

**How did Gender and Poverty Impact on the Experiences of the Mining
Family in Interwar Rhondda, 1918-1939?**

Rebecca Jane Davies

BA History Hons (Reading)

1986

A dissertation submitted to the Open University for the degree of

M.A. in History

January 2023

WORD COUNT 15,956 words

ABSTRACT

The interwar years were a period of social, political, and economic upheaval, often portrayed as a ‘dark’ time of unemployment and poverty. The era is also characterised as one in which gender relations at home and work were redefined, with a re-emphasis on separate spheres. This study asks to what extent these characterisations fit the experience of the Rhondda coal-mining family, through an examination of seventy personal histories, taken from oral histories, film documentary, and published and unpublished autobiographies. Nearly half the testimonies come from the Rhondda Reminiscence Project, recorded in 2001 by Rhondda Cynon Taf Borough Council’s Library Service, and which have lain relatively untouched since that time, while a further three testimonies come from the author’s own interviews and research. Hence, new primary source materials are added to the historiography of Interwar South Wales. Collectively, these ‘voices from below’, firmly situate the consequences of unemployment in the realities of everyday family life. Specifically, the study examines how poverty and unemployment impacted differently on men and women in the coal community, through a consideration of the themes of work and health. Chapter Two, a context chapter, discusses the coal society in crisis, outlining the problems within the industry and community, and the developments across the period. Chapter Three examines the coal family and work, both paid and unpaid, considering changes in working patterns, and the intricate balancing of the domestic economy. Chapter Four explores maternal and infant mortality, taken as a sensitive barometer of the health of the family, and asks how far the high mortality rates of the Rhondda were a direct result of the economic depression and the collapse of coal, and to what extent other factors such as environment, culture, and gender, played a part. The study concludes that the effects of poverty and unemployment on the Rhondda mining family were more complex than the perhaps over-simplified historiographies of ‘separate spheres’, and the ‘hungry or healthy thirties’, recognise, and suggests that mining communities in different parts of Britain, indeed different parts of the Rhondda, could have very specific and diverse experiences.

CONTENTS

| | Pages |
|--|-------|
| 1. Chapter One: Introduction | 1-4 |
| 2. Chapter Two: A Troubled Industry: A Troubled Community | 5-17 |
| 3. Chapter Three: Work and the Family | 18-33 |
| 4. Chapter Four: Poverty, Unemployment and Maternal Health | 34-49 |
| 5. Chapter Five: Conclusion | 50-53 |
| Appendices | 54-58 |
| Bibliography | 59-84 |

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| BFI | British Film Industry |
| BMA | British Medical Association |
| GUIW | <i>Growing Up In Wales</i> (See Grenfell Hill, Bibliography) |
| GG | <i>Glamorgan Gazette</i> |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| ME | <i>Merthyr Express</i> |
| ML | Ministry of Labour |
| MH | Ministry of Health |
| RL | <i>Rhondda Leader</i> |
| RLD | Rhondda Lives Database |
| RMOH | Report of the Medical Officer of Health |
| RRP | Rhondda Reminiscence Project |
| RUDC | Rhondda Urban District Council |
| SOS | <i>Struggle or Starve</i> (See White & Williams, Bibliography) |
| SWCC | South Wales Coalfield Collection |
| SWCF | South Wales Coalfield |
| SWMF | South Wales Miners' Federation |
| WM | <i>Western Mail</i> |

Maps, Illustrations and Tables

| | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| 2:1 | Map of The Rhondda Valley Within the South Wales Coalfield | page 7 |
| 2:2 | Map of Major Settlements of the Rhondda c.1921 | page 7 |
| 2:3 | D.Davies and Sons Poster, Rhondda Fach,1921 | page 11 |
| 3:1 | Still taken from <i>Today We Live, 1937</i> | page 25 |
| 4.1 | Table of Infant Mortality 1920-39 (deaths of infants under one year of age per 1000 births) | page 35 |

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution.

Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Jane Adams for her invaluable advice in supervising this dissertation, and Dr Jenny Zmroczek for her guidance in the MA preparatory modules.

1. Introduction

The interwar years were a period of social, political and economic upheaval, often portrayed as ‘a gloomy[...]society dogged by mass unemployment and class conflict, protest and hunger strikes,’ with the collapse of the coal industry, mass pit closures, and a prolonged economic depression which did not lift until war broke out in 1939.¹ The interwar years are also frequently characterised as an ‘era of domesticity’, when gender relations at home and work were redefined, a re-emphasis on separate spheres argue some historians, asserting there was a ‘national and media revamping of the domestic ideology’ stating ‘woman's true place was in the home’.² More recently however, historians have challenged these interpretations as too rigid, ignoring the nuances and complexities of ‘lived realities’, and thereby inhibiting understanding of significant social changes which did occur.³ This study is a response to these debates, seeking to explore some of those ‘lived realities’ in the Rhondda mining family through an examination of seventy personal histories, in autobiography, audio, and film. These fragments of everyday lives, may, collectively, evidence some of the more subtle shifts and undercurrents of change, allowing access to voices often unrecorded in ‘official’ sources. The Rhondda merits historical inquiry, it is argued, since nearly half of the quarter of a million men employed in the South Wales coal industry at the start of the period, were concentrated in its valleys.⁴ Chris Williams argues the Rhondda’s experience therefore might be seen as ‘a metaphor’

¹ Martin Pugh, ‘Wish You Were Here? Britain Between the Wars’, *History Today*, 58:8 (2008), 45-9, (45).

² Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp.74-5; Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), p.140.

³ Andy Croll, ‘Holding Onto History: Modern Welsh Historians and the Challenge of Postmodernism’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38 (2003), 323-32, (330); Adrian Bingham, ‘An Era of Domesticity?’ *Histories of Women and Gender*, *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), 225-33 (226).

⁴ Chris Williams, *Democratic Rhondda: Politics and Society, 1885-1951* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 4.

not only for the coalfield but for many of Britain's depressed areas during this period.⁵ Specifically this study asks how and to what extent the Rhondda coal mining family was affected by unemployment and poverty between the wars, and how far gender was a factor in the varying experiences of family members. While acknowledging the broadness of this theme, the dissertation focusses on work and health, in Chapters Three and Four respectively, as two of the more significant aspects of family life, following a context chapter to introduce the Rhondda locality and outline key economic and industrial developments. Chapter Three explores the gendered division of labour in the mining family, considering how far the domestic ideology was a lived reality in the home, and the extent to which family work patterns were impacted by the economic stresses of the period. Chapter Four examines the effects of poverty and unemployment on maternal and infant mortality rates, as sensitive indicators of the health of the family, engaging with the 'healthy or hungry thirties' debate.⁶ The 'family' in the context of this study, is the individual household, normally the nuclear family of parents and children plus lodgers or relatives living within the same group. By examining the family as a holistic unit, this proposal heeds calls for more local studies with a gender-balanced, integrated approach, and will thereby add to the historiography of the South Wales Coalfield and to the broader historiography of modern Wales.⁷

The principal methodology is qualitative, examining seventy personal histories of which nearly half, to the author's knowledge, are new to academic study. Three come from the author's research and interviews, and thirty from recordings by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council in 2002 in the Rhondda Reminiscence Project, RRP, stored, uncatalogued, at

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Charles Webster, 'Hungry or Healthy Thirties?', *History Workshop*, 13 (1982), 110-29.

⁷ Kingsley Kent, p. 143.

Treorchy Reference Library.⁸ A further twenty oral histories are taken from the South Wales Coalfield Collection at Swansea, SWCC, recorded in 1974 and stored at Swansea University.⁹ Four oral histories were extracted from the 1971 BFI documentary, *Women of the Rhondda*.¹⁰ Maureen Cotter was interviewed specifically for this study, helping balance potential bias of interviews geared towards a different research agenda.¹¹ Written testimonies include two unpublished autobiographies also new to academic study, by Maureen's sister, Eileen, and by family friend, Margaret Cooper.¹² Six published autobiographies are used, three male, three female, and seven autobiographical accounts taken from two published collections, Grenfell-Hill's *Growing Up In Wales*, and *Struggle or Starve*, edited by White and Williams.¹³ A database has been compiled from the sources, hereafter referred to as the Rhondda Lives Database, RLD, (See Appendix 1 and Supplementary Materials), to collate information on family life relating to the chosen themes. This is not intended as a rigorous quantitative exercise, rather, as an organisational framework to order into themes what might otherwise be a collection of interesting but random personal stories. Critics of personal testimony in academic study question reliability and impartiality, and ask how representative an individual's experiences may be.¹⁴ However, it can be argued the many 'fragments' of 'lived lives' add up collectively, providing access to voices unrecorded in more 'official' records, which according to

⁸ Maureen Cotter, 1926, Transcripts of Author's Interviews, Appendix 2; Eileen Kelly, 1922, *A Family History from the Rhondda* (Chepstow; c.1962), & Margaret Cooper, 1931, *A Picture of What Life was Like Growing up in the Rhondda* (Blaenllechau, c.1973), Appendix 3; RRP, 2002, Appendix 4.

⁹ SWCC, SWML, Swansea University.

¹⁰ *Women of the Rhondda*, directors Mary Capps and Mary Kelly (London: British Film Industry, 1971).

¹¹ Cotter, Appendix 2.

¹² Cooper & Kelly, Appendix 3.

¹³ Jeffrey Grenfell-Hill, *Growing up in Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1996); Carol White & Sian Rhiannon Williams (eds) *Struggle or Starve: Women's' Lives in the South Wales Valleys Between the Two World Wars* (Dinas Powys: Honno Ltd, 1998).

¹⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, 'On History', (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1997), in Elaine Batty, 'Reflections on the Use of Oral History Technique in Social Research', *People, Place and Policy Online*, 3:2 (2009), 109-21, (111).

Hywel Francis are ‘very often ... the only corrective’ for historians studying interwar South Wales, its’ experiences so ‘distorted’ by economic and social upheaval.¹⁵

An extensive secondary literature supports this study. Egan, Francis and Smith, Williams, Hopkins, and Supple, provide background and context on the history of the coal industry and life in ‘coal society’.¹⁶ Herbert and Elwyn Jones’ collection of essays discuss the historiographical debates of the period and locality, while Stephen Thompson’s study remains the seminal work on the multiple effects of poverty and its relationship with health and employment.¹⁷ Studies by Beddoe, Bruley, John, Jones, Crook and Mari Williams are also key, in their discussions of the highly gendered nature of the South Wales coalfield, and of the Rhondda in particular.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hywel Francis, *Stories of Solidarity*, (Talybont: YLolfa, 2018), pp.58-9

¹⁶ David Egan, *Coal Society: A History of the South Wales Mining Valleys* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1992); Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980); Barry Supple, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Volume 4: 1913-1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Chris Williams, *Democratic Rhondda: Politics and Society 1885-1951* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996); Chris Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield 1898-1947* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998); K. S. Hopkins, *Rhondda Past and Future* (Rhondda: Rhondda Borough Council, 1975).

¹⁷ Trevor Herbert & Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds, *Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988); Steven Thompson, *Unemployment, Poverty and Health in Interwar South Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006).

¹⁸ Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Sue Bruley, *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners’ Lockout in South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010); Angela John, *Our Mothers’ Land: Chapters in Welsh Women’s’ History 1830-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991); Dot Jones, ‘Counting the Cost of Coal: Women’s Lives in the Rhondda, 1881-1911’, in John, 1991; Rosemary Crook, ‘Tidy Women: Women in the Rhondda Between the Wars’, *Oral History Journal*, 10 (1982), 42-2; Mari Williams, ‘Aspects of Women’s Working Lives in the Mining Communities of South Wales, c 1891-1939’, *Folk Life*, 38:1 (1999), 56-70.

2. A Troubled Industry, A Troubled Community

The rise and fall of the South Wales coal industry, and of the communities dependent upon it, are an accepted part of Wales's historiography.¹ Examining the experiences of the Rhondda mining family within this narrative, Chapter Two provides context for the dissertation, exploring the complex, interconnected, and converging tensions particular to this locality, this period, and to these people, the elements of a 'good' local history study according to Tiller, Gillespie and Jackson, considering people, place, process, and time.² It is useful to begin by defining the community and industry. Key developments across the period are then outlined to provide economic and industrial background, and to highlight the 'local/national' dynamic, the national issues regarding coal and the specific characteristics of the Rhondda mines and communities. Primary evidence comes from the Sankey, and Samuel Commission reports, and the reports of the Commissioners of the Distressed Areas/Special Areas.³ Drawing chiefly therefore, on 'official' sources, this

¹ Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: A History of Modern Wales* (Oxford: OUP, 1981); Trevor Herbert & Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds, *Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988); Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980); Barry Supple, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Volume 4: 1913-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Chris Williams, *Democratic Rhondda: Politics and Society 1885-1951* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996); Chris Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield 1898-1947* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998)

² Kate Tiller, *English Local History: An Introduction* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1992), pp. 1-3; Raymond Gillespie, 'An Historian and the Locality' in Raymond Gillespie and Myrtle Hill (eds), in 'Doing Irish Local History: Pursuit and Practice' (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1998), in *A825 MA History Part I, Readings for Block 1 (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2016)*, pp. 80- 82; Andrew Jackson, 'Researching and Writing Local Histories of the Twentieth Century: An Introduction and Review.' *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 6 (2), (2010), 7-15.

³ *Coal Industry Commission Volume 1: Report and Minutes of Evidence of the First Stage of the Inquiry* [Cmd. 359] (London: HMSO, 1919), hereafter Sankey 1; *Coal Industry Commission Volume 2: Report and Minutes of Evidence of the Second Stage of the Inquiry* [Cmd. 360] (London: HMSO, 1919), hereafter Sankey 2; *Report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (1925), With Minutes and Appendices: Volume 1* [Cmd. 2600] (London: HMSO, 1926), hereafter Samuel 1.

chapter provides a robust framework for the rest of the dissertation, balancing the ‘history from below’ of the RLD, on which subsequent chapters are based.

The Rhondda

Situated twenty miles north of Cardiff, the Rhondda is a ‘Y’ shaped river valley, made up of the ten-mile Rhondda Fawr (mawr, big), and the seven-mile Rhondda Fach (bach, small), branching out above Porth, often regarded as the gateway to the Rhondda, ‘porth’ meaning ‘gate’ in English. Put simply, the Rhondda mattered, located in the middle of the SWCF, the largest continuous coalfield in Britain covering 1,000 square miles, and home of the famous ‘Rhondda Steam Coal’ exported in vast quantities around the globe, accounting for 20% of national coal exports in 1914.⁴ Coal mining had transformed the Rhondda in one lifetime from a ‘sleepy’ rural population of 1,998 in 1851 to the second-largest urban settlement in Wales after Cardiff by 1921, the census that year recording miners formed 74% of the male workforce, 41,508 people, illustrating the heavy local dependence on coal, with thousands drawn from across Britain and beyond by the prospect of steady work and good wages.⁵ Jobs were for men only in this community where gendered labour roles were deeply entrenched, the men in the collieries, the women in the homes, effectively also ‘working’ for the mining companies, cleaning, mending, cooking, servicing the needs of husbands, sons and lodgers, around two, sometimes three shifts, as will be explored more fully in Chapter Three.⁶ Maps 2.1, and 2.2, respectively, show the position of the Rhondda within the SWCF, and its main settlements.

⁴ Egan, p. 13; Supple, p.6.

⁵ Egan, p. 4; Williams, *Democratic Rhondda*, p.15.

⁶ Sue Bruley, ‘The Politics of Food: Gender, Family, Community and Collective Feeding in South Wales in the General Strike and the Miners’ Lockout of 1926’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18, 1 (2007), 54-77, (56); Eli Ginzberg, *A World Without Work: The Story of the Welsh Miners; with foreword by Thomas Jones*

Map 2.1 The Rhondda Valley within the SWCF.⁷

IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Map 2.2 Main Settlements of the Rhondda⁸

IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

(London: Routledge, 2017), p. 4; Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000)

⁷ Herbert & Jones, p. 19.

⁸ Williams, *Democratic Rhondda*, p.xiv

Industrial Relations

While the war years had been difficult, they had brought growth and comparatively high wages to the SWCF, particularly to the Rhondda. But in 1918 there were many unresolved problems in the industry which government officials acknowledged ‘had long been a theatre of unrest’, with ‘constant stoppages’ and ‘occasional labour disputes on a vast scale’, including the infamous Tonypany Riots of 1910 when police and soldiers were sent into the valleys.⁹ Rhondda was noted for its militancy and support for the socialist cause, with strong Labour and Communist party bases, and was the centre of the rebuilding of the Trade Union movement in the 1930s.¹⁰ During the First World War a strike by 200,000 miners in South Wales led the government to take control of the SWCF and subsequently the whole of the British coal industry in 1916, to protect naval coal supplies.¹¹ With peace in 1918 decisions were needed on the future management and organisation of the coal industry.

Nationalisation was an issue between workers and mine owners throughout the interwar years, the subject of two Royal Commissions, the Sankey and Samuel Commissions, of 1919 and 1925.¹² Miners sought nationalisation to improve conditions in both their home and working lives, ‘indissolubly linked’ in the mining community, with union leaders calling for ‘higher wages in order to give their wives and children the living which they are entitled to expect.’¹³ Witness evidence to the inquiries provide historians with insights to the social conditions of the Rhondda mining community, Gelli miner’s wife and Labour activist Elizabeth Andrews drawing attention to the chronic housing shortage,

⁹ Samuel 1, p. 108; *WM*, 9 November 1910, p.2.

¹⁰ Williams, *Democratic Rhondda*, p.5.

¹¹ *WM*, 9 November 1910s, p.2.

¹² Sankey 1 [Cmd. 359] & Sankey 2 [Cmd. 360] (1919); Samuel 1[Cmd. 2600] (1926).

¹³ Supple, pp. 128 and 478; Sankey I, p. 171, 4353.

overcrowding and poor living conditions, compounding the misery of high infant and maternal mortality in the mining communities, discussed further in Chapter Four.¹⁴ The relevance of the Sankey hearings for the Rhondda mining community was its moral impact, the public appalled at the conditions in which mining families lived and worked, *The Times* noting the inquiry had ‘thrown much light on dark places.’¹⁵ But despite an initial report in favour of nationalisation, the government returned the coal mines to private ownership in 1921 for reasons beyond the scope of this study. For the Rhondda mining families, the consequences were severe with average earnings halved when owners insisted workers accept pay cuts in the terms of re-employment.¹⁶ The strength of feeling among Rhondda miners is suggested by the thousands who marched in protest from Maerdy, Tylorstown, and Ferndale.¹⁷ In a stand-off, workers were locked out of the mines. Sometimes described as a dress rehearsal for 1926, the 1921 lockout across the SWCF lasted four months causing great hardship, since strikers were not entitled to Poor Relief and many families ran up debts before being forced to return to work on reduced wages. The whole community’s sense of grievance against the coal owners is frequently discernible in the RLD testimonies.¹⁸ Worse was to come; the sharp post-war trade slump meant owners required miners to accept further wage cuts and an extra hour on the working day. The government intervened again to avert more strikes, commissioning the Samuel Inquiry in 1925. The miners’ refusal to accept its’ recommendations in 1926 triggered the General Strike in May, the South Wales miners staying out until the end of the year, wiping out families’ savings already depleted after 1921, and leaving many unable to find re-employment for years to come, blacklisted as trade unionists.

¹⁴ Sankey 2, pp. 1019-20; Supple, p. 128.

¹⁵ *The Times*, 18 March, 1919, p. 11.

¹⁶ Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 22.

¹⁷ *WM*, 14 March, 1921, p.9.

¹⁸ Maggie Pryce Jones, *Kingfisher of Hope* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993), p.29; Kelly, p.22.

The Lockouts of 1921 and 1926 were defining moments for the communities it is argued in their attempts to improve living and working conditions, evidenced by the strength of emotion in both contemporary press reports and in RLD recollections years later. The question raised is why the decline was so extensive in the SWCF, and the Rhondda in particular. It is suggested the specific characteristics of the Rhondda mining industry were contributory factors.

Mining in the Rhondda

The Rhondda had abundant reserves of difficult-to-access, but highly valued Smokeless Steam Coal. Its collieries had a reputation for some of the most volatile working conditions in the SWCF, vast, hot, with highly faulted rock strata prone to sudden falls, to gas explosions, and to excessive dust which could ignite in flash burns.¹⁹ The SWCF was recognised as the most dangerous coalfield in Britain, with more than 25% of Britain's colliery deaths occurring here between 1890 and 1939.²⁰ In the RLD some 20 testimonies, 28.5%, mention mining accidents in the family, with potentially catastrophic effects on family income, as is discussed in Chapter Three. In such dangerous conditions miners typically formed strong bonds of trust, working in small, tight groups, unsupervised, fostering a culture of independence, an 'apartness' noted visiting American economist Eli Ginzberg, and, it is suggested, this contributed towards the high degree of 'mutual hostility', 'antagonisms and recriminations' between Rhondda miners and owners observed by the Samuel Commission.²¹ Miners were virtually self-employed, buying their own tools, lamp fuel, and work clothing, and paying sub-contracted labourers and perhaps an

¹⁹Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 35; Supple, p. 22.

²⁰, Ben Curtis & Steven Thompson: 'Disability and the Family in South Wales Coalfield Society, c.1920–1939', *Family & Community History*, 20:1 (2017), 25-44 (27).

²¹ Samuel 1, p. 112.

apprentice, or 'butty', to work their section, or 'stall'.²² The unique wage system 'of horrifying complexity' further aggravated the situation, pay determined by percentage adjustments reflecting the changing price of coal and a range of schedules for the various jobs within a day's work.²³ A significant portion of the wage was a piece-rate, and miners typically employed their own independent 'checkweigher', his sole job, to ensure the amount of coal hewn was accurately recorded, that workers were not cheated, while owners, aggravated by what they perceived as a deliberate 'Go-Slow' policy, threatened workers with pit closures if productivity was not increased, as a typical poster from management illustrates.²⁴

IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

2.3, Poster, Rhondda Fach, 1921²⁵

²² Egan, p.54.

²³ Supple, p. 38; Egan, p. 54.

²⁴ HC Deb. 7 May 1909 vol 4 cc1347; Poster in Francis and Smith, p. 29.

²⁵ Ibid.

Productivity per collier was lower in South Wales than in any other British coalfield, a major source of dispute, the miners arguing it was due to local conditions, colliery mismanagement and chronic underinvestment, while owners believed workers intentionally withheld labour in socialist sympathies and to promote their aim of nationalisation.²⁶

This antagonism between miners and owners must be seen as the constant backdrop to life in the Rhondda mining communities in the interwar years, exacerbated perhaps by fundamental changes in mine ownership, from an industry comprised of thousands of small firms headed by entrepreneurs and adventurers, predominantly Welshmen, to increasing concentration in the hands of giant so-called ‘Combines’, controlled by boards of directors in England. ‘Time was when the colliery worker knew his employer personally.... Such is not the case now,’ noted a 1925 article in *The Colliery Workers’ Magazine*.²⁷ ‘The Combine is a vast machine, and the worker is merely a cog in it.’²⁸ The ‘faceless’ Combine with many collieries under its control, could close a pit, literally overnight, if there was a slump in demand. If workers downed tools, production was ‘speeded up’ at another colliery to make up the production shortfall.²⁹ Rhondda collieries typically ran a three-shift system, enabling pits to operate virtually 24 hours, economising by running one mine at maximum capacity, rather than two pits at half capacity.³⁰ In her evidence to the Sankey Commission Elizabeth Andrews directly linked this shift pattern to poorer living standards in Rhondda mining homes, in which the women were ‘enslaved’ she said, by the heavy domestic workload as miners came in and out of the home at 7am, 3pm and 11pm.³¹ In fact, the centralising of mine ownership had begun before the First World

²⁶ Samuel 1, pp. 108-12.

²⁷ D. J. Williams, ‘The Colliery Workers’ Magazine’ 3, 1, January 1925, in Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 90.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Supple, p. 437.

³⁰ Sankey 2, p.1020.

³¹ *Ibid.*

War but increased dramatically in the economic climate of the interwar years, as big companies bought up smaller concerns heading for liquidation. Cambrian Combine reorganised as the even-larger Welsh Associated Collieries, controlling 60 pits and 32,000 men by 1930, while, in 1935, Welsh Associated merged with Powell Duffryn, to form the largest firm in the British coal industry with over one hundred mines.³² The standardisation of arrangements across many collieries was seen as an attack on traditional customs and concessions at individual pits, exacerbating miners' frustrations and discontent.³³

Mechanisation was slow coming to the Rhondda, further compounding its' lack of competitiveness, its' geological conditions unsuited to the new cutting machines, and unpopular where they were introduced, perceived as adding new dangers, their noise drowning out warning cracks of imminent rock falls, and creating excessive dust, hampering visibility of hazardous electric cables.³⁴ The speed of the machines also concerned miners, representing an intensification of the work pace to the possible detriment of safety, and transforming the collier from skilled workman, to 'a mere coal-filling tool.'³⁵ Modernisation was further hampered by the dated and often haphazard layout of many of the Rhondda's collieries, in production for forty years of more, some for a hundred years.³⁶ In comparison, the giant new pits sunk in the early 1900s in Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire and the East Midlands, were built-to-purpose, with all the advantages of modern, large-scale production.³⁷ Additionally, many of these newer coalfields typically had thick seams of easily-worked bituminous coal, produced primarily

³² Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 32.

³³ Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 34.

³⁴ Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 35.

³⁵ 'Ocean and National Magazine', 6, 5 (May 1933), in Williams, *Capitalism*, p.103.

³⁶ Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.19.

³⁷ Samuel 1, p. 45

for the domestic market, while the Rhondda's collieries became increasingly less competitive in a changing, post-war world.³⁸

In conclusion, the specific characteristics of mining in the Rhondda fostered a culture of independence and hostility towards owners and a government which did not appear to understand its grievances, it is argued, the heat, discomfort and dangers explaining in part perhaps the 'specific and uncommon' industrial relations and economic circumstances of the SWCF, and of the Rhondda in particular.³⁹

Unemployment

Between June 1923 and June 1930 available employment in the pits fell by 40% on average, by nearly 50% in the Rhondda.⁴⁰ The global economic depression sparked by the Wall Street Crash in 1929 added to the problems, so that through most of the 1930s an already bad situation in the Rhondda became worse for mining families, as orders for its steam coal declined, production slumped and workers were laid off. By June 1931 42.5% of the insured population in the Rhondda valleys was unemployed, as much as 80% in some villages.⁴¹ As the South Wales Council of Social Service noted; 'Every third person you meet in South Wales is either unemployed or dependent upon a home whose breadwinner is unemployed.'⁴² The government had maintained a policy of minimal intervention, believing the market could correct itself, but by the late 1920s, mounting political and public pressure forced it to set up inquiries into the health and welfare of the

³⁸ Supple, p.183.

³⁹ Supple, p. 22.

⁴⁰ *Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Conditions in Certain Depressed Areas* [Cmd. 4728], 1934, 145-6.

⁴¹ 'Local Unemployment Index', June 1931, in Stephanie Ward, 'Sit Down to Starve or Stand up to Live: Community Protest and the Means Test in the Rhondda Valleys, 1931-1939' *Llafur*, 9 (2005), 27-44 (28)

⁴² *Voluntary Service in South Wales: Second Annual Report of South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service, 1935-36* (Monmouth, 1936), p. 3.

distressed areas.⁴³ The establishment of the Industrial Transference Board in 1928, and in 1934, of designated ‘Special Areas’ eligible for limited investment in social projects, evidence the government’s strategy that the best way to deal with unemployment in problem areas, was to transfer ‘surplus labour’ out, illustrated by Sir Wyndham Portal’s comments, reporting to the Commission for Special Areas, in 1935.⁴⁴ ‘The situation needs facing’, wrote Portal, that although vast coal reserves remained unmined, that the men and tools were available, ‘nothing can be done...the tide has ebbed’, and ‘transference of individuals and families out of the Special Areas must ...be regarded as one of the essential measures of relief.’⁴⁵ The population of the Rhondda declined significantly between 1931 and 1939, by 22, 780 people, mainly ‘in the younger and more active age-groups’ as is explored more fully in Chapter Three.⁴⁶ But for the majority, transference was hardly practical; it can be imagined that for a family in debt and with strong local ties it was not easy to move. Most stayed, it seems through a combination of inertia, family ties and the hope of local economic recovery.

With the benefits system in danger of collapse under the weight of claimants, the government introduced the hated Means Test in 1931, an intrusive assessment of total family income. The Unemployment Assistance Board created in 1934 further standardised payments, and in effect reduced payments by ten percent, leading to what Ward terms a ‘plethora of marches, speeches, demonstrations and deputations.’⁴⁷ The relevance here is that the Means Test mobilised the community in collective action, the *Rhondda Leader* noting numerous protests across the valleys, in which shopkeepers, councillors, religious

⁴³ *MH: Report on Investigation in the Coalfield of South Wales and Monmouthshire* [Cmd.3272] (London: HMSO, 1929); *Report of the Industrial Transference Board 1928*, [Cmd. 3156] (London: HMSO, 1929).

⁴⁴ Industrial Transference Board 1928, Special Areas (Development and Improvement Act) 1934; *First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales)* [Cmd. 4957] (London: HMSO, 1935), p. 68; *First Report*, [Cmd. 4957] p. 64.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ RMOH, 1931-1939

⁴⁷ Ward, 35

leaders, teachers and MPs unanimously condemned the measure.⁴⁸ On 20 January 1935, some 50,000 people congregated in Tonypandy.⁴⁹ And in February 1938 a march of 20,000 people ‘of all descriptions’ from across the Rhondda marched against the means test, ‘women carrying babies, toddlers aged three and grey haired veterans of the mines’ demonstrated together.⁵⁰ These were huge demonstrations. ‘There was nobody in that district who was not demonstrating except those who were in hospital,’ wrote Rhondda MP W. H Mainwaring, to the Home Secretary, Sir John Gilmour.⁵¹ Ward argues persuasively that the means test had ‘far-reaching consequences’ for the unemployed of the Rhondda valleys, undermining family structure and notions of ‘respectability’, their response, perhaps the only response available, ‘to protest on a dramatic scale.’⁵² The extent of local poverty and desperation, and the feeling that central government did not understand its plight, is illustrated it is suggested by the involvement of people from the Rhondda’s mining community in the hunger marches of the 1930s. In 1931, around 112 Rhondda miners and their wives joined a march to Bristol under the banner ‘Struggle or Starve’. In October 1932, in a nationwide hunger march to London 2,500 marchers from all over Britain participated, including 375 from South Wales. Eileen Kelly from Ferndale recalled in her autobiography, her distress when working in London at seeing men she knew from ‘home’.⁵³

Hearing singing, I turned to see a group of men standing in the kerb outside the shop ... holding a card ‘Unemployed Welsh Miners’. To my surprise, I realised I

⁴⁸ *RL*, 10 June 1935.

⁴⁹ *RL*, 26 January 1935

⁵⁰ *RF*, 12 February 1938.

⁵¹ Cited in Herbert & Jones, p.7.

⁵² Ward, 43-4.

⁵³ Kelly, p.80.

knew them all...they were from Ferndale. How my heart ached as I stopped to speak to them and drop a coin in the tin.⁵⁴

In conclusion, it can be seen that various factors converged in the Rhondda at this time, creating in effect, the 'perfect storm'; the loss of overseas markets, the growth of alternative energy sources, the emergence of giant company combines, the unique mining conditions of the Rhondda, and the emergence of 'a much more assertive and self-conscious working class...in South Wales'.⁵⁵ The relevance of this background of industrial and community unrest, is that it explains in part the attitudes and character of the Rhondda mining community, a community used to hardship and hunger, and united in common cause against the mine owners. The complex reality of 'lived lives', as supported by the RLD testimonies, evidences what might be termed the 'silent majority', those who stayed in the Rhondda, coming out to strike and protest not so much in commitment to 'the cause', but rather perhaps, united by the experience of poverty, with nothing to lose when wages were frequently as low as the 'dole', when benefits were cut, and when mine owners seemed to be against their families' interests, when literally it was a case of 'sit down to starve or stand up to live', their struggle for better standards of living frequently faltering in the face of the deep economic difficulties of the period.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Egan, p. 44; Bruley, 58.

⁵⁶ Williams, *Capitalism*, pp 4-5; Supple, p. 38; Ward, 27.

3. Work and the Family

Introduction

The ‘normal’ division of labour in the Rhondda mining home at the start of the interwar period was on gender lines, where ‘life followed a seemingly set pattern... so that boys usually followed in father’s footsteps,’ into the colliery, while girls joined their mothers in the domestic workplace.¹ Chapter Three examines the impact of poverty and unemployment on this traditional pattern of working family life, considering how far gender affected experiences. Historians Roberts, Beddoe, John, and Williams, argue the ‘full flowering’ of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres occurred in the interwar years, and that the domestic ideology was particularly ‘entrenched’ in the SWCF.² Chapter Three tests how far this narrative was a lived reality in the Rhondda through an examination of the domestic economy, put simply by exploring who did what to keep the family ‘afloat’. The gendered strategies utilized by the family when faced with inadequate income and shifts in the balance of power are explored, asking to what extent men helped with ‘women’s work’ in the home and whether men retained their privileged position when their role as breadwinner was lost, building on Penlington’s studies of masculinity and domesticity in the SWCF.³ It is argued that under the severe economic stresses of the period, the working pattern of the Rhondda mining family was frequently one of

¹ Will Paynter, *My Generation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1972), p.18.

² Elizabeth Roberts, *Women’s Work 1840-1940* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 63; Chris Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield 1898-1947* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp.5, 63-9; Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 74-5; Mari Williams, Aspects of Women’s Working Lives in the Mining Communities, c1891-1939, *Folk Life*, 38:1 (1999), 56-70; Angela John, *Our Mothers’ Land: Chapters in Welsh Women’s History 1830-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991).

³ Neil Penlington, ‘Masculinity and Domesticity in 1930s South Wales: Did Unemployment Change the Domestic Division of Labour?’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:3 (2010), 281-99.

cooperation and mutual dependence between men and women rather than of rigid separate spheres.

Personal testimonies from the RLD form the chief source, the chapter also drawing on the Pilgrim Trust's 1938 report, *Men Without Work*, the 1935 *First Report of the Commissioner for Special Areas*, and *ML Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Conditions of Certain Depressed Areas 1934*.⁴

Traditional Working Roles

Women's exclusion from the workplace was deeply rooted in the culture of the Rhondda mining home. Miner's daughter Doreen Adams was reared with the expectation she would take on domestic responsibilities, one of three girls and three boys, who 'happened to be the one left at home with my mother after leaving school at thirteen.'⁵ 'I was made to understand from my very early childhood that the woman in a miner's home was a slave to the home ... one accepted what the mother said – 'You must look after them,' you see.'⁶ Boys grew up expecting to go down the mines, 'There was nothing else,' observed Octavius Morgan, recalling starting aged fourteen at Locket's Merthyr Pit in Maerdy.⁷ A boy could start straight from school as a collier's assistant or 'butty' and would expect to be an independent collier by twenty one with his own 'stall' or area of coalface, remarked Trelewis miner Walter Davies in his autobiography, most men looking to set up home as soon as they could.⁸ Walter remembered 'counting the days' as a schoolboy until he could

⁴ *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: CUP, 1938); *First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales)* [Cmd. 4957] (London: HMSO, 1935); *ML; Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Conditions of Certain Depressed Areas*, [Cmd.4728] (London: HMSO, 1934), hereafter ML [Cmd 4728].

⁵ Doreen Adams, *Women of the Rhondda*, BFI, 1971.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Octavius Morgan, SWCC AUD/191.

⁸ Davies, p.91; John Gillis, *For Better for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford, 1985), p. 287.

‘join the man’s world’ working underground.⁹ When the coal market collapsed in the early 1920s however, mine owners reacted swiftly, cutting hours and wage rates, closing pits. Francis and Smith calculate some 241 pits closed in South Wales between 1921 and 1936 with the loss of over 140,000 jobs.¹⁰ In the Rhondda the nature of unemployment was more complex, since many collieries went on ‘short-time’, with frequent ‘stops’, according to a 1934 Ministry of Labour report.¹¹ ‘A full week was a rare occurrence,’ recalled miner Bert Coombes in his autobiography, while Ferndale miner’s daughter Eileen Kelly remembered her father only ever allowed by ‘the wily coal owners’ to work four shifts out of six.¹² In practice this meant wages were unpredictable and frequently low, a dramatic impact on family income forcing adjustments in the domestic economy.

Women’s Paid Work

The *First Report into the Distressed Areas*, noted, in 1934; ‘In prosperous times, women folk in the mining valleys normally remained in the home doing domestic tasks but owing to the acute depression many are now compelled to earn a living.’¹³ The RLD bears this out, also finding that one of the first responses of the unemployed miner’s family was for the wife to go out to work, often an extension of her already onerous domestic duties, sewing, washing, cooking or charring. Gwendoline Pearce of Ynysbwl recalled when ‘things were going bad for the miners’, how her mother would ‘go out papering for people that could afford to pay her, and she’d take in washing and things like that.’¹⁴ Beatrice

⁹ Davies, p.91.

¹⁰ Hywel Francis and Dai Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), p. 33.

¹¹ ML [Cmd. 4728], xiii, p. 130.

¹² Bert Coombes, *These Poor Hands: The Autobiography of a Miner Working in South Wales* (1939), p.148; Eileen Kelly, *A Family History from the Rhondda*, (c.1962, Chepstow), p.21.

¹³ ML [Cmd 4728] p. 140.

¹⁴ Gwendoline Pearce, RRP, Appendix 4.

Wood's mother took in knitting, while other women set up 'little shops' in their homes, selling faggots and peas and homemade lemonade.¹⁵ Bert Coombes recalled making a shop counter for his wife when she 'caught the craze.'¹⁶ It is difficult to assess the precise nature and number of working women in the Rhondda mining community since the census did not record the myriad part-time, casual, and temporary jobs which of necessity formed mining wives' employment, fitted around domestic commitments.¹⁷ The 1931 census recorded 88.6% of the Rhondda female population over the age of fourteen as 'unoccupied', yet, by examining the daily lives and working experiences in the RLD it is evident many of these 'unoccupied' women did work in some form.¹⁸ As the economic situation worsened, young unmarried women were expected to support the unwaged family. In Tredegar Aneurin Bevan's sister contributed nearly half her weekly wage of two pounds towards supporting the unemployed Bevan and their mother, an 'aching humiliation', for Bevan.¹⁹

In over half the female testimonies interrogated for this study, young girls were sent away into service. It is estimated 10,000 girls went from South Wales to London alone, sending money back to their families.²⁰ 'Girls are better than boys for South Wales now!' remarked the mother of one mining family in the Rhondda.²¹ 'What we should do without the girls I don't know. My three eldest are all in service in London...and they're good to us when the pit's not working.'²² Mildred James was sent, aged fourteen, to be a parlourmaid at Eton College, sending her £1. 12s. a month home to her widowed mother in Tylerstown.²³ Equally Edith Thurling, parlourmaid to a private house in Sunningdale,

¹⁵ Beatrice Wood, *Wednesday's Child* (Port Talbot: Alun Books, 1989), p.40; Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 65.

¹⁶ Coombes, p. 93.

¹⁷ Mari A. Williams, p 58.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, Volume 1: 1897 – 1945* (London: Faber, 2008), p. 566.

²⁰ Mari Williams, *Aspects of Women's Working Lives*, p. 66; *Second Industrial Survey of South Wales* (Cardiff, 1937), II, p. 81.

²¹ H.V. Morton, *In Search of Wales* (London, 1932), pp. 260-61, in Mari Williams, p. 66.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mildred James, RRP, Appendix 4.

forwarded her salary of one Guinea a month to her family in Maerdy.²⁴ Testimonies in the RLD illustrate this necessity of sending daughters away was painful for many, 'writing tearstained letters home' and 'crying every day in the closet'.²⁵ But it was accepted everyone in the family pulled their weight and Vera Hughes bore no blame towards her parents; 'They couldn't keep me there no longer when I could be earning money to help out in the home,' she said simply.²⁶ The traditional domestic model must have been significantly disrupted with so many young women 'forced' to leave home it is suggested. The extent of permanent impact on family structure and family life is unknown, but it is interesting to note that most of the young women referenced in this study had returned to the Rhondda by 1939, drawn back by family ties and work opportunities opening up closer to home as impending war re-energised the local and national economy.

Wives frequently earned income by taking lodgers, adding to their domestic workload although rent was usually regarded as theirs to manage.²⁷ Walter Davies' mother used it to take him out of the mines and send him to teacher training college.²⁸ RLD testimonies evidence a large proportion of families took lodgers, often relatives or who became part of the family accepted as 'uncles', their financial help crucial. Maggie Pryce Jones' lodger paid the family's rent throughout the strike years, using up all his savings, while Mair MacLellan's uncle 'Dat' bought the children's clothes in the family with his Co-op dividends.²⁹

Studies by both Gittens and Crook found women's paid work in the Rhonda was typically not viewed as 'real' employment, by the women themselves as much as by the

²⁴ Edith Thurling, RRP.

²⁵ Jeffrey Grenfell-Hill, *Growing Up In Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1996), pp. 37-8; Phyllis Burman, RRP.

²⁶ Vera Hughes, RRP.

²⁷ Davies, p. 66.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Pryce Jones, p. 32; MacLellan, in *SOS*, p.230

men, so that the dominant attitude remained strong in the Rhondda mining family that a woman's place was in the home, but not in a passive, subjugated sense implicit in the Victorian separate spheres' narrative it is argued, rather that the home was her workplace as the mine was his.³⁰ The Rhondda coal community was one of contradictory influences, the common cause of socialism and the shared experience of poverty overriding gendered differences it is argued. The changing nature of feminism in campaigns for women's rights in the interwar period is beyond the scope of this study, but the fact that it remained a live national debate, and one that was felt in the Rhondda as much as in the House of Commons, is illustrated by a group of married Rhondda schoolteachers who in 1923 challenged the RUDC marriage bar in a high profile court case, *Price v. Rhondda*, arguing that it was contrary to the new 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. Mrs Price lost her case, and 59 married women were dismissed by Rhondda council.³¹ By 1926 some 75percent of Welsh local education authorities operated a marriage bar, indicative of the hostility towards working women 'stealing' a man's family wage.³² But the fact that the Rhondda teachers challenged the marriage bar suggests the public mood was perhaps not so entrenched concerning the domestic ideology. Within the RLD, although most women did stop work on marriage, some hid their marriages to continue working for three or four years until they had children or longer, suggesting changing aspirations and expectations.³³ Miners' leader Will Paynter certainly felt the 'new generation' to be 'far less servile than its predecessor...bolder...much less subservient and inhibited.'³⁴

³⁰ Dianne Gittens, *Fair Sex, Family Size and Structure, 1900-39* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1988), p.115: Rosemary Crook, 'Tidy Women: Women in the Rhondda Between the Wars', *Oral History Journal*, 10 (1982), 42-2.

³¹ Rosa Matheson, 'The Marriage Bar', *Who Do You Think You Are?* 4, 12 March 2019.

³² Grenfell-Hill, p. 23.

³³ Mrs D. J. Davies, SWML AUD/181

³⁴ Paynter, p. 8.

Men's Work

There was 'no stereotypical unemployed miner' notes Chris Williams, and RLD testimonies evidence how miners responded to unemployment in diverse ways.³⁵ Maureen Cotter's father in Ferndale worked two additional part-time jobs, collecting, and distributing weekly insurance contributions, and running a dance hall, *The Rink*.³⁶ Maureen's older sister Eileen recalled how the whole family helped, father as doorman and manager, while mother and daughters provided refreshments, cloakroom, and cleaning services.³⁷ Many men worked on allotments and gardens, growing food and keeping chickens. William Rosser Jones, unemployed for fifteen years, found this work a 'saviour', allowing him to provide for his family through hard, physical labour where he worked 'practically the same' hours as he had underground, only now he was 'all the time outside in the open.'³⁸ The allotment felt the same as the workplace said Rosser, with its all-male camaraderie and competition.³⁹ Likewise, father-of-six Gwilym Williams' family relied on the vegetables he could bring to the table helping the limited income go further; 'The misses would go down and buy a leg bone for threepence ... and we lived on cawl most of the time...carrots, parsnips you see, and potatoes,' he explained.⁴⁰ Other men went out to shoot rabbits and snipe, while boys in the family were expected to help by catching what they could, as Esau Alexander, one of twelve children, recalled.⁴¹

³⁵ Williams, *Capitalism*, p.75.

³⁶ Maureen Cotter, Interview 1, Transcript pp.3-4, Appendix 2.

³⁷ Kelly, pp. 34-36.

³⁸ William Rosser Jones SWCC, AUD/180.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Gwilym Williams, SWCC, AUD/186.

⁴¹ Esau Alexander, in Grenfell-Hill, p. 14.

All we boys went fishing ...and caught trout and eels ...when we caught something it was a meal. Me and Emlyn my brother were good with our catapults and caught waterfowl, moorhens.⁴²

Coal was vital to the family economy, to heat water, cook food, and to heat the kitchen in which the family lived for the most part. If they could no longer buy it, many worked 'picking' coal. 'Men went long distances, dodged the police and hunted on distant tips for hours, recalled Bert Coombes, 'so that they could get a sack of waste coal which they sold secretly for eighteen pence.'⁴³ To an extent, mining companies turned a blind eye, and the image of men picking coal on windswept slagheaps, depicted in the 1937 documentary film, *Today We Live*, became an iconic symbol of the miner's destitution.⁴⁴

3.1. Still taken from *Today We Live*, 1937⁴⁵

IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

The film depicts the dereliction of discarded pit machinery and piles of coal, common around the idle colliery works and streets, the temptation for the unemployed not hard to imagine. Maggie Pryce Jones recalled her father stealing coal from trucks outside their

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Coombes, p.122.

⁴⁴ *Today We Live*, director Ralph Bond, producer Paul Rotha (London: National Council for Social Service, 1937).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

home one night, although her mother wished they had ‘paid for it like respectable people.’⁴⁶ There were also larger, community operations to steal coal, often dangerous work. The *Glamorgan Gazette* tells of two brothers killed when 90 tons of rock fell on them whilst with a party of nine men collecting coal for a local canteen, while Iori Thomas remembered men who ‘had their backs broken’ getting coal ‘to the soup kitchens to feed the fires.’⁴⁷

That crime was one of the strategies used by the unemployed, is evidenced by the increase in prosecutions for stealing coal, as reported in the *Rhondda Leader* in 1932.⁴⁸ Coal theft had ‘gone beyond the epidemic stage’, to ‘become a plague’, according to the prosecutor at Porth Police Court.⁴⁹ In the neighbouring Cynon valley it was reported that coal stealing accounted for half of all the indictable crimes, a figure likely to have been replicated in the Rhondda.⁵⁰ Sheep stealing was another ‘desperate’ strategy, recalled former miner Will Whitland.⁵¹

There’s a street in Rhondda [...] it was known as Sheepskin Avenue or Mutton Dump [...] and it was known that men used to take turns to kill a sheep there and share it out among the families and the police never found out how they did it.⁵²

That it was perceived as a ‘man’s’ job to kill the sheep, or steal the coal, is implicit in the recollections.

⁴⁶ Jones, p. 34.

⁴⁷ *GG*, 21 May 1926; Iori Thomas, BBC Wales, *The Long Street: A History of Rhondda Coal Mining*, (BBC Wales: Cardiff, 1966).

⁴⁸ *RL*, 2 April 1932, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Williams, *Capitalism*, p. 76.

⁵¹ Whitland, BBC Wales, *The Long Street*.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Shifts in the Balance of Power?

Considering the question of whether the balance of power in a household shifted when men were no longer the breadwinners, Neil Penlington, in his study of masculinity and domesticity in the miner's home, argues persuasively that it did not, that men retained an 'elastic' relationship with the home, able to come and go, while women remained 'tied' to domestic responsibilities.⁵³ The RLD testimonies support this contention, Beatrice Davies recalling her mother home managing the chores and the children, while father and brothers were out on strike, following jazz band processions and enjoying a carnival atmosphere. 'My brothers ended up the strike being very, very sunburnt whereas my mother was worn out,' she said.⁵⁴ A headline in the *Merthyr Express*, 'Women Slave While Husbands Play' suggests this behaviour by men was not uncommon.⁵⁵

Although men sometimes helped with domestic work, Penlington argues it was on their own, masculine, terms, making breakfast as a 'cowboy breakfast' for example, or doing the 'manly' jobs, chopping wood, building and mending around the house.⁵⁶ The RLD suggests a slightly different picture with evidence that men were quite often involved in the daily routine of the household and helped their wives as best they could, inferring the gendered division of domestic labour could be 'blurred'. Mair MacLellan's father black-leaded the grate on Sunday mornings before cooking breakfast for the family, and would wash up the dinner things each night, his own and the lodgers, before going out to the Institute reading room.⁵⁷ The Kelly girls recalled their father did all he could 'to make mother's life more comfortable', while Rosemary Crook interviewed a Mrs Hughes from

⁵³ Penlington, 282.

⁵⁴ Beatrice Davies, dob 1894, in BFI, *Women of the Rhondda*, 1971.

⁵⁵ *ME*, 16 August, 1919, p.4.

⁵⁶ Penlington. 298, 286.

⁵⁷ MacLellan, in *SOS*, p.92.

Treorchy whose brother would help out on a regular basis ‘when nobody was about, you know[...]because my mother wasn’t very strong.’⁵⁸

Examining to what extent wives and daughters were ‘enslaved’ by the domestic ideology subordinate to the man and his needs as Elizabeth Andrew described to the Sankey Commission, this narrative is supported to a degree by the RLD, miner’s son Herbert Smith, one of six children, remembering his mother being largely too busy with domestic duties for any leisure time.⁵⁹ ‘Mam seemed like a prisoner, tied to the home,’ he remembered. ‘The only time she went out was once a week to do the shopping.’⁶⁰ It was ‘an acknowledged fact’ said Herbert, that Dad was head of the household.⁶¹ ‘No one thought of the wife as having any power...we all knew who was boss.’⁶²

Mildred Evans, one of eleven, remembered a grandmother ‘cowed into silence’, and a mother ‘with no influence whatsoever’, her opinions ignored. ‘the wage packet was his to do as he pleased with...his beer money came first, she had to manage on what was left: feed us all on the remains.’⁶³ A significant number of RLD testimonies describe men dominating the household, their decisions dictating the lives of the family.⁶⁴ The overall picture then, from the RLD, is inconclusive, reason suggesting the reality of the domestic ideology within individual families must have varied. How strict or blurred the divide between the sexes would have been, might have depended on a range of factors, on personalities, on whether the father drank, whether the family were churchgoers (and all the community moral policing that might entail), and, quite often perhaps, on whether the parents had a ‘good’ marriage. Simple compatibility might reasonably be expected to

⁵⁸ Cotter, 1, p.3; Mrs Hughes (b. 1903) in Crook, (42).

⁵⁹ Sankey 2, p. 1019-22.; Herbert Smith GUIW, p. 94

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid..

⁶³ Mildred Evans, GUIW, p.170

⁶⁴ Jones, pp. 73-6; Wood, p. 53.

foster a 'happy' home and thereby enable a family to perhaps better withstand the vicissitudes of poverty and unemployment. Laura Stride's family struggled on low wages, with four siblings, and a father who 'worked in the mines his whole life' while 'mother stayed at home and looked after the family.'⁶⁵ But the tone of her memories is of a relatively harmonious and well-functioning household, of a family united in the face of difficulties, 'Oh the Depression affected us alright because we were on very low wages, we didn't have that much to eat but we were quite happy,' she states.⁶⁶ Laura talks of 'happy times', her mother singing and making jam sandwiches for picnics, her father waving them off; no females bullied into silence in this home.⁶⁷ Likewise, Maureen Cotter's family seem to have weathered the hardships better through being in a stable, loving family, where 'father was deeply religious', 'a pleasant man and very handy in the house...never said a swear word in his life'.⁶⁸ Maureen's father was still treated preferentially as the male, however, getting the only piece of meat, while mother and daughters dipped bread around a bowl of *Oxo*, Maureen recalled.⁶⁹ 'Mother always said 'your father comes first', she noted.⁷⁰

Interrogation of the RLD suggests the domestic ideology was accepted to a degree in all seventy families (where data was available), in that in all, the bulk of the domestic labour and responsibility for managing the domestic economy, fell to the women, and that this attitude was unchanging across the period. If the mother died, husbands or sons speedily sought a 'replacement' woman in the house, either remarrying or bringing in a female relative, as Mrs Jones found out on marrying William Rosser Jones in 1920.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Laura Stride, RRP.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Cotter, 1, p 6.

⁶⁹ Cotter, 1, p.7.

⁷⁰ Cotter, 1, p.8.

⁷¹ Jones, SWCC, AUD/180.

A month after we got married his mother died, well then I had a family to look after, two sisters, his brother and his father. Well, I was young but I was able to cope because I had had to cope at home with my mother.⁷²

Ben Davies and his two brothers migrated to Ferndale from Cardiganshire in 1919, to work in the mines, his mother coming too, to keep house for the three sons.⁷³ When she died the eldest son 'got married to a girl from Cardigan immediately, in order to keep up the house and to continue working.'⁷⁴ Mrs Trevor Davies gave up her job in service when her cousin died because 'it was always understood...that I gave up service to come and look after the children for him,' she recalled.⁷⁵ Maggie Pryce had to give up a scholarship place when her mother died; 'My own plans were finished ... Dad's only contribution was to give me money each Friday and let me carry on as best as I could.'⁷⁶ As has already been noted, while some men did help around the house, the tone of the RLD on balance suggests women regarded the domestic work as their share of the workload in the domestic economy, that they felt oppressed not by a domestic ideology, this essay argues, but by poverty and the mine owners, sharing a common cause with the men which united rather than divided a home. Maggie Pryce Jones recalled hearing her parents discussing the strike, in agreement that the colliery owners were causing their suffering; 'Mam sounded angry when she answered, 'All they care about is their fat profits, never mind that we have to work all hours to keep our children tidy.'⁷⁷ 'If anything...the more severe the depression the closer the community,' argues historian Stephen Constantine, describing poverty as 'a shared experience.'⁷⁸ That men and women in the mining household both

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ben Davies, SWCC AUD/168

⁷⁴ Davies, SWCC AUD/168.

⁷⁵ Mrs Trevor Davies, AUD/166.

⁷⁶ Jones, p. 67.

⁷⁷ Jones, p. 29.

⁷⁸ Steven Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1980), p.22.

worked extremely hard was a given, mutually understood. Bert Coombes and Walter Davies both commented in their autobiographies on how hard the mining wives worked, made old before their time, while women from mining homes did not envy the miners their hard lives working underground.⁷⁹

Studies by Sue Bruley argue that one area where the gendered nature of domestic work was challenged during the interwar years, was the communal soup kitchen.⁸⁰ Here, men and women worked together in public life as never before to provision, cook and serve meals.⁸¹ The work itself still tended to be organised on gender lines however, with men responsible for lighting the cooking fires for example, while women cooked and cleaned.⁸² Bruley concludes that during the General Strike and subsequent lockout of 1926 there was a ‘temporary breaking down of traditional gender segregation and increased fellowship between men and women.’⁸³ But it is pertinent to note these spaces were for feeding the men only, their existence therefore arguably reinforcing the domestic ideology. In Maerdy the Labour party women’s section proposed that miners’ wives be fed too but this was not taken up, apparently because of ‘the financial situation,’ underlining again the strength of the domestic ideology.⁸⁴ In conclusion, on the question of whether the gendered pattern of work for mining families changed over the interwar years, on balance this chapter finds that in the Rhondda it did not. In 1939 there remained a deeply entrenched domestic ideology in which women still grew up expecting to marry and work in the home, while men expected to be the main breadwinner. It is argued however that the domestic ideology in the Rhondda mining community was more nuanced, that in the extreme economic

⁷⁹ Coombes, p.11; Davies, p.60; Doreen Adams, *Women of the Rhondda* (BFI).

⁸⁰ Sue Bruley *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners’ Lockout in South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

⁸¹ Bruley, p. 67.

⁸² Bruley p. 76.

⁸³ Bruley p. 77.

⁸⁴ Bruley, p. 66.

stresses of the period, gender concerns were secondary to the ‘shared experience’ of poverty in many mining homes where the labours of men and women were mutually dependent rather than operating in rigidly separate spheres. This supports Angela John’s contention that the problems posed by the strikes and the depression had differing but not less serious implications for both sexes, men losing their status and routines, women frequently faced with additional work, but that in the Rhondda, the RLD evidences this could result in adjustments in power relationships within a marriage, a ‘shift towards a more equitable partnership.’⁸⁵ Masculinity in the performing of domestic tasks might simply have been the behaviour of men unaccustomed to, and uncomfortable in the women’s traditional workplace, in difficult times. Living in poor quality housing where the floors were strewn with sand, where coconut mats had to be beaten, tin baths had to be dragged in and out, where roads were mostly unpaved and miners’ clothes and boots brought in a lot of coaldust, the women worked so hard not because they were ‘obsessed’ with their housework as some historians suggest perhaps, but because they had to, to keep their homes functional.⁸⁶ In 1936 housework was still ‘the basis of existence for most women,’ noted the Porth Branch of the Co-operative Women’s Guild.⁸⁷

Despite women gaining the vote in 1928 and making advances in certain professions, this was largely irrelevant in the Rhondda’s coal community where opportunities for women’s paid work remained limited and mainly domestic, although a new light industry trading estate at Treforest built in 1937 was to provide hundreds of women’s jobs within a decade.⁸⁸ The raising of the school leaving age in 1918 from 12 to 14 years contributed to shifts in expectations it is argued, RLD testimonies evidencing parents determined to give their children ‘a better’ life, away from mining and domestic work. Phyllis Llewellyn born

⁸⁵ John, 82.

⁸⁶ Crook, 40-45

⁸⁷ *The Rhondda Clarion*, 5, November 1936.

⁸⁸ Beddoe, p. 82.

in Porth, in 1915, was one of nine children.⁸⁹ ‘Out of the nine, seven received a grammar school education and all four boys got apprenticeships,’ she said.⁹⁰ One of the girls went to university and Phyllis herself trained as a nurse.⁹¹ Maureen Cotter’s father took out a bank loan of £200 for her to study accountancy at college in Cardiff.⁹² The sacrifices these parents must have made shows the high value mining families placed on education as a way out perhaps. There are examples too of young people simply ‘living’ a little more than the previous generation, going out to dances, going to the cinema, ‘seeing the sights’ in London, joining political groups. Many were clear they did not want their parents’ lives.⁹³ But on balance, considering RDL testimonies, little had changed by 1939 in the daily ‘lived lives’ of the Rhondda mining family in terms of the highly gendered division of labour.

⁸⁹ Phyllis Llewellyn, GUIW p.41.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Cotter, 1, p.13.

⁹³ Grenfell-Hill, p. 172

4. Poverty, Unemployment, and Maternal Health

Introduction

Chapter Four examines the impact of poverty and unemployment on the health of the family, through a study of some of its more vulnerable members, pregnant women, and infants. The chapter centres on mortality rates since these are acknowledged by historians as ‘sensitive indicators of the social and economic well-being of a population’.¹ Key questions ask why maternal and infant mortality rates were so high in the Rhondda compared to national figures, considering how far unemployment and poverty were causes, and the extent to which gender, environment, and cultural attitudes may have contributed. Contemporaries were divided, the argument continuing today amongst historians, in the so-called ‘healthy or hungry thirties’ debate, with which this chapter engages.² The discussion focuses on some of the more significant factors affecting maternal and infant mortality; poverty, poor health services, and the conservative and highly gendered culture of the coal community. The chapter draws on four main areas of primary sources, the oral histories and autobiographies of the RLD, Rhondda’s annual Reports of Medical Officers for Health, several Ministry of Health reports into maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, and social surveys into the welfare of the unemployed.³

¹ Samuel H Preston, ‘Population Studies of Mortality’, *Population Studies*, 50 (1996), 525, in Steven Thompson, *Unemployment, Poverty and Health in Interwar South Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), p. 9.

² Charles Webster, ‘Hungry or Healthy Thirties?’, *History Workshop*, 13 (1982), 110-29; J.M. Winter, ‘Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality and Public Health in Britain in the 1930s’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 8:2 (1979), 439-61; Margaret Mitchell, ‘The Effects of Unemployment on the Social Conditions of Women and Children in the 1930s’, *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1985), 105-27

³ RLD, Appendix 1; RMOH/RUDC, 1918-1939, Treorchy Ref Library; MH, *Report on Maternal Mortality in Wales 1936-37* [Cmd. 5423] (London: HMSO, 1937); MH, *Interim Report of Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity*, 32-293 (London: HMSO, 1930); *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: CUP, 1938); Eli Ginzberg, *A World Without Work: The Story of the Welsh*

The Dangers of Childbirth

Childbirth remained one of the main threats to women's health throughout the interwar years, with high maternal mortality 'a feature [...] everywhere in the Western world', according to fertility historian Irvine Loudon, the figures only declining after 1935.⁴ But Wales had consistently higher rates than the national average, 35% higher for the period 1924 to 1933, with levels higher still in the Rhondda, reaching 11.99 maternal deaths per 1000 live births in 1934, compared to 4.41 in England and Wales.⁵ Infant mortality figures, which had been declining nationwide since the start of the century, also remained significantly higher in the Rhondda, with the highest infant death rate of all the 'Distressed Areas', as Table 4.1 illustrates.⁶

Table 4:1, Infant Mortality 1920-39 (deaths of infants under one year of age per 1000 births)⁷

| | Rhondda Urban District | England and Wales |
|---------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1920-24 | 91.6 | 76.1 |
| 1925-29 | 82.6 | 70.9 |
| 1930-34 | 78.2 | 62.6 |
| 1935-39 | 66.8 | 55.3 |

Miners (London: Routledge, 2017), first published 1942; Wal Hannington, *The Problem of the Distressed Areas* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1937).

⁴ Irvine Loudon, 'Maternal mortality in the past and its relevance to developing countries today', *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Vol 72:1 (2000), 241S–246S.

⁵ 'Investigation of Maternal Mortality; The Ministry's Reports', *BMJ*, 1:3983 (May 8, 1937), 972-76; MH [Cmd. 5423], 1937.

⁶ *WM*, 31 January 1929, p. 9; Thompson, Appendix 8.2, p. 262.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Health visitors' notes hint at the squalor in which many women gave birth; 'abnormal number of flies in the house', 'insanitary conditions', 'overcrowding', 'unfed', 'not well from birth', 'abnormal conditions of mother', and 'difficult birth'.⁸ The scale of infant deaths in England and Wales was striking, some sixteen percent of total deaths in 1920.⁹ Although by no means a robust statistical comparison, anecdotally the RLD shows a similarly high frequency, with ten of the seventy families recalling one or more incidents of infant deaths, around fourteen percent.¹⁰ Eileen Kelly of Ferndale, in her autobiography, writes of a relative who lost nine babies out of thirteen pregnancies, all under one month, while Gwendoline Pearce's mother, of Ynysbwl, lost three infants, and Trelewis miner Walter Davies describes in his autobiography, a relentless series of infant and toddler deaths endured by his mother over a twenty-year period, the dead children remembered each birthday, curly-headed infants smiling from treasured mantelpiece photographs.¹¹

Poverty and Malnutrition

Poverty and unemployment in the coal mining family, at its most fundamental level, meant less money for food, with poor diet and malnutrition contributing to the general poor state of women's health and fitness for child bearing, argue some historians.¹² Contemporary social observers and health campaigners also made the link, Pilgrim Trust investigators, in

⁸ RMOH/RUDC, 1919, p.35.

⁹ *The State of Public Health: Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health 1920*, [Cmd. 1397], p.11.

¹⁰ RLD, Appendix 1.

¹¹ Eileen Kelly, *A Family History from the Rhondda*; (Chepstow; c.1962), p.7, see Appendix 3; Gwendoline Pearce, RRP, Appendix 4; Walter Hayden Davies, *The Right Time, The Right Place* (Swansea: Triskel, 1975), p. 60.

¹² Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 94; Mitchell, 115.

their 1938 report, *Men Without Work*, citing evidence suggesting 3,200 women were dying each year in childbirth because of the effects of malnutrition, nervous strain, and lack of health services.¹³ The official view however remained one of ‘relentless optimism’, that there was no connection between low income and malnutrition, that rising living standards characterised the condition of the unemployed, and that where problems arose this was due to a lack of professional medical services.¹⁴

In this national debate one of the strongest pieces of evidence to emerge linking poverty, inadequate diet, and maternal mortality, came from the Rhondda in a pioneering feeding project for pregnant and nursing mothers. In 1933, in response to growing concerns over the Rhondda’s high maternal death rate, Lady Rhys Williams and the National Birthday Trust Fund, in conjunction with Rhondda Urban District Council, set up a scheme to improve medical services.¹⁵ A resident obstetrics specialist ran free antenatal clinics and home visits, refresher training was provided for midwives, London’s Queen Charlotte Hospital loaned two Superintendent Midwife Sisters, and free disinfectant was provided for all confinements, but to Lady Williams’ surprise ‘in spite of all these efforts, the number of puerperal deaths continued to rise throughout the year 1934, and reached a peak figure of 11.29.’¹⁶ It was decided at the start of 1935, therefore, to supplement the original scheme by supplying free food to particularly impoverished mothers ‘with the sole object [...] to save [...] lives,’ mothers such as Mrs K from Wattstown with her husband and five children found by the project to be living off of 2s. 2d. per head per week for all food and clothing, a Mrs O from Treherbert with her husband and six children on 2s. 9d. per head, and a Mrs M of Cwmparc with 3s. 8d. to feed a family of five for the

¹³ Pilgrim Trust, p 139; Hannington, p. 54; Margaret Llewelyn Davies, *Maternity: Letters from Working Women’s Co-operative Guild* (London 1915) p.5; Margery Spring Rice, *Working Class Wives: Health and Conditions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), p.128.

¹⁴ Mitchell, 105.

¹⁵ Lady Rhys Williams, ‘Malnutrition as a Cause of Maternal Mortality’, *Public Health*, October 1936, 11-9.

¹⁶ Lady Williams, 11

week, 1s. 10d. per head, all three families far short of the stated BMA minimum income essential for health.¹⁷ The results of the free feeding were dramatic, Rhondda's maternal death rate dropping from 11.29 in 1934 to 4.77 in 1935.¹⁸ Some 1080 Rhondda mothers received food under the scheme, as well as iron and vitamin supplements and a pint of fresh milk daily for the final three months of pregnancy.¹⁹

The Rhondda feeding experiment, it is argued, provides persuasive evidence that malnutrition was a contributory factor in high maternal mortality rates in the locality, and is a clear example of where local and national experiences differed, emphasising that this was still a period of 'patchwork' health provision in which charities might play a vital role. Local authorities rather than national, dealt with health concerns explaining in part why the RUDC took a different line, extending the feeding programme to Aberdare, Caerphilly, Gelligaer, Llantrissant, and Pontypridd. Underlining the divergence in local and national experience, when Rhondda's Medical Officer sent a copy of Lady Williams' report to the Ministry of Health he was advised 'the Minister did not desire any lengthy reference to Lady Williams' speculations.'²⁰

Studies by Macnicol and Mayhew show how the drive to improve nutritional standards and the health of the nation became highly politicised issues in the interwar years, the diet of working-class families subject to much scrutiny.²¹ Experts used the 'newer knowledge of nutrition' to formulate minimum subsistence level diets, setting nutritionally based poverty lines.²² Pregnant women were advised to have a pint of fresh milk daily, which, at

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lady Williams, 11-12.

¹⁹ Lady Williams, p. 13.

²⁰ Mitchell, 115.

²¹ John Macnicol, (1977), *The Movement for Family Allowances in Britain, 1918-45*. PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 112; Madeleine Mayhew, 'The 1930s Nutrition Controversy', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23:3 (1988), 445-64

²² Mayhew, 449.

4s.1d. a week, would have taken much of the family's weekly food budget.²³ Other recommendations that all family members eat 1d. of fresh fruit and vegetables a day and have porridge as a nutritious breakfast instead of the traditional bread and tea, were equally impractical if not impossible for the unemployed Rhondda mining family on 27s.3d.a week, often without even the most basic cooking utensils.²⁴ Those in employment fared little better, with average earnings at 30s. a week according to the Pilgrim Trust.²⁵ How this affected pregnant women and infants might be gauged from reports of malnutrition in the local press. The headline, 'Hungry Babes', in 1921, for example, warned of mothers and babies 'in dire distress, many [...] in extremis, owing to the poverty created through the prolongation of the coal stoppage,' while other reports told of mothers feeding infants sugar water, unable to produce milk due to malnourishment.²⁶ That this was common, is evidenced in similar reports across the valleys. Dr Mary Scott attending the New Tredegar Infant Welfare Centre, noted undernourished women, their breast milk failing, while Dr Elizabeth Cameron, at the Risca centre, wrote of; 'only too many mothers [...] growing thinner and more pinched from week to week', and 'fainting, entirely due to lack of proper food.'²⁷

Women were frequently blamed by the government and also the press, for the hunger in mining homes, with letters complaining that 'a large portion of colliers' womenfolk do not know how to cook', reflecting a commonly held view among some, that there was no real poverty and hunger, only ignorance about nutrition and household management.²⁸

Testimonies from the RLD evidence that mining community women were actually often highly adept at providing family meals from very little. Mrs William Rosser Jones of

²³ Nutrition Committee Report', *BMJ*, 1933, 4-6.

²⁴ Ibid; Thompson, Appendix 1.2, p. 253-4; Hannington, pp. 65, 67, 69

²⁵ Pilgrim Trust, p. 204.

²⁶ *RL*, Thursday May 12, 1921, pp. 4 & 7.

²⁷ *Public Health in Wales (1800-200): A Brief History*, Pamela Michael for the Chief Medical Officer for Wales (Cardiff: Welsh National Assembly Government, 2008), 14.

²⁸ *WM*, 29 October 1918, p.2.

Maerdy could feed a family of seven for three days on 4 lb. of the cheapest cut, streaky bacon, from the Ferndale butcher at 2½d. per 1 lb, while Gwilym Williams of Treherbert described how his wife would buy a legbone for 3d. to do two days' meals for a family of eight.²⁹ Advertisements were aimed at budget-squeezed housewives needing cheap, quick, filling food for their families; *Borwicks Egg Substitute*, at 1d. per packet, was 'always fresh, and cheaper than eggs'.³⁰ That the diets of the Rhondda unemployed mining families were increasingly restricted is evidenced in a series of surveys of Rhondda household budgets, in Tonypany, Trealaw and Penygraig, by the *Journal of Agriculture* in 1935, which found families bought less nutritious food, opting for bulky, filling, cheaper items, as employment became long term.³¹ Official enquiries had found much the same, the Ministry of Health reporting in 1928 that unemployed households existed 'chiefly on a diet of white bread, margarine, potatoes, sugar, tea, jam, tea and bacon 'in limited quantity'.³² 'Fresh milk was not seen by us except when provided from a welfare clinic, the usual milk being skimmed condensed,' it added.³³ Social surveys reported diets verging on starvation in some unemployed miners' homes, while the Pilgrims Trust observed meals often consisted solely of bread.³⁴

Whilst this establishes that diets were frequently inferior, evidence from the RLD also suggests a culture of gendered food distribution in the home, that when there was not enough, the women went without. Maggie Pryce Jones of Trelewis recalled numerous times her mother assured her father she had 'eaten earlier, Lew' as she served dinner to the family, while Beatrice Wood of Dowlais, remembered her mother making do with half a

²⁹ Mrs William Rosser Jones, SWCC AUD/181; Gwilym Williams, SWCC AUD/186.

³⁰ *ME*, December 8 1934, p. 18.

³¹ E.L Harry and J.R.E Phillips, 'Household Budgets in the Rhondda Valley', *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, XIII (1937), 81-93

³² MH, *Report on Investigation in the Coalfield of South Wales and Monmouthshire* [Cmd.3272], 1928-29, viii, p.6.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Pilgrim Trust, p. 135; Hannington, p.58.

lemon and water, ostensibly for a sore throat, so that the children and dad could have larger shares of the frugal family dinner, a ‘tuppance ha’penny loaf’ and dripping.³⁵ ‘The children are hungry, the men are hungry, but most hungry of all are the women,’ observed visiting American economist Eli Ginzberg.³⁶ That women bore the brunt of the deterioration in the family diet caused by unemployment, must, it is argued, have affected maternal health with many cases of women ‘literally starving themselves in order to feed and clothe the children.’³⁷

There is persuasive evidence it is concluded that malnutrition was most likely a significant contributory factor in the Rhondda’s high maternal mortality rates, and it is reasonable to assert this lack of food was a direct result of chronic underemployment and unemployment in the locality. As has been shown, RLD testimonies repeatedly emphasise how little money there was for food, how they ‘made something out of nothing’, how they borrowed from neighbours, how they went without.³⁸

A Culture of Large Families

The RLD illustrates how mining families in the Rhondda were typically large. Doreen May Thomas of Williamstown was one of eleven, miner’s wife Beatrice Davies had seven children, while Walter Davies recalled a family of twenty-two in his village, his mother the midwife delivering the last.³⁹ It was not uncommon for women to still be giving birth in their fifties. Mildred Evans of Pen-y-Graig, was number eleven, ‘the baby of the family born when Mam was 54’, while Jennifer Alexander, married to a colliery winder at

³⁵ Maggie Pryce Jones, *Kingfisher of Hope* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993), p.59; Beatrice Wood, *Wednesday’s Child* (Port Talbot: Alun Books, 1989), pp. 31-2.

³⁶ Ginzberg, p. 37.

³⁷ Pilgrim Trust, pp.112 and 133.

³⁸ Wood, pp.83 &39; Phyllis Burman, RRP.

³⁹Doreen Thomas, RRP; Beatrice Davies, *Women of the Rhondda*, BFI; Walter Davies, p.60.

Ynyswen, had twin girls at the age of 51, her eleventh and twelfth children.⁴⁰ It is argued that in a culture of large families, the physical strain of multiple childbirth over two, sometimes three, decades, coupled with the wife's heavy domestic workload in a mining home, as discussed in Chapter Three, (a frequently unhealthy environment, overcrowded, damp and ill-ventilated), may collectively have contributed to Rhondda's higher maternal and infant death rates, compared to other localities, supporting Dot Jones' study of the Rhondda mining women in an earlier period, 1881 to 1911, in which she found working class women's mortality rates were four times higher than men working down the mines.⁴¹ While the maternal death rate was high, the disablement rate through childbirth was higher still, and this, too, meant mothers and infants were left susceptible to ill-health and death it is argued. It was reported in the *Lancet* that ten percent of all pregnancies resulted in disability, 'a conservative estimate', with many women bearing 'in silence minor lesions which may prove fatal later.'⁴² Surveys by the Women's Cooperative Guild and the National Birth Control Association supported this, finding common impairments included broken pelvis, prolapsed uterus, and tears and injuries through clumsy use of medical instruments.⁴³ Mothers accepted these injuries 'stoically', frequently compounding the problems by returning prematurely to domestic duties, or were left weakened through prolonged undernourishment.⁴⁴ Maggie Pryce Jones recalled; 'It was many months before Mam recovered sufficiently to walk as far as the front door', after the birth of her fifth child, while testimonies in the RLD talk of women who 'age themselves before they should', Maggie observing her mother 'wasn't old really, she just looked it.'⁴⁵ These

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Grenfell Hill (ed), *Growing Up In Wales 1895-1939 GUIW* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1996), pp. 14 and 163.

⁴¹ Dot Jones, 'Counting the Cost of Coal: Women's Lives in the Rhondda, 1881-1911', in *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History, 1830-1939*, ed. by Angela John (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 110-33.

⁴² *Lancet*, June 13 1931, 1279,

⁴³ Llewelyn Davies, pp. 83-8; Margery Spring Rice, pp. 80-1, & 93

⁴⁴ Dame Janet Campbell, in Spring Rice, pp. x-xii.

⁴⁵ Pryce Jones, pp. 53; Coombes, p.11.

testimonies consistently evidence a gendered culture where women's health interests came last in the home, in their roles as mothers often bearing sole responsibility for the feeding and health of the family.

Medical Services

Another key contributory factor to the high rate of maternal and infant mortality in the Rhondda was the lack of medical services. Ante-natal care and hospital facilities in the Rhondda and across Wales in the interwar years, were particularly poor at the start of the period, with nearly all births taking place at home, an estimated 92.5%, between 1930 and 1936.⁴⁶ Many could not afford the estimated £5 cost of a professional midwife for confinement, reliant instead on the services of a local woman who, for a couple of shillings, commonly 'did' for both births and deaths in the community.⁴⁷ While midwives had to be trained and registered under the 1902 Midwives Act, nearly one fifth in the Rhondda were untrained according to the 1924 Medical Officer's report, allowed to continue through having already been in practice when the act came into force.⁴⁸ As late as 1937 attention was still being drawn to the 'inadequacy' of some midwives' with the MH Report on Maternal Mortality in Wales finding a significant number attending births, unclean, and lacking necessary equipment.⁴⁹ These, by now elderly, untrained midwives might reasonably be supposed to have, at times, adversely affected birth outcomes. Of the 5,046 births in the Rhondda in 1920, the majority, 4,290 were attended by midwives only, a doctor only sought as a last resort, usually after a prolonged labour, a culture which might also have contributed to deaths, it is argued.⁵⁰ Certainly Eileen Kelly's mother

⁴⁶ Michael, 14; Lady Williams, 11.

⁴⁷ Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), p. 25; Mildred Evans, *GUIW* p. 165.

⁴⁸ RUDC RMOH 1924, p. 30.

⁴⁹ *MH, Report on Maternal Mortality in Wales 1936-37* [Cmd. 5423] (London: HMSO, 1937), p. 32.

⁵⁰ RUDC RMOH 1920, pp. 30-1.

blamed the midwife for not seeking a doctor's help in a difficult lengthy labour culminating in her infant's stillbirth at home in 1930.⁵¹ Often the only pain relief was a towel knotted around the end of the bed on which the mother pulled hard when she felt a spasm of pain; Eileen Kelly remembered her mother having to 'just get on with it.'⁵² The majority of births would have been without complications but if they did arise under these basic conditions, it is perhaps not surprising that so many mining women died of Puerperal fever, or 'bed-fever' as it was commonly known, 'the septic infection of the lying-in woman'.⁵³ Dr Jenkins, Medical Officer for the Rhondda for much of the 1920s noted that infection was frequent and that conditions at many of the homes made strict antiseptic methods 'an ideal [...] difficult to attain'.⁵⁴ Women's health also suffered from the fact that most of the Rhondda's limited medical facilities were for men only, attached to collieries, such as the Pentywyn Hospital built for workmen and officials of the Ocean Company collieries in Treorchy and Ton Pentre.⁵⁵ A small general hospital was built in Treherbert in 1927, funded by local miners' subscriptions and the Miners' Welfare Fund, which provided a limited number of gynaecology beds, while a former workhouse in Llwynypia was converted into a general hospital with a small maternity unit for the whole of the Rhondda in the same year. Successive reports of Rhondda's medical officers called for more women's beds, Llwynypia remaining the only maternity hospital for the Rhondda throughout the interwar period, while women were also excluded from the 1911 National Insurance Scheme, which allowed working men to consult a doctor free of charge.⁵⁶

The development of Wales's public health service is beyond the scope of this study but that access to maternity care in the Rhondda did improve during the interwar years, can be

⁵¹ Kelly, p.74.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ RUDC RMOH, 1920, p. 36.

⁵⁴ RUDC RMOH, 1920, p. 35.

⁵⁵ Lisa Jane Snook (2002); *Women in Rhondda society, c.1870 - 1939*. PhD Thesis, Swansea University, p. 165

⁵⁶ RUDC RMOH, 1920, p. 35; 1928, p.36; 1934, p.36; 1939, p.31 .

seen in the increasing number of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres in the valleys, under the 1918 Maternity Act. By 1920 the Rhondda had its first centre, at Ystrad. A second, in Ynyshir, was established in 1924, so that both the upper and lower Rhondda were serviced, and by 1939, Medical Officers' reports detail five welfare centres and clinics, at Treorchy, Ystrad, Trealaw, Ynyshir and Ferndale, with six ante-natal sessions a week, and 1,849 expectant mothers attending in 5,947 visits to the clinic over the year.⁵⁷ But while availability of medical care for mothers and babies was increasing in the Rhondda, the clinics were initially neither popular nor well used. Just eighteen expectant mothers attended the Ystrad clinic for advice in its first year.⁵⁸ It is suggested the culture of the community was a factor in keeping women away and may have therefore contributed to the high maternal mortality rates.

Cultural Barriers to Healthcare

It was hard, noted Rhondda miner's daughter and Labour party activist Elizabeth Andrews, to overcome cultural ideas about gender in the community, specifically the 'old-fashioned idea that mothers knew all about motherhood by instinct and needed no advice'.⁵⁹ Women were also deterred by legal restrictions which limited birth control advice to married women, and only if pregnancy threatened their health. Grenfell Hill suggests some women also stayed away from clinics because it was not quite 'respectable' to be seen in public whilst obviously pregnant, and there is evidence of this attitude in the RLD.⁶⁰ Eileen Kelly recalled how her mother hid her pregnancy in 1930, 'under voluminous pinafores...as though ...something to be ashamed of...she never went out in the day, not even to the

⁵⁷ RUDC RMOH 1939, p.43.

⁵⁸ RUDC RMOH 1920, p.27.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Andrews, *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, (Cardiff: Honno Ltd, 2006), p. 42.

⁶⁰ Jeffrey Grenfell Hill (1993), *Mothers and Infants in South Wales, 1900-1930*, PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, p. 371.

clinic ...only going for walks when it was quite dark.’⁶¹ This was a common attitude in Ferndale, Eileen remembered, where ‘the mother-to-be’s condition was referred to in hushed tones’, and many, like Mrs Kelly, did not attend the clinic three miles down the valley at Ynyshir, relying mainly on a local ‘woman’ if available to ‘check’ the baby’.⁶² In the mining valleys of South Wales, the impact of a chapel or church upbringing inhibited girls’ discussion about, and understanding of, the functions of their bodies.⁶³ As Eileen recalled, ‘Some mothers, even when they were in labour, had no idea of what to expect, even believing in some cases that the baby would emerge through the naval.’⁶⁴

There was little women could do in the prevailing culture, to prevent conception without the cooperation of their husbands. Mair McLellan of Pentre recalled her mother’s anger at her father, and the silent tension in the home, when mother fell pregnant again, her fears that it would be ‘one more mouth to feed’ one more child to clothe.⁶⁵ Lewis argues that working class women viewed abortion as ‘a natural and permissible strategy’ for managing family size, believing they were simply bringing on a late period, especially if they were using ‘traditional’ methods passed on by mothers, neighbours or friends, advice such as jumping up and down, taking a hot bath, or drinking elm bark tea.⁶⁶ The 1932 Report on Maternal Mortality in Wales noted increasing concern about admissions to Llwynypia Hospital of women with injuries associated with attempted abortions, while newspaper reports tell of women who died or were injured seeking abortions.⁶⁷ Failed abortions accounted for a significant number of maternal mortalities; thirteen percent of the

⁶¹ Kelly, p.73.

⁶² Kelly, p. 74.

⁶³ Grenfell Hill Thesis, 70-3.

⁶⁴ Kelly, p.73.

⁶⁵ MacLellan, SOS, pp. 226-6.

⁶⁶ Lewis, p. 16.

⁶⁷MH 1932 [Cmd.5423], p. 74; *WM*, 24 November 1922, p.6.

maternal deaths in Rhondda between 1923 and 1929.⁶⁸ Rhondda's first birth control clinic did not open until 1935, but was reportedly 'underused' despite treatment being free, reflecting the view of many, that artificial limitation of births was both immoral and distasteful.⁶⁹ Condoms were not widely available outside the clinics, and would have been costly, as well as unacceptable on cultural and religious grounds for many in the valleys. Eileen and Maureen Kelly in Ferndale recalled their parents as 'prudes' and 'innocents', when it came to matters of sex, although this was their recollection as adults looking back to their childhoods and they may well have been unaware of their parents' actual views.⁷⁰ Mr and Mrs Kelly were strict Catholics but they were also reportedly a loving, communicating couple, which suggests they may have come to their own personal arrangement regarding family size acceptable to both their consciences and their resources, to settle with four children.⁷¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, the personal relationship of parents, quite literally the state of their marriage, could be a major factor in the family's ability to weather the economic hardships of the period, and if parents had a tacit agreement to prevent pregnancies, then this would also have benefitted the woman's health as well as the family finances.

Perhaps the key change in medical care for pregnant women in the Rhondda and nationwide was the introduction of new antibiotics, sulfonamides, highly effective against *Streptococcus* infection, alongside the introduction of penicillin, blood transfusions, and better anaesthesia.⁷² Louden argues persuasively that this was the main reason for the 'sudden' and 'profound' decline in maternal and infant mortality in the mid-1930s and reflected in Rhondda's medical records by 1939.⁷³

⁶⁸ MH 1932 [Cmd.5423], p. 74.

⁶⁹ RUDC RMOH, 1935, p.44; Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p.86.

⁷⁰ Kelly, pp.14-5; Cotter, 1, p. 16.

⁷¹ Kelly, p.78.

⁷² Louden, 243S

⁷³ RUDC RMOH 1939

Conclusion

In considering how far maternal and infant mortality was affected by the depression and the collapse of the coal industry in the Rhondda, the historian is faced with two opposing interpretations, 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic', neither of which, this study argues, adequately explains the Rhondda's experience. Winter does not sufficiently take into account regional inequalities in infant mortality, it is argued, and the fact that the depressed areas of South Wales experienced a significantly slower rate of improvement in infant mortality than England and Wales, and in the Rhondda no improvement at all until the late 1930s.⁷⁴ Moreover, in the light of substantial 'eye-witness' testimonies recounting the health impact of the economic hardship felt by mining families in the RLD, this study agrees with Webster that 'it is perverse' perhaps, to suggest the interwar economic depression did not adversely affect standards of health. Webster's traditional narrative however, which presents ill-health and disease as evidence of the effects of mass unemployment and deep poverty in the SWCF, is perhaps too simplistic. There were 'positives' in Rhondda's interwar health experience for mothers and infants, as has been shown, as well as other 'positives' outside the scope of this study but which were equally significant; improved standards of housing and sanitation in the Rhondda, the decreased threat of infectious diseases (a trend which had started before the 1920s), and an increase in consumption of milk and other nutritious foods as food prices declined in the interwar years. Maternal mortality declined sharply at the end of the period, due in the Rhondda to a plurality of factors it is argued; advances in medical knowledge, rising living standards, and changes in cultural attitudes towards family planning with a trend towards smaller families, meaning fewer deaths and injuries in childbirth, the Glamorgan medical officer

⁷⁴ Winter, 461-2.

noting a 'revolution' in attitudes towards childhood with a tendency to smaller families.⁷⁵

It is reasonable to assume smaller families meant less mental anxiety and stress, coupled with an improving financial situation for most Rhondda mining families in the latter end of the period. In conclusion the precise effects of the mass unemployment and underemployment on the health of pregnant women and infants in Rhondda's mining communities, are perhaps more complex than traditional historiography suggests. While many of the factors affecting mortality rates existed before the period, it is reasonable to argue that the unemployment and poverty of the interwar years may have made a hard life, harder still, felt all too painfully by the mining families, in the deaths of its mothers and babies.

⁷⁵ Glamorgan CC, RMOH 1930, p.21.

5. Conclusion

Summary

This study set out to examine the experiences of the Rhondda mining family between the wars, a period frequently portrayed as one of mass unemployment, poverty, hunger marches and industrial unrest, but also an era characterised by a re-emphasis of gender roles and of the domestic ideology. The study considered how far these narratives were a 'lived reality' in the everyday lives of the Rhondda coal community, drawing primarily on seventy personal testimonies from oral histories, film documentaries, and autobiographical writings, the 'voices from below' integral to the study's approach. Chapter Two provided economic and industrial background, highlighting the 'local/national' dynamic, the national issues regarding the coal industry and the specific characteristics of the Rhondda mines and communities. Chapters Three and Four focussed on work and health experiences. Frequently the first response of unemployed miners' families was for women to seek paid work, usually an extension of their domestic duties, washing, cleaning, cooking, and mending. Unemployed men found a variety of ways to supplement incomes, growing food, picking coal, mending and fixing in the house and community. Men tended not to help with domestic labour, seen as 'women's work'. The domestic ideology remained the prevailing culture the study found, but experiences were nuanced in that the labours of men and women in the mining home were mutually dependent, fostering a sense of partnership 'behind closed doors', rather than of rigid separate spheres.

Chapter Four examined maternal and infant mortality rates as a sensitive barometer of the health of the family, considering to what extent they were the result of poverty and unemployment, and how far other factors such as environment, culture and gender, played a part, a key debate among contemporaries and historians ever since. It was concluded

there were various contributory factors to the Rhondda's higher mortality figures including poverty, a lack of health services, a conservative culture, and a tendency for large families.

Summing up, neither the 'pessimistic' nor 'optimistic' interpretations adequately fitted the Rhondda's experiences the study found, with the effects of poverty and unemployment on the mining family more complex than the perhaps over-simplified historiographies of 'separate spheres', and the 'healthy or hungry thirties', recognised.

Further Research

This dissertation has focussed on the interwar years, but the RRP recordings also cover the period of the Second World War up to 1970, making it possible to extend this study of gendered experiences within the Rhondda mining family, in particular to examine the experiences of working-class women in the mid twentieth century. It would be possible perhaps to compare women's post war experiences as wives, mothers and workers, in 1918 and 1945. Elizabeth Roberts in her oral history studies of the period 1940-70, concluded that while there were changes in attitudes about women's primary role in the domestic sphere, nevertheless 'home and family [...] remained the dominant concerns in women's lives', while Deirdre Beddoe's studies of Welsh women's history found the post-Second World War years to be an 'oppressive' time in the history of women's lives in Britain⁷⁶ Both studies would provide a useful starting point for further research into the gendered division of labour and experiences of health care within the Rhondda working class family, and could therefore add to the historiography of modern Wales.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Roberts, 'Women and Families. An Oral History, 1940-1970 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 239; Deirdre Beddoe, 'Jobs, Gadgets and the Pill, 1945-1970' in *Out of the Shadows, A History of Women in Twentieth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 135-158.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the effects of poverty and unemployment on the health and working patterns of the mining family, considering gendered differences in experiences, were perhaps more complex and subtle than the historiography of the period recognises, and were very much shaped by the specific nature and characteristics of the community and locality, the Rhondda. This study has sought, through careful engagement with a large number of personal testimonies, to gain some insight to the everyday lives in the Rhondda's coalmining families during this period, building on the work of Thompson and others, to bring what Elizabeth Andrews terms 'the human factor' into historical analysis of the mass unemployment in the South Wales mining communities which characterised the interwar period.⁷⁷ In considering the 'human factor', frequently the RLD illustrated lives emphatically not dominated by unemployment and poverty. While not downplaying the significance of the sheer depth and extent of the poverty experienced in the 1920s and 1930s the study found this was a part of the family's daily lives rather than the totality as suggested by some historians.⁷⁸ In the RLD families talk of birthdays, picnics, Christmas, schooldays, sporting events – of normal family life. Taking a random sample of the *Rhondda Leader* from these two decades, the reader is struck by the fact that its pages are not dominated by stories of disputes, deprivation, unemployment, and hunger, contrary to the popular perception of the interwar years. As some historians have gently pointed out, the period was a time of advance and progress as well as of poverty and struggles.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Andrews, *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, (Cardiff: Honno Ltd, 2006), p.38.

⁷⁸ Gwyn A. Williams, *When was Wales?* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 253; Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford: OUP, 1981), pp. 210-40; D. Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2000), pp.17-31, 46-53.

⁷⁹ Andy Croll, 'Poverty, Mass Unemployment and Welfare', in Chris Williams and Andy Croll (eds) *The Gwent County History: Volume 5: The Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 207-27 (208);

Seventy percent of the South Wales population was employed for the greater part of the period, illustrating what Aldcroft calls the ‘paradox of progress and poverty’ in Britain at this time.⁸⁰ And within the Rhondda, experiences could also vary, as Croll notes, ‘not all the Depressed Area was depressed’.⁸¹ ‘Normal’ life did continue in the Rhondda alongside and in spite of the hardships, the RLD evidencing that many people had little choice but to ‘settle down to life on the dole.’⁸²

⁸⁰ Stephen Thompson: Derek Aldcroft, *The Inter-war Economy: Britain, 1919-1939* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1970), p.385.

⁸¹ Croll, p. 207.

⁸² Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: CUP, 1938)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: RHONDDA LIVES DATABASE CONTENTS

(Note; Database provided in full, in Supplementary Material SM.1)

| <i>Source</i> | <i>No. of Testimonies</i> |
|--|---------------------------|
| Rhondda Reminiscence Project, RRP | 30 |
| South Wales Coalfield Collection, SWCC | 20 |
| Oral History Interviews (by author) | 1 |
| Autobiographies, published | 6 |
| Autobiographies, unpublished | 2 |
| Biography Collections, published | 7 |
| Film Documentary | 4 |

Details of Testimonies

RRP

Evan Davies * Lizzie Davies * Glenys Edwards* Doris Catheral* Rachel Reed

Edith Ismay Thurling * Doreen May Thomas * William Hugh Lewis * Margaret Griffiths

David Hallett * Ceinwin Baldwin * Gwendoline Radcliffe * Glyndwr Jones

Martha Jones * Rowena Hutchinson * Elizabeth Burman * Gwendoline Pearce

Ivor Morgan * Grace Wicks * Noel Reginald Ball * Mildred Loretta James

John Reynolds * Joan Davies * Vera Hughes * Elsie Eva Price * Ronald Bunston

Allen Jones * Laura Stride * Rev. Iris Thomas * Phyllis May Burman

SWCC

Lill Price * Ned Gittins * Merfyn Payne * Edgar Evans * Will 'Box' Thomas * Mr Morris

Mrs Morris * Dr John Thomas * William Rosser * Mrs J. Evans * Gwilym Williams

Mrs William Jones * Will Picton * Arthur Morgan * Trevor Davies * Dai Coity Jones

Mrs D. J. Davies * Ben Davies * Octavius Morgan * Mrs Trevor Davies

Oral History Interviews by Author (transcripts in Appendix 2)

Maureen Cotter nee Kelly born 1925

Two interviews, recorded at subject's home in Llanishen, March 1 2022, & June 6 2022.

Both interviews recorded in the presence of daughter Mairiona Cotter, with permission requested and given for full use of interviews and of the loaned unpublished autobiographies by Eileen Kelly and Margaret Cooper, permission transcribed.

Unpublished Autobiographies (copies lodged at Treorchy Reference Library)

Eileen Kelly, born 1922

Margaret Cooper, nee Condon, born 1931

Published Autobiographies

Elizabeth Andrews

Maggie Pryce Jones

Bert Coombes

Will Picton

Walter Hayden Davies

Beatrice Wood

Published Autobiographical Collections

In *Struggle or Starve*, White and Williams (eds), (Dinas Powys: Honno, 1998);

Lucy Arundell, born 1912

Mair Eluned MacLlellan, born 1928

Edith Davies, born 1907

Katie Pritchard, born 1907

In *Growing up in Wales*, Grenfell-Hill (ed.), (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1996);

Samuel Edmunds, born 1894

John Prior, born 1914

Mildred Evans, born 1920

Film

In *Women of the Rhondda*, directors Mary Capps and Mary Kelly (London: British Film Industry, 1971);

Doreen Adams, born c.1900

Mary Elizabeth Davey, born c. 1910

Alice Boxall, born 1916

Beatrice Davies, born 1894

APPENDIX 2. TRANSCRIPTS OF MAUREEN COTTER INTERVIEWS 1 & 2

Details

Maureen Cotter nee Kelly, dob 10.04.1925

Recordings made by Rebecca Davies, in the presence of, and with the kind permission Mrs Cotter's

daughter, Mairiona Cotter.

Interview 1, Recorded 1 March 2022, Llanishen, Cardiff.

Interview 2, Recorded 6 June 2022, Llanishen, Cardiff.

Full transcripts of these interviews are contained in the Supplementary Materials, SM. 2

APPENDIX 3. UNPUBLISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Cooper, Margaret, dob, 1931, *A Picture of What Life was Like Growing up in the Rhondda* (Blaenllechau: c.1973)

Typed manuscript, 31 pages

Original held by Maureen Cotter (see Appendix 2). Copy held by author and lodged at Treorchy Reference Library.

Kelly, Eileen, dob 02.02.1922, *A Family History from the Rhondda* (Chepstow; c.1962)

Typed manuscript, 80 pages

Original held by Maureen Cotter (Appendix 2). Copy held by author and lodged at Treorchy Reference Library.

*APPENDIX 4: RHONDDA REMINISCENCE PROJECT, PARTIAL
TRANSCRIPTS*

Interviews undertaken on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taff Library Service, by Gareth Gale in 2004 and 2005, and covering the period 1900-1950, a wider period than the interwar years' parameters of this dissertation.

The recordings were made on cassette tapes some of which have been transferred to CD. They are currently uncatalogued. They may be accessed via the library service where they are currently stored in Aberdare and Treorchy Reference Libraries.

Transcripts and notes of the recordings are not full transcriptions but excerpts relevant to the period and themes of this dissertation. These partial transcripts are available in Supplementary Materials, under SM:3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archival Material

Cardiff University Special Collections, Cardiff

Distress in the Mining Areas of Wales and South Monmouthshire, Powys: Welsh School of Social Science,(WG301928), (998947513402420)

Mrs D. Sim Williams Collection: Women's Archive of Wales, Letters and postcards (DWA36/43), (DWA36/30)

Welsh Journal of Agriculture, Vols. XII (1936), XIII (1937) and XV (1939) ,
Salisbury Collection
(993928993402420)

Glamorgan Archives, Leckwith, Cardiff

Maerdy Boys' School Logbook, 1908-1930, Document ER23/5

Rhondda Ferndale Boys' School Logbook, 1921-1963, Document ER/16/6

Ferndale Girls' School Logbook, 1916-1937, Document ER 16/7

Maerdy Infants' School Logbook, 1915-1960, Document ER/23/2

Housing Act, 1935, Overcrowding Survey, Reports on Form A, Ward 3, RUDC, Health Department, Documents UD/R MOH/ 15/2, UD/R MOH/15/3, and BO/R/M/7/3

Treorchy Reference Library/Archives

Treorchy Girls Junior School Logbook, 1925-1942, Document 3032770995

Rhondda Urban District Council Report of the Medical Officer of Health and School Medical

Officer for the Year 1918, (Rhondda,1918). Also for the Years 1919-1939 inclusive.

Government Sources

Parliamentary Papers

Coal industry Commission Volume 1: Report and Minutes of Evidence of the First Stage of the Inquiry [Cmd. 359] (London: HMSO, 1919)

Coal industry Commission Volume 2: Report and Minutes of Evidence of the Second Stage of the Inquiry [Cmd. 360] (London: HMSO, 1919)

Ministry of Health: Report on Investigation in the Coalfield of South Wales and Monmouthshire [Cmd.3272] (London: HMSO, 1929)

Ministry of Health, Report on Maternal Mortality in Wales 1936-37 [Cmd. 5423] (London: HMSO, 1937)

Ministry of Health: Interim Report of Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, 32-293 (London: HMSO, 1930)

Final Report of Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity (London: HMSO, 1932)

The State of Public Health: Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health 1920, [Cmd. 1397] (London: HMSO, 1921)

Ministry of Labour; Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Conditions of Certain Depressed Areas [Cmd.4728] (London: HMSO, 1934)

Report of the Industrial Transference Board 1928, [Cmd. 3156] (London: HMSO, 1929)

Report of the Unemployment Assistance Board for the Period Ended 31 December 1935 [Cmd. 5177] (London: HMSO, 1936)

First Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales) [Cmd. 4957] (London: HMSO, 1935)

Third Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas (England and Wales), November 1936, [Cmd. 5503] (London: HMSO, 1936)

Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas in England and Wales for the Year Ended 30th September 1937 [Cmd. 5595] (London: HMSO, 1938)

An Industrial Survey of South Wales: Made for the Board of Trade by University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (London: HMSO, 1932)

Hansard

Hansard, HL, 5th Series, 20 December 1934, Vol 95, cols 653-78

Hansard, Coalmines (Checkweighers) Bill, HC Deb 07 May 1909 vol 4 cc1341-83

Published Reports

An Industrial Survey of South Wales: Made for the Board of Trade by University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (London: HMSO, 1932)

‘British Medical Association Report of Committee on Nutrition’, *British Medical Journal*, 2: 3803, Supplement, 25 November 1933

Life in South Wales Today: Third Annual Report of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service 1936-37 (Cardiff, 1937)

Williams, Lady Rhys, ‘Malnutrition as a Cause of Maternal Mortality’, *Public Health*, October 1936, 11-19

Books

Ginzberg, Eli, *A World Without Work: The Story of the Welsh Miners; with foreword by Thomas Jones* (London: Routledge, 2017) First published 1942, by Harper and Brothers, as *Grass on the Slagheaps*

Hannington, Wal, *The Problem of the Distressed Areas* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1937)

Jennings, Hilda, *Brynmawr: A Study of a Distressed Area* (London: 1934)

Llewelyn Davies, Margaret, *Maternity: Letters from Working Women's Co-operative Guild* (London: Virago, 1978), First published 1915

Lush, Archie, *The Young Adult in South Wales; Being a Report Prepared in Co-operation with Young Men in Cardiff, Newport and Pontypridd, Under the Auspices of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust* (Cardiff; University of Wales Press/South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service, 1941)

Meara, Gwynne, *Juvenile Unemployment in South Wales* (Cardiff: Cardiff University, 1936)

Philips, Marion, *Women and the Miners Lockout: The Story of the Women's Committee for the Relief of Miners' Wives and Children* (London, 1927)

Spring Rice, Margery, *Working Class Wives: Health and Conditions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939)

Temple, William, *Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge: CUP, 1938)

Fiction

Davies, Rhys, 'Nightgown', in *The Selected Stories of Rhys Davies* (Parthion Books: Cardigan, 2017), 'Nightgown' written in 1942

Jones, Gwynn, *Times Like These* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1979) First published 1936

Newspapers

Merthyr Express

Monmouthshire Free Press

Rhondda Clarion

Rhondda Leader

South Wales Argus

South Wales Evening Post

South Wales Gazette

The Times

Western Mail

Journals/Magazines

British Medical Journal

Colliery Workers' Magazine

Geographical Magazine

Lancet

Listener

Ocean and National Magazine

Public Health

Spectator

Welsh Journal of Agriculture

Journal Articles

Frazer W.M., 'Overcrowding and the Housing Act, 1935', *Public Health*, 49 (1935), 50-56.

Harry, E. L., 'Consumption of Milk in a Distressed Area of South Wales', *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, XI (1935), pp. 23-48

Harry, E. L., 'Meat Consumption in the Rhondda Valley', *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, XII (1936), 69-86

Harry, E., L., 'The Consumption of Milkstuffs and Meatstuffs in the Rhondda Valley', *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, XIII (1937), 69-81

Harry, E. L., and Phillips, J. R. E., 'Household Budgets in the Rhondda Valley', *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, XIII (1937), 81-93

Phillips, J. R. E., 'Some Further Studies in Household Budgets in the Rhondda', *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, XV (1939), 29-40

Williams, Lady Rhys, 'Malnutrition as a Cause of Maternal Mortality', *Public Health*, October 1936, 11-19

Published Autobiographies

Andrews, Elizabeth, *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, (Cardiff: Honno Ltd, 2006) First published 1957

Coombes, B. L., *These Poor Hands: The Autobiography of a Miner Working in South Wales*

(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002) First published in 1939

Davies, Walter Hayden, *The Right Time, The Right Place* (Swansea: Triskel, 1975) First published 1972

Paynter, Will, *My Generation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1972)

Pryce Jones, Maggie, *Kingfisher of Hope* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993)

Wood, Beatrice, *Wednesday's Child* (Port Talbot: Alun Books, 1989)

Unpublished Autobiographies

Cooper, Margaret, dob, 1931, *A Picture of What Life was Like Growing up in the Rhondda* (Blaenllechau: c.1973), Original held by Maureen Cotter (see Oral Histories, Author's Interviews). Copy held by author, and copy lodged at Treorchy Reference Library

Kelly, Eileen, dob 02.02.1922, *A Family History from the Rhondda* (Chepstow; c.1962), Original held by her sister, Maureen Cotter (see Oral Histories). Copy held by author and copy lodged at Treorchy Reference Library

Film Sources

Today We Live, director Ralph Bond, producer Paul Rotha, (London: National Council for Social Service, 1937)

Women of the Rhondda, directors Mary Capps and Mary Kelly (London: British Film Industry, 1971)

Oral Sources

Rhondda Reminiscence Project, RRP. Uncatalogued recordings held at Treorchy Reference Library, Treorchy, Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Baldwin, Ceinwin, 17/09/1918

Ball, Noel Reginald, 27/06/1923

Bunston, Ronald, 08/04/1919

Burman, Elizabeth, 24/02/1924

Burman, Phyllis May, 25/10/1910

Catheral, Doris, 11/01/1923

Davies, Evan, 1890

Davies, Joan, 03/08/1922

Davies, Lizzie, 13/08/1910

Edwards, Glenys, 26/10/1921

Griffiths, Margaret, 25/10/1921

Hallett, Harold David, 13/04/1929

Hughes, Vera, 28/05/1919

Hutchinson, Rowena, 19/12/1920

James, Mildred Lauretta, 30/03/1925

Jones, Allen, 26/01/1919

Jones, Glyndwyr, 14/09/1925

Jones, Martha, 05/04/1915

Lewis, William Hugh, 04/01/1916

Morgan, Ivor, 03/11/1913

Pearce, Gwendoline, 04/03/1921

Price, Elsie, Eva, 16/09/1918

Radcliffe, Gwendoline, 22/02/1921

Reed, Rachel, 20/06/1930

Reynold, John, 20/10/1933

Stride, Laura, 07/04/1922

Thomas, Rev. Iris, 24/02/1918

Thomas, Doreen May, 13/05/1922

Thurling, Edith Ismay, 18/12/1917

Wicks, Grace, 14/11/1929

*South Wales Coalfield Collection, SWCC. Held at South Wales Miners
Library, Swansea University*

Davies, Ben, AUD/168

Davies, Dai Coity, AUD/247

Davies, Mr and Mrs D. J., AUD/394

Davies, Trevor, and Mrs Trevor, AUD/165

Evans, Edgar, AUD/212

Evans, John, Morgan, AUD/164

Evans, Mrs John Morgan, AUD/172

Fine, Reginald, and Mrs Fine, AUD/184 and AUD/185

Gittins, Ned, AUD/246

Jones, William Rosser and Mrs Jones, AUD/180 and AUD/181

Morgan, Arthur, AUD/182

Morgan, Octavius, AUD/191

Payne, Merfyn, AUD/395

Picton, Will, AUD/193 and AUD/194

Price, Goff and Lillian May, AUD/11

Price, Lillian May, AUD/448

Taylor, Mrs Edgar, AUD/167

Thomas, John, Dr, AUD/343

Thomas, William 'Box', AUD/195 and AUD/196

Williams, Frank, AUD/169

Williams, Gwilym, AUD/186

Williams, Maria, AUD/183

Oral Histories Recorded by the Author

Maureen Cotter nee Kelly, dob 10/04/1925

Recorded March 1, 2022, and June 6, 2022, at the interviewee's home, Llanishen, Cardiff.

Transcripts attached in Supplementary Materials

Secondary Sources*Books*

Aldcroft, Derek, *The Inter-war Economy: Britain, 1919-1939* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1970)

Amgueddfa Genedlaethol - National Museum of Wales, *O'r Gwaith I'r Gwely; A Woman's Work* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1994)

Beddoe, Deirdre, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000)

Borsay, Anne, and Sara Knight, *Medical Records for the South Wales Coalfield, c1890-1948* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007)

Bruley, Sue, *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010)

Burnett, John, *Idle Hands: The Experience of Unemployment 1790-1990* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Carpenter, David J., *Rhondda Collieries: Images of Wales* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2000)

Clarke, John, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson, eds, *Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory* (London: Hutchison, 1979)

Constantine, Stephen, *Unemployment in Britain Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1980)

Constantine, Stephen, *Social Conditions in Britain 1918-1939* (London: Methuen, 1983)

Davies, Russell, *Secret Sins, Sex, Violence and Society in Carmarthenshire 1870-1920* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996)

Egan, David, *Coal Society: A History of the South Wales Mining Valleys* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1992)

Evans, D.Gareth, *A History of Wales 1906-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000)

Foot, Michael, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, Volume 1: 1897 – 1945* (London: Faber, 2008)

Francis, Hywel, *Stories of Solidarity* (Talybont: YLolfa, 2018)

Francis, Hywel, and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980)

Fraser, Derek, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution* (London: MacMillan Education, fifth edition, 2014)

Gardiner, Juliet, *The Thirties: An Intimate History of Britain* (London: Harper Press, 2010)

Giles, Judy, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (London: Macmillan, 1995)

Gillis, John, *For Better for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: OUP, 1985)

Gittens, Dianne, *Fair Sex, Family Size and Structure, 1900-39* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1988),

Grenfell-Hill, Jeffrey, *Growing Up In Wales, 1895-1939: Collected Memories of Childhood in Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1996)

Herbert, Trevor, & Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds, *Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988)

Hopkins, K. S., *Rhondda Past and Future* (Rhondda: Rhondda Borough Council, 1975)

John, Angela, V., *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's' History 1830-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991)

Kent, Susan Kingsley, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019)

Lewis, Jane, *Women in England 1870-1950* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984)

Morgan, Kenneth; *Rebirth of a Nation: A History of Modern Wales* (Oxford: OUP, 1981)

Pope, Robert, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998)

Roberts, Elizabeth, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984)

Roberts, Elizabeth, *Women's Work, 1840-1940* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), first published 1988, Macmillan.

Supple, Barry, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Volume 4: 1913-1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)

Tanner, Duncan, Chris Williams and Deian Hopkin, *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000)

Thompson, F. M. L., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Volume 2: People and Their Environment*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1990)

Thompson, Steven, *Unemployment, Poverty and Health in Interwar South Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006)

Ward, Stephanie, *Unemployment, and the State in Britain: The Means Test and Protest in 1930s South Wales and North-East England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013)

White, Carol, & Sian Rhiannon Williams (eds) *Struggle or Starve: Women's Lives in the South Wales Valleys Between the Two World Wars* (Dinas Powys: Honno Ltd, 1998)

Williams, Chris, *Democratic Rhondda: Politics and Society 1885-1951* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996)

Williams, Chris, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield 1898-1947* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998)

Williams, Gwyn, A. *When Was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (London: Penguin, 1985)

Chapters in Books

Aldcroft, Derek, 'Material Welfare and Income Distribution', in *The inter-war economy: Britain, 1919-1939* (Place: Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1970), pp. 350-90

Beddoe, Deirdre, 'Women Between the Wars' in *Wales Between the Wars* ed. by Trevor Herbert and Gareth Elwyn Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), pp. 129-160

Croll, Andy, 'Poverty, Mass Unemployment and Welfare', in Chris Williams and Andy Croll (eds) *The Gwent County History: Volume 5: The Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 207-27

Davies, Alban, Rev. T., 'Impressions of Life in the Rhondda Valley', in K. S. Hopkins, *Rhondda Past and Future* (Rhondda: Rhondda Borough Council, 1975), pp. 11-21

Evans, Neil, '“South Wales has been Roused as Never Before”: Marching against the Means Test, 1934-1936', in David W. Howell and Kenneth O. Morgan (eds), *Crime, Protest and Police in Modern Society: Essays in Memory of David J. V. Jones* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999) pp. 176-205

Evans, Neil, and Dot Jones, '“To Help Forward the Great Work of Humanity”: Women in the Labour Party in Wales', in *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* ed. by D. Tanner, C. Williams and D. Hopkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 215-241

Hall, Valerie, 'The Inter-War Years: The Contrasting Roles of Mining Women', in *Women at Work, 1860-1936: How Different Industries Shaped Women's Experiences*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2013) pp. 50-78

Jones, Dot, 'Counting the Cost of Coal: Women's Lives in the Rhondda, 1881-1911', in *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History, 1830-1939*, ed. by Angela John (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 110-33

Jones, Rosemary, 'Sociability, Solidarity, and Social Exclusion: Women's Activism in the South Wales Coalfield, ca. 1830 to 1939', in *Mining Women: Gender in the Development of a Global Industry, 1670 to 2005*, ed. by Jaclyn J. Gier and Laurie Mercier (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), pp. 96-118

Articles

Bingham, Adrian, 'Review Essay. “An Era of Domesticity”? Histories of Women and Gender in Interwar Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 2004 (1), 225-33

Burge, Alan, 'Swimming Against the Tide: Gender, Learning and Advancement in South Wales 1900-1939', *Llafur*, 8:3 (2002), 13-31

Bruley, Sue, 'The Politics of Food: Gender, Family, Community and Collective Feeding in South Wales in the General Strike and the Miners' Lockout of 1926', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18, 1 (2007), 54-77

Bruley, Sue, 'The General Strike and Miners' Lockout of 1926 in South Wales: Oral Testimony and Public Representations', *Welsh History Review*, 26:2 (2012), 271-96

Chamberlain, G. 'British maternal mortality in the 19th and early 20th centuries' *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2006), 99(11), 559-63

Croll, Andy, 'Review Article: Holding Onto History: Modern Welsh Historians and the Challenge of Postmodernism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2003 (38:2), 323-32

Crook, Rosemary, 'Tidy Women: Women in the Rhondda Between the Wars', *Oral History Journal*, 10 (1982), 42-2

Curtis, Ben, & Steven Thompson: 'Disability and the Family in South Wales Coalfield Society, c.1920–1939', *Family & Community History*, 20:1 (2017), 25-44

Evans, Neil, and Dot Jones, "'A Blessing for the Miner's Wife": The Campaign for Pithead Baths in the South Wales Coalfield 1908-1950', *Llafur*, 6:3, 5-28.

Freeman, Mark, 'Seebohm Rowntree and Secondary Poverty, 1899-1954', *The Economic History Review*, 64:4 (2011), 1175-94

Gazeley, Ian, Andrew Newell, Kevin Reynolds et al. 'How Hungry were the Poor in Late 1930s Britain?', *Economic History Review*, 75:1 (2022), 80-110

Giles, Judy, 'Playing Hard to Get': Working-Class Women, Sexuality and Respectability in Britain, 1918-40', *Women's History Review*, 1:2 (1992), 239-55

Gorsky, M, 'Public Health in Interwar England and Wales: Did it Fail?' *Dynamis*, 28 (2008), 175-98

Hall, Valerie, 'Contrasting Female Identities: Women in Coal Mining Communities in Northumberland, England, 1900-1939', *Journal of Women's History*, 13:2, 107-31.

Hill, Barry, 'Interwar Unemployment in South Wales and Birmingham: Towards a Comparative Overview', *Llafur*, 8:4 (2003), 77-88

Hogenhamp, Bert, 'Today we Live: The Making of a Documentary in a Welsh Mining Valley', *Llafur*, 5:1 (1988) 45-52

Jeremy, Paul, 'Life on Circular 703': The Crisis of Destitution in the South Wales Coalfields During the Lockout of 1926', *Llafur*, 2:2 (1977), 65-75

John, Angela, 'A Miner Struggle?' Women's Protests in Welsh Mining History', *Llafur*, 4:1 (1984), 72-90

Jones, Alexander, 'Her Body was Like a Hard-Worked Machine': Women's Work and Disability in Coalfields Literature, 1880-1950', *Disabilities Studies Quarterly*, 37:4 (2017)

Jones, Dot, and Neil Evans, 'A Blessing for the Miner's Wife': The Campaign for Pithead Baths', *Llafur*, 6 (1994), 5-27

Lawrence, J., 'Class, "affluence" and the study of everyday life in Britain, c. 1930-64', *Cultural and Social History*, 10 (2013), 273-99

Lineham, Denis, and Prys Gruffud, 'Bodies and Souls: Psycho-Geographical Collisions in the South Wales Coalfield, 1926-1939', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 27:3 (2001), 377-94

Louden, Irvine, 'Obstetric Care, Social Class, and Maternal Mortality', *British Medical Journal*, 293 (6 September 1986), 606-08

Matheson, Rosa, 'The Marriage Bar', *Who Do You Think You Are?*, 4, 12 March 2019.

Mayhew, Madeline, 'The 1930s Nutrition Controversy', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23:3 (1988), 445-464

McLaren, Angus, 'Women's Work and the Regulation of Family Size', *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (1977), 70-81

Mitchell, Margaret, 'The Effects of Unemployment on the Social Conditions of Women and Children in the 1930s', *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1985), 105-27

Louden, Irvine, 'Maternal Mortality in the Past and Its' Relevance to Developing Countries Today', *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 72: 1 (2000), 241-46

O Leary, Paul, 'Masculine Histories: Gender and the Social History of Modern Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 22 (2004), 256-7

Penlington, Neil, 'Masculinity and Domesticity in 1930s South Wales: Did Unemployment Change the Domestic Division of Labour?', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21 (2010), 281-99

Pugh, Martin, 'Wish you Were Here: Britain Between the Wars', *History Today*, 58:8 (2008), 45-51

Thompson, Stephen, 'That Beautiful Summer of Severe Austerity'; Health, Diet and the Working-Class Domestic Economy in South Wales in 1926', *The Welsh History Review*, 21 (2003), 552-74

Todd, Selina, 'Young Women, Work, and Leisure in Interwar England', *The Historical Journal*, 48:3 (2005), 789-809

Ward, Stephanie, 'Drifting into Manhood and Womanhood: Courtship, Marriage and Gender Among Young Adults in South Wales and the North-East of England in the 1930s', *The Welsh History Review*, 26:4, (2013), 623-48

Ward, Stephanie, 'Sit Down to Starve or Stand up to Live: Community Protest and the Means Test in the Rhondda Valleys, 1931-1939' *Llafur*, 9 (2005), 27-44

Webster, Charles, 'Hungry or Healthy Thirties?', *History Workshop*, 13 (1982), 110-29

Williams, Mari, 'Aspects of Women's Working Lives in the Mining Communities of South Wales, c 1891-1939', *Folk Life*, 38:1 (1999), 56-70

Williams, Raymond, 'The Social Significance of 1926', *Llafur*, 2:2 (1977), 5-8

Williams, Sian Rhiannon, 'The Bedwellty Board of Guardians and the Default Act of 1927', *Llafur*, 2:4 (1979), 65-77

Winter, J. M. 'Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality and Public Health in Britain in the 1930s', *Journal of European Economic History*, 8:2 (1979), 439-61

Zmromczet, Christine, 'Dirty Linen; Women, Class and Washing Machines, 1920-1960s', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 15:2 (1992), 173-85.

Printed Reports

Public Health in Wales (1800-200): A Brief History, Pamela Michael for the Chief Medical Officer for Wales (Cardiff: Welsh National Assembly Government, 2008)

Theses

Chapman, Christine (2016), 'My Name was Mud!' Women's Experiences of Conformity and Resistance in Post-War Rhondda', PhD Dissertation, University of South Wales, Newport.

Grenfell-Hill, Jeffrey (1993), 'Mothers and Infants in South Wales, 1900-1930', PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Hackney, Fiona Anne Seaton, (2010), 'They Opened Up a Whole New World': Feminine Modernity and the Feminine Imagination in Women's Magazines, 1919-39'. PhD Dissertation, University of London.

Harris, Bernard, Jonathon (1988), 'Medical Inspection and the Nutrition of Schoolchildren in Britain', PhD Dissertation, Birkbeck College, London.

Hayes, Siobhan Mary (2019), 'West Monmouthshire, a Community in Crisis: To What Extent Was the Extreme Poverty Experienced in West Monmouthshire During the Inter-War Years Affected by Changing Local and National Attitudes Towards Relief, and Itself an Influence on Public Perception of Welfare Issues?' Student dissertation for The Open University module A826 MA History part 2.

MacNicol, John (1977), 'The Movement for Family Allowances in Britain, 1918-45', PhD Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

Snook, Lisa Jane (2002) 'Women in Rhondda Society, c.1870 – 1939', PhD Dissertation, Swansea University.

Thompson, Steven David (2001), 'A Social History of Health in Interwar South Wales'. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Film Sources

One Hundred Years of the Rhondda; Part 1 (Rhondda: RDC, 1994), available at < [\(27\)](#) [100 Years of Rhondda Part 1 - YouTube](#)> [accessed 21 December 2022], Parts 2, 3 and 4, available via same link

The Long Street: A History of Rhondda Coal Mining, (Cardiff: BBC Wales, 1965), available at <[The Long Street \(The History of Rhondda Coal Mining\) - Bing video](#)> [accessed 15 December, 2021]

The Long Street: Rhondda; 'The Road to Pandy Square' (Cardiff: BBC Wales, 1965), available at < [The Long Street - Road To Pandy Square - YouTube](#) > [accessed 3 January, 2022]

The Long Street: Rhondda, Today, Tomorrow (Cardiff: BBC Wales, 1965), available at < [The Long Street - Today and Tomorrow - YouTube](#) > [accessed 3 January, 2022]

The Long Street, Wales Collection: A Collection of Favourite Programme Clips from Landmark Programmes (Cardiff: BBC Wales, 1965), available at < [BBC Two - The Long Street - Clips](#)> [accessed 3 January, 2022]

Women of the Rhondda, directors Mary Capps and Mary Kelly (London: British Film Industry, 1971), available at <[Watch Women of the Rhondda online - BFI Player](#)> [accessed November 26, 2021]

Websites

'Reflections on the Use of Oral History Techniques', by Elaine Batty, in *People, Place and Policy Online*, 2009, (3:2), 109-121, Sheffield Hallam University, available at < [Reflections on the use of oral history techniques in social research | People Place and Policy \(shu.ac.uk\)](#) > [accessed]

Social Welfare in Britain (SO110), Warwick University Library Modern Records Centre (Warwick: Warwick University, 2022), available at < [Social Welfare in Britain \(SO110\) \(warwick.ac.uk\)](https://www.warwick.ac.uk)> [accessed 3 January 2022]

Welsh Coal Mines, www.welshcoalmines.co.uk