eton!), and indeed that Lady Alice Fitzwilliam was amongst those listed (for her model of a colliery ambulance).