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Model Housing for Prestongrange Miners

Annie Lyall

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FOREWORD

This series of books has been specifically developed to provided an authoritative briefing to all who seek to enjoy the Industrial Heritage Museum at the old Prestongrange Colliery site. They are complemented by learning guides for educational leaders. All are available on the Internet at http://www.prestoungrange.org the Baron Court's website.

They have been sponsored by the Baron Court of Prestoungrange which my family and I re-established when I was granted access to the feudal barony in 1998. But the credit for the scholarship involved and their timeous appearance is entirely attributable to the skill with which Annette MacTavish and Jane Bonnar of the Industrial Heritage Museum service found the excellent authors involved and managed the series through from conception to benefit in use with educational groups.

The Baron Court is delighted to be able to work with the Industrial Heritage Museum in this way. We thank the authors one and all for a job well done. It is one more practical contribution to the Museum's role in helping its visitors to lead their lives today and tomorrow with a better understanding of the lives of those who went before us all. For better and for worse, we stand on their shoulders as we view and enjoy our lives today, and as we in turn craft the world of tomorrow for our children. As we are enabled through this series to learn about the first millennium of the barony of Prestoungrange we can clearly see what sacrifices were made by those who worked, and how the fortunes of those who ruled rose and fell. Today's cast of characters may differ, and the specifics of working and ruling have surely changed, but the issues remain the same.

I mentioned above the benefit-in-use of this series. The Baron Court is adamant that it shall not be 'one more resource' that lies little used on the shelves. A comprehensive programme of onsite activities and feedback reports by users has been designed by Annette MacTavish and Jane Bonnar and is available at our website http://www.prestoungrange.org – and be sure to note the archaic use of the 'u' in the baronial name.

But we do also confidently expect that this series will arouse the interest of many who are not directly involved in

educational or indeed museum services. Those who live locally and previously worked at Prestongrange, or had relatives and ancestors there (as I did in my maternal grandfather William Park who worked in the colliery), will surely find the information both fascinating and rewarding to read. It is very much for them also to benefit – and we hope they will.

Dr Gordon Prestoungrange
Baron of Prestoungrange
July 1st 2000

Annie Lyall

Annie was born and educated in Edinburgh. In 1999, she graduated in Scottish Historical Studies at Edinburgh University and won Fraser MacKinstosh prize for her writing on Highland History. She specialised in early mediaeval history and carried out research on Dupplin Cross for the Royal Museum of Scotland. She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland.

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The pitman homeward treads his weary way,
Glad to behold the faintest light of day:
To change his garb, and sit beside the coal
He help'd from yon tremendous hole.[1]

INTRODUCTION

THE HOUSING of the working classes was an issue of growing dominance in Britain, as in other industrialised nations, during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. The outcome of this housing debate has had significant consequences for British housing policy. This chapter will look at miners' housing during this period, stressing the Scottish experience and especially that at Prestongrange. The reason for highlighting miners' housing, as opposed to shipbuilders, railway or factory workers housing, does not simply lie in the fact that mining is a primary topic of this book. In an era when the housing debate was a core issue in the political life of the nation, miners' housing had a distinctive role to play.

To trace this story, this booklet has been divided into five sections. The first section delves into the background of coal industry housing, taking it up to last part of the 19th century and comparing it to other working class housing in Scotland. This demonstrates why miners' housing was a special case, raising problems and issues peculiar to it. The term 'model' applied to houses will be looked at, its origins and what that label meant in practise for miners' housing, especially at Prestongrange. Working class attitudes were changing and an acceptance of conditions that could be described as inherently dirty was giving way to a mood of rising expectations as the nation went towards the First World War.

Miners' houses were functional, built to shelter the workers and their families who lived in them. It is the story of these people, their feelings, and the attitudes of the rest of society towards their communities, that is embodied in the buildings, such as those at Prestongrange in Cuthill and Morrison's Haven. To appreciate what life in these homes might have

[1] A Traveller Underground, *Our coal and Our Coal-Pits*, (1853) p. 190

been like, the second section looks behind the doors of miners' houses to see the families who lived there and the hardships they endured. Public opinion towards working class housing conditions was changing and the issue staked a claim on the political agenda that it was to hold for decades to come.

The third section picks up the story at the end of the First World War looking at various means of addressing the housing problem during the 'Homes Fit for Heroes' campaign of the 1920's and how it affected the miners living around Prestonpans. In the inter-war years, a mounting campaign to improve miners' housing met inevitable opposition but the seeds of its eventual success had been sown.

The Second World War brought a temporary halt to the saga but in the fourth section it begins again with the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1946. Putting nationalisation into effect lifted the lid on the problem of miners' housing yet again and renewed pressure for a permanent solution. At Prestongrange, the fate of the old miners' houses reached its inevitable conclusion in the 1950's and new 'model' houses appeared. Evidence of the progress that had been made towards better living conditions for miners will be seen in the proposals for a 'new' Scottish mining town in Fife.

In the last section, a somewhat different note will be struck with a selection of memories. These will give an idea of the spirit of mining communities, the way they spent their leisure time and how some people from the "kittle" saw their community at Prestongrange.

HOUSING BEFORE THE 20TH CENTURY

19th CENTURY coal mining was a labour intensive operation. In order to have a supply of labour convenient to the pit shaft, coal owners were often forced to provide housing because many pits were located in rural areas, far from centres of population. The numbers involved could mean that such housing schemes were villages in themselves where everyone was supported directly or indirectly by the local pit. In many cases, building houses for miners was an absolute necessity in order to mine coal from the pit.

There were advantages and disadvantages to this arrangement for both coal owners and miners. From the coal owner's point of view, building large numbers of workers houses in

rural areas might be essential but was also an expensive and unproductive capital outlay. The houses would be needed only for the duration of the life of the pit. That life depended on the amount of coal available in the seam, the duration and buoyancy of the coal market, and technological developments in the industry. This is one of the reasons why coal owners often spent as little as possible on houses for their workers. Also there was little incentive for coal owners to renovate houses and bring the facilities up-to-date if they thought the pit might be abandoned within the next few years. If a pit closed, realising any financial return on the houses was unlikely. Often there was no other work to be had in the neighbourhood and a ghost town was created. As early as 1853 a writer commented that "Houses and pits are often simultaneously abandoned and the place presents a most desolate appearance".[2]

There were additional problems associated with providing housing in newly developing rural coalfields. Drainage, sanitation and water supply could pose particular difficulties which were often accentuated by the large numbers of miners involved.[3] Access could also be a problem. Rows of miners' houses might be built beside a good public road, maintained by the rates, but they might be constructed in a field with access by a private road, possibly poorly built and badly maintained, cutting the inhabitants off, even from the local tradesman's carts.[4] The most common plan for a group of miners' houses was a series of parallel rows of connected houses, like the Cuthill houses at Prestongrange. One row was often a mirror image of the next. These long rows might be unbroken and without back doors, condemning those living in the middle of the row to a long walk in order to make use of washhouse and sanitary facilities behind the houses. It is easy to see why Campbell suggests that the term 'flung down' describes the planning aspect of many miners' rows.[5]

There were advantages for coal owners in owning the housing stock in which their workers lived. They could put the houses very close to the pit making them convenient for work, particularly when walking was the working man's common mode of transport. This had the added advantages of

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2 Op cit., A Traveller Underground, p. 189

3 Church, Roy, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Vol 3 1830–1913*, (1986) p. 609

4 McVail, John C., MD., LL.D., County Medical Officer, *Housing of Scottish Miners: Report on the Housing of Miners in Stirlingshire and Dunbartonshire*, (1911) p. 55

5 Campbell, R.H., *Scotland Since 1707: The Rise of an Industrial Society*, (1985) p. 144

encouraging good attendance and making it more difficult for the colliers to seek other employment.[6] As was demonstrated by the 1842 unrest in the coal fields, owning their employees houses gave coal owners a power over their workforce denied to other industrialists.[7] During one strike, for example, a mine owner was able to threaten to cut off the water supply to his collier's village, unless they paid for the water to be pumped from the mine.[8] This extension of the coal owner's control beyond the workplace and into the home was a significant aspect of mining culture which set it apart from other trades. In 1877 when colliers in the west of Scotland won a battle against their employers for higher wages, they were also able to negotiate lower rents, demonstrating that the system could occasionally work the other way.[9]

This relationship between employment and housing is significant. It is probable that the balance worked more commonly in favour of the coal masters. As landlords they were able to guarantee security of rental payments from their tenants. Regulations listed in an 1856 report on the "State of the Population in the Mining Districts" show that rent was deducted direct from the miner's salary.[10] Eviction was not a problem for the coal owner either, as employees could be forced out of colliery housing on the day they finished or were discharged from work.[11]

Colliery expansion during the 19th century was driven by the demands of the industrial revolution. In Scotland, many of the earliest coalfields to be efficiently exploited for commercial use were in the west, in counties such as Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Stirlingshire and Dunbartonshire, where miners' housing on a larger scale started to be built. Colliers housing from an earlier era was still in use. Typical early colliers' houses were stone built with thatched or turf roofs. Any concept of rustic charm is banished by this description of such collier's housing written in 1842.[12] The inadequacy of the roofs was such that they let

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6 Op cit., Church, p. 601

7 Checkland, O & S., *Industry and Ethos: Scotland 1832–1914*, (1984), p. 87

8 Op cit., McVail, p. 47

9 Op cit., Checkland, p. 88

10 NAS publication, Document 22, p. 24, quoted from *Report for 1856 of the Commissioner on the State of the Population in the Mining Districts,* (1856), Appendix B, p. 58, Item IV.

11 Ibid. Item II

12 NAS publication, Document 21, p.23, *Report on the Sanitary conditions of the Labouring Population of Scotland* (1842) S. Scott Alison, M.D. on 'The Sanitary conditions in Tranent and colliery districts', p. 85.

in "... wind and rain ...".[13] Both thatch and rafters were unlikely to be renewed when required which meant that they might become rotten and "infested with bugs, which occasionally dropped down". Add to this the "... paper, bundles of rags, and old hats ..." which were stuffed into windows in place of missing glass and, on occasion, the "... straw strewed in the corner of the apartment, serving as a bed for the family." and some picture of the depths to which colliers housing might sink in this period becomes apparent.[14] This particular description comes from the Tranent district, close to Prestongrange.

Without running water, sanitary arrangements in miners' houses consisted of dry-closets and refuse went on ash-pits or middens, both separate from the houses, which had to be cleaned out by a scavenger who would take the filth away by cart. The frequency and effectiveness of his visits depended on the colliery owners who hired him.

It was in a mid-19th century mining community at Legbrannock, near Holytown in Lanarkshire that James Keir Hardie (1856–1915), was born. He started work in the pits at Quarter at the age of ten, as a trapper. He was destined to work to improve miners' housing conditions, first as organising secretary of the Ayrshire Miners' Union and later as one of the first labour MP's elected to Parliament in 1892.

It is interesting to make comparisons between miners' housing and working class housing generally in Scotland during the 19th century. Government policy, or lack of it, had relied on market forces to meet the need for working class housing. In the cities, this had resulted in landlords "making down", or subdividing, older houses while new housing often consisted of filling in open spaces in inner city areas.[15] Many 19th century miners' houses were single rooms, known as single ends, or two rooms, known as but-and-bens. By the standards of the day this would not have seemed unusual. Glasgow had 226,723 one-apartment houses when the 1861 census was taken and 8,000 of these were windowless.[16] It is estimated that "almost one-third of Scotland's people were living in dwellings of one room" at this time.[17] Overcrowding

[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid.
[15] Op. cit., Checkland, p. 108
[16] Ibid. p. 109
[17] Ibid.

was endemic in working class housing and housing expectations were low. What is important from the point of view of miners' housing, is to try to discover when it was much the same as other working class housing and when or why it started to get left behind. In this respect it is interesting to note that by the 1890's the number of Glasgow's one-apartment houses had dropped sharply to 36,000,[18] demonstrating an improvement in housing conditions which indicates changing attitudes towards them.

One initiative, indicative of such change, can be seen in Edinburgh. In the spring of 1861, a new company, called The Edinburgh Co-operative Building Company Limited, was established to build houses for artisans.[19] The houses were planned on a basic three room model, with internal water closet and coal cellar. Many of the shareholders of this company were artisans who intended to live in the houses they built and they aimed to combine quality of construction with low expenditure.[20] Among the pioneering spirits behind this movement was the Reverend Doctor James Begg (1808–1883), a minister with the Free Church of Scotland. Begg published a book in 1873, entitled *Happy Homes for Working Men and How to Get Them*,[21] demonstrating a concern, felt by many, that the quality of working class housing had a crucial role to play in the serious social problems of the day. The 1860's also witnessed the appointment of Scotland's first Medical Officers of Health, whose work provided evidence of the links between poor housing and bad health. These men were to play an important role in bringing the state of miners' housing to the attention of the nation.

The Edinburgh movement is a good example of the idea behind 'model' homes. They were ideal homes not only in design but also because they took into account the profit margins necessary for builders and landlords.[22] The term 'model' in connection with dwellings first arose in connection with lodging-houses, established in the 1840's by philanthropists, who instituted various "regulations intended to

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[18] Ibid. p. 111

[19] For a full description of this movement look at Pipes, Rosemary J., *The Colonies of Stockbridge*, (1984)

[20] Ibid.

[21] Begg, James, D.D., *Happy Homes for Working Men and How to Get Them*, (1873)

[22] From Housing Exhibition at City Art Gallery, Edinburgh, November 1999.

secure the comfort and the orderly conduct of the inmates."[23] The term was later abused by proprietors whose lodging-houses did not meet the necessary requirements.[24] In the case of miners' 'model' housing, the comfort of the tenants often appears to have taken a lower priority than the landlord's ability to impose orderly conduct on his tenants and secure the colliery company's profits.

This paints the general picture, but what of Prestongrange? Up to the early 1870's, mining was obviously carried out on a small enough scale that miners' houses were scattered over the estate. The row of five miners houses at Bankfoot,[25] beside Cuthill, probably similar in construction to other early colliers' houses, are examples. All this was to change. Sir George Grant Suttie leased out the mining operations on his estate to the Prestongrange Coal & Iron Company Limited of Middlesbrough in late summer 1874. Across the county boundary in Midlothian, so many landlords did the same in this period, that noble coalmasters control of mining enterprises was slashed from 60% in 1842 to 7% by 1880.[26]

It is arguable that miners' welfare and housing suffered as a result. Many noble coal owners had begun to treat their colliers with a benevolent paternalism that was an extension of the way they managed the rest of their estate.[27] In 1873 the Earl of Lothian, who owned substantial estates in Midlothian and built good houses for his miners,[28] agreed with Sir George that mine owners should agree a common policy covering the treatment of their mines and miners.[29] However he refused to become a part of such an association if it was based on colliery practices in the west of Scotland, because of the difference in their methods.[30] Here Lothian puts his finger on an important aspect in the development of Scottish mining in the period. With the introduction of ironmasters into the coal industry in the west, colliery organisation in that region was changing to meet the demands of increasing scale and higher production, often at the cost of miners' welfare. This situation was

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[23] *Oxford English Dictionary*
[24] Ibid.
[25] NAS, Valuers Field Books, IRS/110/115
[26] Hassan, John A., 'The landed estate, paternalism and the coal industry in Midlothian, 1800–1880', in *Scottish Historical Review*, p. 73/74
[27] Ibid. p. 88
[28] Ibid.
[29] NAS GD/357/69/13
[30] Ibid.

spreading eastwards and would encompass the whole Scottish coal industry in the 19th century,[31] destroying the relationship between noble coal owners and their colliers.

Prestongrange appears to have been fortunate that Sir George would seem to have continued as a more conscientious and sympathetic landowner than most. He suggested to Lothian, for instance, that the labouring population in the South of Scotland might need "...special interference in their favour". Lothian, on the other hand, felt their situation was better than ever before[32] – but better than what? Until the complete Emancipation Act, passed as late as l799, miners and their families, alone amongst British labourers, had been bonded to coal owners for life, their position not unlike that of serfdom. This not only separated them as a community from other labourers and affected the attitudes of society towards miners, but also meant that there was little to force the introduction of better conditions in their industry. The 19th century might have seen conditions for miners and their families improve significantly, but they had started from a very low base.

The Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company set about planning the exploitation of the coalfield and, in July 1874, Mr. Jones, the Secretary of the Iron and Steel Institute of Great Britain submitted a report on this to the Company.[33] He estimated that a financial investment of £30,000 would be necessary to cover the cost of harbour repairs, a branch railway and a new shaft, while half as much again would be needed, over a period of three years, to build two hundred workmen's houses.[34] This figure was based on single shift working, although the company's managing partner, Mr. Kitto, was contemplating two or even three shifts per day, increasing profits, but also the number of houses that would be required.[35] The original site for these houses was at Morrison's Haven, beside the pit shaft, an important consideration if Mr. Kitto's shift work, with its awkward hours, was to be instituted. Such proximity to the pit was common but meant that miners' housing was often subject to subsidence due to the mine workings below which caused cracking and broken plasterwork in the houses.[36]

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[31] Op cit., Campbell, p. 104
[32] NAS GD/357/69/13
[33] NAS GD/357/74/19
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Page Arnot, R., *A History of the Scottish Miners*, (1955) p. 135.

In November, when plans for the building of the houses were already well advanced, Sir George suggested that an open field site to the south of Cuthill be considered instead, partly because of a proposed Fire Clay Manufactory on the Morrison's Haven site.[37] Situated between Prestongrange and the western end of Prestonpans, Cuthill already had a small community living in stone-built houses on the coast, whose inhabitants had worked mostly in the pottery and salt works.[38] The contrast between the 'modern' Cuthill and the dilapidated, old dwellings beside which it was springing up must have been quite striking.[39] The following autumn sixty miners' houses were being built at Cuthill, with a further one hundred and fifty planned, when the Company sought a loan of £6,000 from Sir George to cover increased costs in harbour repairs, proposing the sixty houses as collateral.[40] The Prestongrange company had not chosen the best time for their expansion, as the boom years of coal and iron, with their high profits, had came to an end in the mid-1870's, and the future of the coal market was less certain.[41]

It is unlikely that tighter financial constraints affected the design of the houses. During 1875–6, one hundred and seventeen houses were built at Cuthill in five blocks of two storeys each. Front Street and Middle Street had arrived. This choice of street names is typical of the unimaginative approach taken towards the construction of such mining communities. For the first time in this area the new houses were built of brick, which was cheaper than stone, and might also reflect the fact that the company organising the construction came from England, where brick was popular. The roofs were slated, which would last longer than thatch. These houses reflected a new scale and commercialism in the coal industry and their style was to become as typical of Scottish miners' rows as English.

Alternate doors in the rows led either straight into the ground floor or up a wooden staircase to the floor above and each house consisted of two rooms, which would have been considered reasonably spacious by Scottish working class

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[37] NAS GD/357/74/27

[38] Snodgrass, Catherine P., *The Parish of Prestonpans in the third Statistical Account of Scotland, 1953*, p. 78

[39] McNeil, P., *Prestonpans and Vicinity: Historical, Ecclesiastical & Traditional*, (1902) p. 247/8

[40] NAS GD/357/74/26

[41] Op cit., Campbell, p. 105

standards of the day.[42] In some cases both floors were occupied as one house, presumably enabling a larger number of people to be accommodated. This might mean that more than one family lived there, as letting out rooms to lodgers was common practice, sometimes forced on tenants by the coal company. However, taking in lodgers was also one of the very few methods a miner's wife might add to the family income.[43]

These first Cuthill houses had no internal running water or sanitation but each house had a brick built and slated outbuilding containing an ash closet and a coal house. This would have been perfectly acceptable by the standards of the day but they were built much too close to the houses, risking the spread of disease and assuring the presence of unpleasant smells for the householders.[44] In 1894, John Martine wrote about several of the parishes in East Lothian and referred to Cuthill as a small village, on a low hill, with "a long row of excellent miners and workmen's houses" which demonstrates the favourable impression the houses made in the late 19th century.[45] Martine says that the place was then known as "the Cuttle" and oral tradition had it that the origins of this name lay in the fact that, the sinking of minerals below ground, had caused the local burn to change course cutting the hill in two.[46]

One person who watched these houses being built was the local minister in Prestonpans, Dr. Struthers. He wrote to Sir George in November 1876 casting some interesting light on the new mining community at Cuthill.[47] Visits to families within this large and rapidly increasing section of the parish, prompted Dr. Struthers to suggest that this shifting population, which had largely migrated from the west, should have the services of a missionary.[48] Dr. Struthers bluntly demanded what Sir George intended to do for this community, pointedly linking its mushrooming growth and the inadequacy of welfare provision available, to the greatly increased income from his estates that Sir George must now be enjoying.[49] Sir George's reply was courteous and equally to the point: "I am

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[42] NAS Valuers Field Books IRS/144
[43] Op cit., Church, p. 633
[44] NAS Valuers Field Books IRS/144
[45] Martine, John, *Reminiscences and Notices of Ten Parishes of the County of Haddington: Parish of Prestonpans, 1894*, p. 61.
[46] Ibid. p. 63
[47] NAS GD/357/34/10
[48] NAS GD/357/34/10
[49] Ibid.

disposed to build at my sole expense and maintenance a handsome school..." and " ...a room in connection with it to be used as a place for public worship on Sundays and as a reading room on other days."[50]

Sir George was as good as his word and the miners' children were henceforth educated at Cuthill School. It was a fine red sandstone building with high windows, designed so that light could get in but children could not look out. It stood on the other side of the road from Front Street and was so close to the sea shore that, in bad weather, waves broke over the back wall of the playground.

Sir George died in 1878. His son, James, died later that same year, leaving a boy of eight as the new laird, a situation that was likely to weaken the family's connection with the community at Cuthill. Whilst it is tempting to bemoan the loss of such individual acts of paternalistic benevolence, such as the building of the school at Cuthill, such philanthropy was proving ineffective against the demands of Scotland's new industrialised society. Just as a new spirit of commercialism had moved into working practices, so a greater spirit of professionalism was beginning to grow in welfare, taking it out of the realms of philanthropy and into the world of politics.

In 1895, the Summerlee and Mossend Iron and Coal Company Limited took over the Prestongrange enterprise, following the demise of the Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company Limited. The origins of Summerlee were in Coatbridge in Lanarkshire and they had taken over Mossend, a company from Motherwell. Development at Prestongrange was again to be subject to pressures and influences from the west. Summerlee started building forty-four miners houses that same year at Morrison's Haven, comprising two double-storey blocks. The main differences in design between these houses and Front and Middle Streets were that the first floor houses were reached by outside stone staircases which had coal cellars underneath and, instead of individual ashpits, there was an additional building for every eight houses, which contained two washhouses, four water closets and ashpits.[51]

Summerlee's next housing development was at Cuthill with the construction of the first twenty-nine houses of Summerlee

[50] NAS GD/357/34/11
[51] NAS Valuers Field Books IRS/145/146

Street, completed in 1900.[52] By the time Summerlee Street was finally finished, there were five blocks of thirty-two houses each and the Cuthill community had increased by some one hundred and sixty households, most of whom used water wells by the staircases.[53] The last 32 houses to be built on Summerlee Street, during the First World War, were of a higher standard, containing baths, water closets and sinks.[54] Locally these houses appear to have become known as Bath Street,[55] for obvious reasons. Whilst the term 'model' to describe the Morrison's Haven and Cuthill miners' houses might seem somewhat exaggerated in present day terms, it fairly reflects their standard compared to other working class housing at the time and the fact that there were many miners much worse off than they were. This was particularly the case in the west of Scotland where many pits were reaching the end of their productive life, causing maintenance of the housing stock to be neglected. However, in common with the majority of miners' housing, the Cuthill houses had not been built to last and would start to lag behind as working class housing generally improved.

The greatly increased supply of miners housing can be assumed to have been connected to the expansion of the pit which included the sinking of a deep shaft at Prestongrange in 1906 to work the under-sea coal. There was a general increase in population in the area during this period. Between 1871 and 1911 the population of Prestonpans rose from 2,069 to 4,722, while nearby Cockenzie doubled in size.[56] Increased output was undoubtedly one factor in this population increase, but another may be assumed to be the higher than average family size common amongst miners. In 1901, miners, along with crofters, averaged just over seven children per family, compared with professional groups who averaged four.[57] Family size was another significant factor in the housing of miners. Large families were still a feature of mining communities ten years later when the 1911 census was taken.[58]

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[52] NAS Valuation Rolls for the County of Haddington/East Lothian Years1900–1901
[53] NAS Valuers Field Books IRS/145/146
[54] NAS DD6/ll73 Report by Scottish Health Department Housing Inspector, 1924, p. 2
[55] Tindall, Frank, *Memoirs and Confessions of a County Planning Officer*, (1998), p. 141
[56] *East Lothian County Council Survey Report*, 1953
[57] Anderson, M. & Morse D.J., in Fraser, W. Hamish and Morris, R.J. (Eds) *People and Society in Scotland, Vol II*, (1995), p. 40
[58] Ibid.

It is arguable that the isolated position of many mining communities meant that these larger than average families might also be relied upon to replenish the labour force in the pit.

Having looked at how the Cuthill community was becoming established, it is time to return to the national picture in Scotland by the end of the 19th century. The number of colliery-owned houses stabilised in 1890 at approximately 140,000.[59] Scottish miners' housing offered the cheapest accommodation nation-wide,[60] but it was "...almost universally inferior..." and conditions were "...worse than in any other region".[61] In other areas, such as the north-east of England, signs of improvement were becoming evident by the last decades of the century.[62]

Scottish miners were not uncritical of the conditions under which so many of them lived. The Secretary for Scotland received deputation's of miners in 1909 and 1911 as part of a campaign mounted to highlight the plight of their communities. One aspect of a growing awareness of the effects of their living conditions on miners and their families was a set of reports commissioned by the Local Government Board. These reports were prepared by various Medical Officers of Health of mining communities in Scotland because the close relationship between diseases, such as typhoid and tuberculoses, with domestic habit and environment, and the infectious nature of such diseases, was becoming better understood.[63] By 1900, with improving sanitation, fear of typhus was receding, but tuberculosis, in all its forms, was still the major killer after heart disease.[64]

One of these reports, written by John McVail in 1911, was on miners' housing in Stirlingshire and Dunbartonshire.[65] It demonstrates changing attitudes towards the disgraceful condition of some miners' housing. McVail's report is analytical in style and undramatic in language, but still makes chilling reading. Parts of it must have made uncomfortable reading for coal owners, but his grasp of the underlying reasons for the

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[59] Op cit., Church, p. 599
[60] Ibid. p. 604
[61] Ibid. p. 607
[62] Ibid. p. 608
[63] Hardy, A., *The Epidemic Streets: Infectious Disease and the Rise of Preventive Medicine, 1856–1900*, (1993), p. 211
[64] Ibid.
[65] Op cit., McVail

situation, his ability to see all sides of the question and his sincere humanism, make his report useful evidence of the situation as it existed. The tone of his report is positive, concentrating not only on the various problems encountered but also on solutions.

McVail divides the different types of miners' rows in his area into two main categories, those built before and those after the Building Bye-laws brought in after the 1897 Public Health (Scotland) Act.[66] On this basis, Front and Middle Streets at Cuthill fall into the first category and Summerlee Street into the second. Plans for new buildings after 1897 had to be submitted for County Council scrutiny on health grounds, although their scope was so limited that even as basic a facility as the supply of water within houses was not included.[67]

Information on the houses built before 1897 demonstrates why miners' rows were becoming an emotive topic in the working class housing debate. Accurate statistical information was not available but McVail used 1,643 of the 1,881 houses built prior to 1897 for comparison.[68] Only 119 had the use of water closets, some were without any sanitation facilities whatever, none contained baths, only 45 had indoor water, 470 had no coal houses and the vast majority of drains were open channels.[69] These figures demonstrate that hundreds of families were condemned to a degrading standard of living, even by the standards of the day, where disease might almost be classed as an occupational hazard because of its close links with colliery employment.

Of the 873 miners houses built in Stirlingshire and Dunbartonshire between 1897 and 1911, 735 had two rooms[70] and a good proportion of more modern houses contained a scullery and even running water.[71] 589 out of McVail's 873 houses had an indoor water supply though the other 264 had only outside water.[72] This demonstrates that the majority of new houses in the area included many up-to-date facilities but, like other miners' housing, they were probably hastily erected and cheaply built, requiring a high level of maintenance which was unlikely to be provided.

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66 Ibid. p. 16
67 Ibid. p. 7
68 Ibid. p. 34
69 Ibid. p. 36
70 Ibid. p. 20
71 Ibid. p. 23
72 Ibid.

What is particularly interesting about this report is the light it sheds on the administration of these housing estates. Refuse removal, including the manual removal of sewage, comes top of the list of problems. McVail could not understand why the necessity of employing scavengers on a frequent, and not just a regular, sometimes monthly, basis was not understood.[73] He proposed that Local Authorities should be given powers to take colliery villages into their own scavenging districts to ensure higher standards of public health.[74] With groups of houses too small in number to warrant Local Authority intervention, the problem simply became one of expense, an easy matter for mine owners to rectify.[75] It can be assumed that he understood only too well that reluctance to spend money was one of the root causes of the problem.

Responsibility was the key. McVail's solution was that larger mining communities should come under the umbrella of Local Authorities.[76] Between them the 1892 Burgh Police Act and the 1894 Local Government Scotland Act had combined to strengthen local government in terms of its responsibility for various municipal functions and the welfare of the poor. As a solution to the problem of conditions on miners' rows, putting them under the direct control of Local Authorities was to become a growing cry but Scotland, at the turn of the century, was going to take time to adjust to that concept.

FAMILY LIFE

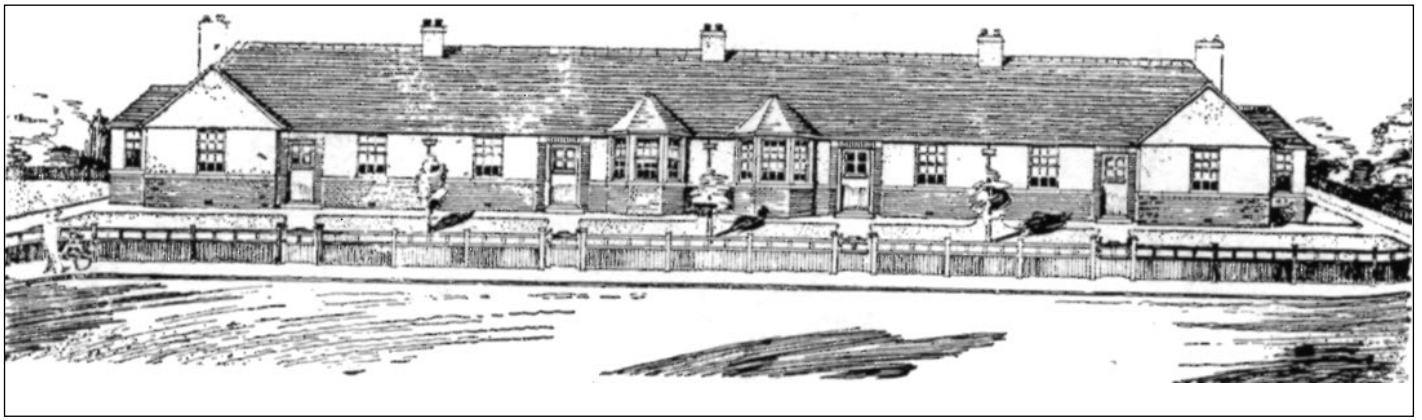
ONE GROUP regularly singled out for praise by McVail were miners' wives. Until the mid-19th century, whole families had worked down the pit. Public concern prompted the 1842 Royal Commission on the Mines. This revealed such startling facts about women being "chained, belted, harnessed, like dogs in a go-cart" whilst they pulled loads of coal, that the first protective labour legislation for women was enacted.[77] The 1842 Mines Act made it illegal for all women, and any children under the age of ten, to work down the mines. One

[73] Ibid. p. 37
[74] Ibid. p. 38
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Oakley, Ann, *Housewife* (1976), p. 43/4

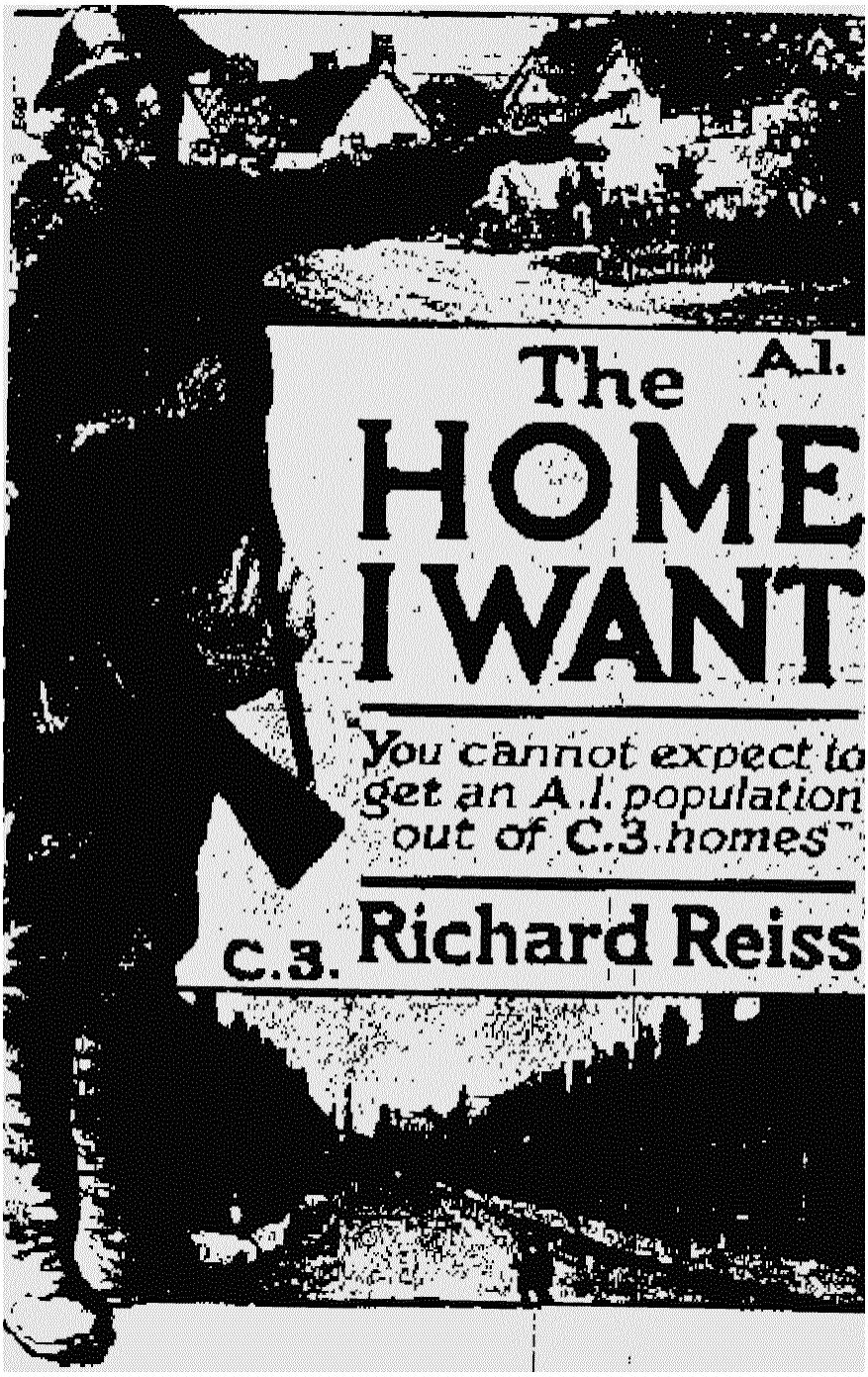
Example of the effects of neglect and lack of maintenance in early Miners' Housing

Courtesy of Central Regional Council Archives Department

Eastward view of Cuthill School, Morison's Haven, Prestonpans
East Lothian Council, T.J. Knight Collection



Sketch of a group of four miners' cottages at 'Preston Garden City', dated 1925
East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection



'Homes for Heroes' publicity whee army health standards were applied to housing, dated 1918.

Courtesy of the Bodleian Library

Miner returning homefrom work after using the 'new' NCB Bathhouse (c 1950)

East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection

View of Prestongrange featuring NCB 'improvements' such as (from right) Road Transport, Bathhouse, Cafeteria

East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection

aspect of this, was the expectation that it would be a major step towards improving the miner's standard of living.[78] Their wives were exchanging one full-time occupation, for which they received a salary, for another, for which they did not. Without employment, it may be assumed that earlier marriage became a feature of mining communities and that this was consequently a contributing factor to the larger than average size of miners' families.

Domestication of miners' wives was also a significant feature behind the term 'model' relating to miners' housing. Both men and women could now carry out socially approved roles[79] conducive to the "comfort and orderly conduct" of the household. Mining communities had changed from "virtually lawless and primitive communities, hastily erected, attracting a restless population, into something more representative of, and acceptable to, mid-Victorian standards."[80] This concept would seem to lie behind Dr. Struther's appeal to Sir George Grant Suttie in 1876 on behalf of the community at Cuthill.

A child's description of his mother's working day shows how hard miners' wives worked in the home:

> "She would be up at three in the morning to prepare a breakfast and a bait for my eldest brother, a hewer, who started at four o'clock. When he went to work she would try and snatch an hour's sleep before going through the same routine for one of my younger brothers, a datal worker, whose shift started at six. Meanwhile, father, who had started his night shift the previous evening at ten, would be coming out of the pit at six and going home for his breakfast and bath in front of the fire. By the time father had finished breakfast and bathed in the zinc tub in front of the fire it would be time for the three younger children to get ready for school. Even when they had been packed off to school mother had no time to rest. The hewers only worked a six-and-a-half to seven hour shift and she had to prepare a dinner for my eldest brother returning from the early shift. The children would be home from school for their mid-day meal before he had finished washing in front of the fire. In all

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[78] Cunningham, A.S., *Mining in Mid and East Lothian: A History of the Industry from Earliest times to present Day,* (1925), p. 64 and 66

[79] Ibid. p. 64

[80] Op. cit., Church, p. 634

probability father would get up and have something with the children at mid-day and then go to the local for a pint. When the children went back to school mother had to prepare for the afternoon shift at 2 p.m. when me and my two other brothers went down the pit. By the time his bath water was off the kitchen floor it was nearly time for the school children to be home for tea. Father would be back from the pub by tea-time and he would try to get a couple of hours sleep before night shift started at ten. Mother's work was not finished yet – in fact the biggest job of the day was to come. After 10 p.m. the three brothers who had gone to work at 2 p.m. would be home and mother not only had to prepare their dinner but she also had to boil water in the pan and kettle on the fire for their baths. Altogether, it would take anything up to two hours before they were finished. Consequently, it was always after midnight before mother got to bed at the end of a normal day – and the alarm clock would be ringing at three o'clock for the start of the next."[81]

It is a lengthy description but it was a long day which must have been physically very demanding. There is no mention made of the clothes washing that was also a feature of her day or the wet garments that must often have been draped around the one or two-room house when it was too wet for them to dry outside. Privacy was a luxury that could not be afforded within the home. Outside the home was no better if latrines had to be shared by several families, like the village of Drongan in Ayrshire, where fifteen families shared one earth closet.[82] Critics agree that this particular hardship was a greater affliction for women than men.

The role of children can also be seen to have changed. The 1872 Scottish Education Act made attendance at school compulsory between the ages of five and thirteen. The foundation of the Scottish National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in 1884, demonstrated people's changing attitudes towards their offspring who came to be valued in a new light and to hold a central role within the family.[83]

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[81] Turnbull, Les., *Chopwell's Story*, Copyright L. Turnbull, published by Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council Department of Education. no date given p. 21

[82] Strawhorn, John, MA, PhD, FEIS, Evidence submitted to the Royal Commission on Housing (Scotland) by Thomas McKerrey and James Brown from the Ayrshire Miners' Union, (1979), p. 6

[83] Op. cit., Oakley, p. 31

As has been said, the only latrines in many miners' rows often consisted of foul-smelling ash-middens or privy-middens, good breeding grounds for flies which could then infect food. The design of the rows was such that children would play on the midden heaps, which made the outbreak of diseases, like typhoid, inevitable. McVail found that communities with no sanitation facilities, where people used the surrounding countryside, were sometimes better off than ones where rubbish and excrement were not regularly removed.[84] If there was an outbreak of typhoid, enough was known about the spread of disease to arrange for daily removal of waste, at least as long as the outbreak lasted. Open channels for drainage also facilitated the spread of disease, if not regularly cleaned, but the introduction of underground drains usually improved matters.

It was, therefore, "a matter of genuine surprise and admiration", surrounded as they were by such filthy conditions, not to mention the dirt and contamination brought back from the pit and the lack of facilities for coping with this, that miners' wives achieved such a high degree of cleanliness and order in their homes.[85] The Herculean nature of their task might make it interesting to dip into the psychology behind this, to learn a little more about mining communities like those at Prestongrange. Douglas and Wildausky assert that there is a strong connection between the society in which people live and those risks they choose to worry about or ignore.[86] Each society gives different priorities to different risks and, in order to belong to a particular society, people adopt common fears and values. Communities link certain risks and their adverse consequences to moral defects, so that knowing why people ignore some risks and lay emphasis on others, will demonstrate much about their community. Miners' wives faced the very real dangers encountered by their menfolk working down the pit for "between 1868 and 1919 a miner was killed every six hours, seriously injured every two hours and injured badly ... every two or three minutes"[87] They could do nothing about this nor about the squalid, insanitary, industrial conditions by which they were surrounded or the filthy midden heaps that served as their

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[84] Op. cit., McVail, p. 39
[85] Op. cit., Page Arnot, p. 136
[86] Douglas, Mary & Wildausky, Aaron, *Risk and Culture*, (1982), p. 1–15
[87] Op. cit., Church, p. 584

children's playground. However, they placed a high priority on the standard of cleanliness within the home. This leads to the assumption that a dirty home would have been the object of social criticism and even an indication of some moral deficiency. Keeping their houses clean must have been a major challenge, but it was one area where they could make a difference and their personal effectiveness would be judged on their success. Due to the identical nature of the houses on miners' rows, comparisons would have been easily made.

Although women in mining communities could do little to improve their circumstances, there was increasing public pressure for better housing. It is arguable that this made the miners' housing issue politically sensitive enough to be taken more seriously by politicians, who served an expanded electorate after the Reform Acts of 1868 and 1884. Men like Keir Hardie and William Adamson (1863–1963), who became West Fife's first miner M.P. in 1910, spoke from personal experience when they appealed in the House of Commons on behalf of those who lived in mining communities. Little could be achieved on the issue during the First World War but, by the time the armistice was signed in 1918, action was already being taken. The housing issue now occupied a central position in the political sphere.

HOMES FIT FOR HEROES

ORIGINALLY SET up in response to the 1912 Rent Strike, a year when unprecedented political action was taken by miners in a national strike, the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population in Scotland finally reported in 1918. Of the twelve Commissioners, David Gilmour was Secretary of the Lanarkshire Miners' County Union and Charles Augustus Carlow was head of the Fife Coal Company, ensuring that the issue of miners' housing would be adequately covered.[88] The evidence submitted to the Commission by Thomas McKerrey and James Brown, of the Ayrshire Miners' Union, demonstrates that the miners' campaign for better housing was active and

[88] Op. cit., Page Arnot, p. 134

that the most disreputable housing was still in use.[89] Along with detailed descriptions of the dreadful state of repair into which many houses in Ayrshire mining communities had fallen, the submission proposed a plan for workmen's houses, prepared by a teacher of building construction, and a list of suggested remedies.[90] The first remedy consisted of putting a Closing Order on many of the houses, considered beyond repair.[91] The second was that miners' homes should not be provided by employers since "the tenants in many cases fear, rightly or wrongly, that it is not to their interests to complain to the employer to whom they are indebted for their employment about the condition of their houses".[92] Much of the blame for the state of the houses was attributed to this attitude which led to an acceptance of the worst conditions for fear of unemployment.[93] The Commission concluded that Scottish working class housing was "much, much worse" than its English counterpart.[94]

Following the end of the war and a General Election in 1918, Lloyd George became leader of a coalition government with a promise to build 'homes fit for heroes'. In January, 1919 the Miners Federation of Great Britain put a set of proposals covering wages and conditions of employment before the new Government. They also called for state ownership of the mines to be introduced under a scheme of joint administration by miners and the state. The government's refusal to meet these demands led to an overwhelming majority of miners backing strike action. To avert this, Lloyd George offered another Royal Commission, to include in its brief: wages, conditions, future organisation and the housing issue. Half the members of the commission were to be appointed by or approved by the Miners' Federation. The Prime Minister's strategy succeeded in averting a strike and the Coal Industry Commission, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Sankey, began work at the beginning of March, 1919.

The Sankey Commission reported later that same month, condemning the system in the mining industry as it stood and

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89 Strawhorn, John, *Evidence Submitted to the Royal Commission on Housing (Scotland)* by Thomas McKerrey and James Brown from the Ayrshire Miners' Union (1979)
90 Ibid. p. 72/73
91 Ibid. p. 73
92 Ibid. p. 73
93 Ibid. p. 73
94 Harvie, Christopher, *No gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland since 1914*, (1981), p. 29

recommending nationalisation.[95] One of the chief witnesses to the Commission was John Robertson, Scottish President of the Miners Federation and his evidence on housing conditions in the industry, which came from first hand experience, publicised the squalid, unhealthy and overcrowded nature of the housing conditions in which many Scottish miners lived.[96] Mr. Justice Sankey attacked such housing as "a reproach to our civilisation. No judicial language is sufficiently strong or sufficiently severe to apply to their condemnation."[97]

Government voiced support for the Sankey Commission's findings and the strike threat was lifted in April under the impression that the Government would implement the Commission's recommendations.[98] In August, Lloyd George rejected nationalisation and the most tangible asset that the mining industry gained from the Sankey commission was the setting up of the 'Miners' Welfare Fund', financed by the introduction of a levy of one penny on each ton of coal produced. The aim of the Fund was to finance 'the social well-being, recreation and conditions of living' of coalminers although housing itself was not included.[99]

The specific exclusion of housing from the Welfare Fund's activities may be misleading. Housing conditions were significantly affected because one of the Fund's priorities was the provision of pithead baths. These were obligatory on the continent and had been in use in Germany for the previous twenty-five years.[100] As far back as 1853, an author on conditions in mining communities had not only stressed the importance of such baths for miners' health but had gone into detail on how they might be cheaply run using some of the quantities of newly condensed steam run off into "hot ponds" at the pithead.[101]

The installation of pithead washing and changing facilities removed the need to wash men and their clothes at the end of each shift, easing the workload of miners' wives and improving the atmosphere and amenity of the house itself.[102] Moreover it

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95 Op cit., Page Arnot, p.147
96 Ibid. p. 146
97 Coal Industry Commission Act, 1919 by the Hon. Mr. Justice Sankey quoted in op.cit. Page Arnot, p.146
98 Op cit., Page Arnot, p.148
99 Supple, Barry, *The History of the British Coal Industry*, *Vol. 4, 1913–1946*, (1987) p. 474
100 Ibid.
101 Op cit., A Traveller Underground, p. 190
102 Op. cit., Supple, p. 475

meant that the public no longer saw the miner going home after his shift, black with filth, red-eyed and often stooped. Instead, he headed home looking like any other workman, improving the public's perception of miners.[103] The introduction of pithead baths was slow but by 1945 somewhere in the region of 63% of miners had the use of such facilities.[104]

Lloyd George's reaction to the miners' demands in March 1919 reflected, not only a desire to avert strike action, but also government fear of a growing mood of dissatisfaction in the country. It was felt this might lead to revolution, as had recently happened in Russia, if the returning soldiers could not be persuaded that "the bad old days" were a thing of the past.[105] The government promised to build half a million homes which would be completely new in concept.[106] This policy was influenced by the Garden City Movement, the roots of which lay in industrial housing for the working classes.

Other industries also appreciated the advantages to be gained from owning the houses in which their employees lived, but their approach was different from that of coal owners. As early as 1887 Lever Brothers had moved their soap factory to an open site on the Mersey and built a factory-village which they called Port Sunlight. In 1895 Cadbury followed suit at Bourneville near Birmingham. These communities enjoyed a standard of housing and an environment that was a vast improvement on previous working class housing.[107] This could genuinely claim to be 'model' housing. The concept pleased socialists and capitalists alike by transforming working people's living conditions on the one hand and leading to an increase in productivity which might be expected from a more contented workforce on the other.[108]

Density was the major difference in Garden City layouts which aimed to achieve eight houses to an acre and to give each house its own reasonably-sized garden.[109] It is interesting to note that the same year Bourneville was being laid out on garden city lines, Summerlee were building forty-four miners'

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103 Ibid.
104 Ibid. p. 477
105 Ibid. p. 189/190
106 Swenarton, Mark, *Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing in Britain*, (1981), p. 5
107 Ibid. p. 6
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid. p. 14

houses on a one acre site at Morrison's Haven.[110] In the instance and spread of disease, especially tuberculosis, overcrowding and housing density were important factors.[111] Another aspect from which the garden city movement was determined to get away was the long straight rows of houses like those at Prestongrange.[112] One of the original architects behind the garden city movement was Raymond Unwin, who went on to play an important part in the design of state housing after the War.[113]

Another influence on Government housing policy after the war was the Tudor Walters Report, published in November, 1918. This Committee, comprising distinguished experts in the housing field, assumed that it was necessary to achieve "an improvement in the general standard of housing and more importantly that the standard of housing demanded by the working class had risen in the past and would continue to do so in the future."[114] As a measure of the importance government placed on the housing issue, the 1919 Housing Act was passed enabling Local Authorities to become major suppliers of housing.

As far as Scotland was concerned the 'Homes Fit for Heroes' campaign was a failure. Barely 2,000 houses were built by 1920 whilst 48,000 were constructed in England.[115] Government support for its housing policy was short-lived but the principle of Local Authority housing meeting much of the population's housing needs had been established and the standard expected had been laid down by the Tudor Walters Report.[116]

The effects of the Local Government Act (Scotland) 1889 were becoming more apparent in the rising power and influence of Local Government institutions. For example, between 1919 and 1939, East Lothian County Council undertook a building programme of some five and a half thousand houses and the reconditioning of many properties to meet the requirements of the County Sanitary Inspector.[117] The second highest number

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110 NAS IRS 64/92/111
111 Op.cit., Hardy, p. 240
112 Op.cit., Swenarton, p. 18
113 Ibid. p. 5
114 Ibid. p. 93
115 Op.cit. Harvie, p. 30
116 Op.cit., Swenarton, p. 93
117 East Lothian County Council Survey Report, 1953

of houses built in one area were in Preston and Prestonpans where 437 Local Authority funded houses were built.[118] A building programme of this magnitude needed a great deal of investment in utility services. In 1938, East Lothian Water Board was set up and the following year was supplying over 90% of the water consumed in the County.[119] The Portobello Power Station provided the power supplied by the Lothians Electric Power Board which started the public supply of electricity in 1923.[120] The coastal situation of places like Prestonpans meant that sewage was mainly disposed of into the sea, in time honoured fashion, but efforts were now being made to restrict the number of outfall sewers on beaches, concentrating on fewer, larger outflows.[121] Education was brought under the direct control of the Local Authority who built three secondary schools in the interwar period, one of which was at Prestonpans.[122]

The mining community around Prestonpans directly benefited from the garden city movement. In 1924–1925 Edinburgh Collieries Limited, owners of Preston Links Colliery, commissioned Mr. A.E. Horsfield, an Edinburgh architect, to lay out a housing scheme on garden city lines at Preston.[123] These miners homes were one-storey, three-roomed dwellings with bathrooms and sculleries which were in "striking contrast to the dingy long rows and squares which were features of the mining hamlets of fifty and a hundred years ago". They were also quite a contrast with Cuthill just down the road. In the 1920's debate centred on the positive aspects of improvement in miners' housing, whilst negative aspects, such as the small proportion of the problem that was actually being addressed, were ignored.

Conditions in mining communities in East Lothian, including Cuthill, played a prominent part in the miners' housing campaign early in 1924. Prestonpans district was one of nine mining areas specifically mentioned in talks between Lord Novar, the Secretary for Scotland, a deputation of Scottish Labour M.P.'s, and John Robertson.[124] These talks resulted in

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118 Ibid. p. 10
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid. p. 11
121 Ibid. p. 10
122 Ibid.
123 Op.cit., Cunningham, p. 75/76
124 NAS DD6/1173 *Minutes of Meeting with Secretary for Scotland*. (1924) p. 27

the preparation of a report on housing conditions in mining areas in East Lothian, drawn up by a Scottish Board of Health Housing Inspector.[125] Conditions were likely to be so similar, that Local Authorities in other mining areas were asked to take measures to deal with the defects highlighted by the East Lothian report.[126]

This report enables a check to be carried out on the progress of the Cuthill and Morrison's Haven houses. There were 1,012 miners' houses in East Lothian in 1924, the vast majority of which belonged to colliery companies, although 100 houses, let mostly to miners, had recently been put up by the Local Authority, using Government subsidy.[127]

Within the parish of Prestonpans there were 370 miners houses. The 44 houses at Morrison's Haven were considered to be "well constructed and all in good order", with "fairly good" access.[128] 128 of the Cuthill houses were described as broadly similar to those at Morrison's Haven. The Inspector was critical of the close proximity of each block of houses to the next which did not allow "a sufficiency of sunlight and ventilation".[129] Some of the facilities had been updated in Front and Middle Streets. Privies had recently been replaced by water closets although the Inspector felt the back yards were small.[130] Some of these yards had been cleared away and "a water Closet and sink with water laid on" was now provided in the scullery of each house.[131] The Inspector noted that there was daily refuse removal, a good water supply and that the amenities were of a good enough standard that he could make no practical suggestions to improve them further.[132]

Modernisation of the facilities of the Cuthill houses may stem from the "healthy rivalry" which the Inspector found had grown between the Edinburgh Colliery Company, which ran the Preston Links pit, and the Summerlee Coal and Iron Company, which ran the Prestongrange pit.[133] Prestonpans miners were often referred to as 'Grange' men, or 'Links' men.

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125 NAS DD6/1173 *Letter from Scottish Board of Health to Scottish Office in London*, 22nd February, 1924.
126 Ibid.
127 NAS DD6/1173 Report by Scottish Health Department Housing Inspector, 1924. p. 2
128 Ibid. p. 9
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid. p. 12

These companies may have been using housing as an incentive in competing for labour, especially skilled labour, as Scotland lost a disproportionate number of servicemen in the war and many of those who survived, emigrated rather than return to their former life.[134] If only such market forces could have been brought to bear on miners' housing earlier. The Inspector's other comment on the pleasant landscape and situation the miners' enjoyed in the Prestonpans area is interesting when compared to a problem experienced in the narrow South Wales' valleys where miners' houses were "deprived of sun and air."[135]

One of the key signs that the miners' housing campaign was beginning to have a serious impact was that the coal owners felt obliged to put their side of the case. A pamphlet published by a 'Scottish Architect' in the 1920's gives the arguments from the coal owner's side.[136] These include the fact that it was not their business to supply houses for their employees,[137] and that cost was a prohibitive factor against building more desirable housing for miners.[138] It is fair to say that schemes built on garden city lines were expensive. The pamphlet also suggests that miners' housing problems should be dealt with by the Local Authority,[139] a conclusion also reached by John McVail. Government had already rejected nationalisation which might have been one way to achieve this.

The General Strike in 1926 followed by depression and unemployment in the thirties aggravated the financial and social problems of mining communities. The miners stayed on strike for six months, and during this time a soup kitchen was opened at Cuthill School, serving those in need with a bowl of soup and a bread roll.[140] Many were prompted to leave the coalfields, or migrate from one to another in search of a better standard of living and many mining communities shrank as a result. Between July 1923 and July 1937, the numbers of insured workers in the coal industry nationally fell by 27%, whilst in Scotland this figure was 32%.[141] Demoralisation

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134 Op. cit., Harvie, p. 24
135 Op. cit., Supple, p. 459
136 A Scottish Architect, *The Housing of Miners in Scotland: A Review of the Position*, (circa 1920)
137 Ibid. p. 3
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid. p. 15
140 Donaldson, Robert, 'From Six to Twelve' in *The Pans Remembered*, 1986, East Lothian District Library
141 Op. cit., Supple, p. 491

amongst miners was so acute that three years into the Second World War the ministry of information was concerned to find a general attitude that "we would be as well off under Hitler" in the Scottish coalfields.[142]

NATIONALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

AFTER THE Second World War, the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act, 1946, finally delivered nationalisation but also a new twist in the tale of miners' housing. The 140,000 colliery houses due to be taken over by the National Coal Board were not considered to be assets with "coal industry value", only "subsidiary value" and the Board were keen not to pay excessive compensation for them.[143] Once more, miners' housing became the subject of dispute. The Board considered the houses as part of a going concern, whereas coal owners were looking for compensation which reflected replacement or open market value for the houses.[144] It was the old problem of the inter-relationship between pits and housing. In Scotland the dispute went to court but, after negotiation, the case was adjourned and a formula, known as the "Newbiggin Formula" worked out.[145] Owners could appeal against a housing valuation to a tribunal composed of representatives from both sides and any decision of this body would be final.[146]

The vesting date for the Board's take-over was lst January, 1947. At Prestongrange, Sir George Grant Suttie, as superior, was due compensation for the land on which the miners' houses at Morrison's Haven and Cuthill stood.[147] In May that year Sir George died, leaving his successor, a minor living in Canada, to receive compensation.[148] The young man's lawyers claimed £260 for the superiorities but settled for the Board's award of £240 in 1949, finally bringing the Grant Suttie's long connection with the mining community to a close.[149]

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142 Op. cit., Harvie, p. 41
143 NAS CB 7/3
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 NAS CB 26/351/1
148 Ibid.
149 NAS CB 26/351/2

The Board's valuation of the forty-four houses at Morrison's Haven was signed in 1951.[150] The valuer was unimpressed by the houses which had no hot water or hand basins and roofs which required constant attention because of proximity to the colliery.[151] In his view they would be subject to a closing or demolition order within the next ten years.[152] He was even less impressed by Front Street, one block of which had already been demolished by 1951. The houses had outside water closets, roofs lacking any form of sarking or felt, and were bug-infested so that three of the houses were already empty and deemed to be uninhabitable.[153] Never built to last, they had certainly reached the end of their useful life by 1951.[154]

No valuation exists for Middle Street which, photographic evidence shows, had been demolished in the mid-1940's along with one block of Summerlee Street.[155] The four remaining blocks, containing 128 houses, had no hot water and the coal boilers in the sculleries were burnt out and obsolete. The Board valuer recommended immediate roof and plasterwork repairs but warned that these houses would also probably be subject to a closing order within the next ten years.[156] Elizabeth Neilson remembers this era when "flittings" from Cuthill took place daily as families were rehoused and more and more houses fell empty.[157]

It was June, 1954 before the Board began settling the last compensation claims for colliery housing but it was pleased that the final figure paid was lower than it might have been.[158] It was less pleased with the houses themselves and it's attitude towards them has a familiar ring to it. They did not want to take on the responsibility of managing the newly-acquired miners' houses and wanted to hand them over to Local Authorities, a proposal which had been made before.[159] East Lothian County Council were offered what remained of the miners' housing at Prestongrange.[160]

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150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 RCAHMS B17–106G/Scot/UK11, 7274
156 NAS CB 26/351/2
157 Nielson, Elizabeth, 'Cuthill' in *The Pans Remembered*, (1986) East Lothian District Library, p. 19
158 NAS CB 7/3/96
159 East Lothian County Council Survey Report, 1953
160 Ibid. p. 33

East Lothian County Council's annual budget on housing in 1950 stood at nearly £290,000, demonstrating their importance as a housing authority by this time.[161] Three years later, the County Council had 278 houses they considered substandard, of which 144 belonged to the Board and 103 of these were in the Prestonpans area.[162] The Council were drawing up a slum clearance plan which would close the old Coal Board houses at Prestonpans and rehouse the tenants in Local Authority houses.[163] It is not difficult to see the Local Authority's hand behind the demolition that had already taken place at Cuthill, some of which had been necessary in order to widen and straighten Prestonpans High Street.[164]

A new era in the housing of miners had dawned. East Lothian County Council had become involved in drawing up housing policies to meet mining employment prospects as early as 1944.[165] Their attempts to link housing policy to projected production targets in the industry had resulted in frustrations similar to those that coal owners had met in the past.[166] Now, solutions could be worked out on a regional basis. The location of miners' housing mattered less when men could be taken by bus to whichever pit had work for them.[167] Thus it was no longer necessary to live beside the pit, spelling the end of mining communities as they had existed until then. A 1958 aerial photograph shows that the Cuthill community had gone by that time but, in what had been fields to the south of Cuthill, the appearance of new houses and roads demonstrates that the County Council were fulfilling their commitment to provide housing of a good standard which was available for miners as for other applicants.[168] The influence of the garden city movement may be seen in the layouts of these new Local Authority schemes of houses and gardens set on the ground above Cuthill.

It is interesting to look at how planning for a new mining town was handled in the 1950's. First its aims were set out: "The primary purpose of the New Town is to house the miners who will work in the new Rothes Pit now being sunk

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161 Ibid. p. 11
162 Ibid. p. 25
163 Ibid.
164 Op cit., Tindall, p. 141
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid. p. 39
167 Ibid.
168 RCAHMS F21/543/RAF/402., Aerial photograph September 1958

near Thornton, and other miners who work in adjoining areas. It is expected that these will be miners transferred from declining coalfields in Lanarkshire and Central Fife and they will, of course, bring their families with them."[169] Significant progress had been made since colliers' families from declining Lanarkshire coalfields arrived at Prestongrange in the 1870's. No thought was given to achieving a balanced employment structure for them so that miners would only form one in eight of the community as they were to do at Glenrothes. Sir George Grant Suttie's choice of a site for housing, its hasty construction and the donation of a school at Cuthill, pales by comparison with the planning effort involved in the proposed facilities for housing, education, welfare, recreation, roads, and drainage which the General Manager of Glenrothes New Town was co-ordinating long before construction began.

MEMORIES

LIVING IN new urban settings was bound to be very different for miners and their families after the hard and demanding life of the old mining communities. Memories of the old days are full of enthusiasm and concentrate on the amusing aspects of the situation whilst elements of hardship are simply shrugged off.

People brought up in the "Kittle" remember the games of their childhood; skipping, marbles, or "joukin the waves" in the school playground, where the penalty for getting it wrong was to get soaked.[170] They remember all the visits to the cinema, Cadona's in Prestonpans, nicknamed "the scratcher", and scrambling over rocks at the sea shore on the way home.[171] The annual Grange Miners Gala Day was also remembered. It was a huge treat involving a great procession to Cuthill park, with tea, cakes, ice-creams and sweets on the grass, followed by sports and prizes for the winners.[172] In the inter-war years, dancing was popular with young people who reeled, waltzed and did square dances, and then went to Antonelli's chip shop for large bags of fish and chips.[173] Football was a popular sport.

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169 Preston, Frank, 'New town of Glenrothes, Fife, October, 1950, in *The Journal of the Institution of Municipal Engineers*, Vol. 77, No.8, 6th February, 1951.

170 Op.cit., Neilson, p. 18

171 Ibid. p. 19

172 Op.cit., Donaldson, p. 8

173 Naysmith, Janet, *As I Remember, Janet Naysmith (Nee Cunningham) 1903–1995,* p. 4 http:// www.maths.strath.ac.uk/-caas66/homepage/preston/html

Even if there was no money to buy a real ball, tennis balls or rags bound with string were used instead.[174] Young boys graduated into the local league to play for teams like "Summerlee Thistle" and the "Bing Boys", fighting it out for the trophy that Mr. McGuire, a miner from Summerlee, had donated.[175]

Should the passing of those times be mourned? One woman remembers living in Front Street with her grandmother in the early 1900's. Before school each day the child had to fetch two pails of fresh water from the well beside the Front Street Post Office, collect rolls from the baker for her grandfather's breakfast when he returned from the pit, and still clean out the fire and dispose of the ashes before heading to school.[176] There was no rest for her on Sundays either, because twenty-two pails of water had to be collected to fill the barrels for Monday's wash.[177] There is pride in the way she writes of this contribution she made to the running of the household but the hard physical work it entailed should not be under-estimated. Memory is selective and good at blocking out or dulling that which it would rather forget. Reading such accounts of life in Cuthill, deprivation illnesses, like rickets, or those from poor sanitation, like dysentery, do not feature, yet feature they did.

There is one particularly wistful note in these memories. Planning for housing had come a long way by the 1950's but, the obvious advantages of better housing tended to disguise the radical nature of the move people were being asked to make. The houses were a vast improvement on what had gone before and often tenants had gardens they could enjoy, but the community was broken up. The wonderful spirit of the "Kittle" was lost and the new housing schemes seemed like "graveyards" by comparison.[178] This community spirit grew out of the physical effort each individual had to put into belonging to such communities. Much of the evidence that has been looked at demonstrates the lack of privacy in old mining communities but that was also one of their lifelines. Everyone in mining communities knew everyone else's business, down to the amount they earned, but they also knew when neighbours needed help or when someone was up to no good. There was no such thing as a closed door in the "Kittle" but once inside

174 Op. cit., Donaldson, p. 7
175 Ibid. p. 8
176 Op. cit., Naysmith, p. 2
177 Ibid. p. 3
178 Op. cit., Donaldson, p. 7

their new houses, tenants were able to shut the door so that the old ways of maintaining their community no longer worked, posing different problems and demanding new solutions.

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