

**‘We were all scattered to the four winds’:  
Work, Identity, and Deindustrialisation in  
Post-War Scotland**

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'I belong to Glasgow  
Dear old Glasgow town.  
But there's something the matter with Glasgow  
For they're pulling the whole place down.  
'Let Glasgow flourish' our emblem says.  
It doesn't seem right to me.  
For it's hard to see what can flourish  
When they are clearing it all away.'

*Clyde Film (1985)*

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Signed: James P. Ferns

Date: 24/05/2023

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the post-redundancy employment experiences of former Scottish heavy industry workers and the survivability of their occupational identities and work cultures. This thesis draws on 51 oral history interviews conducted between 2016 and 2019 with former heavy industry workers in the West of Scotland – 21 from shipbuilding and 30 from steelmaking. The occupational culture of heavy industries such as mining, steelmaking, and shipbuilding have been well documented by labour historians. These industries are renowned for their extensive trade unionism, male-dominated workforce, shop-floor camaraderie, and the prevalence of a hegemonic mode of ‘hard man’ masculinity. Heavy industry sharply declined in the face of the rapid deindustrialisation which typified the 1980s and early 1990s, forcing workers into early retirement, unemployment, or the pursuit of alternative employment. Given their previous immersion in a distinctive occupational culture, a study of heavy industry workers’ post-redundancy employment experiences offers a window into the impact of deindustrialisation on work and identity. In light of this, this thesis will explore how workers defined, understood, and acclimatised themselves to new working environments following their transition from heavy industry into other forms of employment, and how these transitions augmented their experience of work. In order to better understand the long-term impact of deindustrialisation, this thesis examines the ways in which workers’ post-redundancy employment contrasted with heavy industry, focusing on the following thematic areas: health and safety; trade unionism and collectivism; masculinity and emasculation; and occupational community and workplace culture.

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This thesis is dedicated to my granda, Jimmy Ferns.

# Introduction

The destruction of Scottish heavy industry (shipbuilding; engineering; iron and steel; coalmining) in the 1980s and 1990s was a catastrophe. Deindustrialisation came as a blitzkrieg of industrial closure, giving the impression of a nation subject to a seemingly unstoppable economic force. Having stood as a source of national identity and pride from the industrial revolution, the rapid destruction of heavy industry triggered mass identity disintegration in Scotland's industrial communities, as unrelenting closures obliterated an established culture in a matter of decades. In this light, it is tempting to position deindustrialisation as something final, an ending. This, however, minimises if not completely neglects the historic reality of working-class resilience and survival. Scholarship on deindustrialisation has rightly focused on the disruption of workers' lives and their sense of identity, with attention directed to the hardship of redundancy and feelings of alienation prevalent within post-industrial communities. However, little attention has been directed to deindustrialisation and reemployment, specifically, the significance of workers' employment transitions in relation their identity and wider experience of work. Former heavy industry workers continued to exist following the demolition of their factories, and driven by the same economic pressures that have always shaped working-class life, they fought to gain alternative employment. As such, this thesis examines the post-redundancy employment experiences of former Scottish heavy industry workers and the survivability of their occupational identities and work cultures. In order to better understand the long-term impact of deindustrialisation, this thesis examines the ways in which workers' post-redundancy employment contrasted with heavy industry, focusing on the following thematic areas: health and safety; trade unionism and collectivism; masculinity and emasculation; and occupational community and workplace culture.

The intrinsic relationship between work and identity is a central theme within deindustrialisation literature. Sentiments of intangible loss and identity disintegration commonly define displaced workers' narratives of job loss precisely

because work informs both personal and collective identity to such a large extent. As a collective endeavour work can shape the identity of entire communities or regions.<sup>1</sup> Strangleman argues that heavy industries exerted strong cultural influence over the communities in which they were embedded.<sup>2</sup> Displacement from workplaces with such cohesive communities can shatter workers' sense of self and place. The toxic combination of neoliberalism and deindustrialisation has devastated working-class communities, cultures, and organisation. Crime, poverty, and ill-health increased in former occupation-dependent communities in Scotland as the social fabric unravelled with the closure of heavy industry.<sup>3</sup> The impact of deindustrialisation on these communities has been overwhelmingly negative, yet it remains difficult to fully capture this emotional disruption and its aftereffects.

The histories of heavy industry workers – the archetypal male proletarians – appears very well documented at first glance. But research has tended to place heavy industry itself, rather than its workers, at the centre of attention, or has instead focused upon the struggle between labour and capital. While valuable, this tendency is unable to fully capture the diversity and complexity of workers' experiences within heavy industry. The occupational culture of heavy industries such as mining, steelmaking, and shipbuilding are renowned for their extensive trade unionism, male-dominated workforce, shop-floor camaraderie, and the prevalence of a hegemonic mode of 'hard man' masculinity.<sup>4</sup> Heavy industry sharply declined in the face of the rapid deindustrialisation which typified the 1980s and early 1990s, forcing workers into early retirement, unemployment, or the pursuit of alternative employment.<sup>5</sup> Given their previous immersion in a distinctive occupational culture, a

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', in J. Kirk, S. Contrepolis and S. Jefferys (eds.) *Changing work and community identities in European regions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) pp.1-23

<sup>2</sup> T. Strangleman, 'The Remembrance of Lost Work: Nostalgia, Labour and the Visual', in S. Whipps (ed.) *Ming Jue: Photographs of Longbridge and Nanjing* (London: The New Art Gallery Walsall, 2008) np.

<sup>3</sup> S. Farrall, et al., 'Thatcherism, Crime and the Legacy of the Social and Economic 'Storms' of the 1980s', *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 56:2 (2017) pp.220-243; D. McCrone, 'A New Scotland? Society and Culture', in T. M. Devine and J. Wormald (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp.671-687; R. Finlay, *Modern Scotland: 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004)

<sup>4</sup> R. Johnston and A. McIvor, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries', *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004) p.135

<sup>5</sup> G. C. Peden, 'A New Scotland? The Economy', in T. M. Devine and J. Wormald (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp.652-671



study of heavy industry workers' post-redundancy employment experiences offers a window into the impact of deindustrialisation on work and identity. In light of this, this thesis will explore how workers defined, understood, and acclimatised themselves to new working environments following their transition from heavy industry into other forms of employment, and how these transitions augmented their experience of work.

Considered to be the first seminal text on deindustrialisation, Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's *The Deindustrialization of America* attempted to make sense of the extensive industrial decline of the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. They defined deindustrialisation as a process of capital relocation from areas with high production costs (due in part to strong trade unions and high wages) to areas of low production cost.<sup>6</sup> Jefferson Cowie's *Capital Moves* expanded upon this by outlining the constant movement of capital toward areas with lower production costs and more favourable labour markets both within and without given states.<sup>7</sup> A common misconception of deindustrialisation is its characterisation as a natural phenomenon, as some sort of inevitable or uncontrollable force, operating outside the realms of governmental policy. Neoliberalism, defined by David Harvey as a 'political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites', is central to understanding the reality of deindustrialisation.<sup>8</sup> If deindustrialisation is based upon profit maximisation and capital flight, then it is neoliberalism as a political project which permits deindustrialisation through an ideological refusal to intervene in matters of economy and industry. Britain, in comparison to other West European nations, experienced intense deindustrialisation during the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> This profound economic transformation correlates directly to the radical policy choices of Margaret Thatcher's

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<sup>6</sup> B. Bluestone and B. Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982)

<sup>7</sup> J. Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999)

<sup>8</sup> D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p.11

<sup>9</sup> C. Harvie, *Scotland: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

government from 1979 onwards, which oversaw the obliteration of British heavy industry.<sup>10</sup>

In Britain, deindustrialisation is often cast as a phenomenon of the 1980s. Yet industrial employment actually reached its peak in the mid-1960s, declining thereafter, with the industries share of total employment falling from 39.3 percent in 1965 to 32.3 percent by 1979.<sup>11</sup> However, the major point of distinction is that decline was managed and mitigated following the Second World War until the mid-1970s, through what has been termed the 'post-war consensus'.<sup>12</sup> This consensus allowed successive governments, to varying degrees, to place employment and social welfare above economic efficiency.<sup>13</sup> This is not to suggest that all governments in the post-war period up to 1979 rigidly adhered to an interventionist approach. Nor should it be forgotten that the entire history of industrial communities has been characterised by periods of struggle and change. Walkerdine and Jimenez, for instance, caution against the tendency to cast working-class communities before the advent of neoliberalism with a 'salt-of-the-earth stability, a kind of timelessness in which the settled nature of the communities has hardly changed over time'.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, governments from 1945-1979 were vulnerable and responsive to campaigns which deployed moral economy arguments around employment. Jim Phillips, in discussing the closure of the Scottish coalfields, has described how miners and trade unions were able to effectively articulate these moral economy arguments against closure, securing the creation of alternative employment in the earlier period of deindustrialisation.<sup>15</sup> Another example of such moral economy arguments can be seen in the 1970s Upper Clyde Shipbuilders successful Work-In campaign which prevented Edward Heath's Conservative government from closing shipbuilding on

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<sup>10</sup> T. Dickson and D. Judge, 'The British State, Governments and Manufacturing Decline', in T. Dickson and D. Judge (eds.) *The Politics of Industrial Closure* (London: MacMillan, 1987) pp.1-35

<sup>11</sup> Peden, 'A New Scotland? The Economy', p.652

<sup>12</sup> D. Kavanagh, 'The Postwar Consensus', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992) pp.175-190

<sup>13</sup> P. L. Payne, 'The End of Steel Making in Scotland', *Scottish Economic & Social History*, 15:1 (2010)

<sup>14</sup> V. Walkerdine and L. Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community after De-Industrialisation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.7

<sup>15</sup> J. Phillips, 'The closure of Michael Colliery in 1967 and the politics of deindustrialization in Scotland', *Twentieth Century British History*, 26 (2015) pp.551-572

the Clyde.<sup>16</sup> This consensus can also account for the establishment of Ravenscraig Steelworks, when, in 1958, Harold Macmillan's Conservative government compelled Colvilles, the largest steel company in Scotland at the time, to construct a rolling strip mill in Motherwell. Despite the likelihood of low profitability, the government viewed the construction of Ravenscraig as a means to reduce unemployment and supply steel for local markets, such as the locomotive industry.<sup>17</sup>

This commitment to employment and the right to work initially broke down in the mid-1970s, when, in the face of a balance of payments crisis, the Labour government accepted an International Monetary Fund loan, in turn obligating themselves to introduce austerity.<sup>18</sup> The 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher marked an abrupt and total end to the post-war consensus, which Thatcher defined as the 'great illusion of socialism'.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the Labour government of the mid-1970s which introduced budgetary restraint through what they had deemed, rightly or wrongly, as a necessity, the Thatcher government acted upon pure ideological conviction. From 1979 the Conservative government operated under neoliberal auspices and enacted its political experiment, transforming the British state through privatisation and the elimination of subsidisation of key national industries. The result was as devastating as it was rapid for heavy industry and occupation-dependent communities. The destruction of heavy industry took place within a relatively small period of time, with Britain's manufacturing employment base contracting by 1.7 million or 24 percent between mid-1979 to mid-1984. Coal mining, steelmaking, car manufacturing, and shipbuilding collapsed, as Scottish heavy industry's share of total employment fell from 32.3 percent to 17.7 percent from 1979 to 1993, and further declined to 11.1 percent by 2007.<sup>20</sup> Scottish heavy industry was concentrated in the West of Scotland, with the nation's industrial heart based within the heavily

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<sup>16</sup> J. Foster and C. Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986)

<sup>17</sup> D. Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival: The 1980s Campaign to Save Ravenscraig Steelworks', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 25:1 (2005) pp.40-57

<sup>18</sup> Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, p.58

<sup>19</sup> M. Thatcher, 'The Ideals of An Open Society', in M. Thatcher, G. Howe and Sir K. Joseph (eds.) *The Right Angle: Three Studies in Conservatism* (London: Bow Group, 1978) p.9

<sup>20</sup> Finlay, *Modern Scotland*, p.343; Peden, 'A New Scotland? The Economy', p.652

industrialised Clydeside region along the river Clyde; though by the end of the 1990s the industrial heart of Scotland had stopped beating, with effectively all of Clydeside's mining, steelmaking, engineering, and textile manufacturing destroyed.<sup>21</sup> The loss of Glasgow's shipbuilding industry demonstrates the scale of change, with 39 shipyards employing approximately 100,000 in the early twentieth century declining to only two working yards employing around 2,000 by close of the century.<sup>22</sup> Like its birth, the death of Ravenscraig was interwoven with the post-war consensus. Despite the sacrifice of workers and the best efforts of the Scottish trade union movement, Ravenscraig steelworks closed in 1992, 'signal[ing] the death of Scottish heavy industry', and exemplifying a period of Scottish economic history remarked upon by historian George Peden as 'no less radical than the Industrial Revolution'.<sup>23</sup>

## Literature Review

As with other historiographical areas of research, the study of deindustrialisation has evolved over time and continues to do so. High situates this evolution into 'three distinct waves of scholarship'.<sup>24</sup> The initial 'activist' wave of research, based within the 1970s and 1980s, was conducted by activist scholars, and usually set within anti-closure campaigns and the wider labour movement.<sup>25</sup> This wave can be understood as a 'political response' to the onset of deindustrialisation, with scholars seeking to both understand the underlying reasons behind deindustrialisation as well as challenge them in junction with the labour movement.<sup>26</sup> The impact of the cultural turn informed a second wave of scholarship around the millennium, which sought to understand the wider cultural implications of deindustrialisation. Cowie encapsulates this shift of priority, where in *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization*

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<sup>21</sup> A. Mclvor, 'Blighted lives: Deindustrialisation, health and well-being in the Clydeside region', *Revue d'histoire*, 20:21 (2019) p.2

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p.1

<sup>23</sup> Peden, 'A New Scotland? The Economy', p.652

<sup>24</sup> S. High, "'The Wounds of Class": A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973–2013', *History Compass*, 11:11 (2013) p.994

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

he writes, 'we move away from a "body count" of manufacturing jobs... we look at deindustrialisation as... a fundamental change in the social fabric on par with industrialisation itself'.<sup>27</sup> The sociological and cultural impact of deindustrialisation remains important for the third and current wave of scholarship, which examines deindustrialisation in relation to working-class culture, community, and identity in the post-industrial context.<sup>28</sup> The working-class focus of the third wave articulates a tension within second wave scholarship, where an overemphasis on the 'aesthetics or representational politics of industrial ruins unintentionally contributes to the active processes of invisibilization of working people'.<sup>29</sup> As this thesis examines deindustrialisation and workers' identity, it draws most heavily upon scholarship which fits broadly within the third wave. There is of course a degree fluidity to the literature, with older texts such as Modell and Brodsky's *A Town without Steel: Envisioning Homestead*, and Bensman and Lynch's *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community*, utilising ethnographic approaches which prioritises the voices of deindustrialised workers and their communities.<sup>30</sup> However, High's model does effectively describe the general tendency of evolution within the literature, and so presents a useful way to conceptualise the study of deindustrialisation.

The impact of deindustrialisation upon working-class life and identity has been profound. As such, the study of deindustrialisation encompasses a diverse range of scholarship, spanning across a wide range of interrelated disciplines. This thesis employs an interdisciplinary approach, utilising literature from history, sociology, social policy, cultural studies, and psychology. This literature review categorises this varied scholarship into the following thematic areas: 1) work and identity; 2) post-

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<sup>27</sup> J. Cowie and J. Heathcott, 'The meanings of deindustrialisation', in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds.) *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell, 2003) pp.5-6

<sup>28</sup> High, 'The Wounds of Class', p.994

<sup>29</sup> S. High, L. Mackinnon and A. Perchard, 'Afterword: Debating Deindustrialisation', in S. High, L. MacKinnon and A. Perchard (eds.) *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-industrial Places* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) p.349

<sup>30</sup> J. Modell and C. Brodsky, *A Town without Steel: Envisioning Homestead* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988); D. Bensman and R. Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard times in a steel community* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988)

industrial meanings of work; 3) deindustrialisation and workers' lives; 4) unemployment; 5) masculinity; 6) health, and 7) space, heritage and memory.

### Work and Identity

The connection between work and identity underpins much of the literature on deindustrialisation. Notions of intangible loss, commonly expressed by displaced workers, are ubiquitous throughout the literature precisely because work informs both personal and collective identity on such an integral level; something must first be possessed before it can be lost. In *My job, My Self*, Gini argues that work represents a 'fundamental part of our humanity', shaping identity, socioeconomic status, and determining 'where we live, how well we live, whom we see socially, what we consume and purchase'.<sup>31</sup> Leidner believes that an individual's sense of self is intrinsically linked with their employment, providing 'an arena for self-development, a source of social ties, a determinant of status, and a shaper of consciousness'.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Mclvor writes in *Working Lives* that '[work] can be a source of lasting social relationships, of politicization, of joy and stress as well as numbing alienation'.<sup>33</sup> This is a useful point, as it acknowledges work's ability to inform identity as well as simultaneously engender a sense of degradation or alienation.

Work is both a personal and collective experience, connecting the individual with society. In *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Freud outlines this characteristic of work: 'no other technique for the conduct of life attaches the individual so firmly to reality as laying emphasis on work; for his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality, in the human community'.<sup>34</sup> Work provides an avenue whereby individuals can locate themselves in relation to one another. Fagin defines work and occupational categories as a 'calling card to the rest of the world', able to inform not

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<sup>31</sup> A. Gini, *My job, My Self: Work and the Creation of the Modern Individual* (New York: Routledge, 2001) p.xii, p.2

<sup>32</sup> R. Leidner, 'Identity and Work', in M. Korczynski, R. Hodson and P. Edwards (eds.) *Social Theory at Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) p.424

<sup>33</sup> A. Mclvor, *Working lives: Work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.75

<sup>34</sup> S. Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents* (London: Hogarth, 1972) p.27

only an individual's sense of self but also the identities others subscribe to them.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, in *Work and Health* Kahn states that: 'when people ask that most self-identifying of questions, who am I? they answer in terms of their occupation: tool maker, press operator, typist, doctor... retired or unemployed'.<sup>36</sup> Jahoda understands work as a mechanism which facilitates participation in society. It structures and offers meaning to the day, facilitates participation in collective endeavours, confers social status, and provides financial independence; which for most people represent 'deep-seated need[s]'.<sup>37</sup> For Wilson, employment 'provides the anchor for the spatial and temporal aspects of daily life', while in its absence 'life, including family life becomes less coherent'.<sup>38</sup>

As a collective endeavour work can also shape the identity of communities or entire regions, with the formation of occupation-based community identity being well documented.<sup>39</sup> Kirk et al. state that work 'marks a region's potential distinctiveness', producing 'culturally distinct traditions that shape everyday life'.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Strangleman argues that heavy industries, often the primary employer in a given locality, were able to imprint a 'distinctive cultural pattern' – influencing 'culture, class, language, attitude and gender relations'.<sup>41</sup> Brown contends that heavy industry workers report a greater sense of occupational identity than workers employed in other occupations – partly attributed to their long period of service, which allows time to develop occupational bonds.<sup>42</sup> Lockwood also states that heavy industry workers typically form stable occupational identities, defined by an

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<sup>35</sup> L. Fagin, 'Psychiatry', in S. Wallman, (ed.) *Social Anthropology of Work* (London: Academic Press, 1979) p.32

<sup>36</sup> R. L. Kahn, *Work and Health* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981) p.11

<sup>37</sup> M. Jahoda, *Employment and Unemployment: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1982) pp.83-84

<sup>38</sup> W. J. Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) p.73

<sup>39</sup> M. Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 2001); A. Perchard, *Aluminiumville* (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2012); S. Linkon and J. Russo, *Steeltown U.S.A: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); M. Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders: An Anthology of Scottish Shipyard Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001); J. Nadel-Klein, *Fishing for Heritage: Modernity and Loss along the Scottish Coast* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); A. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); S. High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003)

<sup>40</sup> Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', pp.6-7

<sup>41</sup> Strangleman, 'The Remembrance of Lost Work'

<sup>42</sup> R. K. Brown, 'Attitudes to work, occupational identity and industrial change', in B. Roberts, R. Finnegan and D. Gallie (eds.) *New Approaches to Economic Life: Unemployment and the social division of labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) pp.461-476

overarching culture which he terms 'proletarian traditionalism'.<sup>43</sup> Within this culture the workplace is embedded into workers' private lives, workmates socialise with one another, live in the same locality, and share a similar, class based political outlook defined by trade unionism and solidarity. For the workers themselves these bonds of occupational identity can be deeply emotionally significant; workplaces have been remembered as communities and workmates as families.<sup>44</sup>

### Post-Industrial Meanings of Work

Deindustrialisation has sparked and contributed to a debate on the nature of work itself, with some scholars contending that work has lost its ability to shape identity, declining in significance as a result of profound economic and technological change. Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* announced that Western nations have transitioned into a post-industrial societies, noting the shift from manufacturing to services, advances in technology and infrastructure, changes to property and education, and the rise of a knowledge based theory of value.<sup>45</sup> Rifkin's *The End of Work* predicts that automation, computer technologies, and downsizing 'are going to bring civilization ever closer to a near-workerless world'.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, Gorz's *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-based Society*, contends that 'we are leaving work-based society behind', and that work is lessening its hold over people lives.<sup>47</sup> Beck's *The Brave New World of Work* argues that the West is undergoing a process of 'Brazilianization', where, as a consequence of the dualism of neoliberalism and technology, the 'job for life' has vanished, the welfare state is collapsing, employment is temporary and flexible, and people's lives are defined by insecurity.<sup>48</sup> Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character* and Bauman's *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, respectively claim that the formation of work-based identity is undermined by

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<sup>43</sup> D. Lockwood, 'Sources of variation in working class images of society', *Sociological Review*, 14:3 (1966) p.250

<sup>44</sup> T. E. K'Meyer and J. L. Hart, *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

<sup>45</sup> D. Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) p.xv

<sup>46</sup> J. Rifkin, *The End of Work* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995) p.xv

<sup>47</sup> A. Gorz, *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-based Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999) p.52

<sup>48</sup> U. Beck, *The Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000) p.1, p.3



‘flexibility’ and the disappearance of the ‘steady, durable and continuous’ career.<sup>49</sup> For Sennett, the intensification of precarious employment within modern capitalism has eroded the space within which workers had previously formed meaningful work-based identities; prompting them to pose the question, ‘how can mutual loyalties and commitments be sustained in institutions which are constantly breaking apart or continually being redesigned?’.<sup>50</sup>

These catastrophic forecasts have been contested by other scholars, who stress continuity in the relationship between work and identity, arguing that ‘the end of work’ has been overstated and contradicts both economic reality and the lived experiences of modern workers. In *The McDonaldization of Society*, Ritzer questions one aspect of the end of work hypotheses, making the point that rather than disappearing, low-status and low-skill occupations, such as those which typify the fast food industry, have become ubiquitous within post-industrial societies.<sup>51</sup> Doogan highlights that job stability has not declined as radically as suggested, contending that a ‘substantial gap’ exists between perceptions of work and the objective reality of the economy and labour market.<sup>52</sup> Doogan argues that the overestimation of the extent of economic insecurity underpins acceptance for neoliberalism, fuelling the notion that since markets are too chaotic, government should best leave them be.<sup>53</sup> Strangleman, who has wrote extensively on the end of work debate, dismisses claims that work has lost its meaning, stating that these arguments tend to minimise economic facts and deny workers’ agency, presenting them as passive victims. He highlights that the literature on deindustrialisation, especially oral testimony, show that work still plays a complex and important role in identity.<sup>54</sup> The idea that the current tendency towards precarious employment will destroy the meaning of work

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<sup>49</sup> R. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (London: Norton, 1998) p.10; Z. Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998) p.27

<sup>50</sup> Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, p.10

<sup>51</sup> G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012) p.190

<sup>52</sup> K. Doogan, *New Capitalism? The Transformation of Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009) p.5

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p.208

<sup>54</sup> T. Strangleman, ‘The nostalgia for permanence at work? The end of work and its commentators’, *Sociological Review*, 55:1 (February, 2007) pp.96-97

disregards the fact that the stability of employment in the post-war period represents an effective blip in the entire history of capitalism, with work before the onset of the interventionist state characterised by endemic insecurity.<sup>55</sup> As far back as 1848, Marx and Engels wrote that capitalism 'cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society'.<sup>56</sup>

End of work theorists tend to be grouped around the turn of the millennium when, according to Crow, it became fashionable for academics to declare that a hitherto major social relationship had come to an end, with examples of apparent endings including: 'Masculinity ... privacy ... work ... unemployment ... the nation-state ... capitalism ... socialism ... the growth paradigm ... development ... history ... class ... heterosexuality ... photography ... distance'.<sup>57</sup> In his exploration of employment in Britain since 1945, Mclvor cautions against such apocalyptic interpretations which herald the end of work; emphasising that while working life has indeed dramatically transformed, it still retains its significance.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Wall and Kirk's investigation into the modern relationship between work and identity, among railway workers, bank employees, and teachers, contradicts the end of work hypothesis, finding instead that workers still readily report a strong sense of occupational identity.<sup>59</sup> The relationship between work and identity persists even within precarious employment. McDowell's interviews with school leavers from the early 2000s, many of whom occupy 'low-level entry jobs', found that 'waged work' remained the 'central element' of 'acceptable and respected masculine identity'.<sup>60</sup>

## Deindustrialisation and Workers' Lives

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p.95

<sup>56</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: The Merlin Press, 2003) p.38

<sup>57</sup> G. Crow, 'Towards a sociology of endings', *Sociological Research Online*, 10:3 (2005) np.

<sup>58</sup> Mclvor, *Working Lives*, pp.279-280

<sup>59</sup> C. Wall and J. F. Kirk, *Work and Identity: Historical and Cultural Contexts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp.225-226

<sup>60</sup> L. McDowell, *Redundant masculinities?: Employment change and white working class youth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) p.236

Dedicated scholarship on the relationship between deindustrialisation and identity has generally been based within North America. Oral history features prominently in this research, given its capacity to effectively capture the often emotional narratives of loss and displacement associated with job loss. Drawing on the oral testimonies of displaced workers, High's *Industrial Sunset* details and contrasts the development of deindustrialisation in Canada and the United States between 1969 and 1984.<sup>61</sup> Workers from both countries expressed strong bonds of affect with their co-workers and had developed significant emotional ties to their respective mills and factories, expressed through metaphors of home and family.<sup>62</sup> A powerful and recurrent theme among US workers was that of intangible loss and identity disintegration, which Gabriel Solano, a former worker from Detroit, described thusly: 'I lost part of me. Me as a person... I don't so much feel that I was missing GM but I was missing a part of me. Something internal'.<sup>63</sup> In the wake of redundancy, workers articulated a community-wide experience of alcohol abuse, suicide, health decline, marital and family breakdown, and identity disintegration; male workers in particular bemoaned the loss of their status as breadwinner, and struggled with their inability to live up to dominate modes of masculinity.<sup>64</sup> The spatial dimensions of closure – its tendency to uproot and destroy workers' sense of place – feature prominently in the narratives, with displaced US workers, specifically those who left plants along the Interstate I-75 that cuts through the US rust belt, labelling themselves as 'I-75 gypsies'.<sup>65</sup> While feelings of loss were shared by all workers, *Industrial Sunset* notes how factors such as gender and skill often temper its articulation and extent. Women industrial workers described the discrimination they had faced in the workplace, while men spoke more of lost workplace relationships.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, skilled workers were more likely to not only miss the place and the people, but also the nature of the work itself, in contrast with unskilled assembly line workers.<sup>67</sup> The lasting effects of closure

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<sup>61</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.15

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p.44

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p.43

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* p.67

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* p.65

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p.48

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p.50

differed widely between Canadian and US workers, with descriptions of powerlessness and identity disintegration largely absent from Canadian narratives. High attributes this to the Canadian workers use of moral economy arguments against plant closure, which were characterised by left economic nationalism.<sup>68</sup> Opposed to the locally focused and atomised campaigns in the US, these arguments were able to reach a significant audience and compel the Canadian government to mitigate plant closures.<sup>69</sup> The prevention of wholesale closures, like those in the US, allowed redundant Canadian workers to seek similar employment in other plants, thus maintaining their identity as industrial workers.<sup>70</sup> More recently, High's *One Job Town* – focusing on the paper-making town of Sturgeon Falls, Ontario – offers a close examination of the culture of industrialism attached to industries within an occupation dependant community, as well as the rupture and subsequent disintegration of this culture following the loss of industry. Importantly, High stresses the legacy of closure within Sturgeon Falls, situating deindustrialisation as a long-term process with aftereffects felt well beyond the mills closure in 2002.<sup>71</sup>

Dudley's *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* deals with the closure of American Motors Corporation and Chrysler plants in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in the late 1980s. These closures not only marked the end of highly paid employment for autoworkers, but of their entire 'way of life', as the social structure which had underpinned their lives was dissolved under them.<sup>72</sup> Long years of service had cultivated strong occupational identities, based on specific skills and work cultures. The abrupt dissolution of this environment, in tandem with wider industrial contraction, undermined the social value of industrial occupational identities, wounding the workers' sense of self and engendering feelings of dislocation.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, May and Morrison's study of the closing of KEMET Electronics

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p.73

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p.17

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* p.72

<sup>71</sup> S. High, *One Job Town: Work, Belonging, and Betrayal in Northern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018)

<sup>72</sup> K. M. Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p.xvii

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p.134

Corporation in Shelby, North Carolina, notes how the severance of friendships among long-time co-workers is often the most painful aspect of deindustrialisation. Tonya, an employee at KEMET, viewed her co-workers as a family: 'To me, we became a family. We wasn't just operators. We were a family there'.<sup>74</sup>

Walley's *Exit Zero* and Bensman and Lynch's *Rusted Dreams* both tell the story of the decline of steelmaking in Southeast Chicago during the 1980s. With steelmaking crucial to both the local economy and identity of the city, Chicago workers' experience of deindustrialisation proved tragically similar to that of other regions. The social fabric of the community was torn apart, family income decimated, and redundant steelworkers and their community were afflicted by marital problems, health concerns, alcohol abuse, and suicide.<sup>75</sup> The closure of the steelworks shattered workers' sense of identity and self-respect; it prevented them from providing for themselves and their families, and deprived them of the high pay associated with unionised industrial employment.<sup>76</sup> Victor Gonzalez, an ex-steel worker, encapsulated this mood: 'I feel like I've been robbed - robbed of twenty-five, twenty-six years of my life'.<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, both authors state that former steelworkers faced discrimination in the labour market, as employers were apprehensive towards hiring individuals with a history in a traditionally militant and unionised workplace.<sup>78</sup> Walley briefly touches on the post-redundancy employment experiences of steelworkers, which tend to be typified by low pay, lack of unionisation, and precarity. Walley's father was himself a Chicago steelworker, and on a personal level Walley associates 'the destruction of the steel mills with [her] father's destruction', describing how redundancy pushed him into depression and bitterness.<sup>79</sup> When interviewing her father Walley was surprised to discover that he had very little to say, despite his anger

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<sup>74</sup> S. May and L. Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring: Narratives of Accommodation among Downsized workers', in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds.) *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell, 2003) p.272

<sup>75</sup> C. J. Walley, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) p.68

<sup>76</sup> Bensman and Lynch, *Rusted Dreams*, pp.99-100

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p.96

<sup>78</sup> Walley, *Exit Zero*, p.70

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p.58

and bitterness. For Walley, this confirmed that the closure had sapped her father's self-respect; he believed that his words were no longer worth listening to.<sup>80</sup>

Of all the literature on deindustrialisation, K'Meyer and Hart's *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (published in 2009), is perhaps the most relevant to the scope of this thesis. K'Meyer and Hart note that the current literature on deindustrialisation focuses on 'large-scale social and economic consequences', which tells 'us little about the experiences of individual workers displaced by job loss'; where their voices are heard they are 'typically employed for dramatic effect'.<sup>81</sup> K'Meyer and Hart interviewed sixteen former factory workers from International Harvester and Johnston Controls, both located in Louisville, Kentucky, which closed in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. The narrators describe in detail the nature of their previous work, their plants' closure, the process of redundancy and the destruction it wrought on their fellow workers, as well as their own experiences of reemployment. Notably, redundancy not only changed how these workers related to work, but also wider society. Many narrators, all former union members, expressed pessimistic, and at times highly individualist sentiments towards what they perceived as a future of precarious work. Carlie Noyes of Johnson Controls, embittered by the process, stated: 'As far as what I learned from it, you don't want to put too much trust in anybody outside of yourself... don't never put all your trust in a union, a company, your banker, or anyone else'.<sup>82</sup> Redundancy introduced chaos into workers' lives: marriages fell apart, people took to alcohol abuse, and a hopeful future of home ownership and college education for their children was shattered. In spite of this, interestingly, and perhaps unexpectedly, many narrators also described the positive consequences of closure. The narrators' new employment, whilst generally paying less and carrying fewer benefits, were noted as being more enjoyable and better for their health than their previous employment.<sup>83</sup> This was especially prevalent among those employed outdoors, or as

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* p.87

<sup>81</sup> K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*, p.2

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p.138

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p.98

maintenance workers with a high degree of autonomy. The fresh air, discretion, and freedom these jobs allowed contrasted significantly with the heat, strain, monotony, and overbearing supervision of industrial work, which made former employee Bob Reed feel 'like a robot'.<sup>84</sup> K'Meyer and Hart's narrators expertly convey the complexity of redundancy, and the maelstrom of emotion that accompany it, as Rob McQueen of International Harvester perfectly encapsulates: 'I was devastated but yet – god, I was so happy. It was such a hell but, yet, it was my income, it was my life. I was overjoyed, I was sad, I was hurt. I'm glad that I don't still work there, but, man, I wish I still worked there'.<sup>85</sup>

The potentially liberatory aspects arising from the loss of industrial employment are also touched on by interviewed autoworkers in Milkman's *Farewell to the Factory*. During the mid-1980s the United Auto Workers and GM-Linden negotiated a buyout program which offered generous payments to workers who opted for voluntary redundancy.<sup>86</sup> Proving popular, this was accepted by the union membership, with a majority of autoworkers finding alternative, and in their opinion, superior employment. Milkman acknowledges the social devastation caused by deindustrialisation, and notes that interviewed autoworkers did miss the high pay, benefits, and union camaraderie of their old workplace. However, few autoworkers had positive memories of the factory and the assembly line, describing the work as physically exhausting, dull, and highly dangerous.<sup>87</sup> They resented the highly authoritarian Taylorist work structure, commenting that the foremen treated them 'like absolute scum', and that their time at work felt like being 'in jail'.<sup>88</sup> These testimonies offer a cautionary tale regarding romanticising industrial work, of casting industrial workers in the role of the noble savage, who, in circumstances both painful and horrendous dutifully labours on.

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* p.58

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p.98

<sup>86</sup> R. Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) p.1

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p.44

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p.44, p.110

It is possible to both oppose deindustrialisation and criticise the most alienating aspects of industrial capitalism. Workers' experiences of employment are seldom one dimensional. Unique in the deindustrialisation literature, Chatterley and Rouverol's *I Was Content and Not Content*, records the life history of one woman, Linda Lord, after the closure of her workplace, Penobscot Poultry, located in Maine. The title of the book, 'I was content and not content', is given in answer by Lord when questioned on how she felt about her job at Penobscot Poultry, and can be seen to represent the complex emotions workers feel towards their work.<sup>89</sup> In the book's foreword, describing the multifaceted and often seemingly contradictory emotions which workers feel towards their work, Frisch, author of *Portraits in Steel*, compares Lord's statement to the interviews he carried out himself with steelworkers, who at once 'both liked and hated their jobs'.<sup>90</sup> Frisch cautions against attempts to place the experiences of working-class people into 'obvious categories', instead suggesting that their views on work are defined by 'multivalence' – 'the holding of different values at the same time without implying confusion, contradiction, or even paradox'.<sup>91</sup>

In the British context, Strangleman's *Voices of Guinness* uses testimonies of former Park Royal Guinness Brewery workers to place the closure of their plant within the broader context of deindustrialisation. Strangleman reveals a robust occupational community and attachment to the workplace as well as a profound sense of loss over the plant's closure and eventual demolition.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, Waddington et al. investigate the legacy of deindustrialisation in coal mining communities in *Out of the Ashes: The Social Impact of Industrial Contraction and Regeneration on Britain's Mining Communities*. Here, Waddington et al. describe how crime, drug addiction, poverty, ill-health, unemployment, underemployment, low-pay, and the erosion of community pride and identity plague former mining

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<sup>89</sup> C. Chatterley and A. J. Rouverol, *I Was Content and Not Content: The Story of Linda Lord and the Closing of Penobscot Poultry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999) p.21

<sup>90</sup> M. H. Frisch in Chatterley and Rouverol, *I Was Content and Not Content*, pp.x-xi

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* p.x, p.xii

<sup>92</sup> T. Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness, An Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019)



communities.<sup>93</sup> There are few examples of literature based in a British context which specifically address deindustrialisation's impact on workers' lives and identities in relation to post-redundancy employment. Witt's 1990 report on behalf of the Coalfield Communities Campaign, *When the Pit Closes - the Employment Experiences of Redundant Miners*, provides the most systematic and thorough example among the British literature of the post-redundancy experiences of workers. Witt's report is based on 1989 postal survey data of 302 redundant miners (who took redundancy in 1988), from the Woolley and South Kirkby pits, north of Barnsley.<sup>94</sup> The report advanced five key conclusions. Firstly, most miners experienced difficulty finding stable, well-paid work, a long period of unemployment was common, and the age, skill and health of the miners played a significant role in their securing alternative employment, with craftsmen and officials more effective in gaining new employment than general workers.<sup>95</sup> Secondly, miners expressed a reluctance to expand their employment search into the service sector, instead concentrating on manufacturing, transport, warehousing, and construction. Thirdly, many miners re-entered the mining industry on short-term contracts, which, given the gradual decline of the industry, provided no long-term security. Fourthly, the new employment tended to be precarious, offering significantly less pay and requiring a greater commute. These jobs effectively deskilled miners, as the new work was unable to effectively make use of their occupation-specific skillset. Further, those of a higher grade, such as managers and supervisors, also struggled to find employment at a similar level. Lastly, miners received very little by way of retraining programmes, and were not equipped to enter the labour market, despite British Coal claiming otherwise.<sup>96</sup>

## Unemployment

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<sup>93</sup> D. Waddington, et al., *Out of the Ashes: The Social Impact of Industrial Contraction and Regeneration on Britain's Mining Communities* (London: The Stationary Office, 2001) p.213

<sup>94</sup> S. Witt, *When the Pit Closes - the Employment Experiences of Redundant Miners* (Barnsley: Coalfield Communities Campaign, 1990) p.7

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* p.5

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* pp.5-6

Perhaps the most pervasive and emotionally evocative images conjured up by deindustrialisation are the debilitating effects of long-term unemployment upon workers' sense of self-respect and identity. Hutchison and O'Neill summarise the impact of unemployment in *The Springburn Experience* as: 'the loss of everything that work means to people... a person can no longer think of him or herself as contributing to society in a way that is expected of everyone. Instead, they are the recipient of what society judges to be the minimum needed to keep them alive'.<sup>97</sup> Burnett's *Idle Hands: The Experience of Unemployment*, offers the first comprehensive British history of unemployment, covering the period 1790-1990. The widespread social alienation and breakdown of self-respect which accompanied deindustrialisation produced an environment of hopelessness, which Burnett compares unfavourably with the mass mobilisations against unemployment in the 1930s.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, McLaughlin argues that the 1980s effectively recast unemployment from a societal problem to an individual one, thereby shifting responsibility from the state to the unemployed individual.<sup>99</sup>

Concerning its impact, Marsden explores the link between unemployment and identity disintegration by interviewing unemployed men in what would have been the prime of their working lives. Unemployed workers reported a drop in self-respect, personal standards, and self-esteem, which for former labourer, Mr McBain, prompted an existential crisis: 'In them two years I lost all bloody interest. I thought. "What's the bloody point of it all, anyway? What's the reason for it all?" Then you start to become, well, deranged'.<sup>100</sup> Sinfield has also linked unemployment to social alienation and depression. He notes how unemployment not only erodes an individual's current self-confidence, but also corrodes faith in past skills, with one unemployed worker commenting: 'I have lost a lot of confidence in myself, I have

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<sup>97</sup> G. Hutchison and M. O'Neill, *The Springburn Experience: an oral history of work in a railway community from 1840 to the present day* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989) p.80

<sup>98</sup> J. Burnett, *Idle Hands: The Experience of Unemployment, 1790-1990* (London: Routledge, 1994) p.276

<sup>99</sup> E. McLaughlin, 'Towards Active Labour Market Policies: An Overview', in E. McLaughlin (ed.) *Understanding Unemployment* (London: Routledge, 1992) p.1

<sup>100</sup> D. Marsden, *Workless: An Exploration of the Social Contract between Society and the Worker* (London: Croom Helm, 1982) p.156

particularly lost confidence that I can do new jobs, and I am also nervous about getting back to do work within my own trade'.<sup>101</sup> Both Fineman and Seabrook similarly utilise interviews with unemployed workers in their respective research, providing a detailed account of the social alienation and sense of meaninglessness which defines unemployment.<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, Nordenmark and Strandh describe how identity disintegration can be mitigated to an extent in cases where workers derive most of their identity from outside of the workplace.<sup>103</sup> Waddington et al. expanded upon this idea, highlighting the fact that for redundant miners with non-work related hobbies the experience of unemployment was much less catastrophic.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, in *Retiring Men*, Wood explores the concept of 'productive manhood' in relation to the transition from employment into retirement, finding that retirees who redefined their identity in terms of hobbies or interests were able to hold onto a sense of 'ongoing productivity' and therefore purpose, which can oftentimes be lost upon retirement, or indeed, unemployment.<sup>105</sup>

Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld introduced a three stage model of the impact of unemployment. First, individuals experience an initial shock but remain optimistic in their search for employment. Second, as alternative employment proves elusive, a sense of hopelessness sets in. Third, individuals become 'fatalistic' to their situation, resigning themselves to a workless future.<sup>106</sup> This model has been branded simplistic by both Burnett and Sinfield, who criticise its failure to take account of how factors such as job satisfaction and skill can temper the experience of unemployment.<sup>107</sup> However, the model does helpfully outline how long-term unemployment tends to sap individuals' confidence. As reemployment efforts continually prove fruitless and

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<sup>101</sup> A. Sinfield, *What Unemployment Means* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981) p.91

<sup>102</sup> J. Seabrook, *Unemployment* (London: London Quartet Books, 1982); S. Fineman, 'The Middle Class: Unemployed and Underemployed', in S. Fineman (ed.) *Unemployment: Personal and Social Consequences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987) pp.74-93

<sup>103</sup> M. Nordenmark and M. Strandh, 'Towards a sociological understanding of mental well-being among the unemployed: the role of economic and psychosocial factors', *Sociology*, 33:3 (1999) pp.577-597

<sup>104</sup> Waddington, et al., *Out of the Ashes*

<sup>105</sup> G. Wood, *Retiring Men: Manhood, Labor, and Growing Old in America, 1900-1960* (Boulder: University Press of America, 2012) p.3

<sup>106</sup> P. Eisenberg and R. F. Lazarsfeld, 'The psychological effects of unemployment', *Psychological Bulletin*, 35 (1938) p.378

<sup>107</sup> Sinfield, *What Unemployment Means*; J. Burnett, *Idle Hands*

self-respect collapses, Burnett highlights how the long-term unemployed can become 'institutionalized in unemployment', settling into helplessness.<sup>108</sup> Further, the process of unemployment actively lowers workers' employment standards, with a long period of unemployment increasing the likelihood that they will accept work which they had previously considered degrading.<sup>109</sup> Unemployed workers also often face discrimination in the labour market, which intersects with age, race, class, skill, and gender.<sup>110</sup> Maguire has shown that employers will often discriminate based upon the length of unemployment, as well as deny access to applicants from high unemployment areas due to social class bias, concluding that the most successful route into reemployment is often through informal networks, which can be exclusive to certain groups of workers, especially those living in historically occupation-dependent communities.<sup>111</sup>

### **Masculinity**

Work, specifically full-time waged employment, has been strongly associated with masculinity. Gender and masculinity are therefore an important part in understanding the significance of the loss of work and the relationship between deindustrialisation and identity. Whitehead's *Men and Masculinities* and Goodwin's *Men's Work and Male Lives*, highlight the centrality of paid employment to masculine identity.<sup>112</sup> Tolson marks the commencement of full-time employment as the point whereupon boys become adult men, with their entry into work signalling their "'initiation" into the secretive, conspiratorial solidarity of working men'.<sup>113</sup> Men's traditional authoritative position as family 'breadwinner' has been described by

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<sup>108</sup> J. Burnett, *Idle Hands*, p.289

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p.41

<sup>110</sup> M. Maguire, 'The role of employers in the labour market', in E. McLaughlin (ed.) *Understanding Unemployment* (London: Routledge, 1992) pp.80-103; Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory*; S. Pinch and C. Mason, 'Redundancy in an Expanding Labour Market: A Case-study of Displaced Workers from Two Manufacturing Plants in Southampton', *Urban Studies*, 28:5 (1991) pp.735-757; A. Coyle, *Redundant Women* (London: Women's Press, 1984)

<sup>111</sup> Maguire, 'The role of employers in the labour market', p.89

<sup>112</sup> S. M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); J. Goodwin, *Men's Work and Male Lives: Men and Work in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999)

<sup>113</sup> S. Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity* (London: Tavistock, 1977) p.47

Young as 'central to the definition of working-class masculinity'.<sup>114</sup> Additionally, Wight's *Workers not Wasters: Masculine Respectability, Consumption and Employment in Central Scotland*, outlines the crucial social value attached to waged employment within working-class communities, with 'great moral significance' given to the endurance of rigorous labour.<sup>115</sup> The excess of attention on the importance of waged employment to masculine identity can often overshadow the importance of work to women's identity. Coyle's *Redundant Women* critiques the assumption that work and redundancy play a lesser role in the lives of women than men. However, Coyle does make a crucial point of distinction in the experience of unemployment, remarking that although the return to the domestic sphere acts as a gender trap for women – contributing to their sexual subordination – it is not perceived or experienced as an alien and alienating landscape as it is for unemployed men.<sup>116</sup> This alienation derives primarily from the fact that hegemonic masculinity casts men in the role of 'breadwinner' and family provider, which Goodwin understands as the source of their power in the home.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, the loss of this status undermines the very *modus operandi* of masculinity, which, according to Tolson, can '[throw] a man's whole existence into crisis'.<sup>118</sup>

Not only has work been described as central to masculinity, but certain types of work are commonly perceived to be more masculine than others. In this hierarchy of gendered meaning, heavy industry has been traditionally styled as a highly masculine form of employment.<sup>119</sup> Exploring the operation of masculinity within Clydeside heavy industries, Johnston and McIvor found a prevailing 'cult of toughness' which socialised young men into a masculine work culture.<sup>120</sup> Since heavy industry has been characterised as traditionally masculine, it could be supposed that

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<sup>114</sup> H. Young, 'Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities', in L. Abrams and C. Brown (eds.) *A history of everyday life in twentieth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) p.141

<sup>115</sup> D. Wight, *Workers not Wasters: Masculine Respectability, Consumption and Employment in Central Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993) pp.111-112

<sup>116</sup> Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.94

<sup>117</sup> Goodwin, *Men's Work and Male Lives*, p.1

<sup>118</sup> Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, p.48

<sup>119</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*; Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*

<sup>120</sup> Johnston and McIvor, 'Dangerous Work', p.138

the loss of this employment, and the transition into female-dominated work, could precipitate some sense of emasculation. Indeed, in *Masculinities and Culture*, Beynon discusses how ex-industrial workers 'felt demeaned' by occupying 'women's jobs', concluding that '[deindustrialisation] had a huge impact' upon working class masculine identity.<sup>121</sup> Mourning the loss of his previous work in gendered terms, one former miner, now employed in a chicken factory, considers his current employment 'a woman's job', which lacks the 'technical challenges, dangers and male camaraderie [he'd] been used to underground'.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, Nayak comments that the rise of service sector employment lacks the previous 'body capital' transmitted by industrial employment – under which workers would derive pride from their own physical prowess and its usefulness to their work.<sup>123</sup>

Walkerdine and Jimenez explore masculinity and deindustrialisation by interviewing residents of a former steel-dependant town in Wales. The culture of masculinity surrounding steelmaking and community life was an important element in what Walkerdine and Jimenez describe, rather esoterically, as a protective 'skin' of social attitudes, which sheltered the community from hardship.<sup>124</sup> The steelwork's closure was a critical blow to this protective skin, destabilising community identity. Unemployment was widespread, with the little employment remaining based within the service sector. The closure of the steelworks engendered 'intergenerational trauma', where young men employed in the service sector describe feelings of shame and embarrassment over their failure to attain traditionally masculine employment, and are subject to ridicule from their parents, unemployed men, and their female co-workers.<sup>125</sup> Conversely, McDowell challenges the premise that men are emasculated by traditionally female employment, and explores the masculinity of young men employed in the service sector. Apparently immune to the supposed 'crisis of masculinity', these men displayed a stable form of masculinity with its own mode of

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<sup>121</sup> J. Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002) p.87

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* p.88

<sup>123</sup> A. Nayak, 'Displaced masculinities: chavs, youth and class in the postindustrial city', *Sociology*, 40:5 (2006) p.814

<sup>124</sup> Walkerdine and Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community after De-Industrialisation*, p.54

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* p.10

operation, 'emphasis[ing] the heroic struggle necessary to overcome consumer resistance in the selling occupations, or the camaraderie of the long hours/hard work culture of the burger bar'.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Cross and Bagilhole consider the idea of emasculation too 'simplistic', finding that the interviewed men employed in traditionally female-dominated work were 'actively maintaining traditional male values'.<sup>127</sup>

## Health

Employment has the capacity to both improve and degrade workers' health. The loss of work can have a devastating effect upon health, emphasised in the growing literature which explores the intersections between job loss, deindustrialisation, and health. Waddell and Burton underline the positive impact of work upon both physical and mental health.<sup>128</sup> Together with providing the means by which people materially support themselves and their families, work fulfils many psychosocial needs.<sup>129</sup> According to Bamba, employment is the 'most important determinant of population health and health inequalities in advanced market democracies'.<sup>130</sup> Conversely, Waddell and Burton relate unemployment to higher mortality rates as well as poorer physical and mental health.<sup>131</sup> The World Health Organisation has linked poverty, unemployment, inequality, and economic crisis with mental health problems, which can be alleviated by secure employment, a sense of control, and a stable income.<sup>132</sup> Unemployment and a lack of job security have been strongly associated with an increase in the risk of suicide, with men being particularly vulnerable in response to

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<sup>126</sup> L. McDowell, 'Transitions to Work: Masculine identities, youth inequality and labour market change', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 9:1 (2002) p.51

<sup>127</sup> S. Cross and B. Bagilhole, 'Girls' Jobs for the Boys? Men, Masculinity and Non-Traditional Occupations', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 9:2 (April 2002) p.221

<sup>128</sup> G. Waddell and A. K. Burton, *Is work good for your health and wellbeing?* (Norwich, The Stationery Office, 2006)

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> C. Bamba, *Work, Worklessness and the Political Economy of Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.ix

<sup>131</sup> Waddell and Burton, *Is work good for your health and wellbeing?*, p.viii

<sup>132</sup> World Health Organisation, *Impact of economic crises on mental health* (Copenhagen: World Health Organization 2011) p.1

economic hardship.<sup>133</sup> Precarious employment has also been linked to adverse health outcomes. For instance, based on a sample of 3,000 sawmill workers within a workplace threatened by deindustrialisation, Ostry, et al. discovered that workers who had left the industry and obtained alternative employment had higher levels of health than those that stayed.<sup>134</sup> Further, precarious employment is associated with disorganized work settings, which make the enforcement of occupational health and safety more difficult.<sup>135</sup>

Heavy industry also has a well-established and notorious history of destroying workers' health and crippling their bodies.<sup>136</sup> Not surprisingly, among workers' narratives of deindustrialisation the move away from heavy industry into healthier employment stands out as one of the few positive experiences.<sup>137</sup> In these 'escape narratives' workers contrast the adverse health effects and persistent danger of heavy industry with their new, more comfortable, safer, and healthier employment.<sup>138</sup> However, McIvor's 'Deindustrialization Embodied' highlights that although industrial work often 'mangled, poisoned, and diseased' workers' bodies, its removal had a detrimental impact upon health, with job loss or job insecurity engendering acute 'mental trauma and physical damage'.<sup>139</sup> Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the health impact of deindustrialisation also operates

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<sup>133</sup> G. Lewis and A. Sloggett, 'Suicide, Deprivation and Unemployment: Record Linkage Study', *British Medical Journal*, 317 (1998) p.1283; M. Berk, et al., 'The effect of macroeconomic variables on suicide', *Psychological Medicine*, 36 (2006) p.181

<sup>134</sup> A. S. Ostry, et al., 'Effect of De-Industrialisation on Working Conditions and Self-Reported Health in a Sample of Manufacturing Workers', *Epidemiology and Community Health*, 56 (2002) p.506

<sup>135</sup> M. Quinlan, et al., 'Global expansion of precarious employment, work disorganization, and consequences for occupational health: a review of recent research', *International Journal of Health Services*, 31:2 (2001) p.367

<sup>136</sup> R. Johnston and A. McIvor, *Lethal Work* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000); R. Johnston and A. McIvor, *Miners' Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2007); A. McIvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied: Work, Health, and Disability in the UK since c1950', in S. High, L. MacKinnon and A. Perchard (eds.) *The Deindustrialised World: Confronting Ruination in Post-industrial Places* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) pp.25-45

<sup>137</sup> Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory*; Witt, *When the Pit Closes*; K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*

<sup>138</sup> McIvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied', p.38

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* p.32, p.41



on a community-wide level, with poor physical and mental health, alcohol abuse, and substance abuse pervasive within deindustrialised communities.<sup>140</sup>

Coburn connects neoliberalism with health inequalities, arguing that societies with comprehensive welfare regimes outperform more neoliberal orientated societies on matters of health.<sup>141</sup> Charlesworth et al. highlight how the neoliberal policies of the 1980s oversaw a widening inequality in life expectancy among income groups, a rise in the male suicide rate – especially among the unemployed – and an increase in crime and substance abuse.<sup>142</sup> On substance abuse, Pearson's chapter in *A Land Fit for Heroin* describes how the widespread youth unemployment which followed deindustrialisation engendered an atmosphere of social alienation, where young people struggled to construct meaningful identities. Such a climate of helplessness proved ideal for the spread of drug abuse, with heroin exploding among deindustrialised working-class communities from the 1980s onwards.<sup>143</sup> The relationship between drug abuse and the aftereffects of deindustrialisation have been further documented by Portelli's *They Say in Harlan County*. Here, substance abuse is not only common among the unemployed youth, but is also a major problem among former miners in the form of painkiller abuse.<sup>144</sup> In Scotland, drug abuse rose dramatically in tandem with the onset of the rapid deindustrialisation of the 1980s, and remains common within deindustrialised communities.<sup>145</sup> The widely discussed 'Scottish Effect', which describes the poor level of health in Scotland in relation to other European nations, has been attributed by McCartney et al. to the introduction of neoliberal economics.<sup>146</sup> Collins and McCartney understand this process as a

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<sup>140</sup> K. Coates and M. B. Brown, *Community Under Attack: The Struggle for Survival in the Coalfield Communities of Britain* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1997); M. Pacione, 'The Geography of Multiple Deprivation in Scotland', *Applied Geography*, 15:2 (1995) pp.115-133; Walley, *Exit Zero*; Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*

<sup>141</sup> D. Coburn, 'Beyond the income inequality hypothesis: Class, neo-liberalism, and health inequalities', *Social Science and Medicine*, 58 (2004) p.41

<sup>142</sup> S. J. Charlesworth, et al., 'Living inferiority', *British Medical Journal*, 69:48 (2004) pp.49-50

<sup>143</sup> G. Pearson, 'Social Deprivation, Unemployment and Patterns of Heroin Use', in N. Dorn and N. South (eds.) *A Land Fit for Heroin* (London: Macmillan, 1987) p.92

<sup>144</sup> Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*

<sup>145</sup> C. Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Finlay, *Modern Scotland*

<sup>146</sup> G. McCartney, et al., 'Has Scotland always been the "sick man" of Europe? An observational study from 1855 to 2006', *European Journal of Public Health*, 22:6 (2012) p.1

‘political attack’, pointing out that the West of Scotland was heavily dependent upon heavy industry, thus making it especially vulnerable to the Thatcher government’s neoliberal policies.<sup>147</sup> Ironically, the Thatcher government’s attempt to promote an enterprise culture, through the abandonment of subsidy dependant industries, has in fact resulted in greater ill-health and dependency on state benefits. A report by Beatty and Fothergill links the past destruction of industry with the present chaos of public finances. They argue that deindustrialisation has brought ‘persistent worklessness, low wages, [and] an inflated welfare bill’, noting that the incapacity (ESA) claimant rate, disability (DLA/PIP) claimant rate, and per capita spending on Tax Credits are much more prevalent in older industrial Britain than the prosperous south.<sup>148</sup> The legacy of deindustrialisation is expanded upon by Linkon, who introduces the concept of the ‘half-life’ of deindustrialisation, arguing that ‘in social and cultural terms, the transition from one economic period to another is not immediate or absolute’.<sup>149</sup> For Linkon, deindustrialisation ‘is not an event of the past’, but is rather an ‘active and significant part of the present’.<sup>150</sup> The half-life of deindustrialisation ‘generates psychological and social forms of disease’, manifest in the ‘high rates of various illnesses as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide’ that plague deindustrialised communities as they ‘struggle with questions about their identities and their place in a global economy that has devalued workers and their labor’.<sup>151</sup>

### Space, Heritage and Memory

Working-class space has been radically transformed by deindustrialisation, which, as High points out, ‘not only caused the ruination of factories but the destruction of

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<sup>147</sup> C. Collins and G. McCartney, ‘The impact of neoliberal “political attack” on health: the case of the “Scottish effect”’, *International Journal of Health Services*, 41:3 (2011) p.501

<sup>148</sup> C. Beatty and S. Fothergill, *Jobs, Welfare and Austerity: How the destruction of industrial Britain casts a shadow over present-day public finances* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, 2016) pp.2-3

<sup>149</sup> S. Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization: working-class writing about economic restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018) p.7

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p.1

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

working-class towns and neighbourhoods'.<sup>152</sup> With spatial proximity to the workplace a key element in the formation of occupational identity, plant closures and worker relocations engendered a 'fragmentation of relatively stable class formations'.<sup>153</sup> Set in the context of Glasgow, *Clyde Film*, shot in the mid-1980s, captures the profound destruction of Glasgow's industrial heritage, expertly conveying the total sense of social upheaval engendered by deindustrialisation.<sup>154</sup> According to Kirk et al., deindustrialisation has led to a 'dilution' of progressive class-based politics, as well as a decline in collective identities.<sup>155</sup> Crang contends that 'landscapes may be read as texts illustrating the beliefs of the people'.<sup>156</sup> Applying this concept to industrial ruination, High and Lewis contend that industrial sites were once 'proud symbols of human progress and modernity', but now stand 'testament to the inability of working people to control the destructive forces'.<sup>157</sup> High and Lewis describe industrial demolition as a form of 'secular ritual', which serves to legitimise and cement deindustrialisation as unavoidable. In a similar vein, Clarke highlights the demolition of the Moulinex factory site in Alençon, France, as giving 'a spectacular form to the much-feared erasure of industrial and working-class culture from the local landscape'.<sup>158</sup>

Factories and industrial sites have great symbolic value to the communities within which they are embedded, and their erasure can have deep emotional meaning. The symbolism of Ravenscraig Steelworks was and remains multifaceted; representing the post-war consensus, dignity and stability for Motherwell, defiance in the face of Thatcherism, and ultimately, a political defeat for the Scottish working

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<sup>152</sup> High, 'The Wounds of Class', p.1000

<sup>153</sup> S. High, "'They were making good money, just ten minutes from home": Proximity and Distance in the Plant Shutdown Stories of Northern Ontario Mill Workers', *Labour/le travail*, 76 (2015) pp.11-36

<sup>154</sup> *Clyde Film* (1985) Directed by I. Venart, C. Tracy, I. Miller, M. Merrick, A. McCallum and K. Currie (Cranhill Films) <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/3789>

<sup>155</sup> Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe'

<sup>156</sup> Crang, *Cultural Geography*, p.27

<sup>157</sup> S. High and D. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007) pp.1-2

<sup>158</sup> J. Clarke, 'Afterlives of a Factory: Memory, Place, and Space in Alençon', in S. High, L. MacKinnon and A. Perchard (eds.) *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-industrial Places* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) p.117

class.<sup>159</sup> Walkerdine describes the steelworks in a Welsh occupation-dependant steel-town as its 'central object', which represented 'the source of life when it was operating and extreme hardship when it closed', with its demolition leaving a 'huge material and affective empty space where there had once been an object'.<sup>160</sup> This description of emptiness is common among workers' narratives of closure, Bill Sorensen for instance, a former autoworker interviewed in Dudley's *The End of the Line*, states: 'The building itself is something I'll miss. ... It's gonna be this huge gaping hole where this huge chunk of my life was ... literally, just a huge gaping hole.'<sup>161</sup> In the wake of deindustrialisation, former occupation-dependent communities struggle to maintain a positive sense of identity, instead, as Gidley and Rooke point out, working-class communities are often subject to class-based disdain, labelled 'chavtowns' and defined by underclass caricatures.<sup>162</sup> Working-class space not subject to some form of othering are at risk of gentrification, with working-class residents priced out of their communities. Gentrification is a process which, according to Paton, is seen by policy makers as 'the new panacea to the decline wrought by deindustrialisation', but in reality constitutes 'an economic, cultural and moral project that necessitates the reorganisation of class, identity and neighbourhoods associated with industrial Fordist production'.<sup>163</sup>

James links the 'destructive power of deindustrialisation' to a 'crisis of contemporary memory in working class communities'.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the transformation of working-class space, work, and identity has had a profound impact upon working-class memory and heritage. Smith's *Uses of Heritage* defines heritage as 'a process of engagement, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present'.<sup>165</sup> The 'political and cultural power' of heritage, its ability to 'represent and

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<sup>159</sup> Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival'; Finlay, *Modern Scotland*

<sup>160</sup> V. Walkerdine, 'Communal beingness and affect: An exploration of trauma in an ex-industrial community', *Body & Society*, 16:1 (2010) pp.98-99

<sup>161</sup> Dudley, *The End of the Line*, p.173

<sup>162</sup> B. Gidley and A. Rooke, 'Asdatown: The Intersections of Classed Places and Identities', in Y. Taylor (ed.) *Classed intersections: spaces, selves, knowledges* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010) p.95

<sup>163</sup> K. Paton, *Gentrification: a working class perspective* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014) p.1, p.185

<sup>164</sup> D. James, 'Listening in the Cold: The practice of oral history in an argentine meatpacking community', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006) pp.83-102

<sup>165</sup> L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006) p.1

validate a sense of place, memory and identity', introduces issues of control.<sup>166</sup> Smith argues that heritage is typically controlled by 'scare-sanctioned cultural institutions and elites', and is used to 'regulate cultural and social tensions in the present', through the promotion of 'a consensus version of history', which she terms 'authorised heritage discourse'.<sup>167</sup> However, the control of heritage is often contested by 'subaltern groups', and deployed as 'a resource that is used to challenge and redefine received values and identities'.<sup>168</sup> Similarly, Taksa and Tovar et al. have both outlined the depoliticised, politically safe nature of official heritage.<sup>169</sup> Expanding upon the issue of control in relation to labour history, Shackel states that 'those who have the power to control the public memory of these events can command the historical consciousness'.<sup>170</sup> Shackel and Campbell's edited collection *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes*, expertly documents working-class communities' engagement with heritage and the battle over its control. They argue that 'working class people have a remarkable ability to avoid reactionary nostalgia and self-pity, and can build on their history, traditions and sense of place and community in novel ways', with heritage used to support contemporary campaigns and struggles.<sup>171</sup>

Williams' concept of 'structures of feeling' – defined as 'meanings and values that are actually lived and felt' – and his notion of 'residual culture' – which describes the 'experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture' – are valuable in understanding the relationship between deindustrialisation and memory.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, Bright

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* p.297

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p.4

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> L. Taksa, 'Labor History and Public History in Australia', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 76 (2009) pp.82-104; F. J. Tovar, et al., 'A tale of two cities: working class identity, industrial relations and community in declining textile and shoe industries in Spain', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 17:4 (2011) pp.331-343

<sup>170</sup> P. A. Shackel, 'Remembering Haymarket and the control for public memory', in L. Smith, P. Shackel and G. Campbell (eds.) *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes* (London: Routledge, 2011) p.34

<sup>171</sup> L. Smith, P. Shackel and G. Campbell, 'introduction', in L. Smith, P. Shackel and G. Campbell (eds.) *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes* (London: Routledge, 2011) p.1

<sup>172</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p.133; R. Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980) p.40

usefully applies Gordon's concept of a 'social haunting' to deindustrialisation and its aftereffects; a social haunting is defined as a 'social violence done in the past', which though 'concealed', is 'very much alive and present'.<sup>173</sup> According to Bright, the social disruption of deindustrialisation has resulted in a form of intergenerational trauma in coalfield communities, with the legacy of Thatcherism and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike permeating community memory and discourse.<sup>174</sup> These concepts can be used to describe the continued engagement of certain communities with working-class culture and working class orientated campaigning and heritage. For instance, Mellor and Stephenson describe how the Durham miners' gala not only serves as a source of pride for ex-mining community identity, but also allows activists in these regions to use the networks and symbolism of the gala in contemporary anti-poverty campaigns.<sup>175</sup> Linkon and Russo's *Steeltown U.S.A: Work and Memory in Youngstown*, deals with issues of memory in deindustrialised communities, and is based within the context of Youngstown – once the thriving steel capital of America; now the 'heart of the Rust Belt'.<sup>176</sup> Linkon and Russo stress how the struggle for memory constitutes a vital part in a community's ability to understand its current situation and challenge deindustrialisation.<sup>177</sup> With the passage of time, fewer people remember Youngstown before deindustrialisation, focusing instead on the subsequent rise of poverty, crime, and social alienation. However, initiatives such as the Brier Hill Italian Fest, the Sam Camens Steelworkers' Centre, and the Youngstown Historical Centre for Industry and Labour vie for control over memory, offering inroads into community organising and the potential for mobilisation towards a better future.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> A. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) p.xvi.

<sup>174</sup> N. G. Bright, "'A chance to talk like this': Gender, education and a social haunting in the UK Coalfields", in R. Simmons and J. Smyth (eds.) *Education and Working-Class Youth: Reshaping the Politics of Inclusion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) pp.105-129

<sup>175</sup> M. Mellor and C. Stephenson, 'The Durham Miners' Gala and the spirit of community', *Community Development Journal*, 40:3 (2005) p.349

<sup>176</sup> Linkon and Russo, *Steeltown U.S.A*, p.132

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* p.247

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* p.181

## Methodology

Steven High praised K'Meyer and Hart's *I Saw it Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* for asking workers 'the why question': why they thought their plants had closed, why their work had meant so much to them, and why they felt the way they did about their new employment.<sup>179</sup> In order to prioritise working-class perspectives, this thesis similarly sought to ask workers the 'why question'. However, the general lack of archival information which encapsulates the often-emotional narratives of deindustrialisation, compounded by the marginalisation of working-class experiences within dominant remembrances of the past, makes any attempt at reconstructing workers' post-redundancy employment difficult. In archival documents, such as those held by the Scottish Trade Union Congress Archive, deindustrialisation is discussed within the context of campaigns resisting closure or statistics on the viability of heavy industry. In these documents, workers are only visible by virtue of their employment in heavy industry; once these industries closed, workers essentially ceased to exist within the written record. Oral history was therefore chosen as the primary research method given its effectiveness in the recovery of marginalised narratives and its ability to navigate the realms of emotion and meaning.<sup>180</sup> In capturing complex and experiential narratives, oral history proves indispensable as a means of understanding the significance of deindustrialisation for working-class people.

This thesis takes a reconstructive approach, utilising oral history as a form of recovery history in order to better understand workers' post-redundancy employment transitions and the corresponding impact upon their identity and experience of work. Reconstructive oral history, or oral history as recovery history, was the prevailing form of oral history practice during the discipline's earlier period

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<sup>179</sup> S. High in K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*

<sup>180</sup> A. Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1994); Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*; L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010)

of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>181</sup> According to Abrams, oral history as recovery history is defined as:

The practice of interviewing people to provide evidence about past events which could not be retrieved from conventional historical sources... or to uncover the hidden histories of individuals or groups which had gone unremarked upon in mainstream accounts.<sup>182</sup>

In the context of deindustrialisation, oral history as a form of recovery history is especially important. Workers' oral history narratives stand as a remedy to the lack of experiential information about plant closure, as well as a check and balance on the saturation of official narratives that typically portray workers as unfortunate but ultimately necessary victims of 'progress'. High and Lewis, for instance, state that 'by telling us why mills and factories came to be abandoned, these plant shutdown stories remind us that this was no natural disaster'.<sup>183</sup> K'Meyer and Hart have similarly noted the value of oral history in providing not only the "first hand" details of experience but the workers' interpretation of why and how the closing happened and what it meant for them and for society'.<sup>184</sup>

Bartie and McIvor describe the turn away from the reconstructive approach towards an interpretive approach, which involved 'turning the perceived weakness of oral history, the subjectivity of memory, into its strength' through 'embracing and even celebrating the subjective nature of this kind of evidence, to deconstructing and decoding memories'.<sup>185</sup> While noting the decline of the reconstructive approach, Abrams acknowledges its enduring legitimacy as well as its status as a 'prime motivation' underlying many contemporary oral history projects.<sup>186</sup> Summerfield draws attention to the power of dominant cultural scripts or discourses in prioritising or silencing certain narratives, but states that while oral history cannot 'solve all the

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<sup>181</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.5

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* p.5

<sup>183</sup> S. High and D. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007) p.13

<sup>184</sup> T. E. K'Meyer and J. L. Hart, *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p.155

<sup>185</sup> A. Bartie and A. McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 92:234 (2013) p.109, p.135

<sup>186</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.5



problems of cultural silence', it does offer 'legitimation... to memories of experiences that have not been legendized, or that run counter to public discourse'.<sup>187</sup>

An overemphasis upon interpretation and the malleability of memory undermines interviewees' agency, their depiction of historical events, and their ability to accurately narrate their own lived experience, jeopardising the reliability of oral history methodology itself. Just as social history can be seen to represent a departure from the study of elites – aiming in part to better understand the experiences of 'ordinary' people – one of the foundational pillars of oral history was the prioritisation of lived experience, marking the discipline as an almost revolutionary and democratising method of historical inquiry. The rejection of oral history as recovery history risks abandoning this key foundational ethos.

Reflecting on the fact that oral historians have increasingly become focused on how narratives fit into cultural scripts, Green cautions:

If oral historians reject the capacity of individuals to engage critically and constructively with inherited ideas and beliefs, the field has made a paradigmatic shift from the concerns and values that lead to its growth and development in the 1960s.<sup>188</sup>

Walker acknowledges that individual memory can be reshaped by hegemonic discourse, but goes on to state that this 'is more likely to happen when the subject matter has received popular interest and information about it is widely disseminated'.<sup>189</sup> Walker makes the point that this 'does not detract from the fact that people can and do remember events quite clearly'.<sup>190</sup> Ritchie usefully highlights the work of gerontologist Robert Butler, who advanced the idea that as people age they undergo a mental process of life review; Ritchie goes on to state that 'long

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<sup>187</sup> P. Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Cultural and Social History*, 1:1 (2004) p.93

<sup>188</sup> A. Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates", *Oral History* (2004) pp.35-44

<sup>189</sup> D. Walker, "Danger was something you were brought up wi'": Workers' Narratives on Occupational Health and Safety in the Workplace', *Scottish Labour History*, 46 (2011) p.55

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.* p.55

forgotten earlier memories return and grow vivid as people sort through their successes and failures'.<sup>191</sup> Lummis makes a similar point, stating:

The further away one is from the self-interest and advantages to be gained in giving a particular account of an event, and the nearer one approaches a deathbed confession, the more likely it is that an authentic account will emerge: on the whole, time and distance from a situation weaken the pressures to dissemble.<sup>192</sup>

In *Listening to History*, Lummis puts forward a defence for the reliability of memory – or the 'mental integrity of ordinary people'.<sup>193</sup> Lummis is critical of the perspective that 'memory is assumed to be a non-historical entity with only current interpretation of previous experience' – arguing instead that individual memories are 'less malleable' than has been suggested, and that individuals, particularly those with direct first-hand knowledge, are able to disaggregate their experience from dominant cultural scripts.<sup>194</sup>

Oral history was also chosen for its ability to challenge hegemonic understandings of the past as well as its capacity to prioritise the lived experience of working-class people and contest their marginalisation. Post-war British heavy industry, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, has been commonly framed within a narrative that emphasises unreasonably greedy workers, overly militant unions, and a moribund industry that was irredeemably unproductive. Todd has described how the 'mythology of the 1970s' stresses that 'working-class people's greed caused the economic downfall of the country', and that this narrative has been 'unquestioningly accepted by many historians and politicians'.<sup>195</sup> Similarly, Martin-López highlights how the strikes of the 1970s – largely a reaction to a cost of living crisis and equal pay initiatives – became 'mythologised' into the 'Winter of Discontent'; which again

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<sup>191</sup> D. A. Ritchie, 'The evolution of Oral History', in Ritchie, D. A. (ed.) *The Oxford Hand Book of Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) p.12

<sup>192</sup> T. Lummis, *Listening to History* (London: Hutchinson, 1987) p.120

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* p.124

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p.121, p.124

<sup>195</sup> S. Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010* (London: John Murray, 2015) p.299

emphasised working-class greed and economic ruination.<sup>196</sup> In *The Winter of Discontent: Myth, Memory, and History* Martin-López outlines early on that their intention is to 'deconstruct the myth that has developed around the Winter of Discontent'.<sup>197</sup> In the same spirit, this thesis challenges the hegemony of the wider mythology of working-class recklessness, with the testimonies of former heavy industry workers themselves offering a radically different interpretation. Additionally, this thesis challenges accusations of 'smokestack nostalgia' – the popularly held belief that former industrial workers are unable to critically reflect upon their industry, instead gazing back through a rose-tinted lens. The testimonies of interviewed workers stand as a correction to this notion, demonstrating a nuanced and complex depiction of heavy industry which critically engages with both its positive and negative aspects.

This thesis draws on 51 oral history interviews conducted between 2016 and 2019 with former heavy industry workers in the West of Scotland – 21 from shipbuilding and 30 from steelmaking. Interviewees were employed within British Steel and the Scottish shipbuilding industry during the post-war period, with the majority working in these industries during the 1970s and 1980s and made redundant in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Situated close to the former 'steeltown' of Motherwell, as well as Bellshill, Wishaw and the villages of Cragneuk, Newarthill, and Holytown, Ravenscraig Steelworks was the centre of the steel production Scotland as well as a powerful symbol of Scottish heavy industry and its associated culture. Given its size and importance it was inevitable that a majority of interviewed steelworkers were employed at Ravenscraig Steelworks, with the rest spread across other Lanarkshire steelworks, including: Clyde Alloy Steel Company, Victoria Steelworks, Clydesdale Steelworks, Dalzell Steelworks, and Gartcosh Steelworks.

It is difficult to neatly categorise shipbuilders' employment histories, as shipyards frequently changed ownership or merged, thus changing names, which was

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<sup>196</sup> T. Martin-López, *The winter of discontent: myth, memory, and history* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015) p.1

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* p.3

further complicated by shipbuilders themselves often referring to their respective yards with older names. Shipbuilders' employment histories included the following employers: Govan Shipbuilders, John Brown Engineering, Scott Lithgow, Yarrow Shipbuilders, as well as private consortium Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and public corporation British Shipbuilders. Steelmaking and shipbuilding were both closed-shop workplaces, wherein union membership was a prerequisite to employment, and so all interviewed workers had been trade union members, with a number of them holding representative roles. In addition to shop-floor workers, this thesis also engaged with the perspectives of managers and ancillary staff, which provided a more complete understanding of heavy industry and post-redundancy employment. In shipbuilding, five managers were interviewed, alongside an accountant and two IT workers. In steelmaking, four managers were interviewed – including the Director of Ravenscraig and Gartcosh Steelworks, Jimmy Dunbar, and Ravenscraig's Strip Mill Manager, Ian Harris – alongside three lab technicians, a member of administrative staff, two full-time trade union convenors for Ravenscraig and Dalzell Steelworks, and Ravenscraig's Industrial Chaplin, Rev. John Potter.

Former heavy industry workers entered a diverse range of post-redundancy employment, though they generally described a substantial decline in pay and conditions, as well as stalled social mobility, at least initially. Following a path common to other displaced industrial workers, some gained employment as production line workers, taxi drivers, cleaners and janitorial staff; others trained as mechanics, entered the offshore oil industry, or joined the female-dominated public sector in social care or education (see appendix for full employment histories). Unlike steelworkers and shipbuilders, interviewed managers did not experience a dramatic variation in their post-redundancy employment, typically transitioning into similar roles. Jimmy Dunbar moved on to become Director and Group Chief Executive of North British Steel Group, later founding his own business, Trade Development Partnership, while Ian Harris accepted an offer from British Steel to transfer to Llanwern Steelworks, which allowed him to retain his role as Strip Mill Manager. In shipbuilding, Assistant Ship Manager Alastair Hart found alternative employment as

a Ship Surveyor and later Operations Manager for Det Norske Veritas, while Senior Naval Architect Nicholas Howe performed a number of high profile managerial roles in the offshore oil industry, latterly working as the Managing Director of Diamond Offshore Netherlands before launching his own consultancy company.

Given the demographics of Scottish heavy industry in the post-war period, interviewees were predominantly white working-class men. Three women were interviewed about their experience of work in heavy industry: Dorothy Macready was a typist then assistant manager in Ravenscraig Steelwork's printing department, while Janet Moss and Linda Collins both worked within IT in shipbuilding. Six interviewees spoke on behalf of late family members, reflecting on their time in heavy industry and their post-redundancy experiences: Janet Moss, John Johnstone and Colin Quigley's fathers were employed in shipbuilding; Susan Crow and Margaret Fraser's fathers worked in steelmaking, while Dorothy Macready's husband was a steelworker. Either consciously or unconsciously, the interviewed family members of former heavy industry workers had to confront the custodianship of their parent or spouse's reputation. The tension to provide an honest accounting of their experience and also protect the legacy of a family member was made easier for some by providing anonymity. However, in most instances family members were comfortable to offer critical reflection on their experience. Overall, the narratives of family members provided useful insight and an additional perspective on the impact of deindustrialisation.

Participants were recruited through a number of sources, including local press, social media, and trade union and retiree networks. The most effective method of recruitment was the snowballing method, whereby new participants were identified through interviewees' networks. Given the focus upon employment transition, it was integral to identify interviewees who would have been young enough at the time of closure to seek reemployment rather than early retirement, therefore the majority of interviewees were in their fifties or sixties. Deindustrialisation has been associated with unemployment and its deleterious

effects – such as marital breakdown, alcoholism, social isolation, identity disintegration, and suicide – yet all interviewees found alternative employment, which may potentially reveal a recruitment bias toward interviewees with a positive post-redundancy experience. This reflects a wider weakness within oral history methodology, as the self-selective nature of interviewees can potentially lead to a disproportionate emphasis on those with more positive narratives. Nonetheless, interviewees who gained alternative employment were able to reflect on how it contrasted with heavy industry, as well as describe their experience of underemployment or employment within workplaces they considered to be of a lesser quality. Although interviewed workers were not consigned to long-term unemployment following the loss of their jobs, the sentiment of a stolen life or a life derailed was fairly typical. Additionally, workers were able to effectively communicate stories of colleagues and friends who had experienced unemployment, who particularly struggled to adjust to life following redundancy, or who had passed away. The dearth of documented material on the post-redundancy experiences of Scottish heavy industry workers – let alone heavy industry workers more generally – made it difficult to corroborate interviewees' experiences with Scottish heavy industry workers as a whole. However, interviewees' testimonies were contextualised through a comparison with other displaced workers from the secondary literature. This exercise highlighted a number of shared experiences and differences between displaced workers which are emphasised throughout the thesis.

## **Thesis Outline**

This thesis consists of four thematically structured chapters which each deal with a prominent aspect of workers' post-redundancy employment transition. Chapter 1 examines the impact of deindustrialisation on workers' health. In the first instance, the chapter will examine workers' experiences of workplace health and safety within heavy industry. From here, the chapter will follow workers' transition into employment beyond heavy industry, where workers' emphasised cleaner, healthier,

safer and more comfortable workplaces. Lastly, the chapter will place 'escape narratives' in perspective, examining the negative health consequences of deindustrialisation as a whole, both upon former heavy industry workers themselves, as well as upon post-industrial communities. Chapter 2 seeks to understand how deindustrialisation impacted trade unions and the bonds of solidarity between workers. The chapter will firstly build a picture of trade unionism within heavy industry, outlining the strength of workplace unions and their relationship with management, as well as examine the wider culture of collectivism within the workplace. Following this, the chapter will explore trade unionism and labour management within workers' post-redundancy employment, highlighting changing power dynamics between labour and capital. Chapter 3 investigates deindustrialisation and gender. The chapter firstly discusses male identity and the work culture of heavy industry, exploring the extent to which heavy industry can be categorised as a 'macho' form of employment; from here, it examines workers' transition into female-dominated or mixed employment and assesses the impact this had upon masculinity, scrutinising whether this transition provoked a sense of emasculation. Chapter 4 examines the impact of deindustrialisation on workers' identity and culture. To begin, the chapter establishes the social context of heavy industry, examining workers' recollections of camaraderie, community and feelings of social embeddedness. From here, the chapter engages with deindustrialisation and identity disintegration. This involves: an examination of the erosion of camaraderie and community in workers' post-redundancy employment; workers' feelings of being socially uprooted or having their life 'stolen'; the fracturing of community identity; and feeling of placelessness and erasure. Chapter 5 functions as a conclusion and opens by summarising the findings of the thesis. It then considers the survivability and fate of industrial culture following deindustrialisation, before examining how workers articulate the continued association between work and identity. The chapter closes by situating workers' narratives of deindustrialisation within the political attack thesis, emphasising the importance of workers' testimonies in countering the conceptualisation of industrial ruination as an inevitable, unaccountable force.

# Chapter One

## **‘Night and day’: Health and Deindustrialisation**

Heavy industry has a notorious history of destroying workers’ health and crippling their bodies. In the wake of deindustrialisation, as factories, mills and shipyards closed down, a legacy of injury and illness was left behind. Industrial workers are often accused of remembering their industry through a rose-tinted lens, guilty of first-degree ‘smokestack nostalgia’. The problem with this interpretation, besides the implicit dismissal of workers’ ability to accurately recount their own lives, is that in regards to health and safety, workers’ narratives of heavy industry were anything but rose-tinted. Overwhelmingly, heavy industry was remembered as a dangerous and potentially lethal form of employment. The danger of the workplace was acknowledged as one which was ever present, with each day carrying the potential for serious injury or death. Work was often physically demanding and performed under dirty, uncomfortable conditions, which, depending upon the situation, could be either swelteringly hot or miserably cold. The workplace was a volatile environment where lethal machinery could maim or kill. Beyond immediate physical injury or death, workers were routinely exposed to toxic substances, present in the materials they handled and carried in the dust they breathed. Employment within this environment increased the likelihood of developing a host of long-term, debilitating illnesses and disease. Whereas in most other instances workers had portrayed their post-redundancy employment as inferior to heavy industry, this was not the case in terms of narratives surrounding health. In this respect, workers’ departure from heavy industry was typically seen as beneficial, expressed in language which evoked a sense of escape or liberation. McIvor has usefully termed these accounts as ‘escape narratives’, drawing attention to the tendency of former heavy



industry workers to contrast the adverse health effects and persistent danger of heavy industry with cleaner, safer, and healthier employment.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the impact of deindustrialisation on workers' health. In the first instance, this chapter will examine workers' experiences of workplace health and safety within heavy industry. In doing so, workers' testimonies highlight: the bodily demands and conditions of heavy industry, specifically its depiction as a hard or uncomfortable form of work; the deleterious relationship between employment within heavy industry and workers' health, in terms of general health as well as long-term associated illnesses and disease; and the physical danger of heavy industry, including the real and present possibility of occupational accidents or fatalities. From here, the chapter will follow workers' transition into employment beyond heavy industry to compare and contrast their experiences of physical comfort, health, and occupational danger in their new employment. Overwhelmingly, workers' descriptions of their new employment corresponded with the 'escape narratives' typical among other former heavy industry workers, emphasising cleaner, healthier, safer and more comfortable workplaces. Lastly, the chapter will place 'escape narratives' in perspective, examining the negative health consequences of deindustrialisation as a whole, in terms of social alienation and poor physical and mental health within post-industrial communities.

## Health and Heavy Industry

Employment within heavy industry took a toll on workers' bodies. On the question of responsibility, Mclvor holds that 'at the core of this issue... lies an unequal power relationship in which the competitive market system encourages those with power to exploit those with little power, putting profit before health'.<sup>2</sup> A productionist

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<sup>1</sup> A. Mclvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied: Work, Health, and Disability in the United Kingdom since the Mid-Twentieth Century', in S. High, L. MacKinnon and A. Perchard (eds.) *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-industrial Places* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) p.38

<sup>2</sup> A. Mclvor, *Working lives: work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.152

ethos, together with a large degree of managerial ignorance and ambivalence, cost workers their health and risked their lives. McIvor states:

The workplace could be energy-sapping, dangerous and capable of incubating a range of chronic occupational diseases. Perhaps those sectors associated with inhaling toxic dust, chemicals and carcinogens were the most insidious. To a degree, workers' bodies were sacrificed at the temple of Fordism. The legacy was blighted communities of disabled workers.<sup>3</sup>

Steelmaking and shipbuilding were among the most dangerous trades in the post-1945 period, with 'the highest death and mutilation rates'.<sup>4</sup> Calling to mind William Blake's dark satanic mills, Dorothy Radwanski, an occupational nurse employed at North British Locomotive Works foundry, compared conditions to 'Dante's Inferno', stating: 'the air was very black; the men were absolutely black. I was absolutely shocked'.<sup>5</sup> Even with declining fatality rates, heavy industry remained dangerous throughout the 1970s, with Scottish occupational hygienist Ian Kellie labelling conditions in steelmaking 'appalling'.<sup>6</sup> Managerial regimes erroneously believed that workers' exposure to harmful substances such as silica dust and asbestos could be effectively regulated. McIvor highlights that the 'tendency to lay down "threshold limits" of exposure... were later found to be inadequate and of limited effectiveness', providing little more than a 'false sense' of security for workers who had believed that measures were in place to safeguard them.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1945 and 1949 approximately 2,000 workers were killed each year in Britain on average through work-related accidents, with many more unrecorded but nonetheless serious injuries. Through the 1950s, yearly workplace deaths stood at an average of 1,564 per annum, shrinking in the 1970s to an average of 758 per annum.<sup>8</sup> Occupational fatality rates caused by trauma at work demonstrate the danger of work as well as changes over time. In the early 1950s there was a fatal

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p.199

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.155

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.168

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p.177

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p.155

injury rate per 100,000 workers of 10.5, compared to 2.9 in 1974, 1.7 in 1986-7, 1.1 in 1996-7, and 0.5 in 2009-10.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the full extent of the lethality of heavy industry is difficult to capture in statistics alone, given that occupational injury was underreported or in many instances not recorded, and that occupational diseases have a potentially long incubation period, with disability and death occurring decades after initial exposure.<sup>10</sup> While the rapid decline of heavy industry certainly contributed to safer employment, the Health and Safety Executive stated that only 35-50% of declining mortality rates could be attributed to structural change in jobs.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in the United States, Loomis estimates 'that the rate of fatal unintentional occupational injury... declined by 45% from 1980 to 1996', and attributes deindustrialisation to 10-15% of this decline, while including the caveat that 'most of the improvement in the rate of fatal injuries would still have taken place if there had been no change in employment patterns'.<sup>12</sup> McIvor postulates that 'vigilance on the part of the trade unions, better health education and awareness, a more critical investigative media, a changed health culture in the workplace and improved policing and regulation' all contributed towards safer trends in employment.<sup>13</sup>

### **Physical Discomfort**

The workplace of heavy industry was one which had to be endured. Physically demanding, distinct in its uncleanness, with ubiquitous dirt and grim, as well as an extreme climate in some areas, the workplace was remembered as acutely uncomfortable. James Blair described the conditions of working in steelmaking in simple terms, as 'noisy, dirty'.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Harry Carlin expanded upon this, recalling:

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.178, p.179

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.178, pp.184-185

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* pp.178-179

<sup>12</sup> D. Loomis, et al., 'Deindustrialization and the Long Term Decline in Fatal Occupational Injuries', *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 61:7 (2004) pp.616-621

<sup>13</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, pp.178-179

<sup>14</sup> Interview with James Blair by James Ferns, 19/02/2019

You are in a dirty environment, dirty, oily... the conditions you were under weren't very clean. You had a canteen, you went down there for your tea, but the environment you were working in was very hot... some of the jobs were very labour intensive... It was hot and dirty.<sup>15</sup>

Dirt was a defining feature of heavy industry, one often evoked by former workers and their family members. Based in Ravenscraig, Peter Hamill stated, 'the centre plant was dirty, the blast furnace was dirty, the coke ovens was ridiculous'.<sup>16</sup> Speaking on behalf of her steelworker father, Susan Crow remembered, 'a lot of muck, a lot of grime, and a lot of dirt. Certainly, living so close to [the plant], the smell was often around'.<sup>17</sup> The depiction of permeating grime was often recalled alongside the sense memory of a particular odour. Like Susan, Jim McKeown noted, 'your clothes were always dirty in there, everything was always dirty, always had that – that Ravenscraig smell'.<sup>18</sup>

The persistent intense heat in certain areas of steelmaking made for an arduous environment. Dehydration from excessive sweating posed a serious risk, which was addressed through the supply of salt tablets. The discomfort, heat and physicality of the work were conveyed by Andrew Kane:

It was hard, hard work. You got burned – I've got a few scars to this day still. It was really hot, you took a sweat towel to work with you, and they used to give you salt tablets... it was really heavy physical work.<sup>19</sup>

Water stations were installed throughout the plant to prevent dehydration, Stewart MacPherson recalled, 'you were always drinking' to keep the thirst at bay.<sup>20</sup> Because of the intense heat and physically demanding nature of steelmaking, Peter Hamill recalled a popular anecdote of the time relating to job seekers, where unemployment benefits would not be stopped by refusing to work in the industry: 'you could actually leave the brew, get started in the coke ovens, no like it, and go back to the brew and

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Harry Carlin by James Ferns, 18/01/2017

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Peter Hamill by James Ferns, 28/01/2017

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Susan Crow by James Ferns, 09/03/2019

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Jim McKeown by James Ferns, 13/02/2017

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Andrew Kane by James Ferns, 25/01/2017

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Stewart MacPherson by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

they didn't stop your money'.<sup>21</sup> The discomfort of heavy industry is something which stands out in most testimonies of former heavy industry workers. This theme is well represented in K'Meyer and Hart's *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss*, where in one instance, a former International Harvester employee, Phil Nalley, states: 'you had to work in this heat. You had to wear heavy clothes to keep the heat off you... Approximately fifty percent of the people that hired in with me the first day quit'.<sup>22</sup> Another employee, Rob McQueen, reflected upon the impact of physical exhaustion upon his life outside of work: 'when you got home... I had no energy, hardly at all. I had to strain to play with my kids, do any outdoor activities or any activities whatsoever... It was rough. It was real rough'.<sup>23</sup> In steelmaking, areas of intensely uncomfortable heat were accompanied with ones of miserable cold. In their accounts of the workplace climate, workers conveyed a sense of the extreme, emphasising dramatic shifts in temperature. James Blair commented: 'During the winter time... the place was an absolute iceberg. It was warmer outside than it was in the steelworks'.<sup>24</sup> Jim McKeown stated, 'it could go from extreme cold... but when the steel comes it went to the [other] extreme, you were really, really warm'.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Gordon Hatton noted how temperature would immediately leap from one extreme to another around the plant:

It was extreme. Especially in the summer, it was mad hot... You cannot imagine that. It's mad hot... it was roasting... but as soon as you walked away it was Baltic. Which is hard to believe... once you were away from the production, it was frozen.<sup>26</sup>

Conditions in shipbuilding were expressed in no better terms than in steelmaking. Rather than steelworkers' emphasis on unrelenting heat mixed with periods of freezing cold, shipyards tended to be remembered for their spartan amenities and wretched working conditions. Alan Glover stated, 'the conditions, they

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Hamill Interview (Ferns)

<sup>22</sup> T. E. K'Meyer and J. L. Hart, *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p.36

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p.48

<sup>24</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>25</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Gordon Hatton by James Ferns, 25/03/2019

were appalling, they really were appalling’, going on to recall: ‘I actually enjoyed being a welder but sometimes, maybe if you were on the night shift and it was pouring with rain or sleet and snow, it was as miserable as sin’.<sup>27</sup> Emphasising the brutality of the conditions Alan continued: ‘you’re sitting under a ship, it’s dark, the rain has been running down, your feet are soaking, your boiler suit’s soaking... it was Neanderthal’.<sup>28</sup> This depiction was shared by Paul Molloy: ‘There’s times in there when you go out and you are standing in the middle of the [River] Clyde, working underneath a ship at 7:30 in the morning. It’s snowing, it’s not nice’.<sup>29</sup> Danny Houston described the environment in no uncertain terms:

Shit. Awful. Freezing. Used to work outside – raining. Used to touch welding equipment – you got a shock. It was so antiquated it was unbelievable. You worked in a horrible, freezing, cold environment.<sup>30</sup>

Depictions of working under bitter cold were a common theme expressed by shipbuilders. A general lack of decent workplace facilities rendered this environment worse, with breaks taken in cold sheds or outside, on board or under the ship in a potentially freezing yard. Alex Wright discussed these conditions:

It was very basic... under the ship... you would use your tool box to sit on and have a mug of hot tea. It was always a cold environment... the winters were bitter, really, really bitter, on the vessel itself. Then the prefab sheds. It almost felt – with so much steel about – it almost felt like it was colder than outside. You would go into maybe a hold or something: it was almost like walking into a fridge.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this, Alex noted that he had enjoyed his work, but doubted if he could have continued working under such conditions today:

I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it when I was a younger man... Possibly pushing into my 40s, I could have possibly did it. Though I’m still a couple of years off retirement, I couldn’t imagine me welding now at my age.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Alan Glover by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Paul Molloy by James Ferns, 15/03/2019

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Danny Houston by James Ferns, 06/08/2019

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Alex Wright by James Ferns, 06/03/2019

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

In a similar vein, Alan Glover noted how the physicality of the work, along with its associated culture, took a 'toll' on workers: 'It was heavy work... and I saw it in the shipyard. A lot of men they were burnt out by the time they were 50 because they would be drinking a lot, the conditions certainly took its toll'.<sup>33</sup>

### **Toxicity**

Work in heavy industry jeopardised workers' health through exposure to toxic substances, damaging their bodies both in the immediate and long-term in the form of associated illness and disease. Plants under the shadow of closure had an additional pressure to raise productivity, and so often sacrificed health and safety standards, further exposing workers to hazardous materials. On the other hand, the hard labour of industrial work, in an obvious sense, ensured a degree of physical fitness which promoted workers' health. As Alex McGowan noted of steelmaking, 'it was a physical job... it was heavy work, warm work. You were physically fit'.<sup>34</sup> Alex immediately qualified this statement, recalling his regular exposure to 'carcinogenic' substances, noting that the shift from heavy industry was:

Probably a good thing because people are a lot healthier. I mean when I used to work in the coke ovens on the by-product side. You are making things like benzene, toluene, xylene, naphthalene. You just worked in there till you felt a bit lightheaded, and then you come out for some fresh air and then went back in again.<sup>35</sup>

Alex's testimony provides an interesting juxtaposition, highlighting how the health-enhancing potential of heavy industry proved hollow in the face of long-term exposure to harmful substances, how the work strengthened workers' bodies externally, while simultaneously eroding them from within. This reflects McIvor's point on the duality of work, where he notes that 'employment could be benign,

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<sup>33</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Alex McGowan by James Ferns, 11/04/2019

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

could be health-enhancing and could be the harbinger of injury, disease and physical and mental breakdown'.<sup>36</sup>

Former heavy industry workers, particularly those employed within steelmaking, remembered the factory air being 'rife' with toxic fumes and dust. This dust was created as a by-product of steelmaking; Alex Torrance described its composition: 'Iron, iron dust, iron particles. Steel particles, and then you had the carbon, which is similar to coal'.<sup>37</sup> The abundance of dust was 'like working in a fog' according to Stewart MacPherson.<sup>38</sup> Derek Cairns demonstrates both the omnipresence and sheer degree of dust in the plant:

Practically everywhere you went, there was two or three inches of dust. The molten metal would get poured into the vessels and there would be clouds of smoke coming off, and that just settled as dust throughout the place... everywhere you went, you put something down and you couldn't see it because it was sank into the dust... You were breathing it in.<sup>39</sup>

This dust, rendered visible as rays of light pierced the roofing, was what Andrew Kane 'hated most' about steelmaking: 'The sun used to shine through and you could see all this – all swirling around – all the stuff you were breathing... it was disgusting... it was as opposite to healthy as you could get'.<sup>40</sup> The dust was inescapable, it coated workers' clothing and skin and inevitably their respiratory system. Workers recalled the pervasiveness of dust on their body:

You blew your nose at the end of the shift and it was disgusting; it was what you were actually breathing in. It doesn't bear to think about... your leg, you lifted your leg and put your sock down and you had black up your leg.<sup>41</sup>

It was very, very dusty, I will always remember the dust, I always remember when you come off the shift for a couple of days and you went to blow your nose... you were choked up, and it was dirty... I

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<sup>36</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.199

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Alex Torrance by James Ferns, 02/04/2019

<sup>38</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Derek Cairns by James Ferns, 12/04/2019

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



always remember in the summer... the sun came though you could see all the particles of dust... it was really, really dirty... it was extreme.<sup>42</sup>

Used to go out and get washed and you'd blow your nose and it'd be like, 'God's sake'. You thought you'd been down a coal mine.<sup>43</sup>

Alex Torrance mentioned a private film that he had donated to Summerlee Museum of Industrial Life, which had been made with the intention of highlighting 'what the conditions were like in Ravenscraig... the noise and the muck'.<sup>44</sup> He recalled a particular moment:

There's two of my mates, who worked with me. You see them on up on top of a crane. And you can make them out on top of the crane fixing the motor, and it's just red dust all about them, like a sandstorm – they're breathing that in.<sup>45</sup>

This scene almost perfectly captures the everyday drama of steelmaking, the interplay of immediate physical danger from working at heights, with the more subtle menace lurking in the sandstorm-like dust cloud.

Exposure to asbestos was a major risk within heavy industry, particularly common for those in shipbuilding who routinely worked around insulation. Mesothelioma (a cancer of the lining of the lung) stands as one of the most deadly occupational diseases, with an estimated 20,000 Scots set to die through asbestos exposure by 2025.<sup>46</sup> Among the workforce, there was little awareness of the extent of the danger posed by asbestos until the 1960s.<sup>47</sup> Beforehand, the lethal material had been handled as though it was innocuous, with shipbuilders recalling how they would 'play' with the material by throwing it at each other.<sup>48</sup> Alex O'Hara told a story of how in order to avoid redundancy his father, also a shipbuilder, had planned to improve his skillset by learning insulation work, which exposed him to asbestos. Alex

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<sup>42</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>43</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>44</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> R. Johnston and A. McIvor, *Lethal Work* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) p.2

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p.95

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

recalled his father's depiction of shipbuilding during the interwar period, of how asbestos dust was so thick in the air it was like 'mist':

He went into the compartment and you couldn't see anything. The compartment was mist and that mist was asbestos, nobody was wearing anything, nobody had a mask or nothing. And my father was shouting, 'Are you in here Willie', and Willie's shouting 'I'm here Alec'. He's 10 feet away... All the guys in Willie's squad, there was about six or eight of them, mates of his, they were all dead before they were fifty.<sup>49</sup>

Not banned in the UK until 1999, Johnston and McIvor have argued that employers did not implement appropriate safety measures when they first became aware of the danger posed by asbestos, prioritising profit over the health and safety of workers, with the 'asbestos tragedy' standing as 'a classic example of vested interests in the form of powerful multinational corporations conspiring to put profit before workers' health, aided by the effective collusion of the state'.<sup>50</sup> James Cloughley demonstrates that workers who drew attention to the lethality of asbestos and challenged employer's inaction were treated as 'renegades':

It was atrocious... the pollution of course with the dust of asbestos... I remember when I was bursting into a safety meeting, it was the management and workers, and giving them [hell] about the fact that insulators were working there and the place was covered in dust and the men were breathing it in, and of course they think you're a renegade.<sup>51</sup>

James' concerns were of course later vindicated, though this did little to alleviate his feeling of betrayal over employers' failure to act, the result of which had been his own contraction of asbestosis as well as the death of many friends and colleagues: 'It wasn't until many years later... I discovered that I had asbestos myself on my lungs... fortunately it's not moved for me. I've been lucky; I've seen so many of my friends die'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Alex O'Hara by James Ferns, 22/02/2019

<sup>50</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.157, p.185

<sup>51</sup> Interview with James Cloughley by James Ferns, 08/04/2019

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

In the background of workers' discussions of health and heavy industry, there emerged a common theme of heavy industry workers' short life expectancy post-retirement. Almost everyone recalled instances of colleagues passing away shortly after retirement, which they linked to their exposure to the unhealthy, often toxic environment of heavy industry. When discussing older steelworkers, Jim McKeown recalled, 'when they retired you were at their funeral within weeks or months'.<sup>53</sup> This was mirrored by Gordon Hatton's comment, 'guys didn't seem to last long at all... it could have been their health. The conditions and the drinking... It was unhealthy'.<sup>54</sup> In shipbuilding, Danny Houston conveyed how premature death following retirement was almost expected: 'Shipyard workers didn't retire; they died. Was it health and safety? Is it lack of looking after your body? I don't know. Most of them just – as I said, you'd go to their funerals. They didn't retire'.<sup>55</sup> Alex Wright observed that retirement, marked as an achievement and a cause for celebration, was often swiftly followed by tragedy: 'They would bring the bottle at the retirement... Then about six, nine months later, you're going to their funeral'.<sup>56</sup> A morbid banter among former shipbuilders emerged as a consequence of this reality. Alex went on to relate an anecdote in which he 'bumped into a very old colleague', who commented: "'It's a pleasure meeting you Alec... because it's not often I meet a welder that's still living at your age'".<sup>57</sup>

The proximity of illness and death was rendered particularly tangible during an interview with one Ravenscraig steelworker, where the interview was paused after his friend and former workmate unexpectedly visited. During their brief conversation, his friend informed him of how he had just been diagnosed with terminal lung disease and given a few years to live, and that this was most likely linked to the fumes he had been exposed to within steelmaking. In 2017, *The Herald* reported on former Ravenscraig workers' legal action for compensation in light of various cancers and

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<sup>53</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>54</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>55</sup> Danny Houston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>56</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

other diseases which developed as a consequence of their previous employment.<sup>58</sup> The article noted that, 'insurers for British Steel... admitted it was in breach of its duty owed to its employees', with Roger Maddock, an expert industrial disease lawyer stating, 'the workers we represent, through no fault of their own, developed serious, and in some cases fatal, respiratory illnesses and lung cancers'.<sup>59</sup> In the article Sandy Kennedy spoke about his father, a Ravenscraig worker who had died of lung cancer in 2003. A Ravenscraig employee himself, Sandy reflected upon the need for 'justice' and the toxic conditions of the plant:

This is not about money, it's about justice for me and other workers who were not given adequate protection... These conditions were all preventable, imagine being exposed to sulphur fumes, coal dust and extreme temperatures every single day, of course it takes its toll. My dad was never in great health and there is a generation his age who have suffered the same as him.<sup>60</sup>

Following his retirement from shipbuilding James Cloughley dedicated himself to volunteering for Clydebank Asbestos Group, which he found 'extremely satisfying... changing the law in favour of the victims of asbestos'.<sup>61</sup> As with Sandy's campaign for compensation, James was also motivated by a need for justice and recognition. Given the irreversible damage which heavy industry wrought on workers' bodies, James stated that monetary compensation was often the only form of justice victims could hope to receive: 'It's not a question of being paid, it's a question of getting justice. The only way that you can get justice, because they cannot take it out of your lungs, is a payment. That's the only justice you can get'.<sup>62</sup>

## **Danger**

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<sup>58</sup> A. Simpson, 'Scots Steel workers exposed to toxic coke fumes in line for compensation', *The Herald* (2 November 2017) [http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15634433.Scots\\_steel\\_workers\\_exposed\\_to\\_toxic\\_coke\\_fumes\\_in\\_line\\_for\\_compensation/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15634433.Scots_steel_workers_exposed_to_toxic_coke_fumes_in_line_for_compensation/) [accessed 14/05/2018]

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> James Cloughley Interview (Ferns)

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

Heavy industry was an intensely dangerous form of employment. During the latter half of the twentieth-century health and safety standards may have been improving, with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 standing as a particularly significant piece of legislation. But for many, workplace standards remained grossly inadequate, with the legislation either not yet expansive enough or simply ignored by management. In steelmaking, heavy machinery which possessed the capacity to mangle or maim sometimes stood exposed with little to no guard railing. Derek Cairns commented: 'There was quite a lot of exposed turning stuff... pushing the metal back and forward... there wasn't an awful lot of guarding compared to what you would expect nowadays... it was quite dangerous'.<sup>63</sup> In the BBC Radio Scotland programme *Our Story*, Tommy Brennan conveyed the hectic activity of Ravenscraig:

It's dirty, dangerous, hazardous, there's smoke, there's steam, there's overhead cranes moving about, there was pugs shunting backwards and forwards, there was lorries driving about here there and everywhere, there was diggers and forklifts and so on and so forth.<sup>64</sup>

Paul Molloy gave a depiction of what he remembered of shipyard health and safety standards in the 1980s and 1990s:

I can remember walking around with overalls on that were just torn and ripped... Your boots would have holes in them... with regards to welding, no ventilation masks... even things like the way the scaffolding and things were all set up was precarious.<sup>65</sup>

The yard was a site of danger and hardship and work was performed in all seasons. Injury and mutilation were a fact of life, with the risk of falling from insecure staging or being crushed by falling equipment representing typical hazards.<sup>66</sup> Robert Buirds accused shipyard management of a careless drive for productivity, stating, 'the managers just pushed too much to get too much and that sometimes caused real issues... They didn't inspect the tools we were using enough... it certainly led to a few

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<sup>63</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>64</sup> 'Ravenscraig', *Our Story*, BBC Radio Scotland (13 July 2016)

<sup>65</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>66</sup> M. Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders: An Anthology of Scottish Shipyard Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001) p.52

accidents'.<sup>67</sup> In comparison to management's cold obsession with productivity, Robert described shop stewards' efforts towards better health and safety measures: 'They sorted that out. That was the shop stewards actually. Management didn't... The employers didn't give a monkey's for health and safety... if it held up progress then they paid attention to it'.<sup>68</sup>

Working at height was commonly expected, sometimes done on insecure footing with little or no safety measures. The ad hoc setup of working at height was expressed by Alex Straiton, 'I mean the scaffolding in the shipyards was two wooden planks put on brackets, no handrails'.<sup>69</sup> On his first day in the shipyard Pat Clark was immediately placed in danger when required to work on insecure staging at great height:

It was just a big concrete base in the bottom to stop it falling over. They would just run wooden planks one way to the other. Of course in the middle it would be sagging. This is my first day in here. I'm up on this wooden plank. No guard rail.<sup>70</sup>

Sensing his obvious fear, an older tradesman commented that Pat would, 'need to get used to it', referencing in his own way the socialisation process of younger workers which served to normalize work under extreme risk.<sup>71</sup> Alex Wright felt 'quite confident at heights' and was often tasked to repair yard cranes. Indicative of the prioritisation of productivity over human life, Alex noted the irony that repair work was usually carried out in the worst weather, stating that decommissioning the crane in good weather would have impacted productivity, and so only weather so bad it would have rendered the crane inoperable was dedicated to repairs. Alex described the perilous nature of working at this extreme height:

It was a kind of bucket that was getting lifted by one crane to do the repairs to the jib of a second crane... You would then get out the bucket to climb onto the other crane... it was moving all over the place. There was a lot of grease, a lot of tallow... You had to watch where you

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Robert Buirds by James Ferns, 04/03/2019

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Alex Straiton by James Ferns, 02/08/2019

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Pat Clark by James Ferns, 28/03/2019

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

were putting your hands and your feet... I used to get down as low as possible and make sure the wind wasn't going to catch my overalls... if you were caught in a gust, it could've been fatal. You don't use harnesses or anything like that.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, in steelmaking James Blair also remembered working at height with no protective equipment or safety precautions, noting: 'when you were working on the crane, you'd no harnesses, nothing. You were just up there. It was just unbelievable'.<sup>73</sup>

Workers were subject to a host of injuries in heavy industry. The sheer size of the workplace was equalled in the tremendous uproar of its processes. The noise damaged many workers' hearing over time, resulting in industrial deafness and conditions such as tinnitus. Stewart MacPherson recalled, 'we were working in an area where the decibels were higher than 90, which was the safe limit at that time, or the maximum limit I should say... There are a lot of us who are a bit corn beef [deaf]'.<sup>74</sup> Harry Carlin also commented on the long-term hearing damage: 'Most of the people in the steelworks have all got hearing problems because of the noise, the decibels were over 90, so that's quite high'.<sup>75</sup> Burns from splashes of molten metal were a particularly common injury in steelmaking, with stories of being burned and scarred representing a shared experience among workers:

There was a lot of burns and stuff like that.<sup>76</sup>

See that wee white dot I've got there? That was a splash of molten metal probably when I was about 22 or something... I've got them everywhere.<sup>77</sup>

I've got burns, I've got one on my head, I've got a scar, I've got one there, I've got one my belly button, I've got a scar on my arm, I've got one on the bridge of my nose.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)

<sup>73</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>74</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>75</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>76</sup> Interview with James Carlin by James Ferns, 24/01/2017

<sup>77</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Brian Cunningham by James Ferns, 19/01/2017

Workplace burns were sometimes much more serious, in the BBC Radio Scotland programme, *Our Story*, Tommy Johnson stated, 'you would get burned by iron... this stuff went right through your skin, right into the bone'.<sup>79</sup> Besides burns, eye injuries were a frequent hazard in heavy industry. Jim McKeown partially lost sight in one eye when drip water from the roof 'mixed with steel and exploded', lodging 'a wee piece of metal' in his eye.<sup>80</sup> Alex Straiton received a similar injury in shipbuilding, noting, 'I was working with a welder and he was chucking the slag off a building, I got a lot of slag in my eye. Agony'.<sup>81</sup>

Most workers had a few stories of 'near misses', of accidents in which they very narrowly avoided death or extreme injury. Brian Cunningham survived many such accidents, including barely avoiding a collapsing ladle of 125 tonnes of molten metal:

I never noticed it right away, but the senior caster... he feels it on the back of his neck, he says, 'there's something no right', and he looked up and the bottom of the ladle is red hot... and the arse fell out it.<sup>82</sup>

Brian Cunningham recalled another instance in which the hydraulic gate controlling the flow of molten metal malfunctioned because a safety bar had not been replaced during repair work:

Instead of being a nice slow control the fucking gate falls off and it's the equivalent of you putting your cup under a tap and turning it too hard... guys were jumping everywhere, and its molten, its molten metal you're talking about.<sup>83</sup>

Gordon Hatton survived being hit by a falling piece of slag:

I got a broken shoulder... We used to have to go in there and take samples with these big lances... There was these door things, it was

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<sup>79</sup> 'Ravenscraig', *Our Story*

<sup>80</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>81</sup> Alex Straiton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>82</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*



just a wee slip and there was a big bit of slag up on the vessel. That fell and hit the door and hit me in the shoulder... it nearly killed me.<sup>84</sup>

James Blair remembered a situation where a crane brake malfunctioned whilst lifting 30 tonnes of steel coil:

They didn't notice the brake on the crane was slipping, and because the load was so heavy, it just come down, and as it came down, this tipped over... and there're six men [working] underneath it. I was night shift that night. It was absolutely bedlam. Ambulances flying about everywhere... fortunately enough there was nobody killed.<sup>85</sup>

Workers typically styled heavy industry as a 'death-trap', with the potential for extreme violence constantly present. Derek Cairns matter-of-factly related a particularly brutal incident, where a worker had been asked to inspect a piece of machinery:

He asked one of the managers, 'what is it I'm looking for here? I can't see anything wrong'. And... they'd lost somebody's head, he'd been hit by a loco and they only found it after he'd had a look round. That's what they were actually looking for.<sup>86</sup>

Exposure to danger was almost constant, and so it progressively became normalised, a fact of daily life. Frank Roy noted how he developed a 'blasé' attitude:

You were always aware of the dangerous environment you worked in, but you also became blasé about it, you know at the end you probably didn't think much of standing under a ladle with 125 tonnes of liquid steel.<sup>87</sup>

Exposure to such an environment built a sort of nonchalance among workers, and when they retold their experiences of accidents and dramatic near misses they often did so in a tone which suggested normality. Brian Cunningham noted that accidents were a 'daily' occurrence, that 'there is not a man that came out the steelworks that's no got a scar'.<sup>88</sup> James Carlin lost part of his finger in an industrial accident, though

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<sup>84</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>85</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>86</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Frank Roy by James Ferns, 01/02/2017

<sup>88</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

noted this ‘was quite commonplace at that time’.<sup>89</sup> Gordon Hatton even casually stated, ‘I got blown up a few times... It was a part of the job’.<sup>90</sup> Gordon described the usual cause of these explosions:

The oxygen that came into the top of the vessel. That ignited the metal and that turned it into steel. To charge these things, it was usually about 25 tonne of scrap... but in the middle of the winter the scrap bay was two miles away and it was outside so the stuff was frozen solid... there was glass bottles and god-knows-what in this... it was supposed to be sifted out, but things got through... as soon as the iron went in and hit this frozen scrap it just – ‘Whoosh’.<sup>91</sup>

In the wake of this explosion Gordon explained, ‘you’re running for your life up the bay, with all these flames chasing you’.<sup>92</sup> Here, a normal and perhaps mundane working day was transformed in an instant into a scene of intense danger. Other workers similarly recalled the potential for a sudden shift from normality and boredom to sheer terror and excitement. Brian Cunningham described how a typical working day could be transformed instantaneously, noting, ‘it went from mundane, repetitive, monotonous, to absolute terror. Because when it went wrong, it went spectacularly wrong’.<sup>93</sup> In shipbuilding, Thomas Brotherston similarly recounted how a typical day could switch from normality to incredible danger:

You’d be working away, and all of a sudden you were noticing a spot glowing hot in the bulkhead. This is somebody cutting the doorway through... the next minute, you’d be showered with red hot metal... it generally just burned lumps out of you.<sup>94</sup>

Employment with such unpredictable volatility no doubt generated a great sense of unease among workers.

While some accidents were certainly narrated with a sense of normality or even a degree of bravado, a great many, usually those involving the death of co-

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<sup>89</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>90</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Thomas Brotherston by James Ferns, 13/02/2019 (First Interview), 20/02/2019 (Second Interview)

workers, cast up painful emotions in their retelling. Just as former heavy industry workers indicated their now faded scars and burns, many also spoke of the still present mental scars of witnessing co-workers killed on site. A dark aspect of heavy industry was the familiarity with death it gave workers. Pat Clark commented on shipbuilding, 'in the 10 years that I was in there, we had 10 people killed in our yard alone. That was roughly for every boat that was built... there was a man killed on it'.<sup>95</sup> During his time in Ravenscraig, Derek Cairns recalled the shocking normality that 'people would go into their work and not go home'.<sup>96</sup> Brian Cunningham reflected, 'a lot of the guys paid the ultimate price in there, lot of guys lost their life in that place', continuing, 'we killed a man a month, 12 men a year on average'.<sup>97</sup> Peter Hamill stated, 'when I started working in Ravenscraig... might be one, two people that got killed every year. Every single year'.<sup>98</sup> Exposure to death took a toll on workers. Peter recalled witnessing his first occupational fatality:

I remember the first one that got killed... for some morbid reason everybody ran over, and they are round about this boy, he's got – the wee nurse is there – and he's got a cover on him, he had been feeding a rope in and it had whiplashed him, cut him, killed him.<sup>99</sup>

Tommy Johnston, as shop steward, experienced his 'lowest point in Ravenscraig' when one of his union members was 'strangled in a conveyor belt'.<sup>100</sup> Tears filled Alex Torrance's eyes and emotion carried on his voice as he told of deaths he had witnessed onsite. Alex's time at Ravenscraig was marked from the beginning with tragedy:

In Ravenscraig. It was my first day in the strip mill, I'd seen a guy getting killed... it's still to be explained to me how that mandrel started. He was inside that and it whipped him round it. He was killed.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>96</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>97</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>98</sup> Peter Hamill Interview (Ferns)

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Tommy Johnston by James Ferns, 26/01/2017

<sup>101</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

Immediately, Alex offered another example:

Another time, maybe a year and a half later... one of the pillars of slabs fell and trapped a man from the waist down... the mechanical foreman on my shift... he actually gave, gave the guy a cigarette. He was having a cigarette, and they shouted the crane up with the magnet and lifted the slab off of him, and everything just ran out then, that was him.<sup>102</sup>

Following these revelations, I felt the need to comment on the brutality of the workplace, but was cut off by Alex, who went on to tell of another death:

There was a fault in one of the machines. He was quite a small guy... He stood on the end of the panel to reach the fuses at the top of the panel and fell into the panel across the live buzz bars. He was electrocuted. I went in the next morning – he had let me away the day before, so when I came in the next morning to find out that he'd been killed that night... Horrible deaths. Horrible deaths.<sup>103</sup>

During this discussion it was clear that Alex felt a need to fully convey the stark horror of these instances; he felt compelled to make others understand what he and his co-workers had experienced. The novel *Steelmens*, written by former steelworker James Lees, reflects a similar need to communicate the brutality of steelmaking. In a remarkably similar scene to Alex Torrance's account of the worker crushed by slabs, *Steelmens*'s main character, Ricky, witnesses a co-worker crushed to death by a machine:

It was only the pressure on his body keeping everything intact that was keeping him alive, as soon as that was released his insides collapsed in on him like a deck of cards and he died instantly. Ricky could remember the white faced shock of the nurse trying to inject some morphine into him, her hands shaking like a fiddler's elbow.<sup>104</sup>

When asked of health and safety measures in steelmaking James Blair replied bluntly, 'non-existent'.<sup>105</sup> James then recalled a horrific incident:

They had what they call a pickling line. Hydrochloric acid. The steel was all washed with that. It went through different stages. The thing was

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> J. Lees, *Steelmens* (James Lees, 2020) np.

<sup>105</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

maybe 300, 400 yards long. Acid tanks, water tanks, acid tanks... As happened quite often, if it was going from one end of the line to the other, it would sometimes break... These lads would come up... They would have to move it maybe, if it was broken... one of the guys slipped into it. Up to his waist. By the time they got him out, there was no flesh left on him. It was just bone. He lasted three days and he died. A nice guy.<sup>106</sup>

Beyond the tragedy of this man's gruesome death, his co-workers would have been traumatised by witnessing another man's flesh melt from the bone. Not without a tone of anger James noted, 'you wouldn't get away with that nowadays. You wouldn't get away with it'.<sup>107</sup> Instances like these bring the idea that workers are blinded by 'smokestack nostalgia' into sharp perspective. The horrors of heavy industry were not forgotten by workers.

If the dreadfulness of witnessing colleagues killed on site was not harrowing enough, the potential for death and carnage occasionally spilled over to the wider public. Perhaps because of its infamous danger, Ravenscraig was sometimes selected as a site for suicide. Tommy Johnston recalled the suicide of a man with no connection to the plant:

You had people coming in and committing suicide... In one instance, I think it was the late '70s there was a guy that came in off the street... he just came in off the street and ran into a vat of hot metal... You just go on fire, you just burn, he was laying there burning, and the guys there, one of them was telling me, the smell of the burning flesh, they never ever got him, the bones, they couldn't do nothing.<sup>108</sup>

It was the acute negligence over health and safety measures which allowed for this dreadful spectacle, with the smell of burning flesh seared into memory.

In the drive for production, workers' bodies were bent, broken and maimed. In shipbuilding in particular, a general managerial ambivalence to health and safety oversaw a host of gruesome accidents and fatalities. A failure to regularly inspect

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

equipment had catastrophic results, as Robert Buirds recalled, 'leaving Oxyacetylene gear in the tanks was a major issue in the shipyards. I don't know how many people got blew up and exploded with that... That happened numerous times, let me say'.<sup>109</sup> With bitterness, Thomas Brotherston commented, 'fucking health and safety in the shipyards was: "wipe the blood off of that"', conveying a sense of workers' disposability as well as the brutality they were subject to.<sup>110</sup> Thomas went on to describe a particularly harrowing incident:

The worst would be an oxygen fire... my mate is down there... he gets to the head of the tank... and he hears this screaming, and he looks down... the guys had left the oxyacetylene torch down there overnight, and the oxygen was leaking... They were actually sitting in a cocoon of oxygen, and the welder was a smoker. Ian said he saw the whole thing. He put a cigarette in his mouth, and struck the arc to light his fag, and as he did that, the three guys that were there fucking went up like incendiaries.<sup>111</sup>

Thomas related the 'trauma' this had on the workforce:

When they were taken out of the tank, there was people who weren't involved in the fire, they just saw these guys, and they were off work for weeks, with the trauma - it was like yellowed bags of polyethylene, filled with slush, because they had been incinerated from the inside and the out.<sup>112</sup>

Workers' minds were subject to intense mental trauma as they bore witness to the death and mutilation of friends and colleagues. In *The Shipbuilders*, Alex, a Glasgow shipyard blacksmith remembered:

One of our mates got his head chopped right off... he was over the side of the ship, fixin' the rails, and that was the mast there... It was a quick release when everything happened... someone must have touched that and it come down and it chopped his head right off, and his head was in the Carley float.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p.64

Acutely aware that what befell others could befall them, exposure to such events had a colossal impact upon workers' psyche. It coloured how they saw themselves, their language and sense of humour, and represented an important foundation of their characteristically reserved and 'hard' masculinity (explored further in chapter 3). In the face of such horror, the need to close oneself off, suppress emotion and adopt the typical 'hard man' masculinity was less about bravado or the enjoyment of sticking one's chest out, and more about survival and mental self-preservation.

## Deindustrialisation and Health

Deindustrialisation and redundancy had an overwhelmingly destructive impact upon workers' lives and life goals. Perhaps standing as the only exception to this, is the fact that for a majority of workers, departure from heavy industry brought the possibility of cleaner, safer, and healthier employment. Deindustrialisation meant escaping employment that was physically gruelling, filled with immediate physical danger as well as potentially debilitating long-term health conditions. Oral history illuminates the complexity of feeling surrounding deindustrialisation, as McIvor has observed, 'oral narratives of job loss could, therefore, be multifaceted, with some... identifying retrospectively the benefits to health and well-being of job displacement'.<sup>114</sup> McIvor draws attention to the narrative of a teacher and former Ravenscraig steelworker, Jim McCaig, who reflected: 'you're never gonnae get an explosion, you're never gonnae get killed, you don't breathe foul air'.<sup>115</sup> Witt's survey of former miners noted an 'appreciation of cleaner, less dangerous work' in their new employment.<sup>116</sup> One miner reflected on how much the 'stress and danger took out of me', noting, 'I am almost human again for the first time since my school days'.<sup>117</sup> K'Meyer and Hart's interviews with former industrial workers perfectly captures the feeling of release

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<sup>114</sup> McIvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied', p.38

<sup>115</sup> A. McIvor, 'Blighted lives: Deindustrialisation, health and well-being in the Clydeside region', *Revue d'histoire*, 20:21 (2019) p.9

<sup>116</sup> S. Witt, *When the Pit Closes - the Employment Experiences of Redundant Miners* (Barnsley: Coalfield Communities Campaign, 1990) p.36

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

which often accompanies departure from industrial employment. Amidst the sense of loss and betrayal following their redundancy, former Johnson Controls employees were simultaneously relieved. Danny Mann spoke of how ‘that place had beat me to death’,<sup>118</sup> while Marilyn Reed’s testimony evoked a feeling of both escape and hope in the possibility for something better:

I was relieved almost when they closed... don’t know how much longer I would have been able to work there as far as my physical condition - I was getting to where my hands were numb... I thought this is my chance to do some of the things that I’ve wanted to do... because I would have stayed there until, I was either handicapped or retired maybe at fifty-five.<sup>119</sup>

Milkman’s study of former US auto workers provided similar narratives. One former auto worker responded to Milkman’s survey, ‘I was tired of breathing exhaust fumes’, commenting that they had contracted ‘bronchitis’ as a result of their employment.<sup>120</sup> Carl Block described the shop floor as ‘unspeakably bad’, commenting, ‘people had scars on their faces... You could cut-yourself very easily... I would say 35 to 55 percent of the people there had carpal tunnel syndrome... The noise was deafening’.<sup>121</sup> John Pierce missed the high pay and benefits of the auto industry, but noted that as a transit driver: ‘the job itself is better... It’s a lot less physical than working on the line. It’s less of a toll on my body’.<sup>122</sup> When narrating their own departure from heavy industry in terms of health, former Scottish steelworks and shipbuilders share the sense of release described by other displaced workers. Most found reemployment in cleaner, safer, and healthier workplaces; commonly using the metaphor of ‘night and day’ to distinguish between the conditions.

### **More Comfortable, Healthier and Safer Work**

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<sup>118</sup> K’Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*, p.116

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* pp.128-129

<sup>120</sup> R. Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) p.110

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* pp.33-34

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* p.131



Workers typically found the physical conditions of their new employment to be a fundamental improvement on heavy industry; work was easier on the body, cleaner, and more comfortable. As a taxi driver, Andrew Kane suffered a substantial drop in pay, but as a trade-off stated, 'it's a damn sight easier than working in the steelworks'.<sup>123</sup> Simple additions, like basic heating and lighting, canteens and bathroom facilities, or even shelter from the elements, which are usually taken for granted by workers outside heavy industry, were eagerly appreciated. Compared to steelmaking, Alex McGowan described the conditions in Cunningham District Council as 'day and night'.<sup>124</sup> Alex valued the new facilities and provisions, noting: 'Just basics. Like heating, lighting, ventilation, somewhere to have your tea or your sandwich. You're not sitting in a wee corner somewhere or a wee tin hut'.<sup>125</sup> Alex recalled a conversation with a fellow employee concerning these conditions:

He said 'How are you settling in, how do you like it here?' I said, 'This is great, it's heated, there's carpets on the floor, there's light'. He said, 'What do you mean? This office is a tip'. I'm saying to myself, 'You should have been with me a couple of weeks ago and you would have seen what a tip was'... people don't appreciate how it is nice to be in a warm environment.<sup>126</sup>

While Alan Glover did not enjoy working in the Ministry of Defence in Faslane as much as shipbuilding, he did find its conditions to be an unmistakeable improvement. Like others, Alan took enjoyment from simple changes, which he felt were best summarised by a comment made by an acquaintance: 'it's warm and dry in here and nobody shouts at us'.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, in becoming a financial advisor, Alex Wright enjoyed the better conditions which office work provided, commenting, 'there's a canteen... the major plus is generally the temperature's good'.<sup>128</sup> Going on to become a Welfare Rights Officer, Pat Clark noted that office working meant a more comfortable, cleaner environment: 'You go out clean in the morning and you come

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<sup>123</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>124</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>128</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)

back clean... If you work in a shipyard it's dirty... You go out clean in the morning, you come home filthy'.<sup>129</sup> Gaining employment as a care worker in an elderly home, Harry Carlin found the cleanliness and lack of uncomfortable heat a major improvement. For Harry the difference between the steelworks – as 'dirty, warm and hot' – and the 'lovely and clean' elderly care home was significant. Conceptualising these differences as 'day and night', Harry continued: 'day and night. You are in an environment which is spotless... you are in a very, very clean environment... working with steel... then to go to that: day and night'.<sup>130</sup>

In departing heavy industry, workers left behind an environment which had been largely harmful to their health. While the impact of exposure to toxic substances could not be completely undone, escape from this environment did prevent further harm and degradation. Workers celebrated their entry into workplaces filled with clean air and which lacked heavy industry's typical hazardous materials. Tommy Johnston compared steelmaking to his current employment as a janitor: 'The major differences? Well, you are no working in the atmosphere you are working in the Ravenscraig – the dust, the gasses'.<sup>131</sup> Retraining as a teacher, Jim McKeown reflected that he would 'not be as healthy' if he had remained within the 'hellish' environment of steelmaking.<sup>132</sup> For Jim, the improved conditions within teaching represented 'the biggest change', with its 'clean environment and clean buildings' noticeably different from the grime of steelmaking.<sup>133</sup> Jim described an improvement in his general health, particularly his breathing after leaving steelmaking. Even as a steelworker, he recalled how his health would improve during time off: 'When we had couple of days off... you weren't breathing in that stuff, you were actually breathing clearer... even your food tasted better... because you got rid of all that, that smog, that dirt'.<sup>134</sup> The ability to work outdoors, or in fresh air, was commented on as a significant benefit over heavy industry. As a maintenance operative for New Lanark Trust, Gordon

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<sup>129</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>130</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>131</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>132</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

Hatton regularly worked outside, stating, 'the job's much more up my street... in the summer, it's great... I've always preferred being outside'.<sup>135</sup> The clean air Gordon was breathing was a vast improvement on the dust-clogged musk of Ravenscraig, which he labelled a 'death-trap', commenting: 'the sun would shine in these holes... all you could see was all the particles, all the shit floating about, and you used to dodge them, but this shit was everywhere'.<sup>136</sup> The primary and perhaps only health enhancing element of heavy industry was its physicality, which tempered workers' bodies ensuring a degree of fitness. As Gordon MacLean commented, 'you didn't need to go to a gym when you worked in a shipyard... you were in a gym everyday'.<sup>137</sup> Yet the short and long-term deleterious health consequences of the workplace would have nullified these gains in health. While Andrew Kane found taxi driving to be more sedentary than steelmaking, commenting that he introduced regular walking as an offset, he nonetheless noted that 'health wise, I'm a lot healthier'.<sup>138</sup> Despite the lack of physical activity at work, the absence of harmful dust and ability to work in fresh air resulted in a net improvement for Andrew's health.

Most workers transitioned into safer employment, escaping an industry which had killed and disabled many of their friends and colleagues. Alex Torrance, who had vividly recalled various deaths in steelmaking, thankfully found no such instances in British Bakeries. He noted: 'It wasn't the same hazards. It wasn't the same. The most likely thing that you might get in the bakery was you'd get a burn off a tin... There wasn't any major accidents in there'.<sup>139</sup> The prominence of danger and death was absent in Tommy Johnston's new employment as a school janitor. Tommy juxtaposed his new work to steelmaking: 'If I made a mistake in the crane, putting the hot metal in, I could have killed about 6 people, whereas you're a school janitor now, all you have got to worry about is kids shouting back at you and calling you names... totally night and day'.<sup>140</sup> As a ship surveyor manager for Det Norske Veritas, Alastair Hart

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<sup>135</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Gordon MacLean by James Ferns, 23/03/2019

<sup>138</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>139</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>140</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

felt his new industry was ‘much safer’ than shipbuilding, stating, ‘I didn’t feel that risk at all really in there; in the yards I would say it was a dangerous place to work... we had quite a lot of injuries and some deaths in my time in the shipyards’.<sup>141</sup> James Blair’s employment following steelmaking, which included other manufacturing jobs, was invariably less dangerous, he commented: ‘it was a lot safer, a lot safer... you were in a different environment’.<sup>142</sup> Gordon Hatton found light manufacturing in Glacier Vandervell less dangerous than steelmaking, and while he balked under its American-style management regime, he noted that ‘it wasn’t as dangerous, they were quite well up on health and safety’.<sup>143</sup> After his departure from shipbuilding, Alan Glover gained employment with the National Codification Bureau in the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Alan outlined the radical differences in occupational risk between the yard and the office:

The MoD in Glasgow, warm office, we are getting a health and safety inspection next week, a cabinet’s not going to crush me, nothing’s going to blow up. Its common sense health and safety in an office environment... working on a ship, where there’s live electric cables... or scaffolding could collapse. There was quite a few people dying when I was in there. One crane toppled into the Clyde and the guy, he drowned. There’s another guy who got basically decapitated... The MoD is pretty civilized.<sup>144</sup>

Alan’s portrayal of the office as ‘pretty civilized’, serves to underline the sheer barbarity which heavy industry workers were routinely exposed to. What others would take for granted, most former heavy industry workers found to be remarkable; the absence of extreme violence or the constant threat of death in their new employment was a strange departure from the climate they had become accustomed to.

### **Escape Narratives in Perspective**

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Alastair Hart by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

<sup>142</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>143</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>144</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

Employment in heavy industry brutalised workers' bodies and, as has been highlighted through workers' narratives, the transition into alternative employment can be seen as one of the few positive outcomes of deindustrialisation. However, it is important to place workers' escape narratives in their proper context, within a wider understanding of deindustrialisation and its long-term effects upon community health. Workers' escape narratives themselves were not a critique of heavy industry as such, but more a critique of the manner in which it was performed. As McIvor has argued:

What was being recalled in these 'escape narratives' was an insidious regime of managerial economic violence perpetrated upon workers by irresponsible public corporations and private employers who put production and profit above workers' health and well-being. It is perhaps not surprising that some might view escaping from such grim work environments as a positive move.<sup>145</sup>

It is telling that in spite of heavy industry's capacity for brutality, a majority of workers mourned its loss. Overwhelmingly, steelworkers stated that they would 'return tomorrow' if able:

Loved it, aye.<sup>146</sup>

It was good place to work actually, I miss it a lot.<sup>147</sup>

I thoroughly enjoyed it. I could go back there the now.<sup>148</sup>

I loved it, I would go back tomorrow, aw aye I would go back tomorrow.<sup>149</sup>

I loved it, absolutely loved it, had a great time – would go back tomorrow.<sup>150</sup>

If Ravenscraig was still open, today, I'd still be a steelworker, without a shadow of a doubt.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> McIvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied', p.38

<sup>146</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>147</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>148</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>149</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>150</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>151</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

I thoroughly enjoyed it. In fact I would probably still be there to this day if they hadn't made us redundant.<sup>152</sup>

Shipbuilders were more muted in their enthusiasm, perhaps given the less amicable labour relations in their industry (as explored in chapter 2), but the sentiment was nonetheless the same, most enjoyed the work and mourned its loss. Thomas Brotherston described his post-shipbuilding employment as, 'Worse. Worse, aye. Infinitely worse'.<sup>153</sup> Thomas like other shipbuilders, missed the bonds of camaraderie and the protection of a strong union which had defined their time in the yard. Workers made an informed choice in their preference for employment in heavy industry, feeling that its merits outweighed its potential for lethality. Brian Cunningham's comments on steelmaking encapsulate this sentiment:

I'd still be there, if it was still open I'd still be there and it was a dangerous place, I nearly lost my arm in that place... Dangerous, dangerous place but, for nonskilled men it was good work, it was good money, good overtime, aye you could make a damn good living. And the social side of it was terrific.<sup>154</sup>

Similarly, commenting on the demise of the Chicago steel industry, Walley notes that 'the air is much cleaner... but the sturdy prosperity of the region is also gone.... much of the region is now pockmarked with boarded-up houses, empty lots, and deserted storefronts'.<sup>155</sup> Walley raises the important point that, 'people... should not have to choose between healthy environments and their jobs'.<sup>156</sup> Unfortunately, working-class people often find themselves between a rock and a hard place, forced to choose either healthiness with relative poverty, or prosperity with potential lethality.

Deindustrialisation in the UK was both rapid and ruthless, shattering communities and social cohesion, and leaving employment in its wake that was 'lower-paid, more precarious, and less skilled', which itself had a damaging effect

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with James Coyle by James Ferns, 15/02/2017

<sup>153</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>154</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>155</sup> C. J. Walley, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) p.4

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* p.151

upon health.<sup>157</sup> Mclvor cautions against a fixation upon the transition from ‘bad’ jobs to ‘good’ jobs, stating that ‘the actual process as it unfolded within deindustrializing communities was far more intricate and invariably deleterious’.<sup>158</sup> He continues, ‘the injury and ill health legacy of the industrial era intersected with the mental trauma and physical damage caused by job losses and job insecurity’.<sup>159</sup> As Linkon has stated, deindustrialisation ‘is not an event of the past’, but is rather an ‘active and significant part of the present’, which ‘generates psychological and social forms of disease’, made manifest in the ‘high rates of various illnesses as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide’.<sup>160</sup> Insecure and precarious employment have become the norm in the contemporary world of work. While occupational mortality and injury rates have improved markedly, the new modality of work has generated its own host of health issues. The rise in insecure employment has been linked to occupational ill-health, particularity work-related stress, which itself has reached epidemic levels in the UK.<sup>161</sup> Coburn has linked neoliberal policy making to declining public health, citing greater inequality, rising poverty, attacks upon the welfare state, particularly the NHS, and curtailed labour rights.<sup>162</sup> The decline in employment stability has exacerbated ill-health, which compares unfavourably to the past where, as Mclvor has argued, ‘more stable employment patterns... contributed significantly to markedly improving patterns of health and well-being in the 1945-75 period’.<sup>163</sup> Deindustrialisation disrupted the social fabric of working-class communities, rupturing the social embeddedness of individuals and engendering a rising sense of alienation (highlighted in chapter 4). Charlesworth has linked this disruption to ‘increased rates of violence and mental illness’ in post-industrial communities, citing a decline in the ‘quality of the social environment’ among the ‘economically insecure’, specifically the erosion of ‘social affiliations... involvement in community life, sense

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<sup>157</sup> Mclvor, ‘Blighted lives’, pp.1-14

<sup>158</sup> Mclvor, ‘Deindustrialization Embodied’, p.41

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* p.41

<sup>160</sup> S. Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization: working-class writing about economic restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018) p.1

<sup>161</sup> Mclvor, *Working lives*

<sup>162</sup> D. Coburn, ‘Beyond the income inequality hypothesis: Class, neo-liberalism, and health inequalities’, *Social Science and Medicine*, 58 (2004) pp.41-56

<sup>163</sup> Mclvor, *Deindustrialization Embodied*, pp.25-26

of control... and social status'.<sup>164</sup> Economic insecurity, including unemployment or precarious employment, have been associated with poor mental health, including higher rates of depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses.<sup>165</sup> Ebbw Vale, a former steel-dependant town in Wales, is typical of other post-industrial areas; the dismantlement of its industry was not coupled with the creation of supplementary employment, so the formerly proud steel-producing town now hosts pawnbrokers and food-banks, while residents languish with rates of unemployment, poverty and depression above the national average.<sup>166</sup> Higher rates of suicide also plague the post-industrial landscape. Fuelled by Thatcherite dogma, deindustrialisation intensified in the 1980s, and as stable working-class employment collapsed, the Scottish Office Department of Health recorded that the suicide rate for Scottish men and women aged 15-29 almost doubled.<sup>167</sup> Cooper has demonstrated that economic hardship increases levels of unemployment, poverty and mental distress, which contribute to higher suicide rates, while Berk et al. have linked economic adversity to a rise in suicide, with men more vulnerable as a group than women.<sup>168</sup> McIvor has stated that 'rising para-suicide and suicide rates were linked to trauma and to mental illness induced by job losses'.<sup>169</sup> The association between male suicide and deindustrialisation has been highlighted in film, with characters attempting suicide in both *The Full Monty* and *Brassed Off*, relating to steelmaking and mining respectively.

Alongside poor mental health, drug and alcohol addiction feature prominently in post-industrial communities. Waddington highlights that some interviewed redundant miners had resorted to drug or alcohol abuse in order to

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<sup>164</sup> S. J. Charlesworth, et al., 'Living inferiority', *British Medical Journal*, 69:48 (2004) p.49

<sup>165</sup> B. Cooper, 'Economic Recession and Mental Health: an Overview', *Neuropsychiatry*, 25:3 (2011) pp.113-117

<sup>166</sup> J. Bloodworth, 'There's no life here': a journey into Britain's precarious future', *The Guardian* (16 December 2016) [https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/16/journey-to-heart-of-britain-precarious-future-ebbw-vale?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/16/journey-to-heart-of-britain-precarious-future-ebbw-vale?CMP=share_btn_fb) [accessed 14/05/2018]

<sup>167</sup> *The Scottish Office Department of Health, Working Together for a Healthier Scotland* (London: The Stationery Office, 1998) p.10

<sup>168</sup> Cooper, 'Economic Recession and Mental Health', pp.113-117; M. Berk, S. Dodd and M. Henry, 'The effect of macroeconomic variables on suicide', *Psychological Medicine*, 36 (2006) pp.181-189

<sup>169</sup> A. McIvor, "'Scrap-heap' stories: oral narratives of labour and loss in Scottish mining and manufacturing", *Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen*, 31:2 (2019) p.6



'obliterate the stress of unemployment'.<sup>170</sup> Portelli's *They Say in Harlan County* details the high frequency of drug addiction in the formerly coal dependant community, particularly the abuse of prescription drugs such as opioids like OxyContin.<sup>171</sup> One local teacher attributed the drug epidemic to the community's identity disintegration following the collapse of mining: 'this void where there is so much confusion and a lack of a sense of personal purpose that they try to dull the pain'.<sup>172</sup> As region-defining employment in heavy industry collapsed, to be replaced with precarious service-sector employment or nothing at all, communities struggled with issues around identity disintegration and hopelessness. The working class decade of despair gave rise to a drug of despair, as heroin addiction exploded from the 1980s. Pearson's *The New Heroin Users* demonstrates that the rise in heroin use in the 1980s was primarily concentrated among the working-class communities worse impacted by social deprivation and unemployment.<sup>173</sup> Paul, a 24-year-old user from Merseyside commented that, 'It's just the actual boredom, you know, sitting in the house... Like when I do come off, I just stay in the house... just hibernate sort of thing'.<sup>174</sup> Heroin abuse was particularly prevalent as Scotland deindustrialised – from very few cases in 1981 to 6,359 patients under treatment by 1985, and by the end of the century there were at least 60,000 registered heroin addicts in Scotland, with the real figure much higher.<sup>175</sup> Colin Quigley felt 'without a doubt' that the decline of shipbuilding and prevailing sense of despair that followed it fuelled the explosion of drug abuse, particularly Heroin, within working-class communities like Govan during the early 1980s: 'In the late '70s early '80s drugs became a big factor... People my age were turning to drugs, heroin... Places like Govan experienced it worse because I think there was more hopelessness'.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> D. Waddington, et al., *Out of the Ashes: The Social Impact of Industrial Contraction and Regeneration on Britain's Mining Communities* (London: The Stationary Office, 2001) p.43

<sup>171</sup> A. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* p.358

<sup>173</sup> G. Pearson, *The New Heroin Users* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987)

<sup>174</sup> G. Pearson, 'Social Deprivation, Unemployment and Patterns of Heroin Use', in N. Dorn and N. South (eds.) *A Land Fit for Heroin* (London: Macmillan, 1987) p.89

<sup>175</sup> C. Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) p.157; R. Finlay, *Modern Scotland 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004) p.388

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Colin Quigley by James Ferns, 13/02/2019

In the Scottish context, the aftereffects of deindustrialisation had an acutely devastating impact upon public health. Given the centrality of state-ran heavy industry to the Scottish economy, the scale and ruthlessness of UK deindustrialisation had a profound effect, essentially precipitating a freefall into socio-economic oblivion. The 1980s shattered Scotland's sense of identity; the nation that 'made things' became one defined by unemployment, poverty and hopelessness. From this deprivation and despair, physical and mental health deteriorated, giving rise to the widely discussed 'Scottish Effect' – which describes poorer levels of health in Scotland in relation to other European nations.<sup>177</sup> McCartney et al. have attributed this to the introduction of neoliberal economics, citing Scotland's particular vulnerability given its high levels of state employment and housing.<sup>178</sup> Collins and McCartney have conceptualised this process as a 'political attack' upon the working class, with neoliberalism and deindustrialisation wilfully implemented.<sup>179</sup> McIvor has highlighted that industry-dense Clydeside was 'amongst those places in the UK worst hit by Thatcher's marketization and anti-trade union policies'.<sup>180</sup> Mortality rates in Clydeside stand above the Scottish average and widened in the years following deindustrialisation, from 17% above the average in 1980-82 to 30% above the average in 2000-2.<sup>181</sup> The decline of heavy industry certainly resulted in safer employment, but the aftereffects of deindustrialisation continue to have widespread ramifications on individual and community health.

## Conclusion

Work in heavy industry was overwhelmingly remembered as an unsafe and potentially deadly form of employment. Workers' openness on the hardship of heavy

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<sup>177</sup> D. Walsh, et al., 'It's Not "Just Deprivation": Why Do Equally Deprived UK Cities Experience Different Health Outcomes?', *Public Health*, 124 (2010) pp.487-495

<sup>178</sup> G. McCartney, et al., 'Has Scotland always been the "sick man" of Europe? An observational study from 1855 to 2006', *European Journal of Public Health*, 22:6 (2012) pp.1-5

<sup>179</sup> C. Collins and G. McCartney, 'The impact of neoliberal "political attack" on health: the case of the "Scottish effect"', *International Journal of Health Services*, 41:3 (2011) p.501

<sup>180</sup> McIvor, 'Blighted lives', p.3

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* p.13

industry, and their readiness to discuss their feelings of relief over improved conditions in their alternative employment, remedy the notion that workers have been blinded by 'smokestack nostalgia'. Workers described the inherent danger of their workplace as ever present, creating a feeling that each a day carried the potential for injury or death. The workplace was a volatile environment stocked with lethal machinery with the potential to maim or kill, and the work itself was often physically exhausting, taking place under dirty and uncomfortable conditions. Workers were routinely exposed to harmful or toxic substances, present in the materials they handled and carried in the dust they breathed, increasing their likelihood of developing long-term debilitating illnesses and disease. In terms of health and safety, workers' comparison between heavy industry and their post-redundancy employment stood out from other areas in that they described a general improvement, with their departure from heavy industry typically expressed in language which evoked a sense of escape or liberation. Overwhelmingly, workers' descriptions of their new employment emphasised cleaner, healthier, safer, and more comfortable workplaces, with the metaphor of 'night and day' commonly used to distinguish between the two. It is beyond doubt that heavy industry brutalised workers' bodies, and that their departure from its inherent dangers represents one of the few positive outcomes of deindustrialisation. However, it is important to contextualise workers' testimonies within a wider understanding of deindustrialisation and its long-term effects upon community health. The scale and ruthlessness of deindustrialisation in Scotland had a profound effect, especially given the centrality of state-ran heavy industry to the national economy, essentially precipitating a freefall into socio-economic oblivion. The social fabric of working-class communities was torn asunder, rupturing social cohesion and engendering a rising sense of alienation. Poverty and deprivation, poor mental health and higher rates of suicide, as well as drug and alcohol addiction plague the post-industrial landscape, giving rise to the widely discussed 'Scottish Effect'. Communities wrestled with identity disintegration as region-defining employment collapsed, replaced with low-paid, non-unionised, and precarious work in the service sector or simply nothing at

all. The havoc of industrial destruction shattered Scotland's sense of identity; the nation that 'made things' became one defined by unemployment, poverty and hopelessness. At first glance deindustrialisation appears to have freed Scottish workers from a dangerous occupation, but, as workers themselves narrate, the harmful aftereffects of deindustrialisation have proven much more persistent and difficult to escape.

## Chapter Two

### **‘We never had any power, we never had any voice’: Workers’ Power and Deindustrialisation**

Heavy industry was a hub of militant trade unionism throughout the twentieth century. In many respects heavy industry workers represented the vanguard of the labour movement, exhibiting high levels of industrial action, political consciousness and militancy. Trade unions play a ‘pivotal’ role in the maintenance and advancement of working rights, ‘providing a protective matrix, maintaining and extending dignity and respect at work’.<sup>1</sup> In the post-war period, trade unions ensured that workers’ collective voice was heard despite the ‘unequal relationship’ between labour and capital within British industry.<sup>2</sup> Within steelmaking the two primary unions were the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC), which represented general production workers and therefore most of the workforce, and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) which represented skilled tradespeople, such as electricians. In shipbuilding, union representation was more complicated, and varied across time, occupation and yard. The plethora of shipbuilding unions were outlined by Gordon MacLean:

There was always a strong trade union. All the different workers had their own trade union. The boiler workers, the office workers, the engineering workers, the other trades, the painters, joiners, et cetera. Everybody had their trade union. Quite a strong trade union.<sup>3</sup>

Steelmaking and shipbuilding were both closed-shop workplaces, wherein union membership was a prerequisite to employment. This was illustrated by Pat Clark within shipbuilding: ‘Of course, it was a closed shop. Everybody was in the union. You didn’t need to persuade people. If they didn’t want to be in the union that was fine...

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<sup>1</sup> A. McIvor, *Working lives: work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.203

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.203

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Gordon MacLean by James Ferns, 23/03/2019

they just wouldn't get working'; and Alex McGowan in steelmaking: 'Well, if you weren't a member of the trade union, you didn't get a job in there'.<sup>4</sup> By ensuring a fully unionised workforce the closed shop gave union's significant leverage within the workplace, guaranteeing them a seat at the negotiation table with management. Research on trade unionism has tended to focus on the struggle with capital, with flash points of industrial action, pivotal strikes or periods of decline and defeat taking centre stage; the emotional significance and structural importance of trade unions to workers' day-to-day lives within the workplace remains marginal. Outside the realm of political activism, trade unions reinforced bonds between workers, providing a framework for solidarity and fostering a greater sense of community. Dudley has termed the sense of collectivism among unionised workers as 'bonds of solidarity', noting how these bonds can intensify during times of industrial action.<sup>5</sup> In a similar sense, the inherent dangers of heavy industry also strengthened the bonds of solidarity among workers, as team working and implicit trust in co-workers very often meant the difference between life and death.

The destruction of heavy industry uprooted the material basis of workers' trade unionism, untethering them from these cultures of solidarity and extinguishing workplace friendships and activist circles. The loss of a powerful trade union is a common theme throughout former heavy industry workers' testimonies, being one of the most prominently missed elements of industrial employment.<sup>6</sup> The displacement from a workplace defined by a powerful trade union and collective ethos was expressed as a 'culture shock' throughout workers' testimonies. Typically described as either wholly non-unionised or represented by weaker unions, workers' narratives of their post-redundancy employment fits into the declinist thesis of deindustrialisation. Working rights and conditions were found to be lacking,

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Pat Clark by James Ferns, 28/03/2019; Interview with Alex McGowan by James Ferns, 11/04/2019

<sup>5</sup> K. M., Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p.115

<sup>6</sup> R. Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); D. Waddington, et al., *Out of the Ashes: The Social Impact of Industrial Contraction and Regeneration on Britain's Mining Communities* (London: The Stationary Office, 2001); K. M. Dudley, *The End of the Line*

management more blatantly autocratic and openly hostile to trade unions, and the workforce itself more individualised with little culture of solidarity. The declinist thesis is not simply a construction of embittered workers, glorifying the past and belittling the present, but is reflected in the legislative and ideological assault of the Thatcher government upon trade unionism, and mirrored in diminishing trade union membership figures and frequency of industrial action. It was within this environment of anti-trade union laws and a retreating labour movement that workers made their transition from heavy industry into post-redundancy employment. This chapter seeks to understand the emotional and material significance of trade unions within this context. The chapter will firstly build a picture of trade unionism within heavy industry, outlining the strength of workplace unions, their relationship with management, and the cultures they fostered. Labour relations with management between steelmaking and shipbuilding differed greatly, therefore this section will examine steelmaking and shipbuilding unions separately in their own specific subsections. Following this, the chapter will examine trade unionism and labour management within workers' post-redundancy employment, highlighting changing power dynamics between labour and capital and the differences in the bonds of solidarity between workers.

## **Trade Unions in Heavy Industry**

Strong trade unions in tandem with a workforce unafraid to preserve occupational dignity was a defining characteristic of heavy industry. Union strength, mass, and an ability to effectively negotiate with management, ensured that respect for workers was established and maintained. The huge scale and confident tone in which union business was conducted created a lasting impression on younger workers:

I remember as a young apprentice, going to my first union meeting... 400 platers right at the top of this building... Shop stewards up on the stage and they would say, 'somebody at the door', and they would put two members to stand at the door and make sure nobody got in and that nobody was listening outside. The chair would say, 'Upstanding

worthy brothers', everybody would stand up, bunnets off, hand on the heart.<sup>7</sup>

The most valued aspect of trade unions was also perhaps the most obvious, that they provided workers with a sense of security and protection, as John Christie illustrated: 'I've always liked a union because a worker needs a union. Needs help when things are not going the way they should'.<sup>8</sup> Workers also placed great value on the democratising role of unions, with their ability to give workers a voice in the management of the workplace considered one of their most important functions. As a shop steward, Alan Glover approached this aspect of his role with levelheadedness:

I think trade unions are very important, because I'm a good believer in consultation, and when I say consultation, it's a two-way thing... I have always thought 'be sensible when you're in negotiating' – not banging the table, shouting and bawling, slamming doors.<sup>9</sup>

As well as representation, the role of trade unions in the creation of not simply better paid, but also *fairer* workplaces was valued. Joe O'Rourke demonstrates how such a workplace can benefit employers:

Make a guy happy... Pay him a good wage and treat him well and he'll not steal off you. If you put a guy in and you treat him like shite and you give him a poor wage, he'll fucking steal everything off you. It just makes sense that's what you do, treat people right, give them decent money and they'll be there, and you'll get good workers and good employees, makes sense.<sup>10</sup>

Another important aspect of trade unions was the advocacy of health and safety. The fight for better health and safety standards and legislation was spearheaded by trade unions, whose representatives fought to minimise the incredible risk and toxicity of work within heavy industry.<sup>11</sup> This endeavour, alongside union initiatives on workers' education programmes and community-oriented clubs and social events cast a wide

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<sup>7</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>8</sup> Interview with John Christie by James Ferns, 12/08/2019

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Alan Glover by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Joe O'Rourke by James Ferns, 30/07/2019

<sup>11</sup> A. McIvor, 'Guardians of workers' bodies? Trade unions and the history of occupational health and safety', *Labour History*, 119 (2021) pp.1-30



social net around and beyond the workplace, colouring many aspects of workers' lives outside of the traditional remit of industrial action over pay and conditions.

Work and trade unionism were so intrinsically linked for workers that their description of entry into a new workplace was normally followed by a discussion of joining the relevant union. Alan Glover launched into a description of his union activism when discussing his promotion to welding engineer: 'I got promoted then and I became a welding engineer. Did that from 1984 to 1989, five years I did that. In that job, I became the union rep and I fought a regrading exercise'.<sup>12</sup> Lifelong trade union membership was a point of particular pride for workers. Alex Torrance noted, 'I was in the same union all my life', detailing how he maintained his membership in the former Electoral Trade Union as it went through various reformations and amalgamations, eventually becoming Unite.<sup>13</sup> Brian Glen was acknowledged by the GMB for lifelong membership: 'I've never left the union. I've always been in the union... In fact, I got a long service award. They sent it in a letter to me, a wee badge and that, and a couple of drinks in the town'.<sup>14</sup> Although James Carlin did not hold a representative position within the ISTC, he was nonetheless an active member, and proud of his commitment: 'I was always involved as a member, I was always a union member'.<sup>15</sup> Most interviewees were rank and file members like James, but a small number held official positions. James Coyle became heavily involved with the ISTC, encouraged early on in his career by a more senior trade unionist:

Joined the union when I started in '65. I was encouraged by a chap called Jimmy Brandon... and I became a shop steward, I then became the chairman of the branch, I then became branch secretary, and I was the branch secretary for a great number of years. I also spent just short of 10 years on the national executive of the steel union.<sup>16</sup>

Harry Carlin similarly rose through the ranks of the ISTC:

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<sup>12</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Alex Torrance by James Ferns, 02/04/2019

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Brian Glen by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

<sup>15</sup> Interview with James Carlin by James Ferns, 24/01/2017

<sup>16</sup> Interview with James Coyle by James Ferns, 15/02/2017

The reason why I got involved in the union was that I was always that way inclined. I always used to go to the union meetings, and always said my wee bit, you know. Then eventually I was asked to put my name forward for nomination... and people asked me to represent them, which I did do and I was elected as shop steward... then after about a year I became chairman of the branch.<sup>17</sup>

Workers were certainly proud of their commitment to the labour movement, but there was also a sense that lifelong trade unionism was normal, that long-term commitment to the values which trade unions represented and the protections which they afforded were *expected* to be upheld. Alex Wright sought to join the relevant union in all of his various forms of employment following shipbuilding, commenting 'I've always been a union member'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Tommy Johnston demonstrates this lifelong commitment to trade unionism: 'I've always been a member of a union, from when I left school, as soon as I started work I joined'.<sup>19</sup> Workers' commitment to trade unionism evoked a sense that joining the labour movement was not simply the right or moral choice, but a culturally-expected choice for a man to make at the commencement of adulthood and uphold for the rest of his life.

### **Powerful Unions in Steelmaking**

Steelworkers remembered the power of the ISTC within the workplace, recalling how it demanded respect from management and was quick to respond if workers' rights were infringed. Commitment to trade unionism and a readiness to defend working rights and workplace dignity featured strongly in steelworkers' testimonies. Jim McKeown felt that ISTC 'was quite strong actually, and it held a lot of sway' within the workplace.<sup>20</sup> Workers directly linked the presence and strength of their union to the relative high pay of steelmaking, Stewart MacPherson states, '[the wages] were really, really good, aye. But I think the unions were good at the time'.<sup>21</sup> Alex

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Harry Carlin by James Ferns, 18/01/2017

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Alex Wright by James Ferns, 06/03/2019

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Tommy Johnston by James Ferns, 26/01/2017

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Jim McKeown by James Ferns, 13/02/2017

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Stewart MacPherson by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

McGowan believed that the AEU played a positive role in the workplace, which he attributes to a high degree of organisation: 'At that time it was very very organized. Mid-Lanark district, that took in places like Rolls Royce, Caterpillar, Terex'.<sup>22</sup> Importantly, and like other workers, Alex's understanding of unions was not limited to a single workplace. Instead, the role and remit of the union was situated within a wider regional or national context as part of the greater labour movement.

The strength of the ISTC was proportionate to its size, often representing massive individual plants which counted their workforce in the thousands. As John Christie demonstrated: 'British Steel employed 360,000 at its best, at its highest. There was a lot of membership there. A very strong union'.<sup>23</sup> The extent of trade union membership which shop stewards were responsible for carried a sense of mass scale, with the sheer size of particular union branches in and of themselves demonstrating the union's latent power. Jim Reddiex, 'a shop steward for 10 years', was responsible for the representation of 1,000 workers within his branch.<sup>24</sup> The potential power within the hands of shop stewards was further conveyed by Tommy Johnston:

1988 I took over as branch secretary, what was called branch 11, which was the biggest branch in the Ravenscraig because it took in all the contractors, and at one time I had 7,000 men.<sup>25</sup>

As well as size, the density of trade union membership, particularly within publicly-owned steelworks, was a key factor in union strength. Having been employed within British Steel as well as smaller private steelworks, Andrew Kane was able to draw attention to differences between the two: 'Private Steelworks, the unions didn't really have much of a say. Guys could have lost their jobs quite easily. They had a big say, the British Steel ones'.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Gordon Hatton completed his welding apprenticeship in a privately-owned workplace with no union presence, and felt that

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<sup>22</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>23</sup> John Christie Interview (Ferns)

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Jim Reddiex by James Ferns, 10/01/2017

<sup>25</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Andrew Kane by James Ferns, 25/01/2017

differences in conditions between non-union and union workplaces were drastic, evoking the image of a 'Victorian sweatshop':

I've been places that don't have unions, and the conditions are always better in places that have unions... Lanarkshire Welding, there wasn't a union in there and it was like a Victorian sweatshop. They wouldn't even get away with it now... Motherwell Bridge was a huge improvement, they had a union... had showers and everything, we saw this as paradise.<sup>27</sup>

Like many other steelworkers, Jim McKeown was not involved with the ISTC as an activist, he was a member that focused largely on work, with the union holding a peripheral, but nonetheless reassuring presence in his working life. Jim notes, 'I went to the meetings and you sort of towed the party line with the union, that type of thing, but never involved with it, never an official'.<sup>28</sup> His expression of 'towing the party line' encapsulates the way in which steelworkers felt comfortable delegating responsibility to their union, entrusting them to look after themselves and their co-workers, as well as their readiness to take action if or when the union called for it. As a skilled tradesman, Derek Cairns was a member of the AEU, and noted that despite apprentices being unable to join the union while based within their training centre, the union nonetheless made its presence felt, offering unofficial representation:

When you were in the training centres, you weren't allowed to be in the union, but the union looked after you. They told us, 'We'll look after you. You don't need to join, you don't need to pay your dues or anything'. As soon as we went up into the steelworks for the last two-year of the apprenticeship, that's when you joined the union.<sup>29</sup>

Worthy of note is Derek's comment that 'the union looked after you', and 'we'll look after you', denoting the sense of care or guardianship unions provided, which as Derek made clear, was particularly reassuring for younger workers. Workers appreciated the background sense of assurance unions gave, taking comfort in the existence of a dormant power within the workplace which would activate if required.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Gordon Hatton by James Ferns, 25/03/2019

<sup>28</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Derek Cairns by James Ferns, 12/04/2019

Derek highlights this sense of security, noting, 'It was good to be a member, knowing that they had your back... there wasn't any activism or anything. It was always good to know they were there'.<sup>30</sup> Derek's point, 'there wasn't any activism or anything', further notes that even in the absence of overt campaigning, the union was still able to foster a sense of assurance among the workforce simply through its presence and obvious latent power.

Overall, steelworkers defining memory of their former union was not simply its power, but the sense of collective empowerment it gave them. In most instances the power of steelmaking unions remained latent, with the possibility of collective action alone guaranteeing a certain level of managerial conscientiousness. Harry Carlin described how this power encouraged respectful management: 'the union had a lot to play, the management respected you – and the workforce knew that'.<sup>31</sup> Equally, for Brian Cunningham, the union's authority fostered 'mutual respect':

[It] always put the management on notice... because there could be a consequence, a real significant consequence, and if you are a manager in that position and you cause a shut down or a walk out you need to make sure what you did was right... it bred a respect for the workforce... I think that was probably true in most nationalised industries... any place you had large groups of men who were unionised... I definitely missed the trade union environment... that respectfulness that you had between employer and employee... that reassurance... that you couldn't be bullied, or picked on, or threatened by your employer or your boss.<sup>32</sup>

Brian's language conveys the confidence which unions instilled, his mention of a 'significant consequence' illustrates how the collective strength of the union placed limits on abusive management, fostering a feeling among workers that if their rights were infringed there would be recourse. Importantly, Brian connects this sense of strength to the massive size of steelmaking unions, noting the existence of this confidence wherever 'large groups of men... were unionised'.

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<sup>30</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>31</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Brian Cunningham by James Ferns, 19/01/2017

The relative industrial peace within steelmaking was attributed by workers to management's recognition of union power. Respect, or more precisely 'mutual respect', was the term workers used most frequently to describe labour relations. When asked to define these relations, Brian Cunningham responded: 'Respectful. Which I always liked. There was a mutual respect between the workforce and the unions and the management in the Ravenscraig'.<sup>33</sup> When asked if management respected the workforce John Christie replied, 'Yes, very much so, yes. I met a lot of managers, a lot of good people'.<sup>34</sup> According to Andrew Kane, managers within Clydesdale steelworks were 'generally liked', with labour relations described as 'good, really good, great relationship, fantastic working relationship'.<sup>35</sup> Shop steward Tommy Johnston believed that union officials shared a generally good dialogue with management:

It was good, it was good, we had our arguments but – I was a wee crabbit cunt – excuse my French – I wouldn't let them away with anything... But they weren't all bolshie to say, 'right that's your job and you'll do it and that's it', they would sit down round the table and negotiate if it was something serious.<sup>36</sup>

Derek Cairns verbalised this sense of mutual respect: 'the management respected the union; the union respected the management'.<sup>37</sup> Discussing industrial disputes he continued, 'at the time, there wasn't a lot of disputes, other than wee skirmishes'.<sup>38</sup> Derek was quick to point out a lack of 'animosity' in these 'skirmishes': 'It was just a continuous cycle. It was quite funny in a way. It was just a game. The management knew what they were doing. The unions knew what they were doing. There was no animosity or anything'.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Alex McGowan stated, 'we never really had a lot

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> John Christie Interview (Ferns)

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>36</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>37</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

of agro... we had a good working relationship with the management'.<sup>40</sup> When asked if management took the union seriously, he replied:

Oh aye. I mean, they didn't really have an option. Because that was it. If you treated one person unfairly, everybody else would say, 'Well, tough, we're out. We're supporting him'. They both knew – both sides knew the line that you don't cross... Kind of a mutual respect.<sup>41</sup>

The mutual respect between the union and management was no accident, but as Alex highlights, was a direct result of the obvious collective strength of the union and managements' awareness of it – 'they didn't really have an option'. Steelworkers felt valued at work, with the influence of their union and the respect it ensured from management giving them a sense of dignity. This was illustrated further in Stewart MacPherson's description of management's attitude: 'Respect I think, respect.... they didn't treat us like we were a just a number. The respect was good, definitely, it was good'.<sup>42</sup> Heavy industry, with its dark satanic mills, has been popularly characterised as a site where individuality was quashed and where workers were just as regimented as the goods they produced. But the power of steelmaking unions provided a safety net, emboldening workers and giving them the confidence to challenge management when necessary.

Jim Reddiex was in a prime position to offer insight into how labour relations had evolved over time in Ravenscraig, having working in the plant from construction to demolition, he observed 'different stages of management':

From the word go there were nothing but strikes, it was bad. Ravenscraig management had tremendous power at that time. But it slowly disappeared because if it was production they wanted they had to do something to sweeten it... I am glad that certain people, younger people came in and took up management positions... looked at it in a different view.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>43</sup> Jim Reddiex Interview (Ferns)

According to Jim, Ravenscraig's early period of 'constant fights' came to an end during the late 1970s and early 1980s with the introduction of a new generation of 'enlightened managers' who took a more conciliatory approach towards unions, believing that cooperation represented the best way to raise productivity and prevent closure. The constant threat of closure within Scottish steelmaking from 1979 onwards provided a solid basis for the mutual respect that workers had outlined. The overall trade union convenor of Ravenscraig, Tommy Brennan, was proud of the working relationship between unions and plant management, and connected it to the shared goal of resisting closure:

The relationship between management and unions at Ravenscraig was excellent, excellent, and at all levels, all levels. I think that was an indication, you've got to earn that respect, and we at Ravenscraig did earn the respect of management, and not just the trade unionists but the workers themselves, the members themselves earned that respect. When you think of the conditions we were working under, with the threat of closure all the time.<sup>44</sup>

Plant management and union officials worked together to demonstrate Ravenscraig's viability, resisting the closure agenda of the British Steel senior management, and going on to break productivity records both nationally and internationally. The shadow of closure that hung over Ravenscraig for the better part of a decade, and the fight against it, created a sense of shared struggle within the plant which crossed the lines between the shop floor and plant management. Ravenscraig's industrial Chaplin, Rev. John Potter was heavily involved in the campaign to save the plant, and his position allowed for a degree of neutrality, as he was not formally tied to either union or management. Rev. Potter noticed an improvement in labour relations in the later years of Ravenscraig, which he attributed to joint efforts to save the plant:

One of the characteristics of Ravenscraig in its latter years was the good working relationship between unions and management. It didn't mean that they agreed on everything, but what it did mean was that

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Tommy Brennan by James Ferns, 16/01/2017



they could hold their disagreements without damaging the business that they were involved in.<sup>45</sup>

Positive labour relations were expressed by steelworkers from other plants as well as Ravenscraig, such as Clydesdale, which indicates a general goodwill between steelmaking unions and local British Steel management, which was certainly strengthened through shared goals of resisting senior management and government efforts of closure.

### **Managers' Perspective and Union-Management Cooperation in Steelmaking**

Rather than offering diametrically conflicting testimonies, interviewed steelworks managers in fact shared and confirmed workers' accounts of respectful labour relations. Plant-level management were generally accepted as part of the workplace community; while occasionally antagonistic, there was a definite sense that workers, unions and plant management were 'in it together'. On the other hand, British Steel executives and regional senior management were viewed, by workers and plant management alike, as wholly separate, outside of the occupational community of the workplace, a faceless group representing a constant impersonal threat. Ravenscraig's industrial relations manager, Sam Thompson, attributed positive labour relations to management's open dialogue with trade union convenors, remembering an 'overall very close' and 'good relationship' with union representatives during negotiations.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Terry Currie, who held a middle management position in Ravenscraig, described labour relations as 'relatively healthy', stating, 'the unions were terribly sensible people', noting, 'in the main, you had sensible guys like Brennan running the union and you had sensible managers like Jimmy Dunbar at the later end who was the works director... and that all worked fine'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Rev. John Potter by James Ferns, 28/01/2017

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Sam Thompson by James Ferns, 17/01/2017

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Terry Currie by James Ferns, 18/03/2019

Indeed, Jimmy Dunbar, general manager of Clydesdale steelworks from 1977-1982 and Ravenscraig and Gartcosh steelworks director from 1982-1985, was able to provide valuable information by virtue of his unique position, outlining a solid working relationship between unions and plant management. In line with steelworkers' testimonies, Jimmy considered his approach to be a significant departure from what had come before, noting, 'my management style was much more communication, much more about explanation'.<sup>48</sup> Jimmy's approach of open dialogue was taken in order to bolster efforts towards demonstrating the plant's viability:

I used to say quite strongly, 'See these consultative meeting we have, this isn't about the prices in the canteen... This is actually about how we try to keep ourselves in a job. That's what this meeting's about... to try and make this place run well... make sure the customers will want to get things from us.'<sup>49</sup>

Like Jimmy, Ian Harris also strove to foster a dialogue with unions in his capacity as a manager. Ian was the technical and then production manager at Gartcosh, after which he held the position of strip mill manager at Ravenscraig from 1981 until closure. He described his move from Gartcosh to Ravenscraig as 'an interesting time in the industry', where management and unions were both moving towards a more conciliatory position in the face of closure:

That was the time that both management and trade unions woke up to the fact that if we don't work together we are not going to be here. And so I came in, in a rather fortunate position, that rather than attrition, it was, we might not agree with everything but let's see where we have got common ground and a way to take it forward... so you ended up becoming acquainted with the trade officials, rather than avoiding them so you didn't have any, shall we say, stormy meetings and whatnot, it became more of a, 'we will work together'.<sup>50</sup>

Union-management cooperation was also informed in part by a growing estrangement between plant management and senior British Steel corporate

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Jimmy Dunbar by James Ferns, 10/04/2019

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ian Harris by James Ferns, 09/01/2017

management; with plant managers generally anti-closure, often frustrated by British Steel executives' politically motivated closure agenda. The distinction between local and senior management was discussed within a North American context in Bruno's *Steelworker Alley*, where they note that the 'degree of antagonism embedded in worker-boss relationships varied depending on the level of management'; with one of their interviewed steelworkers stating: 'company executives were seen as outside the guys in the plant'.<sup>51</sup> This idea of outsiders and insiders was shared by Scottish steelworkers, with British Steel executives generally perceived as an external, antagonistic force. When discussing plant management, Peter Hamill reflected, 'we were all in the same boat', while Harry Carlin similarly noted, 'the dispute wasn't with them it was with British Steel, truth be known most of the managers agreed with us'.<sup>52</sup> This mirrors the diverse range of managerial behaviour Perchard found in his study of coal mine management in the declining Scottish coal industry, where not all pit-level managers were mouthpieces of authoritarian and anti-union employers.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, during the campaign to save Ravenscraig, Ian Harris stated that while he was not 'out front', he supported the campaign in his capacity as manager, noting, 'we were always fighting it'.<sup>54</sup> Constrained somewhat by his position as director, Jimmy Dunbar, like Ian, avoided openly supporting anti-closure campaigns, however, he was able to provide crucial support – or 'ammunition' – behind the scenes. Describing this relationship, he noted, 'I confided in them a lot... I could brief the guys pretty well as to what the arguments were'.<sup>55</sup> Simultaneously, Jimmy described the need for discretion:

Well I could not be seen to do that in my job. I was officially a British Steel guy. I couldn't have been seen to be campaigning against British Steel directors, but I was quite good at creating ammunition, put it that way!<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> R. Bruno, *Steelworker Alley: How Class works in Youngstown* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999) p.110

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Peter Hamill by James Ferns, 28/01/2017; Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>53</sup> A. Perchard, *The Mine Management Professions in the Twentieth-Century Scottish Coal Mining Industry* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007)

<sup>54</sup> Ian Harris Interview (Ferns)

<sup>55</sup> Jimmy Dunbar Interview (Ferns)

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Jimmy's actions to improve plant viability were chastised and undermined, and his meetings with superiors often ended in 'terrible arguments'; a mixture of disgust and exhaustion towards British Steel's 'internal politics' eventually compelled him to find employment elsewhere. This was confirmed by Ian Harris, who reflected on the pressure plant managers were under to tow 'the party line':

[He] had a difficult time... Jimmy Dunbar, he resigned because, because he couldn't, he would not compromise what he thought was the right thing to do, to follow blindly instructions handed out from London so he finished up. The next guy, was a wee bit more, how can I put it: self-interested.<sup>57</sup>

Overall, the conciliatory approach to labour relations within steelmaking between plant management and unions carried fundamental benefits for management. Whilst unions were able to maintain independence, sometimes cooperation became into cooption, as unions could not avoid being occasionally subsumed into the overall stratagems of local management. The threat of closure looming over Scottish steel, in tandem with union's willingness to make sacrifices to save jobs, created the perfect conditions for management to tackle what they deemed undesirable employment practices. Steelmaking's seniority promotion system – promotion based upon time served – had long been a source of tension between unions and management; unions considered it an integral mechanism to ensure workers received continuous pay increases and career advancement, while management resented the inability to choose candidates for promotion, citing the need for a meritocracy – albeit one which they controlled. Ian Harris described how he worked with union officials to reform seniority promotion:

It was only latterly in the last few years that we managed to get some form of, it wasn't selection, but I had an arrangement with the trade union officials... we managed to get it to the stage that if we thought someone was going to struggle in a job we agreed with the union that we would keep them in his current job and someone else would leapfrog up to the top job... we managed to have a dialogue that said, 'we would rather work together', so that if I had a problem with one

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<sup>57</sup> Ian Harris Interview (Ferns)

of their guys I went to them, if they felt if they had a problem they came to me and we just discussed it.<sup>58</sup>

In this instance, the union-management cooperation undermined long-established employment conditions by shifting greater control to managers. Union willingness to tolerate greater sacrifice in the name of long-term plant viability often meant in practical terms allowing management to cut the workforce and undermine conditions. Ian Harris was proud of efforts to improve plant 'efficiency', noting the union's role in this endeavour:

Through job restructuring we did take down an awful lot of waste labour, I mean when I first joined Ravenscraig there was 10,000 there, when the plant was operating at its highest capacity ever there was only 4,000 employees... there was a good lot of shrinkage of the workforce through efficiency and as I say, removing demarcation lines, and the unions cooperated in that, albeit some of them reluctantly.<sup>59</sup>

The 'reluctance' which Ian references relates to certain shop stewards' unwillingness to oversee employee redundancies or introduce subcontracting for entire sections of the workforce, such as catering and cleaning, as this meant a fall in pay, conditions and redundancy package entitlement, disproportionately impacting female-dominated ancillary roles.

Union-management cooperation over preventing closure and the drive for greater productivity also contributed to the breakdown of inter-union solidarity during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. Jimmy Dunbar, whose tenure as Ravenscraig's director took place during the Miners' Strike, believed that Ravenscraig's continued operation in spite of the miners' picket of the plant afforded Ravenscraig a good deal of moral capital among the Thatcher government 'that really actually helped prolong Ravenscraig's life'.<sup>60</sup> Jimmy considered the persuasion of union officials against joint strike action – in which he referenced the threat of closure – as one of his 'biggest achievements':

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Jimmy Dunbar Interview (Ferns)

We always had this thing called the Triple Alliance. The steelworkers, the rail workers and the miners, Triple Alliance. I think one of my biggest achievements in my career was persuading the Ravenscraig Trade Union guys that they couldn't have this Triple Alliance anymore or the place would shut down and they'll all not be coming back to their job.<sup>61</sup>

Holding the role of strip mill manager during the Miners' Strike, Ian Harris similarly outlined the relationship between the lack of union solidarity and workers' anxiety over closure:

That was difficult for the trade unions; it was not so difficult for me because I didn't have to persuade the guys at all. They knew their future hung in the balance, and they had to keep the plant operating or it would give the London government and British Steel head office the excuse they were looking for.<sup>62</sup>

The need to maintain production and an operational furnace was prioritized over coordinated strike action by Ravenscraig trade union officials like Tommy Brennan as well as national ISTC officials. Shop steward and sectional union official Tommy Johnston described crossing the miners' picket of Ravenscraig: 'a total nightmare... terrible... going in, walking by them as a union official, and they are shouting all sorts of names'.<sup>63</sup> Like Ian Harris, Tommy believed that if the plant ceased operation and the blast furnace cooled down into a state of disrepair the government would exploit the situation and close the plant. Tommy blamed the miners' picket of Ravenscraig on Arthur Scargill, the president of National Union of Mineworkers, who he described as the 'most ignorant man I've ever met in my life':

[It] was totally caused by Scargill... all we wanted was the three blast furnaces, enough coal to come round to keep them fired up, because if a blast furnace cooled down it collapsed in on itself... so if any of those blast furnaces fell in, that was Ravenscraig closed. Scargill said: 'no, you're getting no coal at all'.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Ian Harris Interview (Ferns)

<sup>63</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Unlike their union representatives, steelworkers themselves were typically sympathetic to the Miners' Strike, sometimes expressing a combination of shame, anger and confusion regarding the absence of inter-union solidarity. Recalling the miners' picket of Ravenscraig Jim McKeown stated:

That was horrendous. I believed in unions and I found it hard to go through the gates and go through the picket lines.... I remember the police standing there now and it was horrendous... You went up on the roof to look out and it was like a battle scene out the front gate... the police and the pickets all out there. It was a horrible, horrible time.<sup>65</sup>

Despite his sense of discomfort, Jim, like other steelworkers, felt that solidarity with the miners would have come at too high a cost: 'what a lot of us thought was if we had went out with the miners they would have shut Ravenscraig early'.<sup>66</sup> Many steelworkers situated the Miners' Strike as the last great attempt of working-class defiance of Thatcherism. Brian Cunningham was quick to declare his support for the aims of the Miners' Strike and Arthur Scargill: 'the only thing Arthur Scargill got wrong was the number of pits [Thatcher] was going to close: he said they were going to close half the pits, and they closed them all'.<sup>67</sup> When asked what it felt like working at Ravenscraig during the miners' picket, Brian Cunningham replied:

Traumatic. You had to go through that picket line every day.... and you had the police cordoning them off... the miners were doing what working people do. They were fighting for survival. They were fighting for their jobs and their survival. They were fighting for their jobs and their livelihoods – I mean what's more noble than that? But Thatcher was adamant.<sup>68</sup>

Dorothy Macready expressed a similar sentiment:

It was setting man against man, miner against steelworker. It was bad... it was terrible. It was terrible. I could see the miners' point of

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<sup>65</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

view. When the miners lost their job it was just awful, just, just hellish.<sup>69</sup>

While trade union officials' appeals to the greater good of saving the plant at the expense of inter-union solidarity may have made sense during the context of the campaign to save Ravenscraig, history has proven them somewhat futile. The defeat of the Miners' Strike represented a monumental defeat for organised working-class resistance to Thatcherism and deindustrialisation. Time was certainly bought for the plant, but the general rout of the labour movement made sure that closure was inevitable. Dorothy Macready vocalised the ultimate futility in the ISTC's prioritisation of local plant protectionism: 'They worked through the Miners' Strike to keep their job and they lost their job anyway... in the end it didn't make utter tuppence, they all lost their jobs'.<sup>70</sup>

Steelmaking's union-management cooperation certainly carried benefits for both sides, but it nonetheless took place within the wider context of industrial closure; unions were primed to make regular, seemingly small sacrifices in order to prevent closure, resulting in the slow but steady erosion of conditions as well wider values of inter-union solidarity the longer the shadow of closure hung over the industry.

### **Militant Unions in Shipbuilding**

The depiction of positive labour relations within steelmaking was entirely absent from the testimonies of shipbuilders. Those employed here recalled starkly divided yards, rigid hierarchy, and an openly hostile management. Clydeside shipbuilding itself had a particular reputation for authoritarian management practices when compared to other UK shipyards, such as Tyneside yards.<sup>71</sup> When discussing this

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Dorothy Macready by James Ferns, 20/04/2016

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> G. G. Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); A. J. Reid, *The Tide of Democracy: Shipyard Workers and Social Relations in Britain, 1870-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010)



tension, workers did not always describe outright labour unrest, such as frequent strike action, but rather a feeling within the yard, a class-based antagonism which cast a shadow over labour relations even during times of industrial harmony. It is important to state that shipbuilders did not narrate a one-sided depiction of labour relations, a simplistic rendition with valiant labour on one hand and an insidious management on the other. Testimonies were balanced and nuanced, for instance, James Cloughley stated, 'in Fairfields we were lucky we had a progressive manager... he was pragmatic. You could talk to him... We never really had to go into serious conflict with him'.<sup>72</sup> Workers connected yard militancy, in part, to the style of management, as Robert Buirds highlights:

There was a strong shop floor. Some were more, I would say, militant than others. It just depended on the culture of that actual management team within that particular department. If it was a good management team, that looked after the men... then the people were more inclined to agree with the company and take a softer approach.<sup>73</sup>

Alan Glover concurred, recalling that managers could be both 'good and bad. There was good managers, there were some that were absolute Gestapo, literally'.<sup>74</sup> Despite these nuances, shipbuilders generally described a tendency towards authoritarianism and cruelty among shipbuilding management which was absent from steelmaking. Building upon his previous statement, Alan Glover recalled how one foreman in particular described the men in his supervisory charge as 'nothing but rats'.<sup>75</sup>

When steelworkers recalled the power of their unions they remembered it as largely unexercised, latent, which they attributed to relatively good industrial relations; shipbuilders experienced their union on very different terms, being defined by conflict, often one series of defensive actions after another. The power of their union was apparent in its defensive capabilities, with membership and shop-floor

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with James Cloughley by James Ferns, 08/04/2019

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Robert Buirds by James Ferns, 04/03/2019

<sup>74</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

collectivism understood as workers' only protection against unfair dismissal. Within this climate of autocratic management, Joe O'Rourke's career in shipbuilding was almost cut short as a new apprentice. Following a disagreement with a senior tradesman, Joe was informed by a manager that he had been 'sacked'. In response to this unilateral decision, yard apprentices rallied around Joe:

There was a wee guy called Stilly who was the manager, a wee nasty guy. Everybody was terrified of him. He walked up, and this big plater was standing with him, and he said, 'Is that the boy?' He says, 'Aye'. He went, 'Right. You're sacked'. This was about 10am or 12pm or something. 'You're sacked. Get out'. Dearie me, nearly crying I was like 'my mum will kill me'... We had a meeting of the apprentices, and all the apprentices went on strike... It lasted a few days, and then the journeymen platers said, 'This isn't right. He's only a boy. You need to get something done here, or we're all going out'. All the men as well. It turned out they gave me a two weeks' suspension.<sup>76</sup>

This episode taught Joe an example of the power of solidarity early on in his career, demonstrating the ability of collective action to overturn managers' arbitrary decision-making.

In their efforts to resist yard closure and redundancies, shipyard trade unionists did not usually enjoy the same indirect support from plant management that steelmaking union representatives reported, but instead recalled a general hostility from both local and senior management. James Cairns was familiar with the public myth of lazy workers and greedy unions looting and gutting their own industry from the inside out, and like many was quick to dispel it. James recalled management's outright hostility to yard unions, even towards their efforts to prevent closures. As a senior union representative during the 1980s, James was invited to take part in what would be the final British Shipbuilders conference, where, on behalf of the workers of Scott Lithgow, he advocated against closures; rather than receiving support for his efforts, James found his wages docked:

Crazy how the management were really taking British Shipbuilders side, it was crazy. I got ready one morning to go to work... The phone

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<sup>76</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

rang. You have to fly down to London. Scott's Lithgow sent a chauffeur up for us... My wages were two days short. I went to my manager: 'You were off for two days'... The managers were all totally against unions. Every step of the way management were fighting the unions. Again that's where blame comes in. Blame the man. Blame the workers. Too easy to do that.<sup>77</sup>

When asked to describe the general attitude of yard management, shop steward Pat Clark stated: 'There's obviously various levels of management. But arrogance would be one. There was a lot of arrogance'.<sup>78</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Linda Collins, a former shop steward of Yarrows who represented IT workers during the 1980s. Linda described Yarrows' management as 'absolutely the most reactionary people I'd ever the misfortune to meet', being defined by an authoritarianism and general hostility towards the workforce:

I think we were all collectively loathing the management, because the management in Yarrows was one of the most reactionary management's I've ever had to deal with. They were absolutely vile. It was very authoritarian.<sup>79</sup>

For Linda, the reactionary nature of Yarrows' management had another dimension, as a woman worker she was subject to sexism and discriminatory grading practices. She recalled:

There were so few privileges given to women. Women were all in the low paid jobs. There was no equal pay. That just wasn't happening because they were very clever in making sure that the jobs that there were women in they never employed a man in because they would have given the man the higher pay then we would have had a claim. They were very cute. No, there was not a lot of love lost between the staff.<sup>80</sup>

The idea of 'collective loathing' towards oppressive management which Linda articulates featured heavily within shipbuilders' accounts of labour relations.

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with James Cairns by James Ferns, 01/08/2019

<sup>78</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Linda Collins by James Ferns, 19/03/2019

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

Shipbuilders' relationship with trade unionism was strongly connected to their own moral convictions, with union activism representing a mechanism to right the inherent wrongs manifest in the yard. Linda very clearly associated her trade unionism with her own sense of morality, noting:

I've always been a person who can't stand by silently and watch when things are going wrong, if there's some form of abuse... The man who was my boss at the time, absolutely loathed me, loathed me with a passion.<sup>81</sup>

Like others, the reaction her activism provoked in management was remembered as a point of pride, a job well done. Despite the discrimination he faced for his union organising, Joe O'Rourke recalled a similar feeling of empowerment when taking a stand towards management:

You had to have the people behind you, but if you had the men behind you, you could win and it was fucking good. It was good when you could say to the management, 'no, you are not on... no, because we will have everybody out the yard in 10 minutes. You're not doing it'.<sup>82</sup>

Union membership gave workers a sense of dignity and control within their local workplace, but it also facilitated access to the wider labour movement. Workers derived a sense of pride through their participation in something larger than themselves, in initiatives which aimed to transform national politics. Its tradition of militant trade unionism made Clydeside shipbuilding a focal point of worker resistance in the face of 1970s deindustrialisation, most famously displayed by the successful 1971 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) Work-In. Here, the workers rejected the Government and management's controversial closure plans by occupying and continuing operations themselves, preventing closure and saving thousands of jobs.<sup>83</sup> Describing his involvement in the Work-In, Thomas Brotherston recalled one of the mass solidarity demonstrations in Glasgow:

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>83</sup> J. Foster and C. Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986)

Strongest I ever felt in my life was during the UCS campaign. We had called a demonstration to rally in our support. The whole of Scotland stopped. There was between 80 and 100 thousand marching down the green [Glasgow Green]. It was absolutely mobbed. Just as the head of the demo started to turn, there was a big fellow, big Ronnie Watson, who's a building worker, activist, Communist Party member. He just spontaneously burst into The Internationale. What was even more remarkable, was that the entire demonstration picked it up - I could have fought the British Army single-handed. *Pride*. It was the last time that I felt like a man. You were on your feet, and you were saying to the government, 'No, you're not going to do this. We're not going to allow you'. For that brief moment, you actually said, 'You know what? We're going to beat them'. The confidence that gives you, no just then but for the rest of your life.<sup>84</sup>

The collective strength of the labour movement reverberates throughout Thomas' recollection. His participation was transformative; it reshaped and opened up the politically possible, no longer an isolated worker subject to top down decision-making, Thomas, in practical terms, saw that workers can forge an alternative path. In another sense, Thomas' sense of self-worth and dignity was transformed; alongside a feeling of collective strength, the demonstration also instilled an individual strength with a very clear synergy with working-class masculinity (explored further in chapter 3), where Thomas notes, 'you were on your feet', that he could have 'fought the British Army single-handed', and importantly: 'it was the last time that I felt like a man'.

Discrimination against prominent union activists was commonplace within shipbuilding, with management employing underhanded strategies and blacklisting in order to expel particularly militant trade unionists. Blacklisting had a long tradition within shipbuilding, being utilized as a strike-breaking tactic during the labour militancy of the interwar period.<sup>85</sup> Towards the end of his time at Scott Lithgow, James Cairns represented his fellow pattern makers as a national union

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with Thomas Brotherston by James Ferns, 13/02/2019 (First Interview), 20/02/2019 (Second Interview), narrator's emphasis

<sup>85</sup> A. Mclvor and H. Paterson, 'Combating the Left: Victimization and Anti-Labour Activities in West Scotland, 1890-1939', in R. Duncan and A. Mclvor (eds.) *Militant Workers: Labour and Class Conflict on the Clyde, 1900-1950* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992) pp.129-54

representative, advocating for better pay and conditions. Perceiving him as a threat, James described how management manufactured conditions to justify his dismissal:

They started playing stupid tricks with us. They weren't giving us a job... the management gave you a job each morning. He wasn't giving me drawings, then the manager from Scott's went up and says, 'What's he been doing all week?' He says, 'Nothing'. He says 'right, well sack him'. Just out to get me.<sup>86</sup>

Blacklisting was a particularly effective method of disempowering key union activists. The workplace was the site of shop steward power, being barred from it rendered them powerless, allowing management to isolate and remove the most skilled and politically articulate organisers. Like James Cairns, Pat Clark described a scenario whereby management concocted the conditions to dismiss him, after which he was blacklisted. Alongside another three shop stewards, Pat represented a particularly militant branch of platers in Port Glasgow's Kingston and Glen yards:

Over time, we got the reputation of being probably the most militant department in the place. If we said we were going on strike we generally would. Obviously, this would be 1982... British Shipbuilders were looking to cut jobs all over the country. Obviously, management would like that to be an easier process than it might be.

When a power failure in the yard interrupted Pat's work – 'I went to start welding and nothing happened. I was striking the rod. No spark. No nothing' – he was advised by the site electrician to wait until the problem was resolved.<sup>87</sup> Upon noticing the situation, a passing manager declared, 'you have nothing to do but you will stand at attention' – a petty attempt at belittlement which was refused by Pat.<sup>88</sup> Like other shipbuilders, Pat noted that this overly zealous attitude was commonplace among managers, reflecting, 'things like that happen all the time. It didn't seem like such a big deal'.<sup>89</sup> However, on this occasion senior management capitalised upon the incident to marginalise a militant trade unionist:

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<sup>86</sup> James Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>87</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

This manager happened to mention it in the passing to this director who immediately took the decision to take action against us. There's no other reason than the fact I was a shop steward and that we were the most militant department. Interestingly enough, we had the disciplinary hearing. I got sacked, but my mate didn't get sacked. Both of us were equally 'guilty'.<sup>90</sup>

During Joe O'Rourke's interview, it became apparent that he had been a co-worker and fellow union activist of Pat, and although they had lost touch, Joe confirmed the above narrative without prompting. In light of the tension between shop-floor activists and union hierarchy, senior union officials could be complicit with the blacklisting of 'troublesome' grassroots activists, as highlighted by Joe's recollection of the industrial tribunal following Pat's dismissal:

He was stitched up. The union stitched us up as well as the yard stitched us up... We went down to Newcastle, the Union Head Office and British Shipbuilder's Head Office was across the street from each other. We didn't know this. They used to go and have their dinner together... This guy called Jim Murray who was the head of the union... they weren't wanting me to go... he said, 'That's the way it works. I'm instructing you'. I said, 'Well, you don't instruct me, 600 platers instruct us what to do, not you, and they've instructed me to go so I'm going. If you don't like it, fucking too bad'. They weren't happy... Murray comes in and he gives it, 'This is how I'm going to play it. I'm going to bring the dirty washing out, so you cannot go in Joe'... Eventually, I had to say to him, 'Let him play it that way'... They set wee Pat up and they threw him at the fucking lions. We lost the case. I kind of lost a lot of heart in it after that. After that, I wasn't interested in the trade union, not the trade union movement. I was still a staunch trade unionist, and I was still a staunch socialist. Their part of socialism and trade unionism was different from the way I'd seen it, and the way Pat had seen it.<sup>91</sup>

Following this incident, and an energetic but ultimately unsuccessful shop-floor campaign to have him reinstated, Pat discovered that he had been blacklisted. Pat attributed this solely to his trade union militancy:

Because I was a trade union militant, I effectively ended up getting blacklisted... The personnel guy at Yarrows knew who I was as soon as

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

I walked in the door. He would say 'you're very like your image on television'. There was no doubt that I was basically victimized because of trade union activity and they used that as an excuse.<sup>92</sup>

Joe O'Rourke also eventually found himself blacklisted, noting:

I was barred. I couldn't get a job anywhere in the shipyards. Barred out of everything. It was well-known: 'You're not getting in'. 'Trade Union activities'... Wee Pat... He was like me, he got barred from everywhere... I mean I lost a lot of jobs through it. Jobs I didn't get. Jobs I got sacked out of: 'Trade union activities'.<sup>93</sup>

Pat discovered that the blacklist even applied to smaller yards, as he was informed by a manager he was on good terms with in a Gourrock boatyard:

He says, 'I was given a list of platers who were being taken on over the summer', he says, 'and your name is at the top of the list with a line right through it'... 'Why is his name scored out?' 'Because he's not getting in here'. He says, 'Look, I'm the manager, I want people on that list who I know and who I can trust to do a job'. 'Troublemaker'. He says 'look, it's only three weeks work, and he's hardly going to come in here', but no, they wouldn't entertain it.<sup>94</sup>

Large yards exercised considerable power within their locale, operating to exclude blacklisted workers from smaller, nominally independent yards, as Joe recalled:

There was a wee company out here called Lamont's... Lithgow owned everything else. The deal was, if you don't work for Lithgow's you're not working for anybody... I went down to Lamont's: 'we can't start you because Lithgow's has blocked it', He said, 'They've already phoned down and said, "don't start this guy"'.<sup>95</sup>

Blacklisting was employed as a tactic across shipbuilding, with management working together, sharing information and mutually excluding certain workers from the industry. Never having worked in Yarrow's, Pat found that he was also blacklisted here as well as Scott Lithgow:

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<sup>92</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>93</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>94</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>95</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)



It was confirmed to me about the blacklist. I had a pal that worked in Yarrows and they were looking for platers. I managed to get an interview... Went absolutely fine. He said, 'That's great. You'll be starting in the New Year. Just go through and see HR'... I'd never set foot inside Yarrows in my life to this point, and I went in, this personnel officer, 'Mr. Clark, you're the guy that caused all the trouble at Scot Lithgow'. Christmas Eve, letter in, 'Don't call us, we'll call you'. No job. It was quite clear. I spoke to my pal who spoke to the gaffer and this foreman showed him the list. He said, 'There's your mate's name on the list'. I was getting a start according to the foreman. As I said, when it got to HR, 'we want boilermakers not trouble makers'. So that was it. That's when it began to sink in, 'I'm not going to get a job back in my trade'.<sup>96</sup>

Like Pat, Joe recalled an instance where his blacklisting was confirmed, after being offered employment which was then quickly withdrawn and denied:

They were looking for men in the yard. The gaffer came to my mum's door, saying he had a job for me. Anyway, I then met him, and he denied it. He said, 'No, there's not a job for you'... Then I got the word that one of the senior managers had went, 'Oh, fuck, no. We don't want him in here. It's too much involvement with Trade Unionism'.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to preventing trade union activism, the process of being blacklisted overturned workers' sense of stability, cutting them off from what they had assumed was their job for life and casting them out of an industry which had ran in their family, being passed from father to son and which they subscribed great emotional attachment too. Pat verbalised this loss:

At the time, I just assumed this is me for life because that was the way of it. My father was a plater. He worked at it all his days. His father before him was a holder on. He worked at that all his days. So I never had any idea that I would be doing anything different. It was a shock when I got the sack. I was thinking, 'What am I going to do?'... It's when the notion begins to sink in, 'I'm not going to get work in my trade again'. That was frightening because that was my life planned out in front of me, that's what I am going to do until I'm 65.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>97</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>98</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

Despite the risk of blacklisting, trade union activism remained strong in shipbuilding, if anything the tactic of blacklisting reinforced divisions between the workforce and management, creating living martyrs who were proof of management's uncaring resolve. Trade unionism was a tradition within shipbuilding families, with the struggle against tyrannical management, harsh working conditions and blacklisting reinforcing a sense of duty. Pat's own father himself had been blacklisted, but this did not dispel his sense of obligation:

I was elected shop steward fairly soon after I finished my apprenticeship. I remember my mother cracking up because my father had been a shop steward as well and had been blacklisted from time to time. He was supportive, he was like 'somebody's got to do it'.<sup>99</sup>

Abusive management and harsh working conditions moulded an expressly combative form of trade unionism within shipbuilding. The ruthlessness of the management was mirrored in the militancy of the workforce, whose unions, tempered within this climate, were defined by a strength of active resistance.

### **Managers' Perspective in Shipbuilding**

Just as steelmaking management confirmed steelworkers' testimonies of relatively positive labour relations, interviewed shipbuilding managers confirmed shipbuilders' recollection of tense relations. Alastair Hart entered Scott Lithgow as a graduate trainee, after which he was taken on as Assistant Ship Manager. Although Alastair himself was not involved in union negotiation, noting that 'most of the negotiation was held by the directors and board-level people', the culture of combative labour relations meant that Alastair, as a manager, was perceived to be in an opposing camp, making it difficult to build rapport:

I felt that was part of the job to try and build some relationship, and trust with the guys, but it was – I found it difficult. I have to say it wasn't easy, because it was definitely 'them and us'. Because at that time, it was a very strong unionized labour force... There was a great

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

deal of mistrust, which I probably contributed to and became part of.<sup>100</sup>

Alastair additionally linked the 'them and us attitude' to perceptions of masculinity:

There was definitely a 'them and us' attitude, they were the guys building the ships out in the difficult conditions, and of course, management and the people who worked in the drawing office... were sitting in an obviously better atmosphere... There was definitely a sense that they were a bit softer... and of course a draughtsman sticks out like a sore thumb in the yard, he is wearing a pristine white boiler suit, white safety helmet that's never been used before.<sup>101</sup>

Alastair's trouble in being recognised as 'one of the guys', highlights how masculinity was used within the yard to denote worth, with workers subscribing value to physical labour, and in doing so establishing their own sense of worth in opposition to management hierarchy. The hard labour of shipbuilding compelled Alastair to acknowledge the need for yard unions:

In one sense you could say it was important that we had shop stewards... because the conditions the guys were working in were pretty grim, they were quite harsh. There's no doubt about that, but on the other hand, the shop stewards maybe went too far sometimes.<sup>102</sup>

Referencing the obviously harsh conditions of shipbuilding, Alastair was able to see yard unions from workers' perspective, while still holding onto his belief that they 'went too far'. Lacking Alastair's sense of perspective, though perhaps more representative of management's outright hostility towards unions, Nicholas Howe stated he had 'never been an enthusiastic union guy'.<sup>103</sup> Formerly employed as a senior naval architect at Scott Lithgow, Howe describing himself as 'a huge fan of Margaret Thatcher', believing that unions 'tended to engender a laziness':

Trade unions were very dominant. Obviously, there was a management regime, but the trade unions were very dominant... it

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with Alastair Hart by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Nicholas Howe by James Ferns, 07/03/2019

was extremely worrisome that you could've been hard-pressed to find people who took the view that they needed to work sufficiently.<sup>104</sup>

Heavily invested in the trope of out of control unions and lazy workers, Nicholas recalled that 'trade unions had [management] by the necktie', which cultivated a 'laziness' within managers themselves:

Poor management... There wasn't even any willingness to adopt even quasi-modern management techniques... There was a general sense of, 'we can't get this done today, we'll talk about this tomorrow'... it was quite pervasive from certain managers... the work ethic was, I would say at the poor end.<sup>105</sup>

Not all shipbuilding management shared this viewpoint, for instance, Alan Brown, a manager from Govan Shipbuilders and then BAE Systems, recalled the value of unions, particularly their 'defence of shipbuilding': 'I took unions seriously, but again, the union worked to make the place better... Management has got to talk with unions and consult with unions, yeah there's a place for unions'.<sup>106</sup> Within shipbuilding, promotion tended to be segregated, making it rare for members of the shop floor to work their way up into senior management, as Alastair Hart highlighted: 'I don't remember ever having a shipyard manager who came from, what I would call the black squad. They typically came from the drawing office draftsmen or they came in as graduates'.<sup>107</sup> A rarity, Alan Brown had 'worked his way up the tools', from blacksmithing into management, with his former union membership and shop-floor experience informing his position:

I was a member. I joined the union when I was 17... There's a lot to say about the unions, and how obstructive they are and all the rest of it. At the end of the day, I never seen that, I've never seen that in my life.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Alan Brown by James Ferns, 05/03/2019

<sup>107</sup> Alastair Hart Interview (Ferns)

<sup>108</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

Alan went on to challenge the notion that unions were the root cause of shipyard decline, taking issue with the representation of Clydeside in particular:

Clydeside is seen to be where the unions are up in arms about changing things; the unions really helped to change things, basically. If you put up your case and you explain things to people, why you are doing that, most of the time they follow suit.<sup>109</sup>

Alan did not allow his former allegiances to overshadow his managerial responsibilities, and like other managers worked to reform rigid demarcation rules. However, Alan's narrative of demarcation stands out in that it lacked the usual depiction of moribund unions clinging to archaic practices, and like his narrative above, highlights yard unions' willingness to adapt to change:

When I got made a supervisor, I worked to get rid of the demarcation... The unions locally... we had some right good heated arguments about it, but usually, see if it was the right thing I was doing, they didn't threaten to go out on strike... Most of the things I wanted to happen happened.<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, James Cloughley described how Communist Party affiliated shop stewards worked within yard unions to reform demarcation rules and modernise practices:

Myself and others in the Communist Party, we understood there was a requirement for change. We just couldn't carry on the way we were carrying on in relation to what was taking place in Japan and elsewhere... It had to be done... [it] was not being influenced by the management or sucking up to them or selling your principles down the river. It was the reality of keeping an industry alive... we had people in the Communist Party who were... up to date with what was taking place vis-a-vis the international scenario.<sup>111</sup>

Both Alan and James' testimonies offer nuance to the narrative that unions were responsible for the lack of modernisation in shipbuilding. Labour relations were combative, certainly more so than steelmaking, yet this militancy was not a result of tradition-bound unions resistant to change, but rather a response to the harsh reality

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> James Cloughley Interview (Ferns)

of yard employment as well as an overtly hostile management. Shipbuilding shop stewards were cognisant of the need for change, but in the face of management ambivalence, could not establish the same informal partnership against closure enjoyed in steelmaking.

### **Trade Unions and the Fight for Health and Safety in Heavy Industry**

The general struggle against management was not the only site of activism which workers recalled when describing the power of their unions, an equally important aspect was unions' prioritization of workplace health and safety. The inherent danger of heavy industry was amplified by management's productionist ethos, with production goals at times taking priority over human dignity and life. McIvor has argued that 'workers' bodies were sacrificed at the temple of Fordism', demonstrating that 'work could and did impact adversely upon the body, at least where the profit motive or productionist culture induced managerial abuse, bullying, harassment and work intensification'.<sup>112</sup> The twin problem of managerial ambivalence, or ignorance, to health and safety concerns, as well as the pre-existing dangers of the industry, were a priority for union campaigns. Gordon MacLean remembered union activism as being particularly robust, with regular shop-floor meetings and management negotiation giving the union a tangible presence within the workplace, which it used to advance conditions:

We had quite strong unions with the shop stewards, the conveners, and they held meetings every week, and they met management every week as well for anything... The unions obviously helped workers' conditions. Because the conditions in the yards were rough. I mean they were really rough.<sup>113</sup>

Alan Glover recounted how 'appalling' workplace conditions 'did improve over time', but was quick to point out this progress did not take place organically, attributing it instead to union activism: 'that wasn't the management being benevolent, that was

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<sup>112</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.152, p.199; McIvor, 'Guardians of workers' bodies?', pp.1-30

<sup>113</sup> Gordon MacLean Interview (Ferns)

the trade unions negotiating'.<sup>114</sup> Within steelmaking, Alex Torrance recounted union advocacy for safety equipment:

That's another thing the union fought for, overalls. When I started there, you just went the way you are just now to your work... Then, when that happened, we then approached them regarding safety footwear, everybody got safety footwear... The union did a lot of that, and management recognized that... heat protectors and things like that, safety helmets, visors, goggles, earplugs, earmuffs, we did all that.<sup>115</sup>

Remembering yard unions as 'worthwhile and powerful', Paul Molloy attributed the existence of basic working rights to union activism:

The unions were strong. They really were... I thought the unions did a good job because we wouldn't have had health and safety. We wouldn't have had tea breaks, or long lunch breaks or working hours, or none of that would have come if the unions hadn't – Those businesses would've made you work 24/7 if they could, without a break. [Unions] were worthwhile and powerful.<sup>116</sup>

Echoing wider sentiments, Paul was clear that it was union protection alone which tempered managerial abuse, which if left unchecked 'would've made you work 24/7'. This was confirmed in Robert Buirds' testimony:

The shipbuilding industry wasn't the best. Wasn't the best. And it was the shop stewards that tried to improve it constantly... managers just pushed too much to get too much and that sometimes caused real issues. They didn't inspect the tools we were using enough... The employers didn't give a monkeys for health and safety... If it held up progress then they paid attention to it.<sup>117</sup>

Interestingly, Nicholas Howe, a manager, struggled to articulate a reason for improvements in workplace health and safety:

Frankly, I'm not too sure about that. Other than the passage of time and I think, generally speaking, longer life was something that was

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<sup>114</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>115</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Paul Molloy by James Ferns, 15/03/2019

<sup>117</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

viewed that was attainable, probably to a large extent through the NHS.<sup>118</sup>

Nicholas was alone in overlooking union health and safety efforts; although, this absence in and of itself is revealing, indicating how his lack of shop-floor experience as well as his Thatcherite political stance have perhaps biased his narrative against acknowledging the positive role of unions in the workplace. The fight for better health and safety standards and legislation was spearheaded by trade union representatives. Pat Clark recalled that prior to the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the majority of unofficial industrial action had been related to health and safety:

The vast majority of what they call unconstitutional disputes or unofficial disputes in the UK are those for health and safety. It might be a stoppage for an hour or two, or whatever, to a full-blown strike. Something like 80% of all recorded unofficial disputes in the years prior to the introduction of health and safety legislation are health and safety disputes.<sup>119</sup>

Pat described how ‘the demands for health and safety legislation came from workers’, that the health and safety legislation which composed the Act ‘had been argued for years and years by trade unions’.<sup>120</sup> The passing of health and safety legislation stands as a monument to trade union activism.

### **Trade Unions and Politics**

Heavy industry was a site of politicisation, facilitated by trade union political campaigning as well as educational initiatives. Clydeside heavy industry in particular has a long history of militant trade unionism. This political radicalism was intensified during the interwar period, where squalid living conditions, exploitative rent and increasingly draconian labour relations intensified class consciousness and

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<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Howe Interview (Ferns)

<sup>119</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*



activism.<sup>121</sup> Although shipbuilding experienced a post-war boom, short notice and casual employment remained commonplace, meaning that industrial relations retained their antagonistic character. This context helped ferment an 'egalitarian' mind-set within yard unions; there was 'less interest in the level of absolute wages', instead effort was directed towards ensuring a fairer 'proportion of wages to profits' and a better 'distribution of earnings between groups of workers'.<sup>122</sup>

Trade unions operated as vehicles of political socialisation, moulding and maintaining the views of members leftward. Young workers new to the industry had their views shaped by older more established workers and union representatives. Robert Buirds describes this process in shipbuilding: 'Just listening off the lads that worked around you and your tradesman that you worked with, and they would tell you the pitfalls, what went on in the past about the employers'.<sup>123</sup> A strong commitment to the values of trade unionism was not merely stamped into workers once they entered the yards. Many were simply the newest generation in a long line of shipbuilders, and would have grown up in shipbuilding households, immersed in the work culture, politics and mythos of the yards. Pat Clark expertly illustrates the impact of such an upbringing:

I don't know what it's like in other areas, but when you're brought up in a shipbuilding town, a shipbuilding family, it was never a question that was asked: 'Do we need trade unions?' It was just always assumed: 'of course we do'. As far back as I can remember as a child, I must've been five... I can remember coming home into the house, my mother's sitting crying. My old man, I asked, 'What are you doing here?' 'Aye, we are on strike'. It was ingrained in you, and I would say, 'What does that mean?' So he would explain how because 'these bad bosses they don't pay us enough money', or whatever the dispute might have been. My father always had a great way of explaining it. In the most class conscious way you could think of. It was always, 'These bad people'.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> A. McIvor and W. Kenefick, 'Introduction', in A. McIvor and W. Kenefick (eds.) *Roots of Red Clydeside* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1996) pp.13-14

<sup>122</sup> W. Knox, *Industrial Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p.289

<sup>123</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>124</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

The trade union activism of his father blended in with ordinary domestic life to such an extent to be completely normal. Pat described how his weekly trip to the cinema with his father was coupled with the payment of union dues, 'My father used to take us to the pictures on a Friday night... Before he would go there, we would go up to the Boilermakers Halls to pay his dues, and he always took me with him'.<sup>125</sup> Pat's upbringing, and the upbringing of workers like him meant that participation in the labour movement was less an academic or political question and more a natural fact of life:

These types of question; they were questions that never occurred to you. Everybody was in the union. It was just accepted that's what you do. Certainly, in our house, there was never any questions about should you be in a union or whatever. I'm sure my father could have explained why you should've been. But it was just taken for granted: That's what you did.<sup>126</sup>

Although from a left-leaning family, Alan Glover's politics were fully crystallised during his entry into the workplace, with the socialist ideals of his upbringing being tested and confirmed through the fulcrum of shipyard politics. Of this prevailing radical culture Alan commented, 'it politicized me', noting that, 'everything from the shipyard – that taught me, that was the best tuition I got. It made me very aware of politics, and again trade unionism'.<sup>127</sup>

The political atmosphere of the workplace created a context which normalised mass participation in discussions on how the workplace and work process should be organised. Within Govan Shipyard, Thomas Brotherston described a mass meeting on the three-shift system, recalling the sense of scale:

There was a lot of pressure for the yards to move to a three-shift system. We worked a day shift, night-shift pattern there. We always thought the three-shift system was inhuman along with that back-shift thing, it knackered your day and it knackered your night... There was a huge debate in the shipyard and we had a mass meeting in the plating shed. You can imagine, it's huge like a football crowd and the

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

platforms were erected on a couple of steel sections of a ship, there was a microphone erected there.<sup>128</sup>

With platforms climbing up along the unfinished ship and the allusion of a football crowd, Thomas' depiction conveys the huge sense of scale of the meeting. Continuing with his anecdote, Thomas' language conveyed the epic, almost theatrical nature of the mass meeting:

Jimmy Airlie [the shipbuilders' convenor]... throws the discussion open for anybody from the floor. As you can imagine, going up to speak at a mic in front of thousands of folks is a bit daunting... We had a guy in there that they called The Talking Horse... When Airlie says, 'Anyone like to make a contribution to the floor?' he says, 'Aye, me'... It was like the Red Sea dividing... He marches down and it's like John Wayne. He doesn't run down to the front, he slowly saunters through the crowd, there is a buzz, 'oh it's the horse, it's the horse'. He climbs up the two flights of ladders to get to the microphone and he walks forward and he shouts, 'The three-shift system is only good for policemen and pussycats'. Immediately there's a roar went up and Jimmy Airlie stepped to the mic and he said... 'I'm now going to move to the vote, all those in favour of adopting the three-shift system?' Fucking nobody put their hand up.<sup>129</sup>

Drawing on both biblical reference – the Red Sea dividing – and a heroic (though notably conservative) masculine figure of the time – John Wayne – Thomas underlines his depiction of workplace democracy with a message of strength and righteousness. Participation in workplace meetings of this nature clearly shaped workers' political consciousness, and provided a sense of camaraderie in action.

When asked whether the steelworks was a political environment, Brian Cunningham confidently answered 'of course it was'.<sup>130</sup> Brian attributed the development of his socialist politics to his time in the steelworks, where militancy and radical viewpoints were a common occurrence:

I've always been politically motivated... 90 percent of my mates couldn't care less, you talk politics, 'oh he's on politics again, there he's

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

away again'. That was the steelworks, I grew up in that environment, I grew up with guys who were communist, not socialist, these guys were fecking communist, went to Russia for their holidays, that's without a word of a lie.<sup>131</sup>

The presence of radical viewpoints alone does not necessarily translate into effective action. The political culture of the workplace had a specific purpose, and was utilised by union activists, who, in their capacity as workplace leaders, organised a sense of discipline and structure among workers to champion better conditions. This was described by Stewart MacPherson:

They keep them in line, to be quite honest with you... I worked with that big union man and he could whip up a room... It could be all laughing and carrying on, and then he could come in and he could say something, and then so-and-so would say something and then so-and-so would say something, before you know it – it was off. You could feel the atmosphere. It turned from being nice and calm to volatile.<sup>132</sup>

Stewart's comment – 'keep them in line' – illuminates trade unions' role in fostering discipline among membership. Militant union reps did not simply mirror the general sensibilities of the shop floor, but worked to actively shape attitudes, by promoting wider trade union ideals of solidarity. Towards the end of his time in Clydesdale in the late 1980s, Harry Carlin recalled changing demographics within the steelworks, with an influx of Pakistani steelworkers. Harry used his position as a union rep to crack down on instances of racism towards his new colleagues, noting:

You had to educate the men, 'you canny say that to them', you know, 'that black', and I didn't like that – I went down on that right away... you had to tell them, 'that's offensive language to them, don't do that'.<sup>133</sup>

Trade union membership was often a gateway to wider activism, with members encouraged toward greater participation in civil society. Alex McGowan explained the exponential nature of his commitments:

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>133</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

At that time I was in everything bar the Women's Guild I think. I was a shop steward, I was a delegate to the AEU district. I was a branch chairman of our particular union branch, I was a member of the Labour Party, I was in the constituency Labour Party, the district Labour Party, I was in the group that vetted prospective councillors and things like that. I was also in the social committee for the work, I was a member of the Coltness Community Council, the gala day committee for Coltness... One thing kind of led you on to another type thing.<sup>134</sup>

Similarly, Joe O'Rourke recalled the sometimes blurred lines of union and Labour Party membership:

You were a member of the Labour Party by being a member of a trade union... unless you chose to withdraw from it... which I don't remember anybody ever doing... Trade union officials would all go to the Labour Party conference. I've been to a few Labour Party conferences. National conferences, and trade union conferences.<sup>135</sup>

Frank Roy, who was to become a Labour MP, traced his politicisation to the 1980 Steel Strike – 'I think it all goes back to the steel strike' – where he experienced police brutality on pickets and the anti-union dogma of Thatcherite Britain first-hand:

Three months without any money with a pregnant wife wasn't easy, so that was my politicisation if you like. I was arrested during the steel strike... the police said to me 'it's your turn today'; and I knew it was my turn... It was a politicisation... I thought this is not right, and then you just became a trade unionist.<sup>136</sup>

The presence of a powerful closed-shop union, ensuring a continuous level of activism, created a certain background political culture within the workplace. Workers not directly involved in union activism were nonetheless still socialised by this ambient political culture, with ideals of social democracy filtering down to the shop floor. Brian Cunningham explained this process:

You are part of a trade union, I mean by nature trade unions are political animals, they have to be political animals, because you have to try and canvas support... for you to survive and for you to prosper you need to be a political organisation. So that always filtered down...

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<sup>134</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>135</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Frank Roy by James Ferns, 01/02/2017

there was always something on the go, you know management want to do this, there is a union meeting about this, there's a union meeting about that, and a lot of guys did take an interest, more so in the steelworks.<sup>137</sup>

Political discussion was commonplace, with Stewart MacPherson noting that within steelmaking 'we were pretty militant at the time... we were predominantly socialists... the older guys were really clued up on it'. In particular, Stewart remembered that he 'learned a lot' from working alongside an ISTC branch secretary at the start of his career.<sup>138</sup> The idea of the workplace as a site of political education, administered primarily by older workers, was echoed by other heavy industry workers. Like these other workers, Stewart felt that the lessons learned on the shop floor equipped him with a comprehensive worldview: 'It was an education in life more than anything else'.<sup>139</sup>

### **Bonds of Solidarity**

In their recollections, the value which workers placed on heavy industry unions was not based solely on their obvious strength, but more rather on the broad culture of solidarity which they cultivated within the workplace. This culture of solidarity was described by workers as an intense feeling of camaraderie, with workers sharing strong emotional bonds and a prevailing sense of togetherness. Dudley finds that 'bonds of solidarity' are particularly common within factories, as this environment encourages workers to 'band together to express their collective opposition'.<sup>140</sup> Dudley's interviews with former autoworkers demonstrated the deep emotional significance of their bond with the union; members of Local 72, once one of the largest and most powerful branches, was remembered warmly: 'these are the glory days autoworkers recall when hats are doffed and eyes grow misty at the local bars.

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<sup>137</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>138</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Dudley, *The End of the Line*, p.115

There was a feeling of being at the centre of the action, nationally and internationally'.<sup>141</sup>

The power of unions and the labour movement created a sense of empowerment among working-class people in general, demonstrating that through unity they have an ability to defend themselves and enforce their interests. This is demonstrated in interviews with miners in *Still the Enemy Within*; Joe Henry, formerly of South Kirby Colliery, highlighted this sentiment when discussing the role of the National Union of Mineworkers in toppling the Heath Government: 'It shows you that working class people, when they are organised, when they show solidarity, they can come together and they can defeat the might of the government, and the state that supports them'.<sup>142</sup> Solidarity was not an abstract political construct for workers, but rather a deep emotional connection with political overtones. Miner Paul Symonds outlined the tangibility of solidarity, stating, 'the whole idea of solidarity and sticking together, you know, really, was something tangible, it really meant something to us. It wasn't just a slogan, sticking together just became a habit'.<sup>143</sup> The funeral of David Jones, a miner who lost his life during a picket in the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, was a moment which deeply illustrated the real significance behind workers' bonds of solidarity for Paul Symonds:

When we talk about unions... it's all pretty abstract. But when you turn up at your mate's funeral and there is thousands upon thousands of trade unionists there with the banners. Dignified. Sombre. Determined. That's what the union is – that's the union, that's what solidarity is.<sup>144</sup>

The wider culture of solidarity within heavy industry and the fond sense of camaraderie which workers recalled was not born from nothing, but was rather directly linked to the form of labour within heavy industry and the presence and operation of powerful unions. The shared experience of union membership within a

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p.xviii

<sup>142</sup> *Still the Enemy Within* (2014) Directed by O. Gower (Sinead Kirwan, Mark Lacey, Angelique Talio)

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

closed shop was a key material foundation to workers' culture of solidarity. Brian Cunningham summarised this relationship aptly, stating: 'in the steelworks you had that bond with the union, that camaraderie, that standing up for yourselves'.<sup>145</sup> Con O'Brien, a laboratory worker within Hallside Steelworks, believed that the protection unions afforded workers fostered a sense of 'comradeship':

I think you definitely need a trade union to look after the employees, definitely need representation. There's too many people get stood on, they don't know their rights and things like that... It was good because it kept everybody together.<sup>146</sup>

The idea of 'looking out for one another', of ready and robust social support, was widespread, as Stewart MacPherson described: 'They were like brothers-in-arms. I would imagine, I've never served in the armed forces, but I'd imagine it'd be to the same degree, you had everybody's back'.<sup>147</sup> This is not to suggest that disagreements between workers were uncommon, more that there existed a sense of togetherness which could be counted on when required. Facilitated through regular meetings, it was normal for union members to critically engage with their representatives. The workers Harry Carlin represented had no inhibition towards expressing their views:

It didn't matter what you do or anything like that, 'you're an arsehole, you didn't do enough', 'aye you're hopeless'. But when it came to the nitty gritty for support the men were 100% behind you. But you got your criticism I'm telling you.<sup>148</sup>

The directness of the workforce, their readiness to critique their representatives, as Harry described, did not diminish their ability, when required, for unity in action. Bruno states that 'the experience of fighting to hold on to hard-earned symbols of success and prosperity increased worker cohesion... This was the basis for the us-and-them mentality'.<sup>149</sup> This sense of bonding through shared adversity was exemplified in James Coyle's description of the 1980 Steel Strike:

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<sup>145</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Con O'Brien by James Ferns, 03/04/2019

<sup>147</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>148</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>149</sup> Bruno, *Steelworker Alley*, p.97



It was rough. Penniless, any money we had was spent, bankbook was empty, hadn't a penny coming in. You are living on handouts... But in saying that, again, it is something you look back on as a tremendous experience. Again, in adversity you got a lot of laughs. You had the strike rooms, there used to be a competition... you went round to Brennan's strike rooms to see them and you would get a cup of tea, pieces and spam, plink lint – we used to make curries haha! With cheap sausages and green peppers, it was great!<sup>150</sup>

The hostility of labour relations within shipbuilding, the need to constantly protect and advance working conditions, created a sense of shared struggle, which was itself foundational for the wider sense of yard camaraderie. For many, the primary motivation to become a shop steward was not political but rather a protective instinct towards fellow workers. Robert Buirds noted, 'there was a culture of looking after you... I just didn't like people getting taken advantage of, and I didn't like bullies'.<sup>151</sup> Within heavy industry the shop steward is often portrayed, not without reason, as a politicized leader, a militant prepared to fight for workers' demands. However, there also existed a softer, more nurturing aspect to shop stewards, which is often lost in exciting narratives of labour resistance. Emotional stewardship was an important aspect of shop stewards' day-to-day activity, frequently acting as workers' first port of call for a wide range of interpersonal issues, many of which were not directly related to the workplace. Union representatives acted like mediators, resolving disputes among workers, like advisors, providing guidance on issues such as housing or welfare rights, and like counsellors, empathising with workers' emotional anxieties related to anything from the threat of workplace closure to marital strife. Harry Carlin likened his role as a steelworks union representative to that of a social worker:

They treated you as a social worker, you know. If there were any marital problems they would come to you because they knew you were a good listener, you know, it was normal for them to say, 'Harry can I see you for a minute'. Sometimes, you're thinking it's going to be a union problem, and it's maybe something that's happening with the house or something like that, to help them out. You got on well with

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<sup>150</sup> James Coyle Interview (Ferns)

<sup>151</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

your workmates, they trusted you, and they knew they could come and see you at anytime.<sup>152</sup>

Harry accepted as natural the fact that his role as a shop steward often spilled beyond the remit of traditional union issues, taking seriously the trust and confidence workers placed in his ability to provide council. The emotional support side of union activism (discussed further in chapter 4), while wholly unofficial, was nonetheless crucial to the bonds of solidarity within heavy industry.

## Trade Unions Post-Redundancy

The Thatcher government assaulted British trade unions, waging war upon them both ideologically – portraying them as undemocratic dinosaurs wrecking the national economy – as well as legislatively – through a series of increasingly prohibitive acts. The Employment Acts (1980, 1982, 1988, 1989, 1990), the Trade Union Act (1984) and the Wages Act (1986) restricted lawful picketing, abolished closed shops, interfered with union democracy, limited access to industrial tribunals, cut facilities time for union representatives, made it easier to dismiss employees, and compelled unions to disavow any unofficial action by members, effectively dismantling trade union grassroots leadership.<sup>153</sup>

The expansion in trade union membership had reached its peak by 1979, thereafter experiencing rapid terminal decline.<sup>154</sup> The collapse in membership was especially dramatic within the first ten years of the Thatcher government, with the TUC reporting a decline in membership from approximately 12.2 million in 1979 to 8.6 million in 1989.<sup>155</sup> Membership figures somewhat stabilised but nonetheless continued to decline beyond the Thatcher years, reaching 6.3 million in 2010, which at 26 percent of the total labour force was the lowest level of unionisation since the

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<sup>152</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>153</sup> K. Laybourn, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992) pp.203-208

<sup>154</sup> C. Wrigley, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

<sup>155</sup> Laybourn, *A History of British Trade Unionism*

1930s.<sup>156</sup> Within Scotland, STUC membership fell dramatically between 1980 and 2000, from 1.1 million to 635,000.<sup>157</sup> The traditional demographics and membership patterns of trade unionism shifted as the twentieth century closed. Manual occupations were less likely to be unionised than professional occupations, with the density of union membership in manufacturing falling to below 20 percent by 2010.<sup>158</sup> In the context of the Thatcherite assault, with trade unions haemorrhaging members and potentially facing annihilation, the confidence of the labour movement was shaken, reflected in the declining frequency of strike action. McIvor states that 'a confident and confrontationist trade union movement gave way to a weaker, more cooperative and quiescent one', highlighting that by the 1990s strike activity had fallen to its lowest level in recorded history, and that in the 2000s strikes within the private sector were a 'relatively rare occurrence'.<sup>159</sup> The destruction of trade union militancy and relevancy was a central component of the neoliberal project, in which class-based identities and solidarities were eroded in general, being substituted with individualism on one hand and a rising sense of alienation on the other.

Expelled from heavy industry by closure and redundancy, workers experienced a profound culture shock as they left a workplace defined by powerful trade unions and a collective ethos, entering instead employment overshadowed by Thatcherite anti-trade union legislation. Moving into typically non-unionised workplaces, the post-redundancy employment of displaced heavy industry workers was accompanied by a breakdown in mutually respectful labour relations and workers' bonds of solidarity. Where unions did maintain a presence, they were generally weaker, with management able to ignore union demands.

### **Authoritarian Management and Weaker Unions**

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<sup>156</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.233

<sup>157</sup> A. McIvor, 'Trade Unions in Scottish Society', in J. Beech (ed.) *Scottish life and society: a compendium of Scottish ethnology: the individual and community life* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2008) pp.443-457

<sup>158</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, pp.233-234

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* pp.233-234, p.235

The protection ensured by unions, or more correctly the means to protect oneself through collective action, contributed to a sense of dignity at work. Workers felt that they could not be demeaned or belittled easily, that any abuse by management would provoke their union into action. Part of the 'culture shock' which workers described in their transition from the unionised environment of heavy industry was a diminished sense of workplace dignity. Narrating feelings of powerlessness, workers struggled with the fact that they now had little recourse but to submit to potentially abusive management.

Fundamental to the disruption caused by deindustrialisation was the cessation of unionised employment. According to Walley, deindustrialisation in Chicago saw a shift towards non-unionised and precarious work, a drop in wages, and the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs to casual workers.<sup>160</sup> Following their departure from the auto industry, around half the workers surveyed by Milkman were in non-unionised workplaces; there, lower earnings were typical, roughly a quarter lacked health insurance, and about half lacked pension benefits.<sup>161</sup> For the skilled women clothing workers employed in Roger Firth, deindustrialisation marked a dramatic change in employment conditions, moving from a unionised workplace with relatively good pay and job security into precarious, non-unionised and low paid work following closure.<sup>162</sup> Despite their best efforts, heavy industry workers struggled to attain unionised employment following closure, with many entering almost wholly non-unionised workplaces. Derek Cairns' first job following steelmaking was in a non-union ironworks, Cooper Cameron, of which he stated, 'it was an American company, and there was no union recognition which was a change from what I was used to'.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, when Alex Torrance secured employment in British Bakeries he noted that the biggest difference from steelmaking was that unions 'were virtually non-existent'.<sup>164</sup> Lifelong trade unionist Alex Wright admitted that in his current

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<sup>160</sup> C. J. Walley, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) p.157

<sup>161</sup> Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory*, p.128

<sup>162</sup> A. Coyle, *Redundant Women* (London: Women's Press, 1984) p.64

<sup>163</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>164</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

employment as a Capita mortgage advisor unions were essentially ‘non-existent’, that ‘there are only one or two of my colleagues in there that actually pay a union membership’.<sup>165</sup> Finding employment within Glacier Vandervell, Gordon Hatton discovered that in place of a union the company, ‘were trying to be all fancy and American and had a works committee’.<sup>166</sup> Typically lacking the independence of a union, works committees are often little more than management appendages, as in Gordon’s experience: ‘they were just yes men that sat and the guy would tell them what to do, and that was it. They would come back and tell us, “He’s told us”’.<sup>167</sup> Using the same terminology as other workers, Gordon described this non-unionised environment as a ‘culture shock’, with the lack of a union allowing the rise of a particularly ‘ruthless’ and unrestrained management:

They were murder. They were hellish. They used to sack folk willy-nilly. We used to have a joke about it, ‘the Friday tap on the shoulder’. Friday was always the day that somebody would get the ‘right on you go’... They were ruthless... If they didn’t like the look of somebody, they just sacked them. That was a bit of a culture shock.<sup>168</sup>

The mutually respectful labour relations remembered in steelmaking were alien within this new work culture, or as Gordon recalled, ‘they treated the staff like shit’.<sup>169</sup>

Witt notes in *When the Pit Closes* that, ‘the contrast between working in a situation where the workforce, with the union, are influential, to the situation where workers are divided and unorganised is remarkable and can be difficult to cope with’.<sup>170</sup> One of Witt’s miners found he had little voice outside of unionised mining, where his protest over unfair treatment simply resulted in punishment: ‘My boss had reduced my wages because I refused to work on Saturday. I’m the only tradesmen

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<sup>165</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)

<sup>166</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> S. Witt, *When the Pit Closes - the Employment Experiences of Redundant Miners* (Barnsley: Coalfield Communities Campaign, 1990) p.35

who is underpaid'.<sup>171</sup> Jim Reddiex had described Ravenscraig's managers as 'enlightened' because of their fairness; those who entered employment where workers lacked collective strength discovered that management lost any sense of enlightenment as soon as the necessity for conciliatory labour relations disappeared. Outside of unionised shipbuilding, Thomas Brotherston experienced first-hand management's lack of incentive to treat workers respectfully, noting of the time he spent in plant hire:

You can imagine that going from a big organized place, where a gaffer looked at you at his peril, where a gaffer had to treat you with respect... where you have got organized strength, people say 'fucking treat us with respect', and you go to another place where there's none of that.<sup>172</sup>

James Carlin was astonished to discover that Wisemans Dairy actively suppressed trade union organising by threat of outright dismissal, reflecting, 'if you became unionised you were out the door'.<sup>173</sup> As James started his new job he was shocked when he 'heard stories' that Wisemans had recently fired a worker for attempting to unionise the shop floor, stating, 'I was only a young laddie, I was never aware that places were non-unionised, I thought that everywhere had a trade union, so it was quite a shock to me'.<sup>174</sup> Brian Cunningham found himself alone as the only union member when he first became a car mechanic, which he attributed to management's hard anti-union stance: 'If you joined a union you were sacked, you were out the door. They were quite open about that'.<sup>175</sup>

The absence of union organisation fundamentally altered shop-floor power dynamics. Con O'Brien expressed how he 'missed the conditions' and the feeling of security which unionised work had provided, stating that non-union workplaces were more easily controlled and exploited by management through 'a divide and conquer

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>173</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

type of principle'.<sup>176</sup> Paul Molloy, who took a job in a call centre and quickly rose to a managerial position, recalled how the absence of unions allowed for a disposable workforce:

It was just you as the manager speaking with the owners... If people were really poor, that was it. It was like, 'Okay, they're gone, you need to tell them that they're out of a job'. You'd be like, 'Come on, just give them a chance'. 'No, it's not working, they need to go'.<sup>177</sup>

The lack of a union allows for the development of unrestrained management, and through this, the normalisation of authoritarian labour relations. Speaking of his boss within Glacier Vandervell, Gordon Hatton stated, 'I think the guy [was] a psychopath'.<sup>178</sup> The respect workers had enjoyed in heavy industry was gone, and in its place was now a necessity for obedience, as James Carlin summarised, 'we never had any power, we never had any voice'. For James, the transition from a completely unionised workplace into one lacking any form of unionisation was 'very difficult, very, very difficult'. The absence of a union left no option but to obey management, James recalled that in Wisemans, 'There was no compromise, there was no argument... "if you don't want to do it get your jacket on and you can go home" – that was pretty much how it was'.<sup>179</sup> James described the unchecked power of Wiseman's management as 'almost dictatorial':

It was completely foreign to me to go into a work environment where the manager was there, looking over you to see what you were doing: 'come on do this faster', 'you need to be quicker', you know that whole aspect of it – \*clap\* \*clap\* \*clap\* – 'come on, get that done, and I'll be back in half an hour and if you've no got that done I'll be wanting to know why you've not got it done'.<sup>180</sup>

James contrasted this with Ravenscraig managers who afforded workers a degree of 'professionalism', rather than oppressive supervision.

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<sup>176</sup> Con O'Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>177</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>178</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>179</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>180</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

Towards the end of Stewart MacPherson's time as a Securicor driver the company was taken over, after which a number of unpopular changes to conditions were implemented. Drivers were no longer allowed to use their work vans for personal use, and rather than regular shifts, workers would be informed of their hours the night before. Chaffing under this new regime, Stewart stated that 'the way they were treating people was just deplorable'.<sup>181</sup> This last-minute notice instilled a sense of disposability in Stewart, undermining his self-worth, which he could not tolerate:

They couldn't even guarantee us that we'd be working... I wouldn't find out my shift pattern until eight o'clock the night before... on the third week... a text came in, it was like, 'four fifteen start tomorrow'. I looked at the clock, and says, 'It's five past eight, and they want me to start at quarter past four in the morning?'... I text him back, I say, 'Sorry, not available. Sick'. He texts me back, he says, 'Sorry, we'll have to discipline you. You weren't sick before I sent you the text of your start time'. I text him back. I says, 'You know what you can do with your job?' And that was the polite version of it... I went over to the place and handed my keys in, my IDs, and that was it. Chucked it... It was like, 'No, I'm not going to be messed about like that'.<sup>182</sup>

Stewart was unwilling to compromise his sense of self-worth for a job, choosing semi-retirement instead. Of this incident, it was his manager's readiness to threaten to 'discipline you' that Stewart particularly struggled with, noting, 'that was the one and only time I was ever threatened with disciplinary action in my 40 odd years from leaving school and working in various employments'.<sup>183</sup> Stewart's feeling of disrespect was entangled with a sense of emasculation over the fact his manager, younger than him, nonetheless felt free to adopt a paternalistic tone in threatening to 'discipline' him: 'I'm not waiting for a wee daft boy to tell me I'm starting at quarter past four in the morning at eight o'clock the night before'.<sup>184</sup> Stewart compared his

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<sup>181</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*



powerlessness in this situation to steelmaking, where he would have felt emboldened to challenge a manager:

It was like a wee guy. It was a text message, it wasn't even a phone call... Two of my mates when I worked with Securicor... one of them was an ex-steelworker like myself, and I says, 'See if he had spoke to me like that when I was in the steelworks? Know where he'd have been? He'd have been in the first ladle that came down that shop'... If that guy wants respect off of me, he'll get the respect off of me if he respects me.<sup>185</sup>

The self-respect which had been cultivated in heavy industry workers through their union membership clashed with the expectations of their new workplaces; a readiness to tell management 'no' when asked to perform a demeaning task was not a sought after quality. In Lees' *Steelmens* the character Ricky finds the 'corporate' culture outside of steelmaking alien, struggling to hold down jobs:

Ricky couldn't stick to anything. He got the sack from Motorola over his timekeeping... he had blown up about it when his supervisor had challenged him on it. His timekeeping had never been a problem before... He just couldn't motivate himself to go to that fuckin place. He hated its sterile environment and the whole American corporate business ethic it had espoused.<sup>186</sup>

Similarly, in K'Meyer and Hart's *I Saw It Coming*, Danny Mann, formerly of the heavily unionised Johnston Controls, struggled to conform to the perfunctory camaraderie and subservience that his new workmates afforded management:

It was non-union and the foremen, everybody bowed and stooped. Well, I don't bow and top to anybody. I do my job. I don't kiss butt, I do my job. Whatever you tell me to do, unless it's going to endanger my life, I don't care, I'll do it. But I'm not coming over and washing your car after work. I'm not going to play buddy-buddy to a guy because he's the boss and make him think I like him if I don't. I'm straight up and straight forward and so wasn't going to get anywhere.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> J. Lees, *Steelmens* (James Lees, 2020) np.

<sup>187</sup> T. E. K'Meyer and J. L. Hart, *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p.117

A heavily unionised environment was not necessarily 'more real' to Danny, but rather, the freedom which union protection provided meant that workers did not feel compelled to take on false behaviour to seek management approval. Following his departure from steelmaking, management's abusive language and general lack of respect was the 'biggest culture shock' for Brian Cunningham:

That bosses can speak to you like that: 'you can get yourself to fuck, get your tools and fuck off'... That would never have happened in the steel industry, that manager would have been sacked... there was a mutual respect between the workforce and the unions and the management.<sup>188</sup>

Workers' treatment by management corresponds to their respective power in relation to management, and Brian was certainly aware that steelmaking's 'mutual respect' was not underpinned by benevolence, but rather necessity – as a means of avoiding potential disruption should the workforce be provoked. Authoritarian management and exploitative conditions prevailed in the absence of a powerful union and R. Sloan, a former Clydesdale steelworker, baulked at the submissiveness now required of workers:

I went for an interview, it's a big new place in Bellshill... it's a young guns game in there, 'if you don't do it you are sacked' – if anybody said that to you up in the Clydesdale you just stuck one on them... Nobody spoke to those men in the Clydesdale like that. They wouldn't take those jobs down there for buttons.<sup>189</sup>

Former heavy industry workers had to adapt to this new regime, to swallow their pride if they hoped to stay in employment.

Deindustrialised workers did not often have the privilege to be selective when it came to employment beyond heavy industry, and so had little choice but to conform to the culture within non-union workplaces. Outside of union protection workers had to look after themselves, as Brian Cunningham commented: 'when you

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<sup>188</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>189</sup> R. Sloan Interview, Clydesdale Steelworker (1991), Interviews with Former Steelworkers, Summerlee Museum of Industrial Life Archive

are in a trade union organisation you have got this protection, when you step out of that pal, you are on your own'.<sup>190</sup> When asked about the presence of unions in his new employment, Con O'Brien, speaking with a clear sense of loss stated, 'no, no there wasn't, that was a big problem, I just felt that was – I just got my head down and got on with it'.<sup>191</sup> This sense of 'keeping your head down and getting on with it' – in part a surrender to forces outside of their control, in part a survival strategy – was echoed by other deindustrialised workers. During his time as a safety officer for district councils, Alex McGowan gained insight into how arbitrary and blatantly discriminatory interview panels could be, noting:

Working with them opened my eyes as well. I used to naively think that if you applied for a job, everybody looked at your application form... But one of the guys, he would look at it and he would say, 'Oh, he's in the Scouts, aw he's a poof'. Somebody else, 'He went to St. Patrick's school, he's a Catholic we're not letting him in'. You are saying to yourself, 'Is that really what goes on?' And it was.<sup>192</sup>

This experience, taking place in the context of Thatcherism and the general rout of the trade union movement, forced Alex to reconsider his union membership, fearing discrimination he reflected, 'at that time where it was Thatcher that was in. Trade unions were dirty words'.<sup>193</sup> Alex resolved to 'just keep my head under the bar', and left his union, stating, 'I let it drop'.<sup>194</sup> Leaving the yards, James Cloughley took an engineering position based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the American multinational company, Eastern Bechtel. Employment in the UAE took place within a climate of political repression, and so, like other workers who 'got their head down', James buried his political convictions and union activism, noting:

No that was gone, no. That was away. You forgot about that. As a matter of fact, you had to hide it. If you said anything about being a

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<sup>190</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>191</sup> Con O'Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>192</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

Communist and that and they would have chopped your hands off. I had to tell them that I was a left-wing Labour Party member.<sup>195</sup>

Describing the childcare sector as ‘a scabrous industry’ for its ‘non-existent’ unions and the working conditions this cultivated, Thomas Brotherston reflected, ‘one of the regrets of my life, [was] that I didn’t actually take on board the role of organizing childcare workers’.<sup>196</sup> No longer a young man, lacking the protection of a union and employed in a time of economic uncertainty, Thomas felt pressured to repress his political convictions, to keep his ‘head down’ just like Con O’Brien:

I placed my cards fairly and squarely on the table; at the age of 50, I thought, ‘If I get the pump out of this, I’m not working anywhere’. I’ll be absolutely honest with you, I was scared... I bit my tongue, got my head down, and just placed all my energies and all my enthusiasm into the kids... I determined that if the best that I could do was to give them some happy memories of their childhood, that’s what I would do.<sup>197</sup>

The 1971 UCS Work-In, which turned the tide of government and shipyard management collusion over yard closure, had been a demonstration of working-class power. The exhilaration and sense of solidarity born from such acts of union resistance left workers with a great feeling of empowerment, one which was slow to dissipate. Yet as heavy industry workers left behind their unionised environments, this empowerment jarred starkly with the new order of employer-employee power relations. The upheaval which the loss of unionised employment brought onto displaced workers was a cruel, and humbling experience. Thomas Brotherston’s involvement in the UCS Work-In was life changing, it was the ‘strongest I ever felt in my life’ but was also ‘the last time that I felt like a man’.<sup>198</sup> Outside of shipbuilding, Thomas was compelled to accept employment which lacked robust union protection, provoking in him a sense of powerlessness which tarnished the memory of collective strength he had derived from his past activism: ‘It changes your life. I had that

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<sup>195</sup> James Cloughley Interview (Ferns)

<sup>196</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

experience, then you go from that to feeling like a slave, virtually. You're just powerless. It's horrible, absolutely horrible'.<sup>199</sup>

Former managers also commented on the changed landscape of labour relations outside of heavy industry. Comparing his new managerial position in Det Norske Veritas to shipbuilding, Alastair Hart noted an absence of unionisation: 'We didn't have any. We had an employer-employee organization... it was a toothless tiger you could say... wasn't really any unionisation... not compared to the yards'.<sup>200</sup> Compared to workers, some former managers saw the changed context of labour relations in a different light. Alex Straiton, 'talking from a staff foreman point of view', noted that before he left shipbuilding in the early 80s the 'unions were probably too strong', and that trades demarcation 'was getting to a ridiculous stage'.<sup>201</sup> In contrast, Alex's later employment as an electrician and then charge-hand in Halliday Electrical Contractors was free from demarcation disputes: 'you just got on with it, whatever you came across, even if it had to be a bit of joiner work... you just done that yourself, that was all part of what was expected of you, you didn't have demarcation'.<sup>202</sup> Nicholas Howe had disliked the level of unionisation in shipbuilding, feeling that it had constrained management, and so was pleased that his new employment in the oil and gas industry lacked significant unionisation. Rather than the 'culture shock' expressed by workers, Nicholas was instead pleasantly surprised as he 'went from being [in] a very strict union-controlled environment... at British Shipbuilders to none in Aberdeen'.<sup>203</sup> In this industry, Nicholas enjoyed that management were unambiguously in charge, noting, 'moving into the oil and gas business, [snaps fingers] like that. You could see that management were a lot more attuned, to what to them seemed Dark Age type management techniques'.<sup>204</sup> In a non-unionised workplace some managers felt untethered from the restraints of collective bargaining, and enjoyed one-on-one negotiating, not least because it gave them a

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Alastair Hart Interview (Ferns)

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Alex Straiton by James Ferns, 02/08/2019

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Nicholas Howe Interview (Ferns)

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

significant advantage. Subscribing to an individualist mind-set, Nicholas Howe preferred to negotiate for himself when required, stating ‘I knew exactly who to go talk to and sit down and say, “Hey, I think I’m underpaid”. Which is exactly how it worked. It was literally straightforward’.<sup>205</sup> In his capacity as a manager, Nicholas also appreciated this directness when dealing with subordinates over wages, feeling that it was ‘straightforward, man to man, or man to woman, sit down, look each other in the eyeball, talk about it’.<sup>206</sup> This line of thinking makes the mistake of assuming equality between both negotiating parties, when in reality the structural power imbalance between individual worker and individual manager is vast indeed. Not all workers have the confidence or means to negotiate on their own behalf, let alone the willingness to risk their position should a manager feel that their asking for better pay constitutes insubordination. However, this was of no consequence to Nicholas, as his managerial position ensured that he had the advantage when negotiating with isolated individuals rather than entire workplaces.

### **Small-scale and Owner-run Enterprises**

In tandem with the transition from unionised to non-unionised employment was often a move away from a large-scale workplace – with potentially thousands of workers – into a small-scale, more individualised workplace. The move away from large-scale heavy industry meant becoming acclimatised to the norms and work cultures of small, sometimes owner-ran enterprises. Typically, these workplaces were described as less organised than heavy industry, non-unionised, more ad hoc than well-structured, and particularly vulnerable to management eccentricities. After his redundancy, Danny Houston tried one job after another in small engineering workplaces, but struggled to stay long-term given their conditions. In particular, Danny noted that the absence of a union in these smaller firms lent itself to a lack of respect towards the workforce:

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<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

You get treated like shit. Like it or lump it. Didn't have unions... I went to a certain job, 'Have you got overalls and boots? Get them yourself'. 'I've not got any'. 'Tough, well, you're not getting a friggin job'. Like it or lump it... There was no respect. Even certain places – 'we are working a Friday at eight o'clock tonight', 'no I don't want to work I've got something on', 'Fuck you', it was as simple as that.<sup>207</sup>

This sense of disposability which management placed on workers often translated to a total disregard for health and safety precautions in smaller workplaces, as Danny highlighted:

I worked at a place up in Lanarkshire, it was horrendous, absolutely horrendous. I lasted three days. See the third day, a guy came in, had his hand all wired up, it was mangled. He'd had an accident. 'Are you the plater that's took over from me?'. I says, 'Looks like it'. He said, 'See that crane there? When you press up it goes down. When you press down it goes up'. I went, 'I gather that you pressed it up and it went down'. He went, 'How do you know?' Then looked at his hand. And I was like, 'Frig this. I'm not working this'. Terrible job.<sup>208</sup>

Danny contrasted this sense of chaos with the unionised and ordered atmosphere of large-scale heavy industry:

Bigger places, great. John Brown Engineering, unionized. Houndings Engineering, unionized, you got treated well, and being in a union, it kind of helped. They're not as strong as they used to be but I still think, my personal opinion, I would rather work with the unions than not have them.<sup>209</sup>

Similarly, James Blair took a job with a small-scale engineering company managed and ran by the owner. The lack of organisation and professionalism of this small owner-ran workplace contrasted poorly with the organisation of heavy industry. James recalled his manager's ineptitude:

He hadn't any specific job. It was just taking anything and everything. He had no tools, no equipment, and he was just borrowing this, borrowing that, and borrowing the next thing... we had nothing. I stuck it six weeks. I just couldn't take it any longer because we had no tools,

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<sup>207</sup> Interview with Danny Houston by James Ferns, 06/08/2019

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

any of us... plus the fact after four weeks, he stopped paying me. And I thought to myself: 'No. It's time. Time to go'.<sup>210</sup>

In another ad-hoc engineering job James had a similar experience, although his new manager leant more towards erratic anger than incompetence:

This guy... he was an absolute nutcase, I kid you not. There wasn't a day passed, he flipped. One of the days, I was getting ready for work one morning... he came up the stairs, 'You, you're f'ing sacked, away you go home'... the following day, I went into the golf club... 'Hi, how's it going, big man? Are you all right?' as if nothing had happened... An absolute nutter.<sup>211</sup>

The absence of union representation in the context of these small-scale workplaces allowed management to hold an even tighter grip over the workforce. While Joe O'Rourke's blacklisting for union activism meant he was not able to gain employment in most shipyards, he was able to secure a job in 'a wee yacht yard'.<sup>212</sup> Lacking union protection, this small owner-ran yard was subject to the whims of a controlling manager. Unable to tolerate the hostile conditions this produced, Joe resigned his position in no uncertain terms: 'it was a fucking sweathouse this place was, this wee guy would have killed you, this wee guy was the manager. He was a fucking tyrant... Eventually, I said, "You know what you can do? Fucking stick it"'.<sup>213</sup> Peter Hamill's employment history – from steelmaking to small-scale light industry back to steelmaking again – perfectly illuminates the stark differences in conditions and trade union power between large and small workplaces:

When you worked for big firms, the union is strong, but see when you go into those wee firms... there was one man that was in charge of things and he owned the place and he decided what you were doing, you had to fight with him all the time... they treated people like dirt.<sup>214</sup>

After twenty-five years in steelmaking Peter worked in a number of smaller workplaces for roughly sixteen years. These jobs were typically low paid and

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<sup>210</sup> Interview with James Blair by James Ferns, 19/02/2019

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Peter Hamill Interview (Ferns)



exploitative, with weak unions lending themselves to authoritarian supervision, usually administered by the owner. In one such company the owner taunted workers: 'I just bought a big machine, it will make him redundant, it will make him redundant, it will make him redundant'.<sup>215</sup> Peter took it upon himself to unionise his co-workers, but struggled given their precarity. Unlike steelmaking these smaller enterprises were highly informal, often ignoring health and safety regulations entirely. Peter explained how this informality and small-scale nature jeopardised wages: 'we always thought, "will we get our wages or will we not get our wages", you know, and we went in one day and he says to us, "I've no money to pay you your wages"... the boy was a conman'.<sup>216</sup> Peter eventually returned to steelmaking, which immediately saw a return of union visibility, high pay, regularity, and respectful labour management.

### **Unionised New Employment**

While the general tendency following redundancy was employment with little to no union representation, a few workers were able to re-enter unionised work. In this new employment union membership may have been the norm, but the methods of organising, appetite for militancy and overall strength of the union were often found lacking when compared to heavy industry. In the latter end of his working life, John Christie was employed in the Student Loans Company, where he was also a union representative. The primary disadvantage of this employment was its target driven work model, which was administered by a metrics-obsessed management. John notes, 'I didn't really like them. I thought they were quite callous. They were a different breed all together'.<sup>217</sup> Much of his time as a union representative was spent defending colleagues who fell short of target:

I was at many meetings with management about the targets situation, which I thought were a disgrace. A lot of people can't meet these targets and they found it very difficult. At the end of the day, they lose

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> John Christie Interview (Ferns)

their job and they just got sacked... Many a time in with management trying to save people's job but no, they don't listen to you.<sup>218</sup>

John's comment, 'they don't listen to you', is indicative of both the weaker position of unions and the changed dynamic of post-industrial labour relations; where once heavy industry workers felt emboldened to compel a change of mind in management through activism, they are now often beholden to management goodwill. John commented on this power dynamic:

Unions in Student Loans weren't great. If management wanted to get rid of you they just got rid of you. It didn't matter what type of union person you had, you could have somebody who was really good, but if management were wanting rid of you they got rid of you.<sup>219</sup>

As heavy industry comprised much of the militancy and leadership of the labour movement, its destruction severely impacted the standing of trade unions. Stewart MacPherson linked the decline of union power to the loss of heavy industry: 'I would say the unions were dead by that time, because the heavy industry was all away, they didn't have the same clout'.<sup>220</sup> In Securicor, Stewart was able to join GMB, but felt that the changed context of labour relations rendered the union ineffective against management in most cases, noting 'they more or less let the management away with murder, and the workers suffered for it'.<sup>221</sup>

Even where unions maintained a presence, they were perceived as generally weak, with their concerns ignored by management. Tommy Johnston, who moved into janitorial work, commented: 'The union has absolutely no say... they are hopeless, they have no say whatsoever. If we go in with a complaint to management... they will just say "no, and what are you going to do about it?"'.<sup>222</sup> Despite being a union member, Tommy Johnston did not feel valued by his local authority employers, who treated him like 'a number'.<sup>223</sup> This lack of respect became painfully obvious to

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

Tommy after his manager's response to a period of sickness. At home following an operation, Tommy was rushed back to hospital after a major surgical complication became apparent: 'blood was pushing out of me, I was being sick, I couldn't get a breath, I'm rolling on the floor, couldn't shout on my wife'.<sup>224</sup> Rather than concern or support, Tommy's management was preoccupied by a bureaucratic impulse to account for and punish an absence from work:

You are a number... I mean I've been off work for five weeks, I've been ill... my first day of absence the manager phoned me, and I was just out of casualty... 'right, you will need to come to an absence meeting'... And I've had two letters since then, and I've had two phone calls... wanting me to go all the way up to Lanark... It's fucking ridiculous... then I got rushed in last week with the same thing, and again not, 'how are you, how are you getting on'; 'You will need to come to an absence meeting, you have been off more than eight days'.<sup>225</sup>

Tommy was frustrated by the lack of militancy in his new union, but understood that this also stemmed from the more precarious position of its members:

We should just say, 'well fuck you we will just go on strike'... but now everybody is too scared to because all the cutbacks with the council... everybody is scared for their jobs, so actually, I'm paying £11 a month union dues for nothing.<sup>226</sup>

Workers who gained employment in the public sector found that while there was a strong union presence, these new unions were generally inferior to heavy industry. James Coyle felt that 'unions years ago were more effective than they are just now', stating that while working rights may have legislatively improved, lacklustre unions have allowed employers to undermine progressive legislation in the absence of active enforcement: 'Legally you probably have more rights now... but it's up to the unions to make sure that that legislation is getting used to the benefit of the employee'.<sup>227</sup> As a Unison member in the care sector, James commented: 'the unions within the local authority left a lot to be desired... A lot of conditions were

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> James Coyle Interview (Ferns)

given up and given up very easily... you say to yourself: "I don't think that would have happened in the steel industry".<sup>228</sup> Committed to trade unionism, Jim McKeown joined the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS) when he became a teacher. For Jim, the EIS was clouded by a veneer of middle-class institutionalism, rendering it and its members unwilling to directly challenge management, which did not compare favourably to the security he felt as an ISTC member: 'I would not like to depend on them put it that way, if it was really serious you know, compared to ISTC'.<sup>229</sup> Jim considered the EIS to be less militant and generally weaker than the ISTC, stating that branch meetings focused on trivialities rather than 'real issues':

Its minor and petty compared to what we had in the Ravenscraig... I sit laughing sometimes at some of the things they are talking about, 'there is no soap in the toilets'... 'Paper towels weren't there last week', 'the light wasn't on in one area', and I laugh compared to what we had in [steelmaking] over real issues, union issues.<sup>230</sup>

In one sense Jim's comment could reflect a dismissiveness over issues of hygiene and safety, but it is important to remember that his point of reference for union issues was based in steelmaking, where branch discussions had often revolved around lethal health and safety matters.

Outside of heavy industry, workers found that their new unions lacked the same commitment to keeping members informed. James Coyle commented on a sense of disorganisation in the dissemination of information, and a lack of attention given to ensuring easy attendance of branch meetings:

Their system of passing information on... in the care industry... it would be a branch meeting of all the branches... in such and such a place, and it will be such and such a time at night. And that's not how we would work.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> James Coyle Interview (Ferns)

James compared this to steelmaking, where as an official he recalled how meetings would be held regularly to keep workers abreast of union matters, and that scheduling would suit shift patterns:

In the steel industry... we would have branch meetings every month, or if it required we would have a special branch meeting to discuss a particular problem or whatever... we would hold our branch meeting when everybody was available... on a Saturday morning where everybody had a chance to go.<sup>232</sup>

Communication between union representatives and workers was described as less straightforward and regular, and even when directly contacted, new reps were described as less responsive than in heavy industry. Tommy Johnston found it difficult to contact his representative: 'I can phone them on a Monday, and I guarantee he's not phoned me back for the Friday, he's not interested'.<sup>233</sup> For Tommy, these representatives were too removed from the concerns of workers, which he attributed to an overly 'friendly' closeness with management, adding: 'if the management say "jump" they will say "how high"'.<sup>234</sup>

Even in environments where there was the same appetite for union activism as there had been in heavy industry, such as the offshore oil industry, the context and structure of the workplace made organising very difficult. After his departure from shipbuilding, Robert Buirds entered the offshore oil industry as a pipefitter and took up the role of shop steward in the Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union, eventually becoming a full-time official responsible for whole of the North Sea. Robert reflected on how American management philosophy and British gusto for oil production suppressed union organising offshore:

Terrible industry because it had American anti-trade union influence right from day one. We pushed up against that quite badly. I got blacked umpteen times up on different platforms. Fortunately, I had friends in the industry who had positions and kept me working.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

Unlike shipbuilding, Robert described how offshore oil workers were subject to constant surveillance and control, lest they organise and demand greater health and safety measures, thereby harming profit margins or production quotas:

The attitude was, 'Bugger them, offshore, as long as they're producing the oil, bugger the men'... You are in a captured environment. Constantly monitored... no meetings were allowed. After seeing a gang of people getting together, they came and split you. You had to force a meeting if you want to have a meeting.<sup>236</sup>

Joe O'Rourke also gained employment in the offshore oil industry where he was able to continue his trade as a plater. Like Robert Buirds, Joe balked at the weakened level of unionisation on rigs, noting, 'there's very, very little trade union movement'.<sup>237</sup> The material reality of working on an offshore rig made union activism especially difficult. Striking workers risked replacement by a reserve labour force if they left the rig, therefore offshore strikes often required a sit-in, which meant not only the usual danger of working at sea, but also the tedium of being stranded there. As Joe recalled:

It's the longest day of your fucking life... You've got to kind of do your normal hours which was a 12 hour shift, and we used to do 3 hours overtime... there's nowhere to go. You can't go down the pub for a pint or anything like that. If you're on a rig, you're on a rig.<sup>238</sup>

Amidst this isolation, a sense of insecurity was also exploited by oil company managers as they called individual workers, attempting to pressurise them:

The company trying to force you off, trying to intimidate you. Gaffers ringing in, speaking to guys individually, 'you need to watch what you are doing here'. All the wee threats and innuendo, 'a lot of people wouldn't be coming back again'. 'We like you. You'll be all right'... Eventually we came off, a majority became a minority.<sup>239</sup>

Overall, workers' post-redundancy trade union experience did not compare favourably to heavy industry. Unions were generally weaker, less willing to take

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<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

action, and where there was an appetite for militancy the structure of the workplace often made activism difficult.

### **Weaker Bonds of Solidarity**

The structure of heavy industry had ensured close and regular proximity among an enormous and densely compact body of workers, creating a context for a culture of solidarity to emerge. No longer embedded in a massive workforce, displaced workers expressed feelings of isolation and disempowerment, with bonds of solidarity difficult to form given the individualised nature of the work. Work beyond the mass scale and familiarity of heavy industry was a 'culture shock' for James Blair, with his new job in a small-scale engineering company requiring him to work alone:

I would say when you're in an industry as big as that and then you go into a one-man job, it's a culture shock to you. At the beginning, I just could not handle it... At one time, there was about two and a half thousand people working in the steel industry over in Gartcosh... you go from there to a one-man job.<sup>240</sup>

Similarly, as a tradesman in British Bakeries, Alex Torrance felt isolated as the team aspect of steelmaking was absent. In one instance, Alex described the pettiness of his new management when it came to workers mixing, noting: 'I was taken off a shift because I got too friendly with the other electrician in the shift. You weren't allowed to go and give somebody a hand'.<sup>241</sup> As a Securicor driver, Stewart MacPherson missed the sense of being part of a team, of the solidarity and togetherness he enjoyed in steelmaking. Stewart attributed the lack of community in Securicor to the structure of the workplace:

You were working yourself most of the time. So you weren't really mixing with the people in the place. The other driver, you wouldn't see him from one week to the other... We didn't socialize... You very

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<sup>240</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>241</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

seldom seen anybody because we were all in different areas. We all came back at different times.<sup>242</sup>

Stewart explained how a disparate workforce negated the potential for militancy: 'They couldn't be militant, because you weren't working as an actual group of men. You were split up'.<sup>243</sup> Stewart contrasted this with the togetherness of steelmaking, noting: 'you were a big body of men... there were probably about 40 or 50 men on that shift doing all individual jobs, or jobs as part of a five or six-man crew... we were all the same'.<sup>244</sup> A sense of community at work was also dependent upon workers having an ability to socialise with one another. Alex Wright described how the density of shipbuilding and its regular breaks allowed for intervals of socialising, which he contrasted with his work in Capita's contact centre:

That morning tea break was important... everyone I remember in the shipyards was crabbit first thing in the morning and then come that 9:30 tea break, you'd get that mug of tea and two rolls of sausage and that's when the day becomes better and you get warmed up, you talk about the game the night before and have a blether... just have a good laugh, so I miss that aspect. Nowadays you could still do that in the canteen where I work but more and more I find my colleagues actually take their breaks at their workplace because their breaks are shorter, but that's just a contact centre environment.<sup>245</sup>

Cultures of solidarity also had a geographic dynamic, as the particularly dense concentration of heavy industry in Glasgow and the West of Scotland in general incubated a regionally-based culture of radical politics. Outside of this industrial bubble, former heavy industry workers discovered relatively underdeveloped class consciousness amongst their co-workers. In his search for employment Thomas Brotherston moved from Glasgow to Ayrshire, where he noted that the dispersion of industry was an impediment to the development of a broad culture of solidarity:

In Ayrshire, trade unionism has risen and fallen... in Glasgow at least you had each other, but in a lot of places in Ayrshire factories were

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<sup>242</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)



isolated... you would look after your mate, but you would look after yourself first.<sup>246</sup>

The development and expression of a workplace culture of solidarity is inhibited where there is little to no collective organisation among the workforce. Non-unionised workers lack a coherent mechanism to defend themselves in any meaningful way, and in the context of a workforce isolated and vulnerable to punitive measures, an individualised mind-set – ‘looking after number one’ – often prevails. In Glacier Vandervell James Blair attributed ‘absolutely appalling’ conditions and a lack of trust among workers to their general lack of solidarity:

It was one of these jobs – some of the people you were working with would have took the teabag out of your cup. They would have stabbed you in the back if they thought there was two hours overtime going.<sup>247</sup>

In a unionised workplace a solidarity-based identity was not only adhered to for its political or moral merits, but also because it carried a specific material advantage for workers in terms of the protection which collective action afforded. Whereas, in a non-unionised context, attachment to a solidarity-based identity lost its rational choice component; it certainly still existed, but it became more a matter of moral or political dedication. As James Carlin indicated in the anti-union context of Wisemans Dairy: ‘It wasn’t so much a case of people didn’t want to join, people did want to join, but you were under threat if you became involved with a trade union... there was a real threat hanging over you’.<sup>248</sup> Although Jim McKeown was a member of EIS and employed in an industry with a comparatively high level of trade union membership, he described how the weakening of trade union power and general decline in attachment to occupation or class-based identities made workplace organising difficult:

I think people are frightened... I’m frightened to speak up because you are worried in case you get victimised... I think that has sort of changed the concept from [steelmaking] because you had a union, you had a block of people round about you... I think unions are just lost

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<sup>246</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>247</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>248</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

altogether... I don't think people want to be a part of a union... I don't think people see unions the same way as they used to, I think people see themselves more as individuals rather than part of a group.<sup>249</sup>

There is a sort of feedback loop at play here, where weakened unions create a sense of powerlessness among workers, who then in turn invest less value in unions' ability to advance their rights, which itself minimises support for unions, rendering them even more weakened.

Displaced workers struggled to acclimatise themselves to employment which lacked the familiar sense of solidarity of heavy industry, finding it both cold and alien. James Carlin had felt rooted as a steelworker, embedded in a community of fellow workers and trade unionists, whereas his time in Wisemans Dairy was remembered as highly atomised, lacking any sense of being part of something bigger than himself: 'Camaraderie? There was no camaraderie, there was no team aspect to it, you were an individual and you stayed an individual till the day you went home'.<sup>250</sup> The combination of exploitative working conditions, authoritarian management, and lack of union protection created a hostile environment:

People never looked out for one another. The culture was completely different, it wasn't uncommon for you to see fights among guys down there... there were people starting on a Monday and walking out on a Wednesday, they just couldn't handle it... Managers were getting attacked and everything in there... they spoke to you different, they had no respect for you; you were at their beck and call.<sup>251</sup>

Interestingly, when asked which job outside of steelmaking best matched his sense of identity James Carlin confidently replied, 'Warburtons, 100 percent'.<sup>252</sup> James regained a sense of occupational pride through his current job in Warburtons, which, among his post-redundancy employment, had been the most comfortable and most familiar to steelmaking:

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<sup>249</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>250</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

It's the same process but rather than making steel you are making bread, it's unionised, guys look out for each other, you know what I mean, the health and safety is good, so there is a real team aspect to it... there is a real bond among guys down there and I suppose it is unity in the true aspect of the word, we are all the one big team.<sup>253</sup>

For James, it was the presence of trade unions in Warburtons that fostered a return to a positive working environment. Employed again in a workplace with bonds of solidarity James felt secure, which allowed him to cultivate an attachment and sense of identity towards his work that he had not experienced since leaving steelmaking. This sense of return, of once again feeling at home, was also evoked by Derek Cairns when he discussed his employment with Scotrail. Central to Derek's sense of familiarity was a feeling of togetherness: 'I'd say Scotrail and the steelworks, British Steel, were quite similar... It's hard to put a finger on... it was more everybody was together'.<sup>254</sup> As had been the case with steelmaking, Scotrail had a strong union, job security and decent pay:

One of the best employers I've had... I would compare it to the Ravenscraig, if the Ravenscraig had stayed open, I'd probably still be there... In the rail industry, I've been here 12 years and I'm still one of the new guys... It's as near a job for life as you'll see anywhere.<sup>255</sup>

As with James, Derek Cairns attributed this feeling of stability to his re-entry into a workplace defined by a powerful union:

I like the stability of it and the wages are very good. You get looked after. There is a union there... the unions in Scotrail are probably stronger than any union I came across... if the trains stopped running then they would not be long in getting it sorted out.<sup>256</sup>

In *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered*, Metzgar discusses the erosion of bonds of solidarity among members of the United Steelworkers, and a rising tendency to see unions from a service-based perspective. Metzgar highlights how the heightened industrial action between 1946 and 1959 meant that 'a larger sense of

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<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

the union as “all of us” (including families and entire communities) had to be enacted, lived, and suffered’.<sup>257</sup> Over time this sense of the union as the central hub of collective activism which spilled out into the wider community subsided, with declining labour militancy the union became less entangled in workers’ lives, taking on a more service-based, perfunctory role:

The union became a mere practical mechanism, a service for which you paid your dues and about which you complained if the service was not up to your standards... By 1982 there was still plenty of unity and discipline within the union, but gone was that dense network of sympathies, power relationships, and personal bonds with the larger community... It was nearly impossible to even remember it.<sup>258</sup>

Like Metzgar, there was a tendency among former Scottish heavy industry workers to mourn the loss of the union as a focal point of political activism. In industries which retained a trade union presence, many workers nonetheless described an overall weakening in the bonds of solidarity, a reluctance to confront managerial transgression and a creeping officialdom to union activism. While Alan Glover had been successful in organising his colleagues in Glasgow’s National Codification Bureau in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) – noting ‘virtually every new person that’s come on I’ve got them to sign up with the union’ – he acknowledged that his role was made difficult by the absence of a solidarity-based mind-set compared to shipbuilding, as well as the banning of the closed shop:

I’ll argue, I smoke and there’s people in the smoking shelter and they’ll say, ‘The unions are rubbish. What’s the point of getting in a union?’... Because it’s not a closed shop, the shipyard was a closed shop, you had to be a union member... Whereas in the MoD it’s optional.<sup>259</sup>

Similarly Pat Clark, who had joined Unison when working as a Welfare Rights Officer for the local authority, noted of his colleagues ‘the vast majority of people are members’, but like Alan felt that the banning of the closed shop meant that union representatives’ time was now consumed by recruitment and retainment, at the

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<sup>257</sup> J. Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple, 2000) p.182

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* pp.182-183

<sup>259</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

expense of wider activism: 'The problem now is you have to you have to spend your time recruiting folk, which wasn't an issue to worry about in the past. You have to sell the idea of being in a trade union to individuals'.<sup>260</sup>

The weakened bonds of solidarity among local authority workers compared to shipbuilding were attributed by Pat to cultural differences between industries, noting, 'there just isn't that history of that kind of stuff being done... They haven't got that culture, which makes it more difficult'.<sup>261</sup> Pat did not see these weakened bonds of solidarity as the sole result of cultural differences, but also of an increased formalisation in union activism:

It doesn't have to be like that, there are reasons for it. The way the unions are organized, this idea that everything has to be done officially, whereas in the yards... everything was done unofficial. Going back, Clyde Workers' Committee Manifesto in 1916, where the shop steward movement was born on the Clyde. And it summed the thing up perfectly: 'We will support the officials as long as they rightly represent the members, but will act independently as soon as they don't'. Perfect manifesto. And that's the way it operated within shipbuilding. Whereas, now everything is so much more official... There is this kind of 'well, if you can't win the argument, that's the end of it'. And trying to say to them, 'See if we were to walk out of here something would change in a hurry'.<sup>262</sup>

In the local authority Pat noted that 'everything is done officially', with union officials and the branch playing a greater role, whereas in the shipyards 'the branch was just an administrative thing', as a vibrant shop stewards movement ensured that the workplace and the workers themselves were the locus of union activism. For Pat, the new insistence on authorised action pacified union activism, disconnecting decision-making from the workplace and creating a more clinical, detached union overall. In addition, wearing white collars rather than overalls, the stark class dynamic of shipbuilding was not as present, or at least not as obvious in the local authority. When asked if the shipyard had been more militant, Pat commented:

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<sup>260</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

Absolutely. Yes, absolutely no question. In lots of ways it's because it's simpler. The boundaries of the class struggle were much easier to see. You get people working in local government for example, social workers and teachers, and the rest of it... don't see themselves as sort of proletarian cannon fodder. They see or they believe they've got a certain amount of control over the work process... that's why we've got a union, you have got to disabuse them of that nonsense. At the end of the day, the bosses still have control. But in the yard it's much simpler, even down to the different coloured hats... Day and daily, the idea of them and us was just so ingrained in the place.<sup>263</sup>

Pat further connected declining class consciousness to an increasingly atomized pattern of working and the decline of the large-scale workplace:

One of the things about working in a big industry like [shipbuilding] is that... it forces people to be class conscious. You can't avoid it. Now, people are much more atomized... People are working in Burger King and working in MacDonald's or a wee garage. People are not working in places with lots and lots of other workers where, as I said, the whole class dynamic becomes so obvious. If there are two of you working in a garage with another mechanic, it's not so easy to see him as being the class enemy... When there are hundreds and thousands of you working in a place then it's easy enough to see Mr. Belch as being the class enemy.<sup>264</sup>

Pat linked the absence of nakedly antagonistic labour relations in his new office-based employment to a corresponding decline in workers bonds of solidarity:

Everybody looked out for everybody else. There's no question about that. That's not something that's required in the type of job I'm doing just now. There was always the 'them and us' thing, that you just would not tell tales to the gaffer... Whereas, that happens now all the time in this kind of work.<sup>265</sup>

Pat's use of 'required' is important, denoting that the solidarity of the yards stemmed from its danger, the harshness of the management, and the proximity of workers to one another.

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<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

Jim McKeown had enjoyed his time in steelmaking for its culture of solidarity, dynamic social side and the team-based nature of the work. While still rewarding, Jim found teaching very individualized in comparison, with little sense of community during or beyond work: 'In Ravenscraig you knew everybody... in the school I can maybe walk into the staffroom and sit down, somebody walks past; I don't know who it is'.<sup>266</sup> The 'cultural environment' of Jim's workplace had 'totally changed', he found a 'kind of falseness' among teachers which would have been alien within the more 'genuine' culture of steelmaking.<sup>267</sup> It was steelworkers' lack of pretention which Jim particularly missed: 'I miss the people... that sort of rawness, that sort of rough and ready, the sort of straight to the point people'.<sup>268</sup> For Jim, teachers were less likely to confront issues directly, opting instead to suppress their emotions and play 'politics':

I think it's because we were isolated. Teachers don't like to see themselves as being weak in any way, so they never admit, they never come for help... [in Ravenscraig] if there was something wrong it was out in the open, it was dealt with.<sup>269</sup>

Jim McKeown attributed the lack of a culture of solidarity in teaching to the material differences in the way that work was performed compared to steelmaking, noting:

When you worked in Ravenscraig you were working as a team, when you are in a school you are on your own for most of the day... you are isolated, in Ravenscraig you knew everybody... because of the social side of it as well, but because of the way we worked, we worked in a team.<sup>270</sup>

Linda Collins had worked in the IT department in Yarrows and went into teaching following a voluntary redundancy. Like Jim McKeown, Linda found the work culture of teaching to be more individualised than heavy industry, noting, 'people in shipbuilding were much more union minded than teachers'.<sup>271</sup> As a union

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<sup>266</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> Linda Collins Interview (Ferns)

representative in both industries, Linda felt there was less sense of solidarity or commitment to trade unionism in teaching:

There was more camaraderie in the yard between the staff... Whereas, there wasn't that same camaraderie in the schools, because half the school, this particular clique of women spent their time absolutely reviling the head teacher, until we would be in a collective meeting and then they would do a complete about face, so much so that it'd make your jaw drop. There was no collective movement in the staff to pull together when we were teachers.<sup>272</sup>

Compared to shipbuilding, teachers appeared to be less willing to make personal sacrifices for collective goals:

I was involved the union... I did my turn of shop steward... I have to say that teachers are notorious for being of the opinion, 'Yes, I'll be in the Union, I'll take all the benefits of the union, but if you ask me to do something like strike, I'm not doing it'. I had quite a few arguments with people about that, like, 'You can't be in it and then not follow when you're called to do something. That is not the point of it'. You take all the benefits that the union brings you. The money, the increase, the stability and things like that, you can't opt to say, 'I'm sorry, I'm not doing this'.<sup>273</sup>

Linda largely attributed this to the class differences in teaching compared to shipbuilding, stating that 'teachers are by nature middle class... and definitely don't really want to be a member of a union'.<sup>274</sup> The professional nature of teaching, together with its individualised structure of working, cultivated a mentality which was incompatible with collective action, or more precisely, a willingness to be a part of a movement which required a certain level of self-sacrifice and discipline.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to highlight workers' experience of trade unionism inside and subsequently outside of heavy industry. Heavy industry unions

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*



were remembered for their strength; their protection provided workers with a feeling of security as well as a sense of dignity in the knowledge that they were not disposable and could not be easily abused. But workers also conceptualised their unions as more than membership organisations that strictly looked after their jobs. Unions were hubs of politicisation, labour militancy, and education, they were social organisations that cast a broad net over the workplace and the surrounding community, and they constituted the foundation of the culture and bonds of solidarity which for many had been the defining experience of heavy industry. Post-redundancy employment lacked robust trade union representation, which in turn permitted the development of a power imbalance between workers and management. The absence of collective organisation removed an integral check and balance from the workplace, allowing the ascendancy of unrestrained and sometimes exploitative management practices.

The narrative – that heavy industry was good and what came after was bad – is tempting for a reason: because it contains elements of truth. Workers' union narratives were not simply renditions of rose-tinted nostalgia, they described real material differences in job quality and working rights between unionised heavy industry and their typically non-unionised post-redundancy employment. The unions of heavy industry had been powerful, and the employment workers gained outside of the industry did contrast poorly in its lack of collective strength, with unions unable to effectively resist abusive management.

The period of time where workers had been employed in heavy industry fell for most at some point between the 1960s and the early 1990s – a period of time in which trade unionism peaked and then collapsed. Although unions were in freefall as they approached the millennium, it was also a time of active militancy; as the labour movement atrophied it also fought. For those who had been trade union members before the early 1990s, the world of work of the 90s, 2000s and beyond was a time of incredibly tepid labour organisation. The impact of anti-trade union legislation and neoliberal policy-making was uneven but was nonetheless felt by unions in every

industry. So while the new unions of former heavy industry workers were weaker, this was not necessarily just because they were outside of heavy industry, but was an expression of the fact that in the new world of work weakened unions have become ubiquitous.

Heavy industry had been the perfect environment for the development of labour militancy. Dangerous work had cultivated solidarity and trust, obvious class divisions between management and workers encouraged radicalism, the high density and mass scale of the workplace, with potentially thousands of workers on-site, experiencing hardships, grievances and victories in close proximity to each other was the perfect conduit for the formation of collective identities and bonds of solidarity, as well as large-scale mobilisation. The destruction of heavy industry demolished the source of this culture of solidarity. As Kirk et al. have stated:

Economic change and the growth in manual worker unemployment has led to the dilution of the manual working class and the near disappearance of the utopian beliefs that once guided collective action through most of the twentieth century in such industrial areas.<sup>275</sup>

Trade unions survived, as did workers' attachment to the labour movement, but without their material foundation, the culture of solidarity and style of trade unionism within heavy industry began to evaporate.

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<sup>275</sup> J. Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', in J. Kirk, S. Contrepois and S. Jefferys (eds.) *Changing work and community identities in European regions: perspectives on the past and present* (Palgrave Macmillan, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) p.5

## Chapter Three

### 'It wasn't all dour gloom and militancy': Occupational Masculinity and Emasculation

Historically, work, specifically full-time waged employment, has been strongly associated with masculinity. In the mid-1970s, Tolson described the attainment of full-time employment as the beginning of manhood, the point whereupon boys enter 'the secretive, conspiratorial solidarity of working men'.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, notions of 'being a man' are bound up with breadwinner status, which Young has described as 'central to the definition of working-class masculinity'.<sup>2</sup> Wight's *Workers not Masters* outlines the crucial social value attached to waged employment within both working-class communities and 'men's moral identities', with 'great moral significance' given to the endurance of rigorous labour which provides a family wage.<sup>3</sup> Deindustrialisation has been conceptualised as a 'breaching experiment' by Strangleman, with the significance and perhaps disguised importance of industrial employment and its associated culture becoming fully apparent only after its destruction and absence.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the vital linkage between work and male identity is rendered visible through the process of redundancy and unemployment. Interviewed unemployed men commonly express some form of identity disintegration, alongside feelings of shame, isolation, despair, and a general sense that they have failed as men.<sup>5</sup> In discussing the importance of work for women in the early 1980s, Coyle draws an interesting distinction between the gendered differences

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<sup>1</sup> S. Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity* (London: Tavistock, 1977) p.47

<sup>2</sup> H. Young, 'Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities', in L. Abrams, and C. Brown, (eds.) *A history of everyday life in twentieth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) p.141

<sup>3</sup> D. Wight, *Workers not Masters: Masculine Respectability, Consumption and Employment in Central Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993) p.238, p.111-112

<sup>4</sup> T. Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness, An Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) p.146

<sup>5</sup> J. Burnett, *Idle Hands: The Experience of Unemployment, 1790–1990* (London: Routledge, 1994); A. Sinfield, *What Unemployment Means* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981); J. Seabrook, *Unemployment* (London: London Quartet Books, 1982); D. Marsden, *Workless: An Exploration of the Social Contract between Society and the Worker* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); J. Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002)

of unemployment. She argues that while worklessness can be debilitating for both men and women, traditional notions of masculinity and femininity mean that unemployed men find the domestic sphere more alien and alienating – their loss of breadwinner status transgressed traditional gender norms and ‘unsexed’ them.<sup>6</sup>

Work, as a prerequisite to breadwinner status, is central to masculinity, yet certain forms of work are perceived to be more masculine than others. Heavy industry generally falls into this category, characterised as a definitive form of masculine employment. Historically, hegemonic understandings of masculinity have emphasised physical toughness and aggression, as well as emotional detachment.<sup>7</sup> This representation of masculinity, alongside the perception of women as the ‘fairer sex’, has served to normalise men’s overrepresentation within the most dangerous and unhealthy occupations.<sup>8</sup> Nayak introduces the idea of ‘body capital’ in his discussion of industrial employment in the North East of England, whereby manual labour ‘forged’ a working-class masculinity based upon ‘physical hardness’ as well as breadwinner status.<sup>9</sup> In Scotland, working-class masculinity has been entangled with manual labour, with hard physical labour in particular conditioning ‘men’s physiological power’ and ‘reaffirm[ing]’ their masculinity.<sup>10</sup> Since heavy industry has been characterised as traditionally masculine, it could be supposed that the loss of this employment, and the transition into female-dominated work, could precipitate some sense of emasculation. In *Masculinities and Culture*, Beynon discusses how ex-industrial workers ‘felt demeaned’ by occupying ‘women’s jobs’.<sup>11</sup> Walkerdine and Jimenez explored masculinity and deindustrialisation by interviewing residents of a former steel-dependant town in Wales. Here, the closure of the steelworks engendered ‘intergenerational trauma’, where young men described feelings of shame and embarrassment over their failure to attain traditionally masculine

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<sup>6</sup> A. Coyle, *Redundant Women* (London: Women’s Press, 1984) p.94

<sup>7</sup> A. McIvor, *Working lives: work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.81

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> A. Nayak, ‘Displaced masculinities: chavs, youth and class in the postindustrial city’, *Sociology*, 40:5 (2006) p.814

<sup>10</sup> Young, ‘Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities’, p.141

<sup>11</sup> Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*, p.88

employment in steelmaking.<sup>12</sup> This chapter investigates deindustrialisation and gender. It firstly discusses male identity and the work culture of heavy industry, exploring the extent to which heavy industry can be categorised as a ‘macho’ form of employment; from here, it examines workers’ transition into female-dominated or mixed employment and assesses the impact this had upon masculinity, scrutinising whether this transition provoked a sense of emasculation.

## Heavy Industry and Masculinity

Steelmaking and shipbuilding align closely to the archetype of male proletarian employment. These were male-dominated industries, with the shop floor staffed almost exclusively by an all-male workforce. As steelworker Harry Carlin put it, ‘there was nae women that worked with us’.<sup>13</sup> This was elaborated on further by steelworks office worker, Dorothy Macready:

There was no women crane drivers, there was no women on the floor of the melting shop or the blast furnaces... The women were employed in the catering side, the admin side, nurses... But there would be no women on what would be classed as the shop floor.<sup>14</sup>

The workforce was segregated along gendered lines, with women workers concentrated in either unskilled roles such as cleaning, catering and admin, or highly skilled professional employment within laboratories or IT.

Along with a male-dominated workforce, the work culture of heavy industry has been defined as especially masculine. Hobson describes how ‘physical prowess and toughness at work’ can inform workers’ ‘sense of masculinity’; in this way, the demanding environment of heavy industry forged a specific workplace culture, shaping workers’ masculine identities.<sup>15</sup> Bellamy’s *The Shipbuilders*, and McKinlay

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<sup>12</sup> V. Walkerdine and L. Jimenez, *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation: a psychosocial approach to affect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.10

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Harry Carlin by James Ferns, 18/01/2017

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Dorothy Macready by James Ferns, 20/04/2016

<sup>15</sup> R. Hobson, *Dignity at Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p.73

and Hampton's 'Making Ships, Making Men', highlight the existence of a hard man culture within Scottish shipbuilding, where violence and bravado were common.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, exploring the operation of masculinity within Clydeside heavy industries, McIvor found a prevailing 'cult of toughness'. This cult of toughness can be seen as a means of survival, a mechanism to adapt to hard labour and the constant threat of injury or death – it 'hardened boys up, de-sensitizing them to danger and socializing them into a competitive, macho environment'.<sup>17</sup> The workplace was described by many shipbuilders and steelworkers as a primarily male space – a 'man's world' – which referred to both a predominantly male workforce as well as a specific workplace culture: 'It was a man's culture, basically. Bit of a macho culture.'; 'I know it sounds ridiculous but it was a man's kind of world.'; 'Macho you mean? Oh aye it was a man's world, you know.'<sup>18</sup> In Scottish heavy industry, workplace masculinity was expressed through regular social drinking; physical and emotional toughness; a fine line of humour, camaraderie and intergenerational mentorship juxtaposed with ostracism and ridicule of those who transgressed workplace conventions; and a readiness to defend working rights.

### Drinking Culture

Regular social drinking was an important component of heavy-industry workers' social lives and workplace masculinity. Whilst it would be incorrect to overemphasise the importance of social drinking, as has perhaps been the case in popular representations of working-class men, it would be equally wrong to deny the fact that for many workers the pub was an important hub of social activity and leisure.<sup>19</sup> Writing in the early 1990s, Mullen notes that regular heavy drinking and smoking were commonplace among working-class men in the West of Scotland, acting as

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<sup>16</sup> M. Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders: An Anthology of Scottish Shipyard Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001); A. McKinlay and J. Hampton, 'Making Ships, Making Men: Working for John Brown's between the Wars', *Oral History*, 19:1 (1991) pp.21-28

<sup>17</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.83

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Brian Glen by James Ferns, 10/03/2019; Interview with Frank Roy by James Ferns, 01/02/2017; Interview with Brian Cunningham by James Ferns, 19/01/2017

<sup>19</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.90

'strong symbols of male virility and machismo in traditional working-class culture'.<sup>20</sup> Wight concurs with this point, situating the pub 'at the centre of the men's domain'.<sup>21</sup>

Social drinking functioned as a means of workplace bonding, a communion between heavy industry workers. According to Stewart MacPherson, 'it was a kind of a social thing. There was always drinks. It always revolved around going to the pub after you finished the shift'.<sup>22</sup> As a new shipyard blacksmith, Alan Brown soon fell into the yards 'big drinking culture', noting, 'a lot of drinking went on... and I got involved in that'.<sup>23</sup> The mass of shipyard workers were catered for by numerous local pubs, Alan Brown describes a scene common to many:

Govan in particular, you could just cross the road to the Rob Roy pub... the barmaid would have your dinner, a plate of mince and tatties and all the pints lined up on the bar, and you'd just grab your dinner and your pint and sat down and ate that and then paid for it when it quietened down.<sup>24</sup>

Like other workers, Alan Brown described the normalcy of drinking during lunch breaks, 'a lot of the older guys used to drink a lot at lunchtime. It was always a thing that you went out to the pub at lunchtime'. Lunchtime drinking, lateness and absence, and drunkenness (up to a limit) on the job were aspects of heavy industries drinking culture which was protected through the operation of an unspoken fraternal code of covering for one another. As Frank Roy recalled:

It was masculine, we covered up for each other, guys would maybe be coming on a Saturday night with a wee drink in them who shouldn't have, I don't drink so I was great to work with because you knew I was going to be sober... people could have got sacked, but it was just the times, so you covered up.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> K. Mullen, *A Healthy Balance: Glaswegian Men Talk about Health, Tobacco and Alcohol* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993) p.177

<sup>21</sup> Wight, *Workers not Wasters*, pp.155-156

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Stewart MacPherson by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Alan Brown by James Ferns, 05/03/2019

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

New workers like Alan Brown found themselves inducted into this culture of regular drinking and covering. The expectation and social pressure felt by these workers at the start of their working life to conform to workplace norms was clear in Alan's narrative, negatively reflecting that, 'unfortunately in the early days I got into that'.<sup>26</sup> Whilst it was many workers' choice to drink, it must be stated that for young workers, rejecting an opportunity for socialising with co-workers could have had adverse consequences, resulting in social isolation or mockery.

The most obvious and harmful effect of this drinking culture was of course alcoholism and its associated health impact. Former steelworker James Lees' novel *Steelman*, written about Ravenscraig steelworkers, explores early on how involvement in such a drinking culture could very easily slide into alcoholism:

Harry couldn't quite remember. Couldn't quite place when drinking had become part of his daily routine. At first he was just one of those guys, out bingeing at the weekend, in the club or up the dancing. Then he'd noticed he'd started counting the days down in his head till it was time to have a drink again.<sup>27</sup>

Alcohol dependency not only impacted workers themselves, but placed great strain on their families as well. John Johnstone, whose father was a shipyard worker, remembers his childhood and teenage years being defined by his father's regular heavy drinking, which eventually led to the breakdown of his parents' marriage. John believed that the culture of the shipbuilding sometimes trapped workers like his father into a cycle of alcoholism: 'it was dead easy just to be that sort of go to work, go to the pub, go up the road. Do that five days a week'.<sup>28</sup> This dark aspect of the culture of heavy industry alienated John from the common trajectory of sons following fathers into the shipyard: 'I was never really interested in the shipyards... It never really appealed to me... It was almost like I don't want to be like that. If that's where this takes you'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>27</sup> J. Lees, *Steelman* (James Lees, 2020) np.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with John Johnstone by James Ferns, 05/04/2019

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



Despite the ubiquitous nature of this drinking culture, many workers did reject it. Alan Brown stated that only 'a minority of people' had 'real drink problems', nonetheless, he decided early on in his career to distance himself from the drinking culture: 'I got out of it quite quick. I seen it wasn't for me and stopped going to the pub and that sort of thing'.<sup>30</sup> Andrew Kane made a similar decision, wishing to avoid being pulled into the culture, 'I wasn't a great one to go out with them all, a lot of the guys drank together. I wasn't a great drinker, I went out with my wife'.<sup>31</sup> The rejection of this drinking culture was more straightforward for workers who adhered to a family-oriented provider identity. For these workers, time in the pub was time and money away from their family. Margaret Fraser remembers her late steelworker father in this way, stating, 'he wasn't really one, my dad, for going out even to pubs or socializing. He was very much a family man'.<sup>32</sup>

### **Women Workers**

While heavy industry was male dominated, women did work within it. The workplace masculinity of heavy industry could be a hostile environment for women workers. Janet Moss recalled the difficulty of working in shipbuilding in the 1980s:

Although the Equality Act [Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975] had been brought in, everywhere you went there would still be nude calendars, you would get the wolf-whistling, you'd get catcalling. You'd get all of that, so yes it was very much a male-dominated place... you just got your head down and ignored it.<sup>33</sup>

Sexual harassment such as catcalling creates a hostile environment for women workers, excluding them from the bonds of solidarity shared by male workers, while nude calendars operate as a mechanism to mark a given workplace as a male space. To fit in with the prevailing masculine work culture of Clydeside, Johnston and McIvor

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<sup>30</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Andrew Kane by James Ferns, 25/01/2017

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Margaret Fraser by James Ferns, 07/04/2019

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Janet Moss by James Ferns, 14/03/2019

observed that 'some women workers shared "manly" attributes'.<sup>34</sup> Janet concurred, stating, 'you learn to speak up for yourself, you learn to hold your own, for sure. Swear like a navvy when required'.<sup>35</sup>

The occupational masculinity of heavy industry, like masculinity in general, is subject to internal contradictions. The prevailing culture, as highlighted above, condoned sexist behaviour as normal, but also simultaneously promoted a form of protective masculinity based around an ideal of chivalry. More prevailing than explicit harassment, this masculinity viewed women workers paternally. Men described their efforts to shield women workers and family members from the colourful language of the shop floor. As Stewart MacPherson expanded upon:

They were men's men, if you know what I mean – don't get me wrong, round about women, perfect gentleman, patter merchants, but that was it. They had a vocabulary for our own if you know what I mean. Obviously, we wouldn't use a lot of the language that we used in the house that we used at work.<sup>36</sup>

This desire to shield women workers was an evaluation shared by Dorothy Macready:

From a female point of view, I can't ever remember the men on the clock ever making comments to the women coming or going. They would curse or swear no doubt, but not within... they might shout 'hello' or something but there was never ever... I think the men on the clock respected us.<sup>37</sup>

This ideal of protection was taken on by experienced women workers themselves in their dealings with junior women. Within steelmaking this was most evident in the process of accident report writing, where Dorothy described an informal framework among senior typists which safeguarded junior typists from exposure to the details of serious accidents or fatalities:

The serious accidents, none of the junior girls were allowed to type the reports, because some of them were obviously, pretty

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<sup>34</sup> R. Johnston and A. McIvor, 'Dangerous work, hard men and broken bodies: masculinity in the Clydeside heavy industries, c. 1930-1970s', *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004) p.148

<sup>35</sup> Janet Moss Interview (Ferns)

<sup>36</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>37</sup> Dorothy Macready Interview (Ferns)

horrendous. It was only the senior girls that could type a fatal accident report... we took it in turns.<sup>38</sup>

The paternal masculinity of heavy industry othered women workers; not subject to the same rules of conduct and often placed on a pedestal, they never fully attained the status of comrade in the eyes of some male colleagues. Thomas Brotherston highlights this othering in the treatment of shipbuilding cleaners:

Those cleaners were treated like royalty. They got off the ship before anybody else. Shipyard workers would not swear in their presence. Very respectful... My mother-in-law was a cleaner on the ships, and nobody would have said boo to her. Nobody would have sworn in her presence. They were treated politely. People opened doors for them.<sup>39</sup>

Thomas went on to critically reflect on this mode of behaviour:

There was an element of machismo. There was an element of that. Given what I've told you about the relationship, and how that machismo was demonstrated, its public demonstration towards the women almost Victorian, in its propriety. Did I agree with it? I didn't agree with it, I was just part of it. It wasn't up for discussion. You just did it.<sup>40</sup>

This raises an interesting point in reference to the dichotomy between individual agency and cultural socialisation. Despite Thomas' objection to this culture as 'Victorian', it was so normalised and pervasive that objection 'wasn't up for discussion'.

### **Resistance to Safety Equipment**

The 'hardman' aspect of heavy industry masculinity was evident in some workers' initial ambivalence towards the introduction of safety equipment, such as hard hats, goggles or protective clothing. Alex Wright remembered an incident where a factory

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Thomas Brotherston by James Ferns, 13/02/2019 (First Interview), 20/02/2019 (Second Interview)

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

inspector temporarily closed his shipyard, when 'he noticed so many men on a vessel not wearing the appropriate headgear and earmuffs'.<sup>41</sup> In *Lethal Work*, Johnston and McIvor argue that an entrenched machismo work culture in the shipyards meant acceptance of 'very high levels of risk on the job'.<sup>42</sup> This acceptance of risk taking was very present in steelmaking as well, according to James Carlin this attitude meant 'there was always the potential to get injured', commenting that:

I suppose they took chances, you used to have, see the donkey jackets they were known as RDF, Resistance to Fire Damage jackets, a lot of guys never wore them, and they used to give just shirts to wear underneath it, RDF shirts, they never wore them either, you came in in your t-shirts and stuff like that you know, bare sleeved you know, so it was macho, you know what I mean.<sup>43</sup>

Alex Straiton noted that 'even when the Health and Safety Act and all that came in, the only ones that ever wore helmets were the gaffer. It wasn't until '80s that the workforce started to wear all the safety gear'. He continued:

You used to see people doing crazy things, you're going, 'What's he thinking of?' He's 80 feet off the crane top and he's up there and he's not even got a clip on harness, nothing. No gloves on. Using a hammer and chisel. Hundreds of things, no safety glasses. You ask yourself why. I mean they were all there, everything.<sup>44</sup>

Johnston and McIvor discuss how the introduction of safety equipment in the 1950s and 1960s was initially widely resisted within Clydeside heavy industry, being seen by some workers as a potential display of 'personal weakness and an affront to manliness'.<sup>45</sup> This sentiment was also expressed by interviewees in Bellamy's *The Shipbuilders*; one foreman, Bobby Aitchison, 'felt more committed to wearing a [hard] hat' after his experience of a safety committee, yet still felt a sense of shame in wearing it, noting, 'I just sort of swallowed my pride'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Alex Wright by James Ferns, 06/03/2019

<sup>42</sup> R. Johnston and A. McIvor, *Lethal Work* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) p.81

<sup>43</sup> Interview with James Carlin by James Ferns, 24/01/2017

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Alex Straiton by James Ferns, 02/08/2019

<sup>45</sup> Johnston and McIvor, 'Dangerous work', p.144

<sup>46</sup> Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p.75

The initial avoidance of safety equipment was motivated by a desire to avoid appearing 'stupid looking', according to Alex Straiton.<sup>47</sup> Like workers in other studies, Alex attributed this attitude to workplace machismo as well as a general aversion to change: 'aw it was the whole the macho thing. "I'm not putting them on". "Never done it before". "My father never done it before". "What do I need that for?"'.<sup>48</sup> The statement 'my father never done it before' is telling, speaking to how aversion to safety gear was related to a reluctance to break with tradition and adopt new modes of behaviour by the older, more established generation of workers. Alan Glover remembered his frustration when challenging these attitudes:

I remember going to a union meeting, the electricians and the joiners, they got waterproof trousers and waterproof jackets to go through the workshop to the ship, we didn't but we were touching live electrodes and that. I remember standing up at the meeting and I says 'we should be getting this'. A lot of the older guys were, 'This is how it's always been'. I said, 'we should move on'. I says, 'rickets were rife in Glasgow in the '40s should we be getting back to putting kids up chimneys? No, we should be progressing'.<sup>49</sup>

It is worth noting that Alan situates union meetings as the site where resistance to safety equipment was challenged. As noted in chapter 2, it was trade union representatives who spearheaded greater health and safety legislation within the workplace.

On the surface, such blatant rejection of protective equipment seems irresponsible, even foolish. But these attitudes need to be placed in the wider context of workers' survival mentality. Wearing safety equipment was tantamount to admitting vulnerability, an act which transgressed the essential tenet of hardness which comprised heavy industry masculinity. This idea of hardness was not created and maintained by workers in order to simply feel like 'big men' or 'hard men'. In a workplace which required sustained willpower to tolerate its miserable conditions, where death or disability were very real and constant possibilities, in which co-

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<sup>47</sup> Alex Straiton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Alan Glover by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

workers and friends had been killed or maimed, a sense of personal hardness is less a choice and more a requirement of the job. Workers can of course shape and transform their workplace, but equally, they themselves are often shaped by it. Ironically, the culture that existed as a way to cope with the dangers of heavy industry also unfortunately instilled resistance to one of its potential remedies.

Additionally, the normalisation of risk taking was a consequence of heavy industry's productionist ethos. In this regard, Walker argues that workplace machismo was 'not simply about male strutting', instead, the normalisation of risk taking arises as 'a consequence of being repeatedly exposed to both work and danger [whereby workers are taught] the need to overcome or suppress instinctual fears and apprehensions'.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, worker resistance towards protective equipment needs to be seen alongside a culture of companies and managers either failing to enforce protective equipment or outright denying their effectiveness. For instance, McIvor argues that risk taking behaviour needs to be seen in the 'wider context of unequal power relations' between workers and managers.<sup>51</sup> Safety measures have an attached cost, and so workers were incentivised into 'not grumbling about poor working conditions', with their compliance potentially making their job more secure or singling them out as future promotion prospects.<sup>52</sup>

Rather than wholly attributing resistance to safety gear to restrictive masculinity, it may have also had a more straightforward basis. Steelmaking and shipbuilding were already physically strenuous and exhausting, and so the introduction of uncomfortable equipment was naturally met with a degree of hostility. Thomas Brotherston described this sentiment: 'they brought in hats, and everybody was supposed to wear them, and nobody did, because they were uncomfortable, and they are horrible to wear in confined spaces'.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, given the danger of the workplace some workers were reluctant to wear anything which

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<sup>50</sup> D. Walker, "Danger was something you were brought up wi'": Workers' Narratives on Occupational Health and Safety in the Workplace', *Scottish Labour History*, 46 (2011) p.57

<sup>51</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.92

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

could potentially dull their senses. As Stewart MacPherson noted, 'big steel ladles full of molten metal. The last thing you want to be doing is working underneath an overhead crane with ear defenders on'.<sup>54</sup> Resistance to protective clothing was complicated, and Thomas went on to elaborate how the inherent danger of the workplace could also be a powerful motivator towards accepting safety gear, highlighting a near-miss accident where a fellow worker wearing a hard hat was hit by falling pieces of heavy material:

If they'd have hit him square in the head, it'd have killed him instantly, but they hit him just off the centre of his crown. They just shot right down his boiler suit, right out the arse of his boiler suit, but in the way down they cut two big grooves right down his back. Now, he wasn't seriously injured, but immediately after that happened, it went around the place like wildfire, and after that, people were strapping on their helmet... after that everybody wore their hard hats, because it just became too obvious, this guy could have died.<sup>55</sup>

### **Suppression of Emotion and 'Weakness'**

The spartan working conditions of heavy industry forged in workers a physical and emotional hardness. Emotional vulnerability was generally discouraged, as were symbols of potential weakness. Workplace machismo found form in the various competitive sports open to workers. Alan Glover compared the annual Govan shipyard football tournament to Roman gladiatorial combat, stating, 'this wasn't football, this was like gladiators in ancient Rome. They kicked the shit out of each other'.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, heavy industry workers fit into the typical depiction of traditional working-class masculinity, which according to High, 'discourages men from showing their vulnerability. Anger sometimes comes easier'.<sup>57</sup> In her autobiography, *Motherwell: A Girlhood*, Orr described an incident where her father narrowly survived a workplace accident, saving another worker's life in the process

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<sup>54</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>57</sup> S. High, "'They were making good money, just ten minutes from home": Proximity and Distance in the Plant Shutdown Stories of Northern Ontario Mill Workers', *Labour/le travail*, 76 (2015) p.18

but being deeply affected by it. Orr believed that her father felt a sense of shame over his fear, attributing this to the prevalence of 'a macho, patriarchal culture', where 'losing your nerve, getting the fears... was entirely unseemly'; and so her father's 'failure to conform to the fearlessness of the steelworker had torpedoed [his] self-esteem'.<sup>58</sup> Workplace norms and the men that enforced them could be harsh; Danny Houston felt this especially true for young apprentices entering the industry, commenting, 'it could be ruthless. Only the strong survived'.<sup>59</sup>

The need to maintain a façade of toughness in practical terms meant scorn for symbols which could be interpreted as effeminate. Andrew Kane recalled steelworkers' intolerance towards what they perceived to be unmanly grooming habits:

Your hands were like leather. And [my brother] says to me one time, 'can you not put hand cream on your hands?' And I burst out laughing and he says 'what you laughing at?' There was a guy that started one time and at the end of the shift he combed his hair, and he was called a 'poof' after that... 'oh look at her over there'... imagine me taking hand cream in!<sup>60</sup>

Alan Glover described similar cultural taboos in shipbuilding, noting, 'if you wore aftershave they thought you were 'a queer' and that's the way it was, that was the culture. You had to toughen up, you had to get streetwise really quick or your life could get beat shit'.<sup>61</sup> In *Steel Closets*, Balay demonstrated how this restrictive culture impacted LGBTQ-identifying steelworkers in Indiana. In her interviews, Balay found a pervasive homophobia, where ostracization and attacks upon open displays of gayness were common. Gay steelworkers enjoyed the same robust community aspect of steelmaking, having 'access to a meaningful sense of identity, belonging, and purpose'.<sup>62</sup> But their inclusion in this culture came at a cost, in exchange for inclusion, gay steelworkers were under great social pressure to hide their identity,

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<sup>58</sup> D. Orr, *Motherwell: A Girlhood* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2020) p.40, p.43

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Danny Houston by James Ferns, 06/08/2019

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>61</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>62</sup> A. Balay, *Steel Closets: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Steelworkers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014) p.160



with many remaining 'closeted', often taking on exaggerated forms of masculinity as a cover or coping mechanism.<sup>63</sup> In both their narratives, Andrew and Alan recognized the ludicrous nature of these workplace norms, their recognition was not realised through the distance of time, indeed, it had appeared ludicrous at the time. But the social pressure to conform was immense, something as simple as applying hand cream could result in one being unsexed – 'oh look at her over there' – or having their sexuality questioned and being subject to homophobic abuse. The maintenance of such a prohibitive masculinity was often oppressively restrictive, but its pervasiveness was perceived as immovable – as Alan had described it, this was simply 'the way it was'.

Workplace pranks and banter provided an essential lightness to an otherwise exhausting and tedious shift. While good natured pranks were certainly widely enjoyed, those taken too far, or done with malice in mind had to be brushed off as harmless, otherwise an individual could find themselves labelled overly 'sensitive', unable to 'take a joke'. Jim McKeown recalled how this atmosphere could be difficult:

The one thing you didn't show was any weakness... as a young fellow you are in the shower and the next thing your clothes get thrown in beside you, and you just laughed it off because if you didn't they would do it again sort of thing. Or maybe you went down for the toilet or something, burned paper, newspapers go underneath the door and set on fire, that kind of thing you know – 'for a laugh' – you know, and you didn't react because if you reacted you would make it worse... pranks we would call it, sometimes it was hard, but there was a kind of macho feel aye, real macho feel.<sup>64</sup>

The idea of not displaying 'any weakness' was a common motif among heavy industry workers. Within Hallside steelworks Johnston and McIvor discovered a similar sentiment in the 1960s, quoting steelworker Stewart McIntosh:

It was a very macho culture... it could also be quite violent too... guys quite often recently released from prison, and they included the occasional psychopath, literally, would wind up working beside you... You had to be able to look after yourself... had to be prepared to stand

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Jim McKeown by James Ferns, 13/02/2017

up and say you were prepared to fight... if you backed down, that would be it. Everyone, everyone would stamp on you from then on.<sup>65</sup>

A readiness to defend oneself and 'not make a fuss' were crucial to workers' reputation, and failure to abide by these norms could be exploited by aggressors. Paul Molloy spoke of sometimes working beside 'people who are just psychos', and James Blair felt that 'some of the guys were evil. You had to watch them'.<sup>66</sup> These narratives demonstrate how heavy industry workers take on a sense of hardness – a 'hardman' mentality – not out of some simplistic display of male swagger, but as a reaction to perceived danger; as a form of defensive masculinity which operates as a protective psychological shell.

This form of protective masculinity functioned to shield workers from the reality of working within an incredibly dangerous environment. Humour functioned as a way of coping with the reality of heavy industry, with dark humour in particular serving as a means of normalising and making light of sometimes horrific circumstances. McIvor states that 'this was a brutal world in many respects, though one mediated by the black humour, swearing and 'patter' characteristic of these work communities... the edge was taken off the danger and the degradation of employment by this repartee'.<sup>67</sup> Rodrigues and Collinson argue that workplace humour 'can be a means of handling anxiety and threat: a defensive, distancing strategy for dealing with adversity'.<sup>68</sup> Joking with colleagues on the shop floor was a foundational aspect of workplace culture, with workers linking adversity with the need to create humour:

There was always a great sense of humour in the shipyard, I think because of the adversity.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Johnston and McIvor, 'Dangerous work', p.142

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Paul Molloy by James Ferns, 15/03/2019; Interview with James Blair by James Ferns, 19/02/2019

<sup>67</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, pp.84-85

<sup>68</sup> S. B. Rodrigues and D. L. Collinson, "'Having Fun'?: Humour as Resistance in Brazil", *Organization Studies*, 16:5 (1995) p.744

<sup>69</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

I think because of the kind of work or the activities that you did, there was a lot of humour in it, because the conditions were terrible.<sup>70</sup>

It was a man's culture, basically. Bit of a macho culture... it was good camaraderie, good banter... because the conditions are so spartan, you use humour to get through that.<sup>71</sup>

Alan Glover described a scene following an explosion where it was believed that a worker was crushed underneath the scaffolding he had been working on, the panic workers felt as they frantically fought to uncover their colleague immediately gave way to laughter as the missing man appeared from the toilet facilities, seemingly unaware of everything that had unfolded. Reflecting on this incident, Alan stated, 'you laughed in the face of adversity and it was because of the conditions. You kind of laughed at life for want of a better word and laughter was the best form of medicine'.<sup>72</sup> Dark humour and bravado were deployed as a coping mechanism, an attempt to normalise and make light of a reality which, when confronted starkly, was simply terrifying. Perhaps as a way of normalising the potential for mutilation, it was common for workers who survived an accident to receive a particularly gruesome nickname. Pat Clark reflected:

Roughly for every boat that was built during the time I was there, there was a man killed on it. That's the obvious thing, but then you've got people who've sustained major injuries. The number of people walking about called 'hoppy' and 'wingy' and stuff like that, somebody loses a foot, loses an arm. They are immediately christened with some nickname. Quite horrendous.<sup>73</sup>

While dark humour was prevalent in heavy industry and was often used as a coping mechanism for workplace adversity, it should not be overemphasised to the extent that it overshadows the fact that a great deal of workplace humour was good-natured and largely intended as a distraction from boredom. A much less dramatic hardship of heavy industry was that fact that it could be incredibly monotonous. Thomas Brotherston stated, 'industry's boring a lot of the time, and one of the

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Alex McGowan by James Ferns, 11/04/2019

<sup>71</sup> Brian Glen Interview (Ferns)

<sup>72</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Pat Clark by James Ferns, 28/03/2019

mechanisms humanity's got to deal with boredom is humour'.<sup>74</sup> Thomas noted how the famous shipyard humour arose in response to tedious or particularly unpleasant tasks:

You would have a situation where you're undertaking a really shitty, grimy job, and there's a team of you, and somebody makes a funny comment, and your brain is desperate for distraction... it immediately seizes on it and tries to add a wee bit... the creative flood that comes out. Scriptwriters would give their right arm to have a tenth of it.<sup>75</sup>

Humour acted as a salve to the harshness of the workplace, providing moments of light-heartedness which allowed workers a momentary escape from the grim reality of heavy industry. Pat Clark felt this was a necessity: 'It was good fun... It had to be. The wages and conditions were terrible, so you had to get some kind of sport out of it'.<sup>76</sup>

In James Lees' novel *Steelman*, the narrator states that 'gallows humour' was a common part of workplace banter, but that there was an 'unwritten rule' that accidents which 'ended in fatalities were rarely discussed'. While it is easy to dismiss the cold and inexpressive masculinity of heavy industry as emotionally stunted, a central character of the novel, Ricky, explains the logic of this detachment at the funeral of his co-worker:

His wife of just over a year weeping and wailing uncontrollably and the unborn son inside of her who would never meet his father. In truth that's why the fatalities were never spoken about. Not the fear it could happen to you or a desire to forget the lads involved. It was just too much to think of the families left behind and the lifetime of pain and anguish they would have to endure. No, the lads who went to work one day but never came back might rarely have been spoken of, but they were never far from someone's thoughts and certainly never forgotten.<sup>77</sup>

The detached hardness of heavy industry masculinity functioned as an imperfect coping mechanism, a defensive set of behaviours which allowed workers to tolerate

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>77</sup> Lees, *Steelman*, np.

the persistent latent fear of a potentially lethal workplace, as well as process the emotional trauma of friends and colleagues seriously injured, disabled, or killed onsite.

### **Socialisation and Mentorship**

Leaving school and entering heavy industry was intimidating for young workers. When discussing the beginning of their working life, workers tended to draw attention to their youth and inexperience, juxtaposing it to the confident, intimidating male world of heavy industry. Gordon Hatton described it as a 'culture shock', that 'all of a sudden you're with all these big men... It was a big place, overhead cranes. Dead noisy and dusty. It was tough and you had to stand up for yourself. I was just going from school straight to that'.<sup>78</sup> Stewart MacPherson also found steelmaking 'very, very daunting', noting that 'I was a boy, a wee raw boy at 16 going into a male-dominated, heavy industry. It was an eye-opener'.<sup>79</sup> Entering shipbuilding evoked similar feelings for Alex Straiton:

Scary. Because you've heard all the stories about working in a shipyard and you're going in there to find out whether it's true or whether it's not... I think a lot of it was. It was quite scary, you had to stand up for yourself. The 'university of life' I think.<sup>80</sup>

Mclvor situates apprenticeship as the site which marks the 'transition to adulthood', where young workers 'learnt the trade and all the informal, unspoken workplace culture that went with it'.<sup>81</sup> This transitory period was verbalized by Derek Cairns:

A big learning curve. You left school, and you thought you'd made it when you went into the training centre... You thought you were made. 'I'm a working man'. You're out on the street, you've got a wage, and you think you're there. Then when you went into the steelworks for real, you have got men of all ages. You'd guys ready to retire, you know like your grandpapa's age, guys couple of years older than you that

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Gordon Hatton by James Ferns, 25/03/2019

<sup>79</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>80</sup> Alex Straiton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>81</sup> Mclvor, *Working lives*, p.84

have started a family. That was really a big shock. It was like, this is real-time – it's not the training centre any longer.<sup>82</sup>

Young makes a similar point that the apprenticeship represented a 'boundary between boyhood and manhood', teaching young workers the 'skills of a trade and the inside knowledge of the work culture', which 'were prerequisites to a full-blown masculine identity and inclusion within the male working community'.<sup>83</sup>

An important aspect of this community was respect for workplace elders, which, as Frank Shannon highlights, was given irrespective of rank or seniority:

When you went into the work: your elders – you respected them. And it rubs off on you. Kids now couldn't care less about a teacher. It's all wrong now, it's all wrong. That's the attitude, when you went into the works you held respect to your elders in the works, irrespective of who they were.<sup>84</sup>

These older workers enforced workplace cultural norms, with deviation from these behaviours potentially resulting in ridicule or ostracism. In this way, younger workers were inducted and socialised into the workplace masculinity of heavy industry. This adaptation, or transformation, was commented on by Stewart MacPherson: 'They were men's men, they were. Especially the older ones. If you came in at the bottom and you were young, you weren't long in turning into one of them'.<sup>85</sup> As discussed earlier, an aspiration towards the ideal of chivalrous conduct towards women was an important aspect of heavy industry masculinity. Bran Cunningham discussed the enforcement of this behaviour by older workers, stating that although jokes were predominately 'good natured, good bantered', there were 'lines you didn't cross', that violence would erupt if young workers were seen to be overly public about their sexual exploits:

I seen a wee guy getting punched right across the table because he made a comment about a guy's daughter – not his daughter particularly – but what they all do at the weekend, they are all out

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Derek Cairns by James Ferns, 12/04/2019

<sup>83</sup> Young, 'Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities', p.139

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Frank Shannon by James Ferns, 23/01/2017

<sup>85</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

trying to get the leg over, and your man just punched him right across the table... 'That's my fucking daughter you're talking about'.<sup>86</sup>

Older workers had little tolerance for mockery or failure to conform to the workplace traditions they protected. The quasi-masonic ritual of shipbuilding trade union meetings – themselves a leftover from old craft unions – were still adhered to and enforced by the older generation during Pat Clark's first union meeting:

The chair would say, 'upstanding worthy brothers', everybody would stand up, bunnets off, hand on the heart... You see as a young boy, we're looking at the other apprentices saying, 'What's this?' Then you realized. One of the boys laughed and this old guy just fucking says, 'there is nothing funny about that son'. They took it very, very seriously.<sup>87</sup>

These workplace norms were a steep learning curve for younger workers, but adaptation was essential, as Brian Cunningham highlighted: 'you need to grow up fast, really fast, because you go in there and you think you are good with your mouth and you think you are a bit of a tough guy, trust me, you find out how tough you are'.<sup>88</sup> Conformity to these established workplace norms crafted a personality that allowed young workers to navigate the rigid social order of the workplace, which itself was a means to survive the harsh working conditions of heavy industry.

Heavy industry had a strong intergenerational workforce, which lent itself to the development of an informal, organic, and intergenerational mentorship. But this mentorship, while it existed alongside the harshness of the wider work culture, was softer, more nurturing, almost fatherly in expression. There existed 'a big family type environment' according to James Carlin, where 'the older guys tended to look out for the younger ones', James describes this fatherly dynamic:

I was the youngest... I can remember a couple of times I went in with a hangover and you know they, they used to give me a hard time, they would say to me, 'you should be ashamed of yourself', and all that sort

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<sup>86</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>87</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>88</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

of stuff, 'coming in in that state' you know, so I suppose a lot of father like figures as well, they looked after me.<sup>89</sup>

Derek Cairns described a paternal environment, 'you'd always guys that would help you out... my dad didn't work right beside me, but some of the guys I worked beside knew my dad so they were always looking after you'.<sup>90</sup> Older workers had an entire professional and personal life of lived experience to share with younger workers, which was incredibly valuable and remembered fondly. It provided 'a good schooling and a good grounding', according to Brian Cunningham: 'honestly it was terrific, and you had all different levels, different ages, boys 18, 19, to guys in their 60s, and people who had real heartache in their lives, real grief to suffer'.<sup>91</sup> Those younger workers who were more reserved, such as Alan Brown, benefited from the intergenerational nature of the workplace:

It was a great place to work, and I think it was a great place to build your character. I would describe myself as being, not shy but a bit demure maybe, not worldly wise. It certainly opened your eyes too, because you'd have people from every walk of life in there. It certainly opened your eyes to what went on in the real world.<sup>92</sup>

Jim McKeown enjoyed the educational aspect of this environment: 'it was good, it was an education because see as a young fellow going in with the sort of older men it was, it was a university of life – that was the university of life, they taught you a lot of things other than steelmaking'.<sup>93</sup> This idea of the workplace as university was shared by Alan Glover: 'I've said it and I'll keep saying it and I'll say it till my dying day it's the best university I went to. Because it taught me a lot about people and there was a lot of really talented men in there'.<sup>94</sup> The 'university of life' was deployed frequently by workers to narrate their induction into heavy industry, denoting its educational value. As Brian Glen reflected:

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<sup>89</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>90</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>91</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>92</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>93</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>94</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)



It helped make you a man and taught you a lot about life, because when we came out of school and had a year in the training centre in the Govan Shipbuilders. It's like moving from one classroom into another with a practical side. After that you're in an environment where I would say, real life, opened your eyes and gives you that life experience.<sup>95</sup>

Lees' *Steelmen* also demonstrates an educationally nurturing environment; referring to his older colleagues, one character, Jack, reflects, 'he was always learning something from these two. He was honest enough to admit he hadn't paid enough attention at school and felt in some way he was plugging some of those gaps now'.<sup>96</sup> Working alongside older workers was 'an education in life more than anything', according to Stewart MacPherson, and this mentorship also had a political dynamic, as older men shared their understanding of trade union solidarity and socialist politics – 'the older guys were really clued up on it' – with younger workers.<sup>97</sup> There was a strong nurturing aspect to intergenerational relationships within heavy industry. Older workers would take those they saw potential in 'under their wing', mentoring and providing opportunities and training for career advancement. Alan Brown attributes his early promotion to supervisor to such a relationship:

I was sort of looked after if you want to call it that sort of thing. I was sort of channelled. I think, usually if they see people with potential, if you want to call it that, somebody always takes you under their wing. I was fortunate enough, they took a liking to me. I was sort of given the training, I was put into sketching and then planning... I was actually promoted to supervisor at the age of 23 from a craft backroom, which at that time was quite unusual.<sup>98</sup>

Using similar language, a third generation Cape Breton miner in McNeil's *Pit Talk* also describes the fostering aspect of the industrial workplace, noting how 'the older men kind of took you under the wing, and they were always there to look after you'.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Brian Glen Interview (Ferns)

<sup>96</sup> Lees, *Steelmen*, np.

<sup>97</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>98</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>99</sup> I. McNeil, *Pit Talk: the legacy of Cape Breton's coal miners* (Sydney: Icon Communication, 2010) p.134

Heavy industry therefore had a Janus-faced masculinity, ruthlessly unforgiving yet simultaneously nurturing.

These two seemingly conflicting aspects did not appear contradictory to workers; workplace masculinity is complex, and this complexity is woven with ease into workers' testimonies. This is exemplified in Derek Cairns' narrative:

It was good. Good camaraderie, really good fun. It was just, how can I say, I was a young man going in there amongst older men. They'd be pulling your leg. There'd be good fun between each other. You had to toughen up. It could be brutal at times, but it was good times.<sup>100</sup>

The phrase 'brutal at times, but it was good times' perfectly encapsulates the complexity of heavy industry masculinity, as does Frank Roy's statement 'it could be merciless; it could be so comradery... that's just the nature of heavy industry'.<sup>101</sup> Alan Glover reflected on his own experience of shipbuilders' sometimes rough approach to mentoring:

A lot of the guys they took you under their wing. If you were doing the job wrong or there was a better way of doing it they would show you... There was a lot of mentoring, there was a lot of reverse psychology with some of them as well... one foreman who knew my father. He used to call me a 'useless long-haired hippy bastard'... He always gave me the really tough jobs to do. He was actually nurturing me in his own wee perverse way.<sup>102</sup>

Particularly interesting here is how Alan acknowledged that this form of mentorship could be hard, or 'perverse', but that the intention was nonetheless to 'nurture' him. A natural, though not necessarily correct conclusion to draw from these testimonies is that they are demonstrative of workplace bullying, which workers have simply internalised, reproduced, and then excused. In one sense this is a matter of agency, a demonstration of how much oral historians trust that workers are able to effectively

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<sup>100</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>101</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>102</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

narrate their own lived experiences. Stewart MacPherson, for instance, felt that the charge of bullying was misplaced:

I sometimes see things and they've put it down as bullying, it wasn't bullying. We never bullied anybody. It was, what's the word? It's a learning curve. But there wasn't any badness involved. They weren't trying to pick on people. It made you grow up. It was that type of environment.<sup>103</sup>

Workers were adamant that the lessons of heavy industry were necessary, but not universally so, rather, they believed that they fit the tone and context of a particular workplace at a particular time. Indeed, as has been stated previously, heavy industry was an incredibly dangerous occupation, fraught with both immediate and long-term bodily risks as well as the emotional trauma of witnessing workplace accidents and fatalities. It is too simplistic to judge these testimonies according to contemporary, and perhaps middle-class, standards. The lessons which older workers passed on to younger workers – taught with either care, cruelty, or both – had evolved in a specific context, and though imperfect, they were designed to protect workers against the hardships of a brutal, sometimes terrifying industry.

### **Masculinity and Defence of Workers' Rights**

An important aspect of heavy industry masculinity is its connectedness to the defence of class interests. The hardness of this masculinity, its aggressive response to provocation, cultivated a workforce ready to defend their working rights. Until the 1970s, Clydeside heavy industries were among the most politically militant and strike-prone regions of the UK, defined by a 'fiercely independent work culture'.<sup>104</sup> Mclvor attributes this militancy in part to the 'synergies between class and masculine values' that were prevalent within Clydeside heavy industry, where 'being a man also involved standing up for your rights against authoritarian management'.<sup>105</sup> The

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<sup>103</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>104</sup> Johnston and Mclvor, 'Dangerous work', p.140

<sup>105</sup> Mclvor, *Working lives*, p.87

strength of heavy industry trade unions meant that management threats were received with little tolerance from union officials. As Brian Cunningham recalled:

Macourt was our shop steward at the time and we were at a meeting, it was a dispute, and the [HR] guy threatened him... he says, 'if you don't get these men back to work Mr Macourt you're gonnae go out here without a job', and big Macourt says to him, 'if I go out here without a job you're going out here in a stretcher son, and I ain't fucking kidding you on'.<sup>106</sup>

The threat of economic violence here is firmly met with a threat of physical violence by the shop steward, who rejects the HR representative's attempt to establish superiority, diminishing his masculinity in the process by labelling him 'son'. In a similar way, Ayrshire miner and trade union activist, Alec Mills stated, 'if you were a weak man you would have did what the boss said', thereby establishing a link between resisting management control and manhood.<sup>107</sup> But this culture went beyond a mere individualistic rejection of authority; it was collectively protective in orientation, aimed particularly towards defending those who lacked the means to defend themselves. This protectiveness drew Robert Buirds towards the role of shop steward:

I became a shop steward in my early 20s... I just didn't like people getting taken advantage of, and I didn't like bullies. I still detest bullies to this day, and I will always react to that. It was more or less to protect people who didn't want to protect themselves or couldn't protect themselves. I kind of stood up for them. That was just more compassion than any political motivation. It was just: 'That's not fair'.<sup>108</sup>

As with intergenerational mentorship, Robert's appeal to 'fairness' ran throughout workers' narratives of trade union activism, further indicating the more compassionate aspect of heavy industry masculinity.

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<sup>106</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>107</sup> A. McIvor, 'The realities and narratives of paid work: The Scottish workplace in the twentieth century', in L. Abrams and C. Brown (eds.) *A history of everyday life in twentieth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) p.109

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Robert Buirds by James Ferns, 04/03/2019

Further illustrating the linkage between masculinity and class interests, Thomas Brotherston described his emotional response to the 1971 Upper Clyde Shipbuilder's (UCS) Work-In as the 'strongest I ever felt in my life... I could have fought the British Army single-handed. Pride... It was the last time that I felt like a man'.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, Work-In figurehead Jimmy Reid's now-famous statement, 'we don't only build ships on the Clyde, we build men', has been popularly understood as emblematic of a machismo-fuelled workplace. This is, however, a misinterpretation. His statement cannot be fully understood in isolation from the rest of his speech, in which Reid, speaking of leaked documents that revealed the Conservative government's attempt to covertly rundown UCS, declared:

They are the hardest-faced bunch of political gangsters I have ever met. They make Al Capone and his gunmen look like a troop of Boy Scouts. The biggest mistake we could make is to lie down, capitulate and grovel to them. We don't only build ships on the Clyde, we build men. They have taken on the wrong people and we will fight.<sup>110</sup>

Reid's impassioned appeal to resistance is made in response to what he describes as a predatory, criminal masculinity from shipbuilding senior management and government officials. Reid's statement – 'we build men' – is not intended to portray shipbuilders as hard-bodied men, composed of the same material as the ships they build; he is describing a community dependent upon shipbuilding employment, which, compelled to defend itself from threat of annihilation, does so collectively, eagerly, and with dignity.

The masculinity of senior management, with its relentless focus on productivity and disregard for workplace democracy, has not been properly analysed alongside shop-floor masculinity, but it is clear from workers' narratives that the two are connected. Robert Buirds, for instance, felt that the charge of 'macho' better suited shipbuilding management than the workforce:

Whoever says that is talking a load of rubbish... People looked after their self because they wanted to walk into their work the same way

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>110</sup> Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p.199

they walked out it. They watched one another. It was just the managers that didn't look after you. They just wanted their pound of flesh. The 'macho' was only part of the management let me tell you. See how much they could fucking screw you into the ground and get as much out of you without looking after all the stuff that went with it. No, no, the men weren't macho.<sup>111</sup>

As described in chapter 2, shipbuilding was distinguished from steelmaking by a particularly ruthless management. Linda Collins, who was motivated to become a shop steward to defend others, believed that shipbuilding's workforce was united in part through its 'collective loathing' for management, which she described as 'reactionary... absolutely vile... very authoritarian'.<sup>112</sup> Joe O'Rourke similarly remembered one of his managers as 'an evil bastard, well-known evil'.<sup>113</sup> Alan Glover's recollection of a conversation between shipyard foremen is illustrative of the attitudes Linda and Joe described:

Some of them were just, and excuse my language here, but some of them were just evil bastards... My brother got a job in there briefly as a timekeeper, staff job; and my brother didn't believe half the stuff I told him. I remember my brother sitting there fixing the time cards and two foremen – [it] was pissing down with rain – two foremen, one says, 'I better try and get some dry jobs for my men' – because when a ship's getting built there's water running everywhere – and the other went, 'fuck them, they are nothing but rats anyway'. My brother says, 'now I know where you're coming from'.<sup>114</sup>

Authoritarian management, primarily an issue within shipbuilding, conditioned workers' masculinity, which was in turn utilised by trade unionists to mobilise resistance. The synergy between class and masculine values were in part a reaction to a much more toxic, and certainly more ruthless form of masculinity deployed by management; any analysis of shop-floor masculinity must be considered with reference to the culture and behaviour of management, as well as the power dynamics of the workplace.

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<sup>111</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Linda Collins by James Ferns, 19/03/2019

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Joe O'Rourke by James Ferns, 30/07/2019

<sup>114</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

## Rejection of Macho Characterisation

It is important to consider that a number of workers objected to the characterisation of heavy industry as particularly macho altogether. Unlike a marker such as social class, which was readily understood and discussed, the idea of a job being specifically ‘macho’ was challenged. Pat Clark felt that it, ‘depends what people mean by “macho”’, pointing out that although the workforce was primarily male, this did not prevent men from being ‘sympathetic’ to one another.<sup>115</sup> As noted above, Robert Buirds judged the portrayal of a ‘macho’ workplace as ‘a load of rubbish’, believing that the characterisation of workplace ‘macho men’ was a ‘fanciful reminiscence’ on the part of those who study the industry.<sup>116</sup> Such a depiction also failed to connect with Tommy Johnston, who ‘never ever looked at it that way’, viewing it instead as ‘an everyday job’.<sup>117</sup> Alan Brown felt the portrayal had more to do with outside perceptions than the experience of workers themselves:

Outwardly it would probably seem macho... I don’t know. That’s a strange thing. It’s certainly there, and it’s certainly that’s the way it was portrayed at the time. But if you worked in it, you didn’t think you were a hard man and you certainly didn’t go out to pick fights with people. You weren’t better than anybody sort of thing.<sup>118</sup>

Alan, like other workers who reflected on heavy industry masculinity, was eager to dispel the notion of workplace violence – ‘you didn’t think you were a hard man and you certainly didn’t go out to pick fights with people’ – being a ‘hardman’ was not a conscious part of workers’ psyche, but rather simply part of a broader mythology surrounding the industry held by those outside it. James Carlin similarly contested the idea of macho workers, noting that while the ‘[outside] community might have viewed it as macho’, for those ‘in that environment it is just a job’.<sup>119</sup> Importantly,

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<sup>115</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>116</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Tommy Johnston by James Ferns, 26/01/2017

<sup>118</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>119</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

James also draws attention to how the inherent danger of heavy industry can make men feel vulnerable:

I'm struggling to sort of grasp the meaning of the word macho, because I could open it up a wee bit, it might have been viewed as macho, we certainly didn't view it as macho, although it was an extremely dangerous job, you know what I mean. See when you are in that environment you don't see it as that, you know what I mean. There were accidents that happened, there is one that stands out in my mind, it was a Sunday night and my dad, him obviously being one of the union guys down there, he got a phone call to go into work, there was a guy that actually fell into a ladle [of molten metal], it was obviously horrific for the guys that witnessed it and for any of the guy's family members, but, see on the back of that accident, I don't think that guys felt macho. It's hard to pin point, I think the community might have viewed it as macho, but see when you are in that environment it is just a job, you are just doing your job, you are no, you don't puff the chest out and – it's not like that.<sup>120</sup>

James' narrative is very self-reflective, his struggle to 'grasp the meaning of the word macho' in relation to such a horrific death problematizes the notion of emotionless 'hardmen'; after witnessing a colleague burn alive, workers did not 'puff the chest out'. Despite the normalisation of danger within heavy industry, and the protective shell of workers' bravado and dark humour, accidents like these remained terrifying.

The masculinity of heavy industry workers, and of working-class men in general, is often portrayed as aggressive, emotionally distant, and repressed, but oral history testimonies reveal a much more colourful, expressive culture laced throughout this harder masculinity. Thomas Brotherston was keen to point out that within shipbuilding:

It wasn't all dour gloom and militancy. There was a huge amount of colour and character. We'll cite some names, the Talking Horse, his young brother we called him The Foal. There was a welder, a welder shop steward, The Pig McCrindle. The Pig McCrindle was renowned... We had Spooky Joe, the Spiritualist – that was a fucking hoot!<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)



There was a full range of personalities within heavy industry, as Paul Molloy stated, 'there are people who are just psychos to people who are just super intelligent. You had this real eclectic mix of people who were from crazy different extremes all mashed together'.<sup>122</sup> Workers described a vibrancy within their industry, which challenged one-dimensional depictions of stunted masculinity, demonstrating that a range of masculinities can co-exist at the same time. James Cloughley recalled that 'so many people working within the industry had other activities including art, music, a lot of philosophy – the whole shooting match'.<sup>123</sup> Beneath the harsh veneer of heavy industry masculinity, there flourished creativity and collaboration over shared passions. Workers' masculinity was nuanced, it was harsh, at rare times violent, but it was also caring and empathetic. This coexistence was elaborated on by Alan Glover:

There was a lot of really talented men in there... It was a very macho environment. In saying that, there was guys in there, I don't know if it was the Talking Horse – that was his nickname, some of the nicknames were brilliant right – he kept bees and made honey. As I said there was guys that were caricaturists, there was guys that had a lot of talents, there was guys that were – see like an old converted lifeboat or something, there was guys fixing them up to sail them and stuff like that... Silly things like in the canteen, maybe say it was stew and potatoes and you'd left a bit, there were guys with chib marks [scars] down their face going, 'You finished that big yin?' I'm like, 'Aye'. They'd put it in a polystyrene cup. Then maybe a cat – there were feral cats in the shipyard – and maybe they had kittens, they were feeding these cats. These are big, hard, tough guys who'd probably stab you [snaps finger] like that, and yet they were collecting food and feeding cats – there was no rhyme nor reason to it.<sup>124</sup>

This depiction, of 'talented men', of bee keeping and honey making, further undermines the notion of dour masculinity, clarifying in its place an image of the workplace as a site of working-class creativity. Alan's description of the large scar-faced worker taking food from his table immediately provokes a sense of intimidation, and like heavy industry at large, this micro incident at first glance appears symptomatic of workplace machismo, but Alan's explanation of how this

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<sup>122</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>123</sup> Interview with James Cloughley by James Ferns, 08/04/2019

<sup>124</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

man took it upon himself to care for stray kittens, perfectly encapsulates the nuance of heavy industry masculinity, its ability to be both hard and gentle.

## Emasculation and Deindustrialisation

As the work culture of heavy industry has been characterised as traditionally masculine, it could be supposed that the loss of this employment, and transition into female-dominated work, could precipitate some sense of emasculation. According to Young, the mixture of rapid deindustrialisation and high unemployment from the 1980s presented 'significant challenges' to working-class men's efforts to 'maintain a suitable masculine identity'.<sup>125</sup> The link between feelings of emasculation and unemployment, specifically loss of breadwinner status, are very well established. They have also been portrayed in popular culture, especially within films which touch on redundancy and male identity such as *On a Clear Day* and *The Full Monty*, dealing with shipbuilders and steelworkers respectively.

Some scholars have taken this further, suggesting that the process of deindustrialisation, which has propelled men into formally female-dominated industries, has engendered a sense of emasculation, perhaps even a crisis of masculinity within deindustrialised communities. In *Masculinities and Culture*, Beynon discusses how ex-industrial workers 'felt demeaned' by occupying 'women's jobs'. Beynon highlights an ex-miner's testimony, who found that his employment in a chicken packing factory lacked 'the technical challenges, dangers and male camaraderie' of mining; he did not consider it a 'proper job', but instead, 'a woman's job'.<sup>126</sup> Walkerdine and Jimenez explore masculinity and deindustrialisation by interviewing residents of a former steel-dependant town in Wales. They present adherence to steelmaking masculinity as a vital component of the community's survival strategy, noting that the 'strong masculine body of the steelworker was

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<sup>125</sup> Young, 'Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities', pp.131-132

<sup>126</sup> Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*, p.88, p.202

absolutely central to the fantasies and practices through which the safety of the community was sustained' throughout its history.<sup>127</sup> The closure of the steelworks not only prompted a loss of income but the disappearance 'of real men, of a strong masculinity' which had sustained the community through hardship, thereby making its loss 'feel doubly catastrophic'.<sup>128</sup> Its closure engendered 'intergenerational trauma',<sup>129</sup> where young men describe feelings of shame and embarrassment over their failure to attain traditionally masculine employment:

These young people seem to long for a lost past, are unable to move and become the targets of attacks by the older townspeople for, in the case of young men, taking jobs considered too feminine, which produces powerful and painful conflicts between generations.<sup>130</sup>

Walkerdine and Jimenez argue that the young men who take work in the service sector were a source of shame for their former steelworker fathers, and were ridiculed by male and female peers, who questioned their sexuality and belittled their masculinity.<sup>131</sup>

Waves of intense deindustrialisation marking the decline of traditionally male industries, the expansion of service sector employment, and working-class men's admissions of hopelessness and alienation, alongside their wider experience of redundancy, unemployment and low pay, are seen as symptomatic of a supposed 'crisis of masculinity'.<sup>132</sup> Within Homestead, Pennsylvania, employment in steelmaking was a readily available and obvious source of work for young working-class men: 'From the early twentieth century until well after the Second World War, a boy growing up in Homestead knew that men worked in steel... A boy who grew up in a mill family could follow easily in the footsteps of his father and uncles, entering the mill with barely a second thought and not much prior training'.<sup>133</sup> The traditional

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<sup>127</sup> Walkerdine and Jimenez, *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation*, p.136

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* p.10

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p.8

<sup>131</sup> Walkerdine and Jimenez, *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation*

<sup>132</sup> C. Wall and J. F. Kirk, *Work and Identity: Historical and Cultural Contexts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

<sup>133</sup> J. Modell and C. Brodsky, *A Town without Steel: Envisioning Homestead* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988) p.135

route for male working-class school leavers, of gaining employment in manufacturing, was disrupted by deindustrialisation.<sup>134</sup> McDowell notes that the 'world in which masculinity was an automatic passport to the better paying jobs has disappeared', that the 'lads' who messed about at school were secure in the knowledge that they would be able to acquire a trade, status, a reasonable wage, and a masculine way of life.<sup>135</sup> Deindustrialisation has had a devastating impact upon young workers, particularly school leavers. The availability of industrial employment meant that there was access to relatively well paid employment which did not require formal qualifications. Byrne notes, 'in 1971 most school leavers in Middlesbrough had no formal qualifications but had access to an employment system in which many relatively well paid jobs did not require such qualifications. Now things are very different'.<sup>136</sup> The professionalisation of entry-level work had made it increasingly difficult for those who do not possess a formal qualification or accredited skill to gain decent employment.<sup>137</sup> Secure employment within manufacturing has collapsed, and in its place young working-class school leavers are predominantly employed within precarious, low paid workplaces, often within the service sector.<sup>138</sup> Within this labour market context of service sector employment, McDowell notes that the 'traditions and cultural attitudes' of young working-class men place them at a particular disadvantage, that 'their appearance, bodily stance and style of interaction often counts against them'.<sup>139</sup> A similar point is raised by Finley, who argues that in 'the service economy, where "aesthetic values" have a great deal of currency... bad speaking voices and strong accents are another employment liability'.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Wall and Kirk, *Work and Identity*

<sup>135</sup> L. McDowell, 'Transitions to Work: Masculine identities, youth inequality and labour market change', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 9:1 (2002) p.56

<sup>136</sup> D. Byrne, 'Deindustrialisation and dispossession: an examination of social division in the industrial city', *Sociology*, 29 (1995) p.110

<sup>137</sup> J. Bloodworth, 'There's no life here': a journey into Britain's precarious future', *The Guardian* (16 December 2016) [https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/16/journey-to-heart-of-britain-precarious-future-ebbw-vale?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/16/journey-to-heart-of-britain-precarious-future-ebbw-vale?CMP=share_btn_fb) [accessed 14/05/2018]

<sup>138</sup> McDowell, 'Transitions to Work', p.40

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> R. Finlay, *Modern Scotland 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004) p.389

The loss of heavy industry and move into female employment is commonly understood to be an almost inevitably emasculatory experience. But there is a noticeable pattern to testimonies which supposedly propagate the notion of female work engendering emasculation; specifically, they are either 1) not about reemployment at all, but rather unemployment/underemployment, which *is* linked to emasculation, or 2) they are the projections of individuals who themselves have no direct experience of moving from male to female-dominated employment. In Cross and Bagilhole's study of men's transition into traditionally female employment, a majority of the men 'reported experiencing a questioning of their sexuality' from their peers, including former male colleagues, as well as male and female friends and acquaintances.<sup>141</sup> A former miner, now a psychiatric nurse, was ridiculed: 'Some of them were actually quite nasty about me. They were quite cutting... They were sort of like, sort of really really into questioning my, you know, my sexuality'.<sup>142</sup> Though this was not uniform, another former miner, now a general nurse, received a positive response: 'a lot of [coal]mining friends that I keep in touch with were very supportive. They said, "Go for it, owt's gotta be better than this". And there were a lot of 'em that actually said "I'd love to do something like that myself"'.<sup>143</sup> Within the formally steel dependant Homestead, Pennsylvania, the wife of a former steelworker belittled the new employment outside of heavy industry as unmanly: 'There's sort of like a brawny, a brashness about them being in there, and they feel that that's like, I don't know, sissified'.<sup>144</sup> Rather than highlight emasculation on the part of workers themselves, these narratives instead reveal a sense of societal uncomfortableness towards men moving from male to female-dominated work. This unease was also present in two interviews highlighted by McIvor:

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<sup>141</sup> S. Cross and B. Bagilhole, 'Girls' Jobs for the Boys? Men, Masculinity and Non-Traditional Occupations', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 9:2 (2002) p.213

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Modell and Brodsky, *A Town without Steel*, p.40

Men are used tae breaking bricks, building walls, lifting things wi' cranes, awe heavy and muscle stuff so they're losing a bit oh that, so their macho image is no longer there, is it?<sup>145</sup>

We no longer were breadwinners... and we had our partners working. I was a kept man.<sup>146</sup>

In neither narrative do these men suggest, with reference to their own personal experience, that the move into female-dominated employment was emasculatory; the former is contrasting his own experience of traditionally male employment with that of men nowadays who enter traditionally female employment, while the latter is making a link between emasculation and unemployment, rather than reemployment. Bemoaning the emasculation of other men is a narrative usually confined to those with no experience of female-dominated work. Prefacing his statement by acknowledging it as 'a sexist viewpoint', Alex McGowan described a sort of mixture of shame and pity for men in 'female' employment:

I suppose it's age-related, but if I go out, if we go for our lunch, or we go shopping, or something like that, it's just – it's a sexist viewpoint, I know that – but you're looking at young guys, 21, 22 serving in coffee shops, and clothes stores and that, you're saying, 'God is that what that guy is going to be doing for the rest of his life?'... That was all women's work sort of thing. Guys had, they were into manufacturing, they were into construction, or they were into steel. They were into something.<sup>147</sup>

This alludes to a perception that traditional male work was tangible, real – it was 'something' – suggesting that female-dominated employment is not true work, and therefore should not be performed by 'real' men. In a similar vein, Sam Thompson lamented the lack of obvious progression for young men employed within 'female sectors': 'How do you get succession in jobs now... when would you have seen men working in Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, when I was young, you wouldn't have... men are now encroaching into the female sectors'.<sup>148</sup> As with the interviews McIvor cites

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<sup>145</sup> A. McIvor, 'Blighted lives: Deindustrialisation, health and well-being in the Clydeside region', *Revue d'histoire*, 20:21 (2019) p.4

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Sam Thompson by James Ferns, 17/01/2017

above, these two men also lack direct experience of ‘female’ employment, they discuss emasculation in reference to an assumption and judgment of other men. This distinction is crucial, as most claims of emasculation being linked to female-dominated employment rely on the testimonies of men speaking about other men, not themselves. As will be shown below, interviews with men who had experience of female-dominated employment – despite expressing meaningful, sometimes negative differences – did not report any sense of emasculation.

### **Masculinity Survives in ‘Female’ Employment**

The association between female-dominated employment and emasculation is overly simplistic. Masculinity has traditionally been associated with a breadwinner identity, physical toughness, aggression, and emotional detachment.<sup>149</sup> McIvor has highlighted a growing recognition that ‘few men actually “fit” [masculine] norms and that some of the stereotypical “core” attributes are not necessarily exclusive to men’.<sup>150</sup> Segal has also cautioned, ‘masculinity is not some kind of single essence, innate or acquired’.<sup>151</sup> Masculinity, as a set of acceptable and expected male behaviours, is continually evolving, and manifests itself in a diverse range of forms that suit specific contexts. Hakim has suggested that neoliberalism and austerity, in eroding men’s traditional breadwinner roles, and therefore one aspect of their masculinity, has resulted in men paying greater attention to their physical appearance.<sup>152</sup> Linking the 2008 financial crash to an ‘empirically observable rise in young British men sharing images of their worked-out bodies on social media platforms’, Hakim argues that these men, unable to attain breadwinner roles, derive masculine status, or ‘erotic capital’, in the ‘cultivation of sexual desirability’ through their physical fitness.<sup>153</sup> The fluid nature of masculinity is referenced by McIvor, who

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<sup>149</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.81

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p.81

<sup>151</sup> L. Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.123

<sup>152</sup> J. Hakim, “‘The Spornosexual’: the affective contradictions of male body-work in neoliberal digital culture”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27:2 (2016) pp.1-11

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p.2, p.6

states, 'neither masculinity nor femininity were fixed constructs at any point in time, rather a range of gender identities (masculinities and femininities) coexisted across a spectrum and mutated as time passed'.<sup>154</sup> Utilising the concept of 'multiple masculinities', Collinson and Hearn highlight 'the temporal, spatial and cultural diversity of masculinity' between and within the workplace.<sup>155</sup> As such, the masculinity of heavy industry worker's should be seen as fluid; it adapts to new employment contexts, rather than simply wither away.

McDowell has questioned the premise that men are emasculated by traditionally female employment. Her interviews with male school leavers from the early 2000s, many of whom occupy 'low-level entry jobs', did not uncover endemic emasculation, instead, 'waged work' remained the 'central element' of 'acceptable and respected masculine identity'.<sup>156</sup> Exploring the masculinity of young men employed in the service sector, McDowell reported no 'sense of a crisis of masculinity'; men 'emphasised the heroic struggle necessary to overcome consumer resistance in selling occupations, or the camaraderie of the long hours/hard work culture of the burger bar'.<sup>157</sup> Rather than an emasculatory McJob, employment within McDonalds 'did not challenge [men's] sense of themselves as masculine', emphasising the fast paced nature of the work they 'slog it out day to day', taking enjoyment from the banter and camaraderie of co-workers.<sup>158</sup> McDowell also noted how men within the service sector have created a masculine hierarchy of appropriate employment, where 'working in a sports shop or an electronic goods boutique, for example, is seen as appropriately masculine, compared to, say, employment in a general clothing store'.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Mclvor, *Working lives*, p.103

<sup>155</sup> D. Collinson and J. Hearn, 'Men at "Work": Multiple Masculinities/Multiple Workplaces', in M. Mac an Ghail (ed.) *Understanding masculinities: social relations and cultural arenas* (Buckingham: Open University Press 1996) p.66

<sup>156</sup> L. McDowell, *Redundant masculinities?: Employment change and white working class youth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) p.236

<sup>157</sup> McDowell, 'Transitions to Work', p.55, p.51

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* p.52; McDowell, *Redundant masculinities?*, p.236

<sup>159</sup> McDowell, 'Transitions to Work', p.51



Cross and Bagilhole interviewed men who moved from traditionally male into traditionally female-dominated workplaces, examining the 'ways in which masculinities are defined, (re-)constructed, and maintained'.<sup>160</sup> Contrary to any emasculation, they found that men were 'actively maintaining traditional male values' through their work.<sup>161</sup> The association between 'female' employment and emasculation is considered 'too simplistic', and it is 'debatable' whether the lack of availability in traditionally male employment consequently means an abandonment of 'traditional hegemonic masculinity'.<sup>162</sup> They describe a much more complex process, where men are 'trying to maintain a traditional masculinity' as well as 'beginning at times to (re-)construct a different masculinity which encompassed traditional feminine traits'.<sup>163</sup> Cross and Bagilhole highlight the establishment of a 'traditionally masculine culture' among occupational therapists, which was described by one male nurse as a 'testosterone culture', in which occupational therapists would shame other men in caring roles, such as general nurses, deeming them unmanly.<sup>164</sup> Crucially, the reconfiguration of masculinity served to preserve 'men as the dominant gender'; for instance, men would remark upon how they outperformed female colleagues, who they supposed lacked professionalism and commitment to quality work.<sup>165</sup> One nurse established 'personal and professional distance from female colleagues', stating:

When you look at males coming into nursing... they're probably going into nursing for the rest of their career... females only go into nursing as either a second job or as something to do until something else comes along. Or until they get married and have children.<sup>166</sup>

The trope that women's paid employment does not constitute 'real work', but is rather some form of entertainment or avenue for 'pocket money' was also drawn on by a male cleaner: 'half of them have got kids and it's just a job to get them out and

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<sup>160</sup> Cross and Bagilhole, 'Girls' Jobs for the Boys?', p.210

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* p.221

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* p.214

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.* p.220

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* p.217

just earn a bit of money. They're only there to earn money. Whereas I take a lot more pride and I think a lot more men do as well'.<sup>167</sup> Cross and Bagilhole demonstrate how the masculinity of these men remains unscathed, partly based on their belief of outperforming women in the very skills traditionally associated with women's work.<sup>168</sup>

### **Centrality of Work not Type of Work**

The masculinity of former heavy industry workers is perhaps not as fragile as some may believe. Former heavy industry workers who transitioned into female-dominated employment reported no sense of emasculation whatsoever. Strangleman raises an interesting point, stating, 'I have almost never encountered workers who volunteer thoughts on abstract concepts such as "occupational identity". Workers do not think like this; it is not part of their grammar'.<sup>169</sup> In a similar sense, discussions of emasculation were also 'not part of [workers'] grammar'. But unlike occupational identity, which can be discussed either directly or in a roundabout fashion, it was clear that when experiencing their own employment workers do not think in terms of 'macho work' or 'emasculation', prime importance was attached to work, not its form. Rather than recoil under the gendered reputation of his work, one former miner from Cross and Bagilhole's study, now a community care worker, simply stated, 'I don't want to sound funny but a job is a job'.<sup>170</sup> This sentiment was shared by former heavy industry workers, with importance given to continuous employment, rather than type of employment. While Harry Carlin acknowledged the differences in shop-floor culture between steelmaking and his new employment in social care as profound, his overall analysis was that it remained a job:

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p.216

<sup>168</sup> Cross and Bagilhole, 'Girls' Jobs for the Boys?'

<sup>169</sup> Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness*, p.102

<sup>170</sup> Cross and Bagilhole, 'Girls' Jobs for the Boys?', p.216

It went from a real, culture of, background of heavy steel and things like that, a labour intensive environment, to a sort of quiet, sedate environment. But at the end of the day you had to do your job and do it well, you know, the same as the steelworks.<sup>171</sup>

Strangleman's interviews with Park Royal Guinness Brewery workers revealed a robust occupational community, but like steelworkers and shipbuilders, workers' commitment to employment was related to work itself, rather than type of work.<sup>172</sup> Highlighting the experience of one Brewery worker, Ray, Strangleman notes that 'work mattered to Ray, but his sense of self-worth was bound up not with what he actually did, but rather from doing something'.<sup>173</sup> Wight has outlined the social value of paid employment over unemployment within working-class communities, as such, emasculation comes from a lack of work, not necessarily the type of work:

For men, the moral values surrounding work are best understood as an employment ethic, rather than a general work ethic. The essence of this employment ethic was that a man disciplined himself to earn money for himself or his family, and the extent of hardship suffered to this end was an expression of his manhood.<sup>174</sup>

Gaining and holding employment was of central importance for workers, the form of the work, or the traditional gender attached to it, was of little consequence relative to the need for a wage. The more hardship suffered in pursuit of this wage, or the more demeaning the job, the greater workers' provider identity was fulfilled. Holding employment, irrespective of type, gives working-class men access to moral capital over unemployed men. Correspondingly, Harry Carlin's move into female-dominated employment in the social care sector did not diminish his masculinity; he still maintained his status as a worker, which he could exercise over those without work:

There was a boy greeting [crying] at me in one of the pubs in Bellshill saying '[immigrants] are stealing our jobs', I said, 'you haven't fuckin'

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<sup>171</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>172</sup> Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* p.140

<sup>174</sup> Wight, *Workers not Wasters*, p.106

worked, I can't mind you working, and they are stealing our jobs?' I said, 'away you go, don't even talk to me'.<sup>175</sup>

Because this man lacked employment, his opinion lacked credibility, and Harry was able to mobilise a traditionally masculine, working-class work ethic to effectively disarm his anti-immigrant rhetoric.

### **Continuation of Provider Identity**

The emasculatory effects of deindustrialisation are not a consequence of the decline of traditionally 'male' industries and rise of 'female' ones, but rather the destruction of employment which gave working-class men access to breadwinner status. In terms of masculinity, importance was attached to being 'a worker', as this allowed men to fulfil their provider identity, the type and form of work was largely irrelevant. It was commitment to this provider identity which compelled men's search for any form of employment in the aftermath of their redundancy. Financial pressure produced immediate anxiety among recently redundant workers. The high pay of heavy industry and the social mobility it supported had evaporated, leaving behind a sense of impending financial ruin. The gravity of this situation was outlined by Brian Cunningham: 'at 31 I had a house, a wife and a mortgage; no job... redundancies no going to last you forever'.<sup>176</sup> Brian's provider identity compelled him to 'compartmentalise' his feeling of loss:

It was quite easy for me to compartmentalise, I could put that chapter of life away and go: that's done, I was a steelworker, I'm not anymore, I need to move on I need to look forward... But some people can't do it... it was really, really difficult for some people... I will always have fond memories of it but it was done, it was finished. Nothing I can do about it, I've got to move on, I had a family and a house to consider so I just put it behind me and move on as best I could.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>176</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

As Brian highlights, former heavy industry workers, especially in the immediate wake of factory closure, could ill afford prolonged sentimentality; the emotional attachment to their former workplace was suppressed as they scrambled to re-enter the workforce. Following his redundancy, Alex McGowan was bound by a sense of personal responsibility to regain employment: 'you can blame other people but sometimes, I think you need to take responsibility yourself and say, "Well, what am I going to do about it?"'.<sup>178</sup> Alex was not articulating some form of rugged individualism here, but expressing a fact common to most redundant workers: if they did not help themselves they would receive no help at all. Thomas Brotherston articulated the 'desperation' of redundant workers to take any form of employment which would allow them to provide for their family:

I needed to work, you have got to work, you've got to pay your way in the world. It was a desperation... I would have done anything, just to keep the money rolling in, keep and look after my family. I've got three kids, so I had to look after them. Stability, the working man has got no stability other than that which he creates for himself. And I think you need to create that inside yourself, that stability. You need to say to yourself, 'It doesn't matter if this gaffer thinks I'm a tube, I'm worth more than just what I do for this gaffer' ... you've got to have that if you are to cope with the vagaries of life.<sup>179</sup>

Thomas' point that he 'would have done anything' to provide for his family echoes similar testimonies of former industrial workers, who often massively lower their standards in order to secure a family wage, or something close to it. As noted previously, between Danny Houston's redundancy and re-entry into shipbuilding, he was compelled to work in a number of smaller workplaces which were typically exploitative, generally low paid, and had little regard for trade unions or health and safety legislation. Danny chafed under these conditions, which compared so unfavourably to the shipyards, but felt obligated to accept them in order to provide for his family:

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<sup>178</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>179</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

I'd a mortgage to pay. Daniel, my son, he was just born when I took a redundancy, was that stupid? Maybe, right? I'd got to feed and clothe him. So I done some jobs maybe I shouldn't have, because I needed money like anybody else.<sup>180</sup>

In one sense the act of lowering one's standards could suggest potential emasculation, but the inverse appears more likely; paradoxically, in lowering their standards, and taking potentially emasculatory employment, workers are making a personal sacrifice for their family. Their dignity might be compromised but their provider identity is intact, even fortified through their struggle.

Workers' core identity was primarily provider based; the loss of heavy industry employment was not emasculatory so long as they were able to attain alternative reemployment. Derek Cairns outlined that the importance of work was that it allowed him the ability to provide for his family: 'What does work mean? It gave me an identity. Let's me provide for my family. Gives me a purpose'.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, commitment to work underpinned Alex Straiton's sense of provider identity:

[Work was] the main thing for me. I worked for 48 years without a break. I think I was off sick twice. That was my motivation for getting up in the morning. Well, obviously family, make sure that they had a house. I've got two daughters... That was the important thing.<sup>182</sup>

Alex's redundancy was a blow to his self-esteem, but his ability to quickly re-enter employment staved off any sense of emasculation. The children of heavy industry workers, in this instance two daughters, both noted that their respective fathers' core sense of identity was not occupation based, as steelworkers or shipbuilders, but was instead derived through the maintenance of full-time employment, which allowed them to fulfil their actual core identity as family providers. Susan Crow stated:

I wouldn't say that [being a steelworker] was important to him in terms of – no, I wouldn't. I would say being a family man was the thing my dad identified most with, and wanted to be known the most for... Very strong work ethic. He was rarely off ill, very hard working,

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<sup>180</sup> Danny Houston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>181</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>182</sup> Alex Straiton Interview (Ferns)

sometimes to his own detriment. If he wasn't well, he would still go to work. But yeah, very hard working.<sup>183</sup>

Susan noted that as her father was the sole wage earner, 'a lot of pressure was on him to support the family', which in turn greatly influenced the type of employment he sought:

I think [becoming a steelworker] was salary based, to be honest, because he had a young family. He had three kids and a wife to support.... I think that's what drove him through all his choices was caring for his family and providing for them.<sup>184</sup>

This commitment to breadwinning meant Susan's father prioritised high paying work over personal interest. She believed that he enjoyed his post-redundancy employment as a chef in the Fire Service more than steelmaking:

The chef industry? Yeah. Aye he loved it. Absolutely loved it.... I think it probably brought a lightness to him that maybe had been missing because I think there was a lot of pressure on him when he worked in Ravenscraig. A lot of pressure probably financial as well. Raising a family and being the sole worker because my mum didn't work... but I think maybe as we've got older, he's moved into to that, less pressure on him he was able to enjoy it.<sup>185</sup>

Her father was able to enjoy this 'lightness' as his responsibilities to provide for the family were no longer as pressing. With his children now able to provide for themselves, it became more acceptable to take on work he was passionate about and able to derive satisfaction from, rather than take roles which earned the most money. Margaret Fraser similarly described the overriding importance of her father's provider identity – 'I think he was proud of what he did as a job and then proud that he was out there making money for his family' – which she linked with his long work hours: 'When you have six children, you need a bit more money. He always took any

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with Susan Crow by James Ferns, 09/03/2019

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

overtime going'.<sup>186</sup> Margaret recalled how her father invested his redundancy money into the family:

I don't think he wanted to finish up working, but I think financially at the time, as well, he thought 'well my daughter's getting married and this is an opportunity to get a wee bit extra money'... To him, it would've been quite a lot of money... Weddings then don't cost as much as they do now, but he was like, 'That's good. There's money there. We can pay for your wedding'... Then my sister got married after that. They used part of it for that as well... And then at the time, my brother... needed a car so my dad bought him a wee car... Things like that. Any money that he got he just put it back into the family.<sup>187</sup>

Redundancy can emasculate men, shattering their masculinity if it results in long-term unemployment, but the decision to take voluntary redundancy often appealed to workers' masculine provider identity, with the relatively large sums of money seen as an opportunity to invest in the family.

### **Transition into Female-Dominated Employment**

While the transition into female-dominated employment was not in and of itself emasculatory, workers did note a number of differences, the most profound of which was in shop-floor culture and language. The language of heavy industry was colourful and expressive, Frank Roy described the shop floor as being defined by quick and often savage humour – 'the joking was brutal, brutally funny'.<sup>188</sup> Harry Carlin remembers 'mad language all the time': 'the foreman never took any great thing if you swore at him because he swore at you, tell you to "f-off" haha! But that was the way it was, shop-floor talk, that's what you used to call it'.<sup>189</sup> As the only man in his new employment as a social care worker, Harry expressed the need to sanitise his language, he adopted a more 'hoity-toity' professional tone, which he attributed to both the more public-facing side of his work and the presence of female colleagues:

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<sup>186</sup> Margaret Fraser Interview (Ferns)

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>189</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)



'It was a different culture... the language that we use, shop-floor language, it was a wee bit hoity-toity... You had to change dramatically in your language... you're dealing with families'.<sup>190</sup> Also surrounded by female colleagues as a school janitor, Tommy Johnston illustrated his own temporary 'culture shock':

From the steelworks where it's all men, 'who's got the porn the night'... to go working with all women, that was a culture shock for a while, till you got used to it, you know, you're not allowed to swear and things like that, where up in the Ravenscraig steelworks, or any environment where men are, there will be cursing all the time and telling jokes and all that, talking about football.<sup>191</sup>

Alastair Hart observed a change in the shop-floor language in the office environment of his new employment in ship surveying, which had a greater gender balance:

I think the conversation was certainly different in the yards. It was fairly crude, I would say. It was quite common to talk about intimate sexual issues or macho fights I would say. In the other workplace that was never talked about at all.<sup>192</sup>

The need to maintain a tough façade and tolerate co-workers' pranks was the 'biggest thing' Jim McKeown noticed missing in teaching, where relations were more 'professional, more respectful'.<sup>193</sup> Jim commented on the 'calming' effect of women colleagues during union meetings:

We have department meetings every three or four weeks... it is all formalised, there is somebody taking minutes... at the ISTC meetings it was usually a shouting match you know, or if it started getting personal it maybe moved out to the carpark... I think women just bring a sort of calming atmosphere to meetings and to the workplace environment.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Alastair Hart by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

<sup>193</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

Linda Collins noted class differences within teaching, commenting upon a more sanitised language, and like Jim, noted that union meetings in teaching were calmer, less 'volatile':

The noticeable [class] differences were everybody speaks the Queen's English when you're a teacher in schools. Even when people are arguing, they do it a lot more politely in schools, whereas in the shipyard, you have heard of shipyard French, it's very, very - what is the right expression?... No holds barred. People argued and even in union meetings, it would get very, very volatile sometimes. Very volatile.<sup>195</sup>

However, Linda felt that this calmer environment came at a price, and resulted in a workforce which was less solidarity minded than in shipbuilding:

You were dealing with a different mindset though. People in shipbuilding were much more union minded than teachers. Teachers are by nature middle class... and definitely don't really want to be a member of a union. But they do it because it's the accepted norm... A lot of the people who were in the unions in [shipbuilding] were there by a conscious choice... People in teaching didn't think so much like that and the only times that I've ever seen them come together, is when there has been money arguments.<sup>196</sup>

Linda felt that shipbuilding unions were 'more aggressive', which was often lacking within teaching unions where workers were often 'very disinterested'.<sup>197</sup> However, she did not attribute teaching's 'calmer' environment to the greater presence of women workers as such, but instead to the more individualised structure of working, which in turn produced a weaker sense of solidarity. The structure of a workplace and the form of work itself informs workplace culture. The intense, mass scale of shipbuilding, as well as its history as a particularly brutal form of employment, produced a form of trade unionism specific to that context.

Some workers had issues working with women. Jim McKeown found his female colleagues 'less forgiving' than steelworkers: 'an argument up in the

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<sup>195</sup> Linda Collins Interview (Ferns)

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

Ravenscraig, it was maybe forgot after the shift, women don't, I've been at meetings and things have been brought up from a year before... I find that sometimes women are less forgiving'.<sup>198</sup> Linda Collins had a similar experience to Jim, noting that although she now benefited from a greater level of equality within teaching, she found the shop-floor culture colder:

It was good in as much as I was getting the money I was deserving of now. [But] I didn't particularly like the women in there, I've never had any problem working with women because the women in Yarrows and the men in Yarrows, I'll say this for them, they were the loveliest people, really nice people. A lot of bitches in the [teaching] staff room... there was a central core of some nasty women.<sup>199</sup>

John Christie felt a degree of resentment over female management within Boots, which was intensified by the fact that they tended to be graduates or external appointments, rather than promoted from the shop floor:

I didn't particularly like the management style in Boots... A lot of women were involved in that side as well. I'm not saying that women shouldn't be in management but that was difficult to see how – women think differently than men. I found that quite challenging. Ravenscraig or Gartcosh was – You usually find that management is in his position for a reason. They know their stuff... that's why you could trust them for what they were saying. As far as Boots was concerned, people were just walking into these jobs and never done the type of work and they were telling people what to do.<sup>200</sup>

Most workers felt that internal promotion, or 'working your way up from the tools', was crucial for effective management, but John's discomfort was more gender based than a natural dislike of being managed by an individual with no direct experience, noting:

Women do think differently to men. There can be an obstacle there. You can get on with them... But to actually do work with them and get

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<sup>198</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>199</sup> Linda Collins Interview (Ferns)

<sup>200</sup> Interview with John Christie by James Ferns, 12/08/2019

the end result the way you want it. It can be quite challenging when there's male and females involved in the process.<sup>201</sup>

Women workers within heavy industry who moved into female-dominated employment were able to reflect on this transition in a way male workers were not. Linda Collins found the most impactful difference between shipbuilding and teaching to be the reduction of gender discrimination. Linda resented the fact that women were denied opportunities and higher rates of pay within shipbuilding:

I left Yarrows because I was sick and tired of men who intellectually were gnats compared to me, earning four and five times the money I was earning because they were doing apprenticeships and had served time. That option wasn't available for anybody who was a woman in Yarrows, so I decided to go into a job whereby it was dominated by women and the rate of pay was equal, and in some instances, better.<sup>202</sup>

Like her male colleagues, Linda had been immersed in the occupational culture of shipbuilding, part of its robust community and trade unions solidarity, but gender discrimination meant that she never truly felt 'valued' within shipbuilding:

People in Yarrows were good people. They really were. I enjoyed working there but there was that aspect of it where I wasn't getting paid what I was valued, in my opinion. You know, I felt I deserved more.<sup>203</sup>

Linda enjoyed shipbuilding's sense of community, but chafed under its management: '[Shipbuilding] people generally were so nice except for the management... absolutely the most reactionary people I'd ever the misfortune to meet'.<sup>204</sup> Within a female-dominated workplace Linda was free from both management harassment and the sense of being an imposter, noting: 'generally, you got spoken to more like an adult in teaching' and 'I felt more in my element as I worked as a teacher because I didn't have to prove myself all the time'.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> Linda Collins Interview (Ferns)

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

Most workers had very little negative commentary of working within a female-dominated workforce, though they did generally express a preference for the shop-floor culture of heavy industry, which they associated with working with men. Tommy Johnston missed the social aspect of steelmaking, associating his previously male workplace with a more vibrant social life:

A staff night out, you would get blootered, well you wouldn't get blootered but you would go to a club somewhere and then snooker and all that, where our staff night out is sitting in a wee room having a meal, two glasses of wine, and then home. Everybody would bring their own car, where if we went with the Ravenscraig we would hire a minibus. Women are different... a meal and then go home, sit and blether and talk a lot of shite.<sup>206</sup>

Similarly, Harry Carlin did not derive the same satisfaction from the day-to-day workplace conversation of his younger, female co-workers:

The usual patter and the football talk, everything, the general day to day politics... you didn't have that in there, the women over there were more interested in dresses and thing like that, films... when you all had your tea together it was a different environment altogether you know. We would sit arguing, playing cards, you couldn't do that there you know.<sup>207</sup>

Despite the differences workers found in female-dominated employment, the initial 'culture shock' lessened quickly and they were invariably able to adapt and form meaningful relationships with their female co-workers. After his retirement, Harry Carlin kept in touch with female colleagues from social care, noting, 'they were all my pals, they are still pals to this day'.<sup>208</sup> Tommy Johnston also formed bonds with his female co-workers, but still felt the need to adjust his behaviour:

Totally different relationship altogether – good relationships, it's a good relationship, I mean I get on well with everybody, I get a laugh with everybody... It's just a different atmosphere, you have got to

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<sup>206</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>207</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

watch what you are saying – to telling a women a joke to telling the same joke to a guy, you would change it, you know.<sup>209</sup>

For many, working in a female-dominated workplace was not something to be tolerated or adjusted to, but simply a normal fact of life. Pat Clark expressed this normalcy: 'The majority of people that I work with are women. Absolutely fine. No problem with that at all'.<sup>210</sup> For most workers, the greater presence of women workers was neither a positive nor a negative, simply a neutral detail. Working within a female-dominated industry was different, but ultimately these differences were mundane. Stewart MacPherson found Cannon Hygiene – 'predominately a female environment' – to be unremarkable, like most of his post-redundancy employment, male or female dominated, he described it as simply another job.<sup>211</sup> The conditions were not as good as steelmaking, and so he did not derive the same enjoyment from it, but the higher proportion of women workers was irrelevant to this.

### **Crisis of Class not Masculinity**

The masculinity of former heavy industry workers was rarely challenged by their experience of female-dominated employment, they continued to express stable work-based identities and quickly adapted to the workplace culture of their new employment. The idea that 'women's' work is emasculatory is not only simplistic, but it promotes a one-dimensional view of working-class men's masculinity; it severely undermines their agency, limiting their ability to choose and enjoy a wide range of employment. Former industrial workers described a diverse assortment of life experiences and interests, and many found themselves in female-dominated work as a result of these interests, not in spite of them. For Harry Carlin, whose involvement in steelmaking unions was a result of his desire to help people, the move into a caring profession seemed natural:

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<sup>209</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>210</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>211</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

Why did I want to go into caring? Because I am a caring person. And the one group of people I did want to work with, you got an opportunity either to work with children or elderly, and I done elderly care, I worked 13 years in the home, you know.<sup>212</sup>

Given the fact that women have been marginalised into precarious, non-unionised, low-paid, and part-time employment, the sense of emasculation articulated by other former industrial workers who entered female-dominated employment relates more to the exploitative working conditions of typical 'women's work', rather than the supposed shame of working a job considered effeminate. Female-dominated professions, such as teaching or nursing, stand out from typical female employment through their relative better pay and strong unions – it is no coincidence that former industrial workers, themselves used to these conditions, do not express a sense of emasculation when reemployed with this form of 'female' employment.

Women's work has traditionally been undervalued, it has been associated with 'pocket money', as something temporary or frivolous – not considered real work. Opposed to this, men's employment has been tied to breadwinner status, which has prioritised a full-time wage capable of supporting a family. Therefore through the lens of traditional gender norms, a man employed in a woman's job must be emasculated. For the most part, the 'emasculation' of men in female-dominated employment has been imposed on these workers by external observers, typically by those with no direct experience of working a 'female' job as a man, or by academics guilty of a one-dimensional interpretation of working-class masculinity. The relationship between deindustrialisation and emasculation is more complex than has been suggested, the two are linked, but working-class masculinity is primarily challenged by unemployment or underemployment, not reemployment into traditionally female industries. As McDowell states:

The power of the phrase 'a crisis of masculinity' denies the social and spatial variations in the ways in which economic and social restructuring work out in different places and among different groups in society. The idea of a crisis itself, as well as the implicit gender

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<sup>212</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

polarity it embodies, needs deconstructing. What seems to be emerging in Britain, rather than being a crisis per se, is an uneven challenge to the automatic associations between masculinity and privilege which has particular impacts on different groups of men.<sup>213</sup>

The security, pay, trade unionism, and camaraderie of heavy industry was remembered fondly by workers, but the decline in jobs which exhibit these characteristics relates more to a crisis of class rather than a crisis of masculinity; it is not that 'men's' jobs have vanished, but that jobs with exploitative working practices have increasingly become the only source of employment available for both working-class men and women.

### **Conclusion**

Heavy industry was a male-dominated workplace, with the shop floor staffed almost exclusively by men. The harsh environment instilled a physical and emotional hardness in workers, and the maintenance of this restrictive masculinity was often perceived as oppressive, but nonetheless immovable. Workers' narratives demonstrated that this sense of hardness was not some simplistic display of male swagger, but rather a form of defensive masculinity which operated as an imperfect coping mechanism, allowing workers to tolerate the hardships of a brutal, sometimes terrifying industry. Beyond the depiction of a rigid social order, workers fondly recalled how the intergenerational workforce of heavy industry lent itself to the development of informal intergenerational mentorship. This mentorship existed alongside the harshness of the wider work culture, mirroring aspects of it, but it was generally softer and more encouraging. Against the portrayal of working-class masculinity as aggressive, emotionally distant, and repressed, workers' testimonies also revealed a much more colourful, expressive, and empathetic culture laced throughout this harder masculinity. Workers described a vibrancy which challenged one-dimensional depictions of stunted masculinity, demonstrating that a range of

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<sup>213</sup> McDowell, *Redundant masculinities?*, p.91



masculinities co-existed at the same time. The seemingly conflicting nature of heavy industry masculinity did not appear contradictory to workers; workplace masculinity is complex, and this complexity was woven with ease into workers' testimonies.

Deindustrialisation destroyed traditionally male-dominated industries, propelling former heavy industry workers into female-dominated or mixed employment. This act has been interpreted as an emasculatory experience, particularly by scholars such as Walkerdine and Jimenez, but as has been demonstrated, former heavy industry workers who transitioned into female-dominated employment reported no sense of emasculation whatsoever, continuing to demonstrate stable work-based identities and adapting quickly to the culture of their new employment. The association between female-dominated employment and emasculation, prevalent in popular culture and purported by Walkerdine and Jimenez, is an oversimplification which fails to take into account the infinite changeability of masculinity. As discussed above, the emasculatory effects of deindustrialisation have been largely imposed on workers by external observers. There is of course a correlation between deindustrialisation and emasculation, but this stems from unemployment or underemployment, rather than entry into female-dominated employment. When workers themselves narrate their own lived experiences it becomes clear that working-class masculinities are far from one-dimensional.

## Chapter Four

### **‘There was a bit of me missing’: Identity Disintegration**

Deindustrialisation shattered workers’ sense of self and place, tearing apart established work cultures and collapsing stable working-class communities. Workers’ recollections of heavy industry emphasised an intense feeling of camaraderie, of an immersion within a culture that was defined by strong bonds of solidarity and a real, tangible sense of collectivism. Not a job that could be left at the factory gates, heavy industry formed the bedrock of a broad social fabric, encompassing most aspects of workers’ lives beyond work. The workplace functioned as a nexus for a wide array of social activity, with voluntary associations, social clubs, educational programmes, and political groups attached to the shop floor. Heavy industry represented an integral hub of regional employment. Beyond its own substantial workforce, it supported countless ancillary industries that relied on its products as well as a local service sector that catered for its employees. As such, heavy industry formed an essential component of the socioeconomic infrastructure of the communities where it was located. In this context occupational identity overflowed from the workplace, informing the character of communities, regions, or, in the case of Scotland, national identity. Mining regions became pit villages or coal towns, steelmaking forged places like Motherwell or Sheffield into steeltowns, and cities like Glasgow or Newcastle were inseparable from shipbuilding, with their skyline dominated by the cranes of the shipyard. Heavy industry gave birth to a form of working-class industrial culture that transcended the workplace in its influence. The culture of collectivism that formed in heavy industry seeped into the labour movement and national politics, as well as into regional and national identities. Deindustrialisation obliterated the material foundation of this culture, with the closure of plants, factories and shipyards shattering at its source the basis of industrial culture. Overwhelmingly, workers depicted their post-redundancy employment as more individualised and isolating.

For them, deindustrialisation fundamentally shattered occupational community, rupturing social lives and bringing an abrupt end to socially embedded workplaces.

In this sense, this chapter perhaps deals with the most profound aspect of deindustrialisation, examining its impact on identity. To begin, the chapter will establish the social context of heavy industry, examining workers' recollections of camaraderie and community, and feelings of social embeddedness both inside the workplace and wider community. From here, the chapter will engage with deindustrialisation and identity disintegration. This will involve: an examination of the erosion of camaraderie and community in workers' post-redundancy employment; their feelings of being socially uprooted or having their life 'stolen'; the fracturing of community identity; and feelings of placelessness and erasure.

## Occupational Identity and Community

A precise definition of community can be elusive, able to delineate the residents of a geographical area as well as categorise people along an infinite number of lines, such as ethnicity, language, or even hobby or interest. While certainly useful, conceptualising community in this manner risks missing its fluidity, understanding it instead as something fixed or unchangeable. Lee and Newby have highlighted the lack of a 'satisfactory definition' for community, attributing this to the 'emotional appeal' of the concept, which often results in a tendency to regard it as an 'unmitigated good thing'.<sup>1</sup> They distil the definition of community into three factors: (i) as a 'geographical expression' of a 'fixed and bounded locality'; (ii) as a 'local social system' or 'set of social relationships which take place wholly, or mostly, within a locality'; (iii) as a 'type of relationship' or 'sense of identity between individuals'.<sup>2</sup> In a similar way, High views community as a 'fluid process undergoing constant change', defining it as 'social interaction, as spatial process, and as imagined reality':

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<sup>1</sup> D. Lee and H. Newby, *The problem of sociology* (London: Hutchinson, 1983) p.57

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp.57-58

In the first sense, community identity develops out of the face-to-face social interactions of everyday life. In the spatial process, places develop, institutions form, and local identities are constructed. Finally, community is an imagined reality where people associate themselves with others they have never met. This third element allows community to extend well beyond personal social networks and local places to encompass a region or a nation.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of community, or more precisely the prevalence of communal values, was a central component of industrial regions. Largely, this working-class collectivism developed as a defence to the brutal reality of industrial employment. From their inception, industrial communities were subject to exploitation – the violent process of industrialisation, work intensification, inadequate health and safety legislation and attacks upon wages, or the existential threat of deindustrialisation itself compelled community cohesion and a culture of mutual aid. Speaking of the industry-dense North East of England, Robinson states:

A particular set of communal values, developed in response to 19th-century industrialization... a collective response to the problems and pressures of adversity, leading to the development of key institutions: the store, the chapel, trade unionism and the Labour Party... that community, that social cohesion, is celebrated on union banners, with slogans like 'Unity is Strength', 'United we Stand' and 'An Injury to One is Injury to All'.<sup>4</sup>

In a similar sense, the enduring danger of the industrial workplace tempered a solidarity among workers, as circumstance forced a mutual dependency upon one another. Bellamy notes in *The Shipbuilders* that 'the highly dangerous nature of the work helped build a common bond among the shipbuilders and increased their pride in being able to survive in such a harsh environment'.<sup>5</sup> While in *Portraits in Steel*, steelworker William Douglass states that co-workers, 'got to know everybody real good, got to be friends', attributing this to onsite danger: 'I think it was probably because the type of work that we did there was dangerous and you depend on the

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<sup>3</sup> S. High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) p.10

<sup>4</sup> F. Robinson, 'The North East: a journey through time', *City*, 6:3 (2002) p.331

<sup>5</sup> M. Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders: An Anthology of Scottish Shipyard Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001) p.52

other guy to help you... So you always depended on somebody else to watch your back'.<sup>6</sup>

Work shapes identity well beyond the confines of the workplace, with the formation of occupation-based community identity well documented.<sup>7</sup> Kirk et al. state that work 'marks a region's potential distinctiveness', producing 'culturally distinct traditions that shape everyday life'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Strangleman argues that heavy industry, often the primary employer in a given locality, was able to imprint a 'distinctive cultural pattern' – influencing 'culture, class, language, attitude and gender relations':

Work then was both embedded in place, and place and the people were embedded in their work and industry. Whole families across generations were formed in one way or another by work; socialised in the factory; subject to an anticipatory socialisation by the proximity of settlement to factory; community life ordered by the shift patterns demanded by employers, seasons or times of day.<sup>9</sup>

As the primary employer in the local area, with working-class housing built up around it, heavy industry stood as the natural choice of employment for many. John Johnstone recalled that his childhood tenement building was a 'five minute walk from the gates of Fairfields', with most residents having some connection to shipbuilding: 'the guy downstairs, the guy next door, and the guy up the stairs all worked in the shipyards... it was a natural thing... it was the biggest employer... that was just the norm'.<sup>10</sup> Alex Torrance similarly noted, 'the steel industry was all roundabout, so the obvious place of employment was steel'.<sup>11</sup> Having taken an electrical engineering

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<sup>6</sup> M. Rogovin and M. H. Frisch, *Portraits in Steel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993) pp.249-250

<sup>7</sup> M. Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 2001); A. Perchard, *Aluminiumville* (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2012); S. Linkon and J. Russo, *Steeltown U.S.A: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*; J. Nadel-Klein, *Fishing for Heritage: Modernity and Loss along the Scottish Coast* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); A. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); High, *Industrial Sunset*

<sup>8</sup> J. Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', in J. Kirk, S. Contrepolis and S. Jefferys (eds.) *Changing work and community identities in European regions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) p.6-7

<sup>9</sup> T. Strangleman, 'The Remembrance of Lost Work: Nostalgia, Labour and the Visual', in S. Whipps (ed.) *Ming Jue: Photographs of Longbridge and Nanjing* (London: The New Art Gallery Walsall, 2008) np.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with John Johnstone by James Ferns, 05/04/2019

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Alex Torrance by James Ferns, 02/04/2019

apprenticeship in Ravenscraig, Alex, like many of his peers recalled how his physical environment had been shaped by steelmaking since childhood:

Where I was born, there was nothing but steelworks all roundabout. Even as a child, there was horns that went off in all the different works for meal breaks and things like that. So we didn't need a watch, we went with the horns.<sup>12</sup>

This aptly demonstrates industry's influence beyond the workplace, with the 'horns' of the steelworks even marking time for those not on the payroll. Illustrating the density of those employed in steelmaking in his local area, Stewart MacPherson joked, 'If you'd went to a night out, you run the risk of getting burnt because there was more steel floating about that pub'.<sup>13</sup> The lines dividing work life and private life are blurred, as High has observed, 'where people work and where they live are generally separate spheres... oral narratives suggest that the two were physically and psychologically interconnected'.<sup>14</sup> Brown contends that heavy industry workers report a greater sense of occupational identity than workers employed in other occupations – partly attributed to their long period of service, which allows time to develop occupational bonds.<sup>15</sup> Lockwood also states that heavy industry workers typically form stable occupational identities, defined by an overarching culture which he terms 'proletarian traditionalism'.<sup>16</sup> Within this culture the workplace is embedded into workers' private lives, workmates socialise with one another, live in the same locality, and share a similar, class-based political outlook defined by trade unionism and solidarity.<sup>17</sup>

Workers' immersion in the occupational culture and extended community of heavy industry forged strong bonds of attachment and identity. Former steelworker James Blair noted 'it was a big, big part of my life'.<sup>18</sup> The culture was embedded into

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Stewart MacPherson by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

<sup>14</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.53

<sup>15</sup> R. K. Brown, 'Attitudes to work, occupational identity and industrial change', in B. Roberts, R. Finnegan and D. Gallie (eds.) *New Approaches to Economic Life: Unemployment and the social division of labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) pp.461-476

<sup>16</sup> D. Lockwood, 'Sources of variation in working class images of society', *Sociological Review*, 14:3 (1966) p.250

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* pp.249-267

<sup>18</sup> Interview with James Blair by James Ferns, 19/02/2019

workers, it 'moulded character'; it was 'something that gets into your blood'.<sup>19</sup> Ravenscraig's former industrial chaplain, Rev. John Potter commented, 'whilst it was a tough and hard industry to be involved in, it did shape a lot of people, it gave them dignity and a sense of self-worth'.<sup>20</sup> Former Ravenscraig director, Jimmy Dunbar, spoke of the 'gigantic' importance of the plant to local identity: 'Ravenscraig was so gigantic in the outside community, there was a hell of a lot of folk that talked about the Craig. They were proud to be part of the Craig'.<sup>21</sup> Workers' exposure to the egalitarian politics and principles of militant trade unionism had a profound impact. Though a manager, Alastair Hart reflected that his time in shipbuilding was, 'very important for me. That definitely shaped me... the insights I took out of it... that in all classes everyone is important... to recognize good in everyone'.<sup>22</sup> The relationship between work and identity is rendered all the more impactful given the sheer amount of time an individual will spend at work. Speaking of her shipbuilder father, Janet Moss noted that, 'He worked six-and-a-half days a week... he always seemed to be working'.<sup>23</sup> Work shapes and defines identity, as Thomas Brotherston noted, 'Your industry marks you, you develop certain characteristics in order to adapt to the industry'.<sup>24</sup> Given the woeful neglect of female heavy industry workers, it is tempting to assume that attachment to an identity based around heavy industry was alien to women. Yet existing interviews with women heavy industry workers reveal a similar sense of meaning subscribed to work. Reflecting on shipbuilding, Janet Moss, a former computer programmer at Yarrow Shipbuilders, commented, 'It's kind of weird, it's just part of me'.<sup>25</sup>

For James Carlin, steelmaking was part of his heritage, a gateway into the labour movement and central to his working-class identity:

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Brian Cunningham by James Ferns, 19/01/2017; Interview with Sam Thompson by James Ferns, 17/01/2017

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Rev. John Potter by James Ferns, 28/01/2017

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Jimmy Dunbar by James Ferns, 10/04/2019

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Alastair Hart by James Ferns, 04/02/2019

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Janet Moss by James Ferns, 14/03/2019

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Thomas Brotherston by James Ferns, 13/02/2019 (First Interview), 20/02/2019 (Second Interview)

<sup>25</sup> Janet Moss Interview (Ferns)

It shaped my identity aye, in a huge way aye, definitely, it shaped my identity long before I even became a steelworker – because I was a steelworker – it was the next progression for me to become a steelworker, get involved in the trade union movement... that was a huge part of my identity: steelworks and trade unionism... that's where I believe my socialism comes from... I have carried that about with me ever since.<sup>26</sup>

James' narrative evokes a sense of history and personal heritage, a tangible feeling that steelmaking represented something much more than a job. His comment, 'it shaped my identity long before I even became a steelworker' reveals the interconnected nature of work and identity. The interfamily aspect of heavy industry – with children following their parents into work – formed strong bonds of affect, as well as a sense of heritage. Descended from a steelworker family and a region defined by heavy industry, steelmaking was the natural 'progression' for James; it provided a sense of rootedness and belonging, and its association with the labour movement and wider left-wing politics formed the foundation upon which he built his political and moral convictions. Williams' 'structures of feeling' provides a useful framework to conceptualise the extended culture of heavy industry – with structures of feeling defined as 'meanings and values that are actually lived and felt', as 'social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available'.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, there was a prevailing 'structure of feeling' within industrial communities which informed culture, promoting communal cultural values and acts of mutual aid. Byrne applies Williams' structure of feeling to industrial and post-industrial communities, referring to an 'industrial culture' – a distinctive cultural form that emerged in response to the economic production of industrialism, which 'informs and constructs "ways of life", ways of doing things, [the] sense not just of personal but of collective identity'.<sup>28</sup> In his study of the cultural experiences in the North East of England and Katowice industrial region in Poland, Byrne argues that 'industrial culture' continues

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with James Carlin by James Ferns, 24/01/2017

<sup>27</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp.132-134

<sup>28</sup> D. Byrne, 'Industrial culture in a post-industrial world: The case of the North East of England', *City*, 6:3 (2002) p.287



to survive and inform culture within these regions.<sup>29</sup> Rosenwein's concept of 'emotional communities' also proves valuable, defined as 'systems of feeling' within communities, specifically:

The emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.<sup>30</sup>

For workers themselves, the bonds of occupational identity were deeply emotionally significant; workplaces have been remembered as communities and workmates as families.<sup>31</sup>

### **Camaraderie and Community**

The term 'camaraderie' consistently intersected throughout workers' narratives, ubiquitous within their definitions of workplace culture. In a BBC Radio Scotland programme on Ravenscraig, presenter Mark Stephen said of the term, 'time after time the people I have been speaking to have used the same word about this place'.<sup>32</sup> The workplace was remembered as a site of camaraderie, of togetherness. Former steelworker Stewart MacPherson recalled, 'they were like brothers in arms... you had everybody's back'.<sup>33</sup> Stewart described the comradeship among workers, 'the boys were good, they were solid. We were really a close-knit workforce... We got on well, we socialized together'.<sup>34</sup> Harry Carlin stated: 'I loved it, I liked the camaraderie, you know, working with the people there. I was heavily involved in the unions with the men, and I loved it, absolutely loved it'.<sup>35</sup> Dorothy Macready, a typist and then

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> B. H. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', *International Journal for the History and Theory of Emotions* (2010) p.11

<sup>31</sup> T. E. K'Meyer and J. L. Hart, *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

<sup>32</sup> 'Ravenscraig', *Our Story*, BBC Radio Scotland (13 July 2016)

<sup>33</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Harry Carlin by James Ferns, 18/01/2017

assistant manager in Ravenscraig's printing department, had similarly fond memories:

I loved every minute I was there, it was a great place to work... there was a lot of banter, a lot of fun things, just repertoire... Everybody sort of stuck up for everybody else... you weren't just a number.<sup>36</sup>

Within shipbuilding, Paul Molloy remembered the connection among fellow apprentices at the start of his career: 'There was a team of us apprentices, big team of us... the camaraderie was always there between all the apprentices'.<sup>37</sup> James Cloughley similarly described shipbuilding as, 'one of the best places in the world to work, because you had everything. You had camaraderie'.<sup>38</sup> Speaking of her father's time in steelmaking, Susan Crow recalled 'a lot of camaraderie among men'.<sup>39</sup> Working together usually meant socialising together, and Susan attributed workers' bonds to a wider tight-knit community: 'Carfin, Craigneuk, Newarthill, Jerviston, Motherwell, there was loads of people that all lived there and they all tended to drink together and work together. They all knew each other well'.<sup>40</sup> As a lab technician, Jack Mccusker felt somewhat 'sheltered' from the wider work culture of Hallside Steelworks, even so, he described his former colleagues as 'nice people, good people'. Like Susan, Jack attributed workers' bonds to their rootedness in the wider community: 'all the men down the work, they all came from that area, as I said, it was like a community'.<sup>41</sup> Con O'Brien enjoyed his time as a lab technician in Clyde Alloy, particularly the 'camaraderie' of the workforce, noting, 'the camaraderie, it was good, and you knew all the guys. You used to have a good laugh and things like that... great stories, great people... just bouncing off people, you got to know them very well'.<sup>42</sup> However, as a Glaswegian, Con described himself as a 'city guy' and felt somewhat of an 'outsider' in Lanarkshire steelmaking, noting his lack of family history in the industry compared to other workers: 'All the guys seemed to have fathers and

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Dorothy Macready by James Ferns, 20/04/2016

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Paul Molloy by James Ferns, 15/03/2019

<sup>38</sup> Interview with James Cloughley by James Ferns, 08/04/2019

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Susan Crow by James Ferns, 09/03/2019

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Jack Mccusker by James Ferns, 08/04/2019

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Con O'Brien by James Ferns, 03/04/2019

grandfathers and people that could work right through from generations in the steelworks whereas I was an outsider'.<sup>43</sup>

As has been noted in chapter 2, a large part of heavy industry's culture of camaraderie was expressed through trade unionism, with bonds of solidarity central to workplace culture. These narratives expressed a sense of togetherness, a resistance to an antagonistic force. Here the bonds of solidarity functioned as a means to protect workers and their communities. However, the culture of camaraderie and community within heavy industry was not limited to worker militancy or the defence of rights, it was also expressed through feelings of belonging, of being 'a part of something'. Exemplifying the social embeddedness of heavy industry, Dorothy Macready met her steelworker husband Jim at the wedding of another colleague. Like many other workers, Dorothy shared the feeling of being 'part of something', drawing a great sense of belonging from the workplace and its wider social network:

It was just a nice atmosphere. It was, sort of, I don't know – you were part of something... There's a sense of belonging when you worked... I think I'm talking about the whole place, I think there was a sense of you belonged, you know?<sup>44</sup>

This sense of belonging was important for Jim McKeown, who also 'felt part of something' in steelmaking, remarking, 'all looked after each other and all looked out for each other'.<sup>45</sup> Similar testimonies were expressed in shipbuilding, where Alex O'Hara recalled 'a close-knit feeling', while Danny Houston spoke of a 'massive' sense of community, commenting, 'we all looked after ourselves. If there is a death in here, we all rallied round. If anybody needed money, we rallied round. We looked after each other'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Macready Interview (Ferns)

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Jim McKeown by James Ferns, 13/02/2017

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Alex O'Hara by James Ferns, 22/02/2019; Interview with Danny Houston by James Ferns, 06/08/2019

Parallels to family were frequently drawn in the depiction of workplace culture and community. Alan Brown commented, 'there was a friendly atmosphere, you were part of a family. And I think everybody sort of looked after everybody. It was a nice atmosphere to work in'.<sup>47</sup> James Carlin noted, 'there was always a lot of banter flying about... it was a great place to work... it was a big family type environment'.<sup>48</sup> This emphasis upon family is woven throughout displaced workers' narratives, with lost workplaces 'framed around the metaphors of home and family'.<sup>49</sup> McNeil's *Pit Talk* interviews capture a similar feeling in the mining town of Cape Breton, with third generation miner Fred Howard likening the camaraderie of mining to a family:

Part of the camaraderie, always somebody looking out for somebody else. There's never ever a time you would think that somebody wasn't looking out for you. It's like a family. You have your family at home, and at work you have a family too.<sup>50</sup>

K'Meyer and Hart's former manufacturing workers expressed similar sentiments; the comparison to a family atmosphere was evoked by Charlie Noyes, 'it was just like being part of a big family, an extended family'.<sup>51</sup> Phil Nalley recalled the comradely nature of the workplace: 'a camaraderie and loyalty... we trusted each other and we would take care of each other'.<sup>52</sup> Beyond productivity and labour militancy, the workplace was a site of support, providing workers with emotional respite, shared understanding, and advice. As Thomas Brotherston highlighted:

You borrowed off of the happiest person in the squad. You can draw on each other's strengths, and you can draw on each other's humour, draw on each other's experience... there was always a guy that you could go and talk to.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Alan Brown by James Ferns, 05/03/2019

<sup>48</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>49</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.44

<sup>50</sup> I. McNeil, *Pit Talk: the legacy of Cape Breton's coal miners* (Sydney: Icon Communication, 2010)

<sup>51</sup> K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*, p.60

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p.39

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

This mutual reliance was also described by Robert Buirds, who spoke of a 'community feeling' within shipbuilding: 'There was a culture of looking after you... everybody looked after everybody... there was a community feeling'.<sup>54</sup> Wishing to avoid a potential unwanted diagnosis of rose-tinted nostalgia, Robert prefaced his depiction of 'community feeling' with, 'I'm not reminiscing'.<sup>55</sup> For himself and other workers, the framework of camaraderie which surrounded the wider community of heavy industry had been lived through, it was a real experience which had taken place and had then been lost.

Reference to a family atmosphere was literal as well as metaphorical, with multiple family members often employed alongside one another. Work in heavy industry tended to be concentrated within families, informally passing from parent to child; it was not uncommon for fathers, sons, uncles and cousins to work side-by-side. One former Bethlehem steelworker, interviewed by High, described this familial atmosphere, 'my father worked there. His father worked there, it was like your family. All my uncles worked there. All my relatives. All my friends. Everybody I knew'.<sup>56</sup> As a manager, Alastair Hart observed multiple family members working together in shipbuilding, noting, 'father, son, uncle, grandfather, all sorts of relationships'.<sup>57</sup> Neither Colin Quigley nor John Johnstone worked in shipbuilding, but nonetheless both men could claim a family history that demonstrated the normality of family ties within the yard. Colin Quigley commented, 'my grandfather, my dad, my uncles all worked in the shipyards', while John Johnstone noted that as well as his father, 'my mum's brother worked in the shipyards... My dad's brother was a pipefitter in the shipyards. My dad's sister's husband, he was an electrician in the shipyards'.<sup>58</sup> When describing Hallside Steelworks, Jack Mccusker reflected that

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Robert Buirds by James Ferns, 04/03/2019

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.46

<sup>57</sup> Alastair Hart Interview (Ferns)

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Colin Quigley by James Ferns, 13/02/2019; John Johnstone Interview (Ferns)

'whole families worked in it'.<sup>59</sup> In a BBC Radio Scotland programme, Dorothy Macready noted:

In my family... there was my husband, my cousin's husband, her son, the man across the road, the man upstairs, the bloke downstairs. I don't think there was a family in Motherwell that didn't have somebody that didn't work in Ravenscraig.<sup>60</sup>

This interfamily aspect, exemplified by Tommy Brennan – 'I worked in the Craig, my brother worked in the Craig, my two sons worked in the Craig, my brother's three sons worked in the Craig' – encouraged even greater bonds between workers, blurring the lines between the workplace and the family.<sup>61</sup>

The degree of family ties within heavy industry played an important role in securing employment and skilled work within the industry. Describing the former steeltown of Homestead, Modell and Brodsky noted, 'a boy who grew up in a mill family could follow easily in the footsteps of his father and uncles, entering the mill with barely a second thought'.<sup>62</sup> In an interview with *The Daily Record*, former Ravenscraig engineer Stevie Jeffery recalled how steelworkers 'would follow in the footsteps of their father, uncle or brother and find employment at Ravenscraig'.<sup>63</sup> Derek Cairns recalled that employment of multiple family members was 'fairly common' in steelmaking, with himself following in his father footsteps: 'my father was a welder. He worked in the steelworks at the latter end, so that was always the direction I was going to go'.<sup>64</sup> Alex Wright attributed his entry into shipbuilding to his uncle, who worked at Fairfields yard, stating, 'it was very much a case of my uncle'.<sup>65</sup> Andrew Kane's brother-in-law secured him a position in steelmaking, as he highlighted: 'Somebody spoke for you – that's basically what happened in those days,

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<sup>59</sup> Jack Mccusker Interview (Ferns)

<sup>60</sup> 'Ravenscraig', *Our Story*

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Tommy Brennan by James Ferns, 16/01/2017

<sup>62</sup> J. Modell C. and Brodsky, *A Town without Steel: Envisioning Homestead* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988) p.135

<sup>63</sup> B. Mclver, 'Closure of Ravenscraig steel works still causing pain twenty years on', *Daily Record* (23 June 2012) <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/real-life/closure-of-ravenscraig-steel-works-still-1130067> [Accessed 14/05/2018] np.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Derek Cairns by James Ferns, 12/04/2019

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Alex Wright by James Ferns, 06/03/2019

somebody put a word in for you'.<sup>66</sup> After leaving school Gordon Hatton enrolled onto an engineering training course, following which his father facilitated an apprenticeship for him in Lanarkshire Welding: 'My father worked in Ravenscraig at the time and he was a manager... He heard they were looking for an apprentice. Because I was already familiar with welding, he asked me'.<sup>67</sup> Family connections proved useful again for Gordon, when, during a period of unemployment following a redundancy, his uncle secured him a position in Ravenscraig: 'One of my uncles... His brother was the manager of the Boss plant... He phoned me one day, he says, "I'm looking for operators in Ravenscraig, are you interested?"'.<sup>68</sup> The normality of family ties within the workplace were labelled nepotistic by Stewart MacPherson:

It was nepotism. It always was, I worked in a shift and there were five brothers and a father who worked in the same shift. Also, in that same shift there were three cousins and a brother-in-law... imagine what it would be like if you fell out with one of them.<sup>69</sup>

Although lacking a family background in steelmaking, Stewart was able to take advantage of the culture, with his initial application being supported by his neighbour, a former steelworker himself, who guaranteed Stewart an interview by posing as his grandfather.

The interfamily aspect of heavy industry – with children following their parents into work – formed strong bonds of affect, as well as a sense of heritage. McKinlay and Hampton state that 'family ties and contacts were of vital importance for Clydeside shipyard workers', that shipbuilding apprenticeships typically represented a 'father's legacy to his son'.<sup>70</sup> Pat Clark had been 'brought up in a shipbuilding town, a shipbuilding family'.<sup>71</sup> Having emigrated from Donegal to seek better employment opportunities, Robert Buirds family had been shipbuilders for generations, 'my dad and my granddad. I think that my family came over here from

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Andrew Kane by James Ferns, 25/01/2017

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Gordon Hatton by James Ferns, 25/03/2019

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>70</sup> A. McKinlay and J. Hampton, 'Making Ships, Making Men: Working for John Brown's between the Wars', *Oral History*, 19:1 (1991) p.21

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Pat Clark by James Ferns, 28/03/2019

Ireland in the early middle of the nineteenth century... it was work that attracted them over here. They all worked in the shipyards'.<sup>72</sup> Gordon MacLean conveyed a sense of rootedness:

You'd work with guys who'd be in their 60s... they'd tell you the stories of what it was like to work in the yards... Then all of a sudden, you'd hear stories from your grandfather, and your father, and your father-in-law, who all were yard workers.<sup>73</sup>

Work defined family history, giving meaning and a sense of the past. This notion was embedded in James Carlin's comment – 'I come from a steel working family'.<sup>74</sup> Steelmaking was part of workers' heritage, central to their identity, which James illustrated:

That's what I wanted to be, because I came from that sort of history, that lineage within my family, we were all steelworkers, we worked in heavy industry, and I was desperate to leave school and get into the steelworks.<sup>75</sup>

### **Social Embeddedness**

A developed social network encompassed heavy industry, with the workplace deeply embedded in the social life of the surrounding community. The sheer scale of heavy industry commanded awe, and with sometimes thousands of workers onsite its size had an almost gravitational effect on the social life and identity of the community it was embedded in, Thomas Brotherston observed:

To explain the kind of militancy and the attitude and I suppose the culture of the shipyards. First of all... imagine a factory or a group of workers that was as large as a small town. There was something like 10,000 people working at Fairfields when I joined it.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Gordon MacLean by James Ferns, 23/03/2019

<sup>74</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)



The sense of community surrounding heavy industry was something understood rather than acknowledged, taken for granted as a fact of life. Pat Clark explained that while it was not something that people commented on in and of itself, it was nonetheless very real: 'I don't think it's the kind of thing that people were running about and saying, but aye it was there. There was no doubt about it'.<sup>77</sup> This vibrant community social life shaped workers' and their families' lives, structured through a range of formal and informal voluntary associations and recreational clubs which catered for hobbies, sports, socialising, and politics.

Steelworks had a significant presence within their surrounding community, with a plethora of social clubs informally attached to the plant. As a manager in Ravenscraig, Terry Currie observed a wide array of clubs across Scottish steelmaking, 'there was a football team, fishing teams, cricket teams, golf outings and all that type of stuff'.<sup>78</sup> John Christie commented on some of what was available in Gartcosh Steelworks, 'They had the yachting club. They had recreation places. They had a big home down in Largs'.<sup>79</sup> The variety of social opportunities, both with his wife and with fellow workers, was extolled by Brian Cunningham:

The social side of it was terrific... we used to do overnight stays, dinner dances, we used to do mid-week breaks for the golf... obviously you had your anniversaries, weddings, engagements, so the social side of it was really good.<sup>80</sup>

Jim McKeown 'enjoyed the social side' of steelmaking:

We all looked after each other and all looked out for each other... I enjoyed the social side of it... there was always nights out and things on, snooker tournaments and that type of things on your day off, a lot of the guys played golf and you went golfing with them even though you couldn't play.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Terry Currie by James Ferns, 18/03/2019

<sup>79</sup> Interview with John Christie by James Ferns, 12/08/2019

<sup>80</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>81</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

Alex Torrance recalled a vibrant social life in Ravenscraig, 'we ran inter department football tournaments, darts teams, various other aspects. There was a huge social side to Ravenscraig'.<sup>82</sup> Days off were packed with social events, as Stewart MacPherson described, 'we would go to the dancing and we'd go to the pub. Play pool. We'd go golfing outings, we'd go fishing trips. We even went to the racing a few times'.<sup>83</sup> The regularity of socialising fortified a sense of community, as Ian Harris described: 'My wife knew my workmates, knew their families... you got invited to everything, so you were at the fishing club dance, the bowling club dance – I was in the golf club so I was at the golf club dance, the football dance, everything'.<sup>84</sup> Large-scale formal workplace social clubs, such as Ravenscraig's Jerviston House, the Clydesdale Club, and the Gartcosh Social Club were important hubs of social activity. The Gartcosh Social Club hosted various entertainers and boasted a variety of interest, hobby or sporting groups. As James Blair illustrated:

Gartcosh social club. That was built when we were there. There was a tennis court, they had bowling, they had cricket... they had really some top acts in the social club... They had the two football teams, Gartcosh Thistle, Gartcosh United. They had a cricket team. They had a bowling team.<sup>85</sup>

Andrew Kane noted, 'the Clydesdale had a fantastic social club, oh aye, that had a brilliant social club'.<sup>86</sup> Harry Carlin recalled the popularity of the Clydesdale Club:

A massive club, very well attended, right up to the redundancy. It opened every night... dancing at the weekend, acts would come on – they used to at one time have a debating society in it. They had their football teams... Aye that was a good club, everybody loved the Clydesdale Club.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>83</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Ian Harris by James Ferns, 09/01/2017

<sup>85</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>86</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>87</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

The wider social life of the plant was not made up exclusively by male workers, as Dorothy Macready recalled, 'there was Colville Park Social Club. That was where everybody went at the weekend'.<sup>88</sup>

The social life of shipbuilding was equally robust, with workers deriving a great sense of community from the yard. Like in steelmaking, workplace sport events were common; Alan Glover recalled, 'they had a football tournament every year'.<sup>89</sup> When asked if there was a sense of community, Alex O'Hara answered 'very much so'.<sup>90</sup> Danny Houston noted, 'there was a massive sense of community' in Govan, which itself was intrinsically connected to the culture and social network of shipbuilding.<sup>91</sup> He recalled an annual Govan parade: 'They had floats. They had a gala queen. The full community came out. Pubs were all open and you had a drink and that'.<sup>92</sup> As with other interviewed women employed in heavy industry, Janet Moss also felt connected to the wider community of shipbuilding:

There was always a social club, and there's always something happening at the weekend. You'd go to the football, or just a bingo night, there was always something... they used to have outings, days out down to the beach, and they'd have Christmas parties in restaurants... Everybody was close-knit. Everybody knew everybody else.<sup>93</sup>

From his childhood, Colin Quigley recalled an extensive social fabric around shipbuilding, 'You had working men's clubs... lots of clubs, the shipyards provided, Fairfield had bowling greens and things like that, football. Alexander Stevens, they had a full big recreation ground for the men'.<sup>94</sup> Recreational infrastructure was literally built around the workplace. Pat Clark described how multiple pubs would cater for a single yard: 'There was all sorts of pubs around about the yards... opposite the main entrance in Scots there was no fewer than five pubs all serving one

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<sup>88</sup> Dorothy Macready Interview (Ferns)

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Alan Glover by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

<sup>90</sup> Alex O'Hara Interview (Ferns)

<sup>91</sup> Danny Houston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Janet Moss Interview (Ferns)

<sup>94</sup> Colin Quigley Interview (Ferns)

shipyard'.<sup>95</sup> The yard was an integral part of the community, a focal point which anchored a sense of stability. As James Cloughley highlighted:

They were extremely important... the shipyards were there for a long time... it allowed people to live a life, although sometimes it was a hard life. Allowed them to educate their children. There was good community feelings. There was solidarity amongst families... Surrounding the shipyards there was everything that anybody could want.<sup>96</sup>

Unlike steelmaking, workplace social clubs played a less central role in shipbuilding, with social activities organised between workers more loosely and informally. Like other shipbuilders, Alan Glover stated, 'no in my time, there wasn't any social clubs' – which manager Alastair Hart echoed, 'I don't really have a sense of much of that, to be honest'.<sup>97</sup> One exception was union social clubs, as Pat Clark noted, 'our union had a club – The Boilermakers' Club'.<sup>98</sup>

The social life of heavy industry was not jealously guarded or exclusive to the workforce. Workers' families and friends were heavily involved in various aspects, attending workplace social clubs and events – in many instances the social life of the plant bled into wider community life. Former Ravenscraig electrician Alex Torrance noted, 'it wasn't just the guys of the shift. It was extended to families of the shift as well', commenting:

We would do social dos and things like that. Every year at Christmas, we'd organize a Christmas dinner... Sometimes, depending on our rota, somebody would come up and say, 'There's *A Sound of Music* on in one of the theatres'... We'd actually arrange a bus for the shift to go and see all these shows.<sup>99</sup>

Gartcosh Steelworks was the nuclei of a particularly vibrant community social life, as former steelworker James Blair recalled:

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<sup>95</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>96</sup> James Cloughley Interview (Ferns)

<sup>97</sup> Alastair Hart Interview (Ferns)

<sup>98</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>99</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

They had everything. They had fishing, golf, a car club, you name it... There were days out, weekends away, fishing and different things like that. It was good... Every year we had a gala day. It was absolutely jumping. All the people brought their families, their kids.<sup>100</sup>

The social life of the plant was part of the social life of Gartcosh, not something reserved solely to employees, as James explained, 'the people in Gartcosh itself were involved in the social club and they were part of that culture as well, so the social side of the strip mill was excellent. It was excellent'.<sup>101</sup> The social activity of heavy industry should not be confused with the various socialising initiatives that typify paternalist companies. Rather than a management strategy to bolster company morale, these initiatives were typically organised by workers themselves, their unions, or had evolved organically alongside the workplace as part of the background culture of the surrounding community. Most clubs were worker-led and organised on a local level by members. The informal organisation of social events in steelmaking was elaborated on by Jim McKeown:

I was never involved with anything official you know, if you are on a shift there would be someone organising a golf outing on your two days off... There was that social side of it but it was all kind of informal rather than anything formal.<sup>102</sup>

Stewart MacPherson expanded on this informal planning:

Golf outings. It wasn't named as a club as such, but it would be the same guys... Informal. It wouldn't have a title... They would say, 'we are having an outing to whatever golf club... who wants to go?'... A lot of it was just off the cuff: 'what you doing at the weekend?'<sup>103</sup>

The strength of steelmaking's social life was attributed largely to the role of workplace unions. Alex Torrance stated: 'I think the unions had a lot to do with it. The unions had a lot to do with it regarding setting things up'.<sup>104</sup> The organisation of social activity for Yarrow's shipbuilders was 'part union and part worker' according to Janet

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<sup>100</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>103</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>104</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

Moss. Similarly, Alan Brown noted, 'the company itself never ever organised anything. The guys organised stuff... mostly the unions... self-organised stuff'.<sup>105</sup>

Beyond the wider social life discussed above, that included workers' families and members of the community, workers' social lives were also built around the workplace, and thus typically limited to the shop-floor workforce. The shift structure of heavy industry was a key foundation of workers' cohesive social life. Regular shifts and time off as a group provided stability which allowed workers to structure their social life in advance. The shift structure in steelmaking particularly lent itself to socialising, as Harry Carlin commented, 'everyone knew one another... there was about 30 or 35 in the shift, in your bit, so you all knew one another'.<sup>106</sup> Steelworkers typically worked a continental shift pattern, which allowed for days off during the week and thus facilitated the planning of social activity around work in advance. Stewart MacPherson stated:

The shift structure helped. It helped because you could plan things if you wanted to do something like that. We were obviously all on the same shift so we were all off at the same time.<sup>107</sup>

Frank Roy attributed the shift structure to steelworkers' strong sense of occupational identity:

It was your identity. And the reason why it was your total identity was because the lifestyle, because we worked a thing called a continental shift pattern, which was dayshift, backshift, nightshift... So you knew weeks in advance, months in advance, what shift you were... your social life was round your days off... you had a diary in your head where you knew your shifts.<sup>108</sup>

Workers on the same shift pattern planned social outings together to fill regular intervals, as Tommy Johnston outlined:

The camaraderie was excellent. The way we worked it was called continental shifts... if you were nightshift, you are away golfing during

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<sup>105</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>106</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>107</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Frank Roy by James Ferns, 01/02/2017

the day with all your pals. They used to have golf sections, football teams, fishing clubs, so you were either playing football in the afternoon, golfing in the afternoon, or away fishing... a big community.<sup>109</sup>

Steelworkers' mid-week breaks were labelled 'Irish weekends' and usually packed full of social activity. Brian Cunningham stated:

We had a five aside team, we played in Wishaw in a Wednesday night... We played golf all the time... we used to have days out, then we had a midweek break, our Irish weekends were fantastic... we went to Port Patrick to this wee pub... we were there from the Tuesday to the Friday, 15 of us.<sup>110</sup>

May and Morrison's interviews with displaced KEMET Electronics Corporation workers also revealed a fondness for regular shift patterns, as it allowed workers to 'lead more predictable, patterned lives'.<sup>111</sup>

## Social Capital

Workers had access to a great deal of social capital by virtue of the various voluntary associations, social clubs, educational programmes, and political groups associated with their workplace. The World Health Organisation defines social capital as 'the quality of social relationships within societies or communities, including community networks, civic engagement, sense of belonging and norms of cooperation and trust', which has been linked to positive mental health.<sup>112</sup> An abundance of social capital as well as civic participation enhances the quality of life for the individual and their community. As Putnam states, 'life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital', arguing that, 'networks of civic engagement foster sturdy

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with Tommy Johnston by James Ferns, 26/01/2017

<sup>110</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>111</sup> S. May and L. Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring: Narratives of Accommodation among Downsized workers', in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds.) *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell, 2003) p.171

<sup>112</sup> World Health Organisation, *Impact of economic crises on mental health* (Copenhagen: World Health Organization 2011) p.3; A. M. Almedom, 'Social capital and mental health: an interdisciplinary review of primary evidence', *Social Science and Medicine*, 61 (2005) p.958

norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust'.<sup>113</sup> The duality of a large workforce, which was both highly organised and defined by a strong sense of social embeddedness, allowed workers to easily mobilise their collective influence and organise initiatives which benefited their community.

A culture of mutual aid ran throughout workers' vibrant social life, with part of their union dues going towards the funding of the various social clubs as well as a welfare fund. Stewart MacPherson described how his union contributions were split:

One was the [Jerviston] club. The running of the club. Then it was the welfare. That was for people who were experiencing hardship. Maybe due to ill health or something. Maybe a woman losing a man in an injury in the steelworks.<sup>114</sup>

With around 6,000 employees and union members present at the time Stewart was employed at Ravenscraig, this fund was relatively healthy and able to fund a variety of initiatives. Brian Cunningham remembered one such scheme, where Ravenscraig workers raised money for two workplace ambulances and donated equipment to the Law Hospital – which responded by naming a cardiac unit after Ravenscraig.<sup>115</sup> Alex McGowan was active in Clyde Alloy's social committee, which organised many initiatives for workers as well as the local community:

We had a social committee that used to take all the pensioners away on a bus run in the summertime. Then we had a Christmas party for them, a Christmas party for all the kids, maybe take them to the pantomime, everybody chipped in five pence a week or something. We used to organize dances as well, so there was a lot of things like that going on.

The social side of steelmaking went beyond the purely recreational, as Alex Torrance recalled:

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<sup>113</sup> R. Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', *Journal of Democracy*, 6:1 (1995) p.67

<sup>114</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>115</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)



In Ravenscraig, we had a welfare committee. Every kid at Christmas, the people who had kids... they all got a selection box, and they all got taken to either a pantomime or the Kelvin Hall circus.<sup>116</sup>

Remarking that 'Ravenscraig was good in many ways', Jim Reddiex described a scheme where workers collectively deposited their money into a bank and used the accumulated interest to purchase yearly Christmas presents for local disadvantaged children.<sup>117</sup> Referring to the Clydesdale Social Club, Andrew Kane recalled, 'they were good to the kids. At Christmas, they had a big party for the kids with Santa Claus, selection boxes and presents'.<sup>118</sup> Ian Harris described a yearly steelworks dance that aimed to raise money for the children's charity, Cash for Kids, 'We had an annual dance... our target there was every year to raise £1,000 for children'.<sup>119</sup> A similar focus on worker-led community initiatives existed in shipbuilding. Danny Houston described the charity work of workplace social clubs and union branches:

They had the Fairfields club. That's still going... They had all the community stuff. They done a lot for charity, massive – the boilermaker's union, you had platers, you had shipwrights. They all really done well for charity. Used to help anybody it could.<sup>120</sup>

Alan Brown recalled that yard unions organised events for retired members, 'they'd have a yearly outing, which would take the retired members away for the day somewhere'.<sup>121</sup> Social capital and social embeddedness have also been associated with increased political participation, with Klandermans and Stekelenburg stating that, 'networks provide space for the creation and dissemination of discourse critical of authorities'.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 2, heavy industry cultivated a politicised workforce, encouraging participation in the wider labour movement. The relationship between unions and community initiatives functioned as a feedback loop, wherein workers' sense of robust occupational community emboldened them

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<sup>116</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Jim Reddiex by James Ferns, 10/01/2017

<sup>118</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>119</sup> Ian Harris Interview (Ferns)

<sup>120</sup> Danny Houston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>121</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>122</sup> B. Klandermans and J. Stekelenburg, 'The social psychology of protest', *Sociopedia*, 61:5-6 (2010) p.7

to initiate campaigns, which in turn created a greater sense of community feeling and empowerment.

## Division

The overwhelmingly positive depiction of community feeling within heavy industry will of course evoke a certain suspicion of 'smokestack nostalgia'. The issue of rose-tinting was often brought up by workers themselves, with many asides or addendums to depictions of the workplace clarifying that what was being described was the general not the absolute. As Alan Glover clarified, 'Don't get me wrong, we weren't all working-class heroes... guys were complete dickheads as well. There were guys that would stab you in the back for a penny... but overall they were good'.<sup>123</sup> Bellamy's *The Shipbuilders* outlines a 'strict hierarchy' among yard workers, this 'rigid caste system' had at its bottom unskilled labourers, followed by apprentices, then the semi-skilled, with skilled workers at the top.<sup>124</sup> The hierarchy of the yard was also reflected in the quality of housing beyond work, with lower paid unskilled workers usually relegated to poorer housing and tradespeople occupying more spacious tenement housing.<sup>125</sup> The occupational divisions in the yard often led to conflict, as 'resentment existed simply as a matter of principle' between groups.<sup>126</sup> James Cairns described how socialising outside of work was split by occupation, as well as religion:

Pubs were segregated. You had engineers, labourers, shipyard builders, all different pubs. Pattern makers only drank in the Carnock Bar. Shipyard workers drink in Ancient Flynns. Then of course religion came into it, that was a Protestant pub and that was a Catholic pub. That was a carpenter's pub. That was a pattern makers' pub, that was engineers'. Took a long while to understand.<sup>127</sup>

Anti-Irish racism and anti-Catholic bigotry were entrenched throughout Scottish heavy industry. Rooted in the nineteenth century as a reactionary response

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<sup>123</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>124</sup> Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p.22, p.154

<sup>125</sup> Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Interview with James Cairns by James Ferns, 01/08/2019

to Irish migration – itself intensified by the Great Famine – these attitudes manifest in extensive discrimination, resulting in the historic marginalisation of Irish-Catholic workers in Scotland. Knox and McKinlay caution against ‘nostalgic longings for the “old days”’, stating that ‘the ownership of skill was always exclusive and sectional. Outsiders, such as women and Catholic Irish, were always denied access to apprenticeships through some form or other of trade practice’.<sup>128</sup> While providing the strong bonds of affect discussed above, the interfamily aspect of heavy industry also facilitated discrimination, with skilled work often limited to Protestant families. Con O’Brien, a Catholic employed in steelmaking, noted, ‘in those days it was, again, it was a father-son syndrome... they all had generations in there’.<sup>129</sup> A growing demand for labour, in tandem with Socialist trade union activism and greater Irish Catholic representation within the labour movement, led to a gradual weakening of anti-Irish racism in twentieth-century Scotland. However, holdouts of discrimination persisted, particularly within heavy industry. The Orange Order – a reactionary anti-Catholic fraternal organisation – had a considerable presence in the West of Scotland, particularly in shipbuilding areas like Partick and Govan, with the Orange Lodge in Clydebank located immediately outside the entrance of John Browns Shipyard.<sup>130</sup> Although the social side of heavy industry was remembered largely for its warmth and sense of camaraderie, workers readily shed light on these darker aspects of workplace culture. Those with an Irish or Irish-Catholic background were typically more vocal in articulating such instances – likely a result of them having direct experience of the entrenched anti-Irish racism and anti-Catholic bigotry of Scottish heavy industry.

Alongside being a site of collective struggle, solidarity, and community, Scottish shipbuilding was infamous for its deep-seated discrimination against workers with an Irish-Catholic background. Management roles, skilled work, and particular trades within a given yard were typically reserved for Protestant workers,

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<sup>128</sup> W. W. Knox and A. McKinlay, ‘Work in Twentieth-Century Scotland’, in J. Beech (ed.) *Scottish life and society: a compendium of Scottish ethnology: the individual and community life* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2008) pp.48-66

<sup>129</sup> Con O’Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>130</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation* (London: Penguin, 2000) p.506

with membership of either the Orange Order or Masonic Lodge an informal prerequisite for interview or promotion. Robert Buirds explained:

You always got advancement if you were a Mason... the managers were all Masons and all the senior supervisors were all Masons. Very few Catholics when I was serving my apprenticeship... A lot of the welders in Scotts were all Protestants because it was all Protestant supervision and it was the Masons that ran it.<sup>131</sup>

Joe O'Rourke believed discrimination against those from an Irish-Catholic background was commonplace. As the only Catholic supervisor at Fergusons Yard in the 1990s, Joe recalled, 'when I was the gaffer at Fergusons, there was 15 supervisors in it and I was the only one that was a Celtic man, Catholic, out of 15'.<sup>132</sup> According to Joe, trades were typically segregated, with 'dirty' trades having greater representation of Irish-Scots or Catholics than 'clean' office based ones:

We were called the Black Squad... we were always fucking dirty... Whereas the engineering, marine engineering, electricians, and draftsman they were all – very, very few Irish Catholics would have got an apprenticeship in there... There was loads of discrimination.<sup>133</sup>

As was typical for those from an Irish-Catholic background, Colin Quigley's father was an unskilled worker, he noted, 'I think a lot of religion came into that as well. Being from the Catholic community... if you were a Catholic, the only chance you had of getting an apprenticeship was that you had somebody in your family'.<sup>134</sup> Colin's mother's family were Protestant, which he attributed to his father's employment in shipbuilding. Through his father, Colin was privy to the normality of yard sectarianism:

My Dad told me stories... where you have your lunch and all of that. They would be playing the sash, Orange music... It was rife and even more so in the dockyards. I think it was really very much 'no Catholics' type attitude there.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Joe O'Rourke by James Ferns, 30/07/2019

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Colin Quigley Interview (Ferns)

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

When asked about the social side of shipbuilding Robert Buirds stated, 'Fine. Fine. The only thing that was different was maybe the Catholic-Protestant thing. That was quite prevalent. There was still an attitude in the '60s and '70s of anti-Catholic[ism]'.<sup>136</sup> The already hard environment of shipbuilding was compounded by sectarianism, as Paul Molloy noted, 'it was a difficult environment... Then you'd throw into that sectarianism which is just crazy... It was just all the hatred'.<sup>137</sup> On his first day of work, while trying to navigate through the yard, Paul found himself subject to abuse:

My mum had bought me a rugby top... No reference to football but it was green and white. I'm walking down through the yard and I've got my wee map and I'm trying to see where I'm going... I could see out of the corner of my eye this guy coming towards me and he had a red hat on which meant he was a foreman... he says, 'Excuse me, son, where are you going?' I say to him, 'I have to go here. This is where I have to report to'... So he said, 'What's your name son?' And I said, 'Paul Molloy'. He says, 'Aw are you a fucking Tim?'. And I said, 'Sorry?' And he goes, 'You're Fenian'... he says, 'Look at that top you've got on. You can't wear stuff like that in here'... he says, 'If you ever come into my squad, I'll hammer you into the ground'. He just walked away. I was only 16.<sup>138</sup>

The Orange Order was well represented within shipbuilding, Joe O'Rourke commented, 'they had lodges in the yard, big masonic lodges in them as well'.<sup>139</sup> The 1982 visit by Pope John Paul II to the United Kingdom was a point of particular excitement for the Orange Order, and considerable tension for Catholic workers like Joe O'Rourke. Joe stated, 'when the pope visited in '82 – it was a fucking shambles'.<sup>140</sup> Taking leave to attend the Pope's address, Joe recalled that other workers also requested leave, wishing to join the Orange Order's protest demonstration – 'you had these dafties, this loyalist mob, they wanted the day off to go up and protest'.<sup>141</sup> The Orange Order was an integral aspect of identity for many shipbuilders. Speaking

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<sup>136</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>137</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

of his father, John Johnstone noted, 'he would spend quite a bit of his time in the Orange Lodge'.<sup>142</sup> As with other workplace social clubs, the Orange Lodge played a prominent role in the lives of workers' families. John remembered:

At Christmas we would go to a children's party in the shipyards, a children's party in the Orange Lodge and a children's party in the Masonic [Lodge]... You could see how that was all intertwined and interconnected.<sup>143</sup>

The seemingly obvious tension between trade unionism – promoting values of egalitarianism and solidarity – and the Orange Order, a reactionary, right-wing fraternal organisation based upon the exclusion of Catholics, was lost on many shipbuilders, with dual membership commonplace. When asked if his father felt conflicted in being a trade unionist and a member of the Orange Order, John replied:

No, because the two things served different purposes. The Orange Lodge was connected to being a Protestant growing up in Govan supporting Rangers... The trade union was what he did with work... he separated the two. I don't think he would have seen a contradiction.<sup>144</sup>

Yard bigotry sometimes made the task of trade union representation difficult, with Irish-Scots or Catholic shop-stewards perceived as a threat by the very workers they represented. Robert Buirds attempted to rise above this, noting, 'you couldn't take a shop steward job in particular departments because of the culture... but in fairness, it never stopped me. It was there. Everybody knew it was there'.<sup>145</sup> As a shop steward Joe O'Rourke had to work to overcome resistance from those who resented being represented by a Catholic. He noted, 'most of it was all right. Most of it was fine. But there would be wee pockets of ones that just wouldn't want to integrate. They wouldn't want to, they would be fucking sneering and sniping'.<sup>146</sup> Upon taking over the role of shop steward at Lamonts' Yard Joe addressed the subject of sectarianism to those he represented:

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<sup>142</sup> John Johnstone Interview (Ferns)

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>146</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

I said, 'You all know what I am, you know what team I support. You know what I do'. I said, 'But see once we get in that yard, we are all the same, it is not Celtic or Rangers or anything else, it's no Orange Order or Hibs'. I said 'we are all in here, and if yous all fucking stand by each other I will stand by the lot of you'... It was all right, most times, but you would get individuals within it who wouldn't talk to me. Fucking hated the sight of me because of what you are.<sup>147</sup>

While the anti-Irish racism of shipbuilding was particularly blatant, this bigotry was not alien to steelmaking. Lacking the same skilled trades-based workforce as shipbuilding, there was less opportunity for exclusion in steelmaking, instead bigotry manifest itself more in an underrepresentation in management roles and the normalisation of prejudice. Gordon Hatton recalled a divided workplace, 'There was a lot of factions, a lot of bigotry, which I didn't like. It was blatantly obvious. The 'us and them'... folk that would stick together in their own'.<sup>148</sup> Frank Shannon expanded upon workplace discrimination:

Well let's put it this way, if your face fitted you got in. It didn't matter how good you were, and I don't need to tell you what foot you kicked with. That was bad then, really... if you couldn't count two and two you got the job, but if I knew what two and two was and you said 'Irish' I didn't get it.<sup>149</sup>

When asked if these attitudes improved over his working life, Frank stated:

It was always there, it was always there... I could stand my ground... I was forty-three years in the industry and I know over the period of time, I only remember one man who was a Catholic who was the works manager, in all the years I was there, what does that tell you?<sup>150</sup>

Freemasonry was common throughout Scottish steelmaking, and although not sectarian in its own right, there was a large degree of dual membership between the Masonic Lodge and Orange Order in Scotland. Harry Carlin stated, 'The Orange Lodge was there as well, but the Lodge didn't control it, the Masons controlled it. But a lot

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Frank Shannon by James Ferns, 23/01/2017

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

of the Orangemen were in the Masons as well. It was very prominent'.<sup>151</sup> When asked of discrimination in steelmaking, Harry Carlin commented, 'you would never get a Catholic manager in the steelworks', stating:

It existed. It existed in the steelworks and in the community of Lanarkshire... in the steelworks, all the managers, all the foremen, they were all Protestant. But I am happy to say later on that that wasn't the case. By the time of the Clydesdale shutting there were some managers that were Catholic.<sup>152</sup>

Con O'Brien commented that he witnessed instances of anti-Irish racism or anti-Catholic bigotry 'all the time' in steelmaking.<sup>153</sup> Surnames betray an individual's background, and seemingly innocent questions – 'what team do you support?', 'where did you go to school?' – serve to potentially identify someone as Irish or Catholic. As Con stated, 'unfortunately, I've got a name that tells you what religion I am... I remember the adverts, "no Irish need apply". Unfortunately my name, I'm Scottish, but unfortunately my name gives it away'.<sup>154</sup> Con explicitly tried to avoid those with bigoted views, noting, 'you just kept away from them'.<sup>155</sup> He continued, 'You knew by the way they spoke to you. When they spoke to you, you knew they disliked you... You knew what it was, there was definitely a kind of bias, a bigotry, whatever you what to call it'.<sup>156</sup>

Workers were somewhat reluctant to discuss their experience of anti-Irish racism or anti-Catholic bigotry, with responses usually limited to short affirmations that discrimination existed. This reluctance was vocalised by Joe O'Rourke, where he prefaced his depiction of yard sectarianism with, 'it probably is a dodgy subject':

At one time it was a divided community. It probably is a dodgy subject to brace but the first time I really experienced sectarianism was in the shipyards. Because when I served my apprenticeship, all the gaffers

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<sup>151</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Con O'Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*



were all Rangers men. Masons and stuff like that. And all the shop stewards were all Celtic men.<sup>157</sup>

The history of discrimination against the Irish in Scotland and the legacy of colonialism in Ireland itself remains a taboo subject in Scotland, with the resounding silence mostly broken by the liberal dictum of ‘both sides are as bad as each other’ – itself working to divorce discussions of racism and colonialism from sectarianism. Phil Mac Giolla Bháin has highlighted the enduring nature of anti-Irish racism in Scotland, as well as the taboo around publicly naming and challenging it.<sup>158</sup> In this context, workers had reason for their hesitancy. A detailed discussion of sectarianism usually began after the disclosure of a shared Irish-Catholic background with the interviewer. There was a sense that interviewees almost sought permission to talk about their experiences, making it important to establish a context in which they felt heard and taken seriously.

There was a tendency among workers who had been subject to anti-Irish racism or anti-Catholic bigotry to minimise its insidious nature, with the desire to be seen as a ‘good sport’ and throw it off as ‘banter’ fairly common. Con O’Brien attempted to minimise the impact of discrimination, stating, ‘I’ve had it that many times it’s water off a duck’s back – I just brush it off’.<sup>159</sup> Although Paul Molly provided multiple examples of workplace sectarianism or outright racist abuse, like most other Irish-Scot or Catholic workers he diminished these instances as banter, maintaining that while they certainly existed, they had little effect upon him:

I don’t think – I never felt that excluded. I’m a Catholic but I never felt excluded from anything... Yes, it was prevalent, but I never had any – it never impacted me or I never felt threatened at all at any time or anything like that, but it was always there as a background banter.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Joe O’Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>158</sup> P. Mac Giolla Bháin, *Minority Reporter: Modern Scotland’s Bad Attitude Towards Her Own Irish* (Edinburgh: Frontline Noir, 2013)

<sup>159</sup> Con O’Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>160</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

In response to this ‘background banter’ many adopted a ‘live and let live’ strategy, tolerating the ambient bigotry of the workplace. Robert Buirds noted:

My chargehand, he was a flute player... he was always away on the 12<sup>th</sup> [July] on Orange Marches. But to be honest, I got on all right with [him]... I knew who he was and he knew who I was, and we lived that way. There were others who took it a bit further.<sup>161</sup>

Tensions were intensified in the lead-up to football matches, with sectarianism normalised and largely seen as an unchangeable fact of life. Paul Molloy recalled:

Especially coming up to games... Kind of banter, you know. There would be the odd person who’s really crazy about it. There was this one guy, they called him The Heap... Before every Celtic Rangers game, he used to wear his sash, the Orange Lodge, under his jacket... he would clock out and then turn round and pull the sash out his jacket and kiss it and go, ‘Fuck you Fenians!’ then just walk out... There was no – it was just like, ‘There’s The Heap’. That’s the way he is. Do you know what I mean?<sup>162</sup>

Notably, workers with no Irish-Catholic background typically either had very little to say of workplace discrimination, or simply minimised it. Alan Brown commented:

It was always a joke from people outside saying that you could only get into the yards if you were a Protestant, but when you’re in the yards, nobody cared what you were. It doesn’t matter what you were, whether you’re Protestant, Catholic or whatever, religion really didn’t get discussed.<sup>163</sup>

Similarly, James Cairns denied the extent of sectarianism, responding with an anecdote when asked if the yards were discriminatory:

People say they were, they weren’t... when I moved into Scott’s pattern shop, one of the young apprentices failed his exam, so obviously got put out. They said he got put out because of his religion which was nonsense, absolute nonsense because my journeyman was a Catholic and I wasn’t.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>162</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>163</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>164</sup> James Cairns Interview (Ferns)

The discriminatory practices of heavy industry have prompted some to suggest that its destruction resulted in a more egalitarian workplace culture in general. Knox and McKinlay write:

The destruction of the once all-powerful sectarian masculine culture of the skilled worker in Scotland has allowed a new workplace culture to emerge that on one level is more democratic, less misogynist and less anti-Catholic.<sup>165</sup>

This perhaps goes too far; Irish-Catholic workers had suffered and fought to overcome discrimination in heavy industry for over a hundred years, as the twentieth century wore on their struggle began to bear fruit, yet at the moment where they began to enjoy greater access, this potential triumph was overturned. This was encapsulated by Robert Buirds:

There was that much work that they couldn't put the bar against Catholics getting jobs... they needed as much skilled labour as they could get because the place was booming in the '60s, '70s. Until Maggie Thatcher took over and that killed it.<sup>166</sup>

Well-paid skilled work and a 'democratic, less misogynist and less anti-Catholic' work culture are not mutually exclusive; the possibility of obtaining both had become increasingly tangible within heavy industry, but was undone in the wake of deindustrialisation.

## Narrating Loss

Deindustrialisation ruptured workers' lives, upturning social networks that had been taken for granted and obliterating a culture that had appeared unshakable. The impact of deindustrialisation goes beyond economic loss, as Portelli states, 'when this intergenerational chain of work breaks, it is felt less as a political and economic loss and more as an existential catastrophe, a deep wound to identity, pride self-

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<sup>165</sup> Knox and McKinlay, 'Work in Twentieth-Century Scotland', pp.48-66

<sup>166</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

esteem'.<sup>167</sup> Jim McHale, a Detroit tool-and-die maker interviewed by High verbalised this sensation, commenting, 'You're in a little world. Then you leave that world'.<sup>168</sup> The material basis of heavy industry's working-class culture was demolished alongside the factory. Deindustrialisation in Scotland was both rapid and pervasive – a blitzkrieg of industrial closure gave the impression of a nation subject to a seemingly unstoppable economic force. According to Finlay, 'there was no transitional phase', with the 'economic and social transformation of Scotland' comparable in speed to 'former Soviet nations'.<sup>169</sup> The physical destruction of heavy industry doomed the culture surrounding it. Cultural disintegration was often rapid, like the closing down of workplace social clubs, while in other instances it was gradual, with the cultural attitudes associated with heavy industry lingering on, but the trend was nonetheless terminal – deindustrialisation signalled the end of working-class industrial culture. In their narration of this loss workers spoke with great emotion, mourning both the end of a job and a way of life.

### Identity Disintegration

Deindustrialisation triggered mass identity disintegration in Scotland's industrial communities as unrelenting closures obliterated an established culture in a matter of decades. Filmed shortly after the closure of Ravenscraig, the BBC Scotland documentary *Shadow of the Craig* captures the deep sense of loss expressed by workers and the wider community, with one former steelworker likening closure to 'a death in the family'.<sup>170</sup> The erasure of industrial employment not only disordered workers' lives, it destroyed an intrinsic aspect of their identity. Jim McKeown narrated his sense of loss:

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<sup>167</sup> A. Portelli, "'This Mill Won't Run No More': Oral History and Deindustrialisation', in S. Linkon and J. Russo (eds.) *New Working Class Studies* (London: ILR Press, 2005) p.57

<sup>168</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.41

<sup>169</sup> R. Finlay, *Modern Scotland 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004) p.386

<sup>170</sup> *Shadow of the Craig* (1992) Director unknown (BBC Scotland)

I think the important thing was... you were part of a team, you were something... you felt part of something... part of something important we thought, you know; in the end it looks as if we weren't.<sup>171</sup>

Jim lost a part of himself, a feeling he believed was even more pronounced among the older generation of steelworkers:

There was a bit of me missing, because a lot of those people, even though they are living round about, I've never seen them again... I think a lot of the older ones, who knew they weren't going to work again, when you meet them a couple of times they seemed – a part of their soul was missing.<sup>172</sup>

Frank Shannon, who was part of this older generation agreed, affirming that many lost their sense of purpose: 'I know a lot [of] people that didn't last a year, dead... maybe drink, gambling... work was their life... it was devastating'.<sup>173</sup> A few of James Blair's former colleagues that he kept in touch with were unable to find employment, he noted, 'they never worked after they left the steelworks. I used to meet two or three of them. It was soul destroying for them'.<sup>174</sup> James' depiction of joblessness as 'soul destroying' is similar to Jim McKeown's previous comment – 'part of their soul was missing' – both men observed that deindustrialisation had destroyed something intrinsic that could not be replaced.

High's interviews with displaced North American workers reveal a similar sense of 'intangible' loss, with workers' narratives 'studded with references to marriage break-up, alcohol abuse, and suicide'.<sup>175</sup> High states that, 'although most workers interviewed agreed that they lost money in a shutdown, long-time employees placed far greater emphasis on more intangible losses. It was as if they had lost "something internal" or a piece of themselves'.<sup>176</sup> Gabriel Solano, a long-time employee of General Motors interviewed by High and Lewis, vocalised an intense

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<sup>171</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Frank Shannon Interview (Ferns)

<sup>174</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>175</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.67

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p.43

feeling of loss, reflecting, 'I lost a part of me. Me as a person who said, "I have a goal. I have a dream"'.<sup>177</sup> Gabriel continued:

To come home and say 'I no longer have a job.' The wife looks at you. You're looking at this baby. You're looking at this house and you're realizing that something is missing and it's a part of me. I don't so much feel that I was missing GM but I was missing a part of me. Something internal. It's hard to explain because it's an emotion. It's a feeling. Because it took all those years to build this emotion and this feeling and then it's not there. So you end up with a blank in your life.<sup>178</sup>

K'Meyer and Hart's interviews with former heavy industry workers conveyed a similar loss. Bob Reed of Johnson Controls felt untethered: 'you feel like you're in a lost world... your life was structured. Now, the bottom falls out and you've got to go out there and try to start all over again at forty-five years old'.<sup>179</sup> Modell and Brodsky, in their examination of the demise of steelmaking in Homestead, Pennsylvania, interviewed one steelworker with 'two hundred years' of family legacy in the mill, who stated, 'your life revolves around that mill. No mill and no life'.<sup>180</sup>

This feeling of losing something essential or intangible was expressed across multiple interviews. Deindustrialisation shattered the structure of workers' lives, disordering routine and leaving a sense of uncertainty over the future. After a lifetime of work dedicated to one industry it was difficult to consider starting anew. Tommy Brennan, the trade union convenor of Ravenscraig and Iron and Steel Trades Confederation official, took retirement following the closure of Ravenscraig. Tommy found this transition abrupt:

On the Friday I was working in the steel industry and on the Saturday morning I wasn't. And I lost all the positions, I was an executive council member at the time, I was the Scottish area secretary, I was the convenor of the Craig.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> S. High and D. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007) p.127

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* p.128

<sup>179</sup> K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*

<sup>180</sup> Modell and Brodsky, *A Town without Steel*, p.64

<sup>181</sup> Tommy Brennan Interview (Ferns)

John Johnstone remembered the struggle of his father's generation as shipbuilding collapsed:

I just remember it being pretty horrendous for a lot of folk. One of my dad's pals, Ronny, he'd been in the shipyards from an apprentice at 16 right up to he was nearly 40. It almost ended him. He couldn't cope with it. He couldn't cope... he struggled for a long time to find anything.<sup>182</sup>

The process of industrial closure 'destroyed people's lives', substituting prior certainty with a fear of the future. Tommy Johnston recalled:

It finished people's lifestyles in Lanarkshire... when you think that people came from 30, 40 miles around just to go to the Ravenscraig. It impacted on wee villages as well – and that's what I hate about it... They destroyed people's lives. People had to – the likes of myself – working from when I was 15 to go and saying, 'right, you are getting made redundant': your future is uncertain.<sup>183</sup>

Susan Crow noted, 'A lot of men were left wondering "what are we going to do? We've been working in this employment for a long time"'.<sup>184</sup> Speaking on behalf of her father, Susan remembered how the closure of Ravenscraig deepened his struggle with alcoholism:

My dad... he did have addiction issues. He was an alcoholic. He was very unwell. For the six or seven years after Ravenscraig closed, he was unwell physically, unwell mentally, and there was no support around. He was left fending for himself and trying to understand a new way of being.<sup>185</sup>

Susan's comment of seeking 'a new way of being' aptly verbalises the pressure workers were subject to following redundancy, being compelled to reconstruct their sense of purpose. Colin Quigley similarly recalled how his father's 'life was dominated' by alcoholism after his redundancy from Fairfields, reinforcing how

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<sup>182</sup> John Johnstone Interview (Ferns)

<sup>183</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>184</sup> Susan Crow Interview (Ferns)

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

alcohol abuse became a coping mechanism for many workers after losing their sense of structure:

He had no prospect of work... I think he was out of work that long that he ended up he turned to alcohol and he never really worked that much more after that. His life was – it got a grip of him – his life was dominated by that.<sup>186</sup>

Workers' redundancy packages provided relative financial stability – as Stewart MacPherson commented, 'they had plenty of money. They were getting their redundancy' – but this could not compensate for the loss of daily routine. Redundancy engendered a sense of purposelessness that could find expression in alcoholism and an early death:

My father's friends who worked in the Ravenscraig... There were about four or five of them, and every one of them died young... they didn't last long after the steelworks. The pub – that was their day. They would go to the pub, go to the bookies, go to the bowling club, go to the bookies, go back to the pub... That was their routine.<sup>187</sup>

Stewart's comment, 'the pub – that was their day', emphasises how a life structured around work gave way to one built around the pub. Stewart stressed the importance of work, observing, 'when you take that part away from a working man, he's not got anything left.'<sup>188</sup>

For many workers, their redundancy notice might as well have been a death warrant. Frank Roy recalled that older workers approaching retirement age particularly struggled to re-establish themselves. When asked if colleagues had died in the aftermath of closure, Frank stated:

Piles of them... the amount of funerals I went to in the '90s of people I had worked with, who were in their 50s... it was just very, very sad... if you were 53 you just didn't get another job. Loads of them died too

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<sup>186</sup> Colin Quigley Interview (Ferns)

<sup>187</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*



young... they had been steelworkers for 20 odd years... they never worked again, hit the drink... just too many of them.<sup>189</sup>

Tommy Johnston similarly reflected, 'they couldn't take it – if they had been working all their life', noting:

In the first year I was at twelve funerals of twelve of my workmates, twelve of my colleagues, who didn't have any hobbies, sat in the house all day, and got fed up and just went to the pub. Pub in the afternoon and back down at night, seven days a week – couldn't handle the money.<sup>190</sup>

Daily conversation was changed in the aftermath of closure, taking a darker hue it gravitated toward an accounting of former colleagues who had died. Peter Hamill noted:

I met Mick Smith and we started saying: 'Have you heard from thingmy? How's so and so getting on?' 'He's dead. How's so and so?' We were actually at twenty-three people that we had worked with and they were all dead, in a matter of seven or eight years all they people had all died.<sup>191</sup>

Reflecting upon the short life expectancy following redundancy, Harry Carlin noted, 'that was a lifetime job... then that was all taken off them... a lot of men took to drink... they were fed up... A lot of them died, died young'.<sup>192</sup> Christine Walley examined the impact of deindustrialisation on her own community of southeast Chicago, where closures left a slew of broken lives and families. Walley relates that many of her father's former steelworker colleagues fell to alcoholism or suicide, noting that in the ten years since Wisconsin Steels closure, almost 800 out of 3,400 workers had died, primarily from alcohol and stress-related illnesses.<sup>193</sup> Amidst the generalised despair precipitated by deindustrialisation, a significant proportion of workers committed suicide. An obvious limitation of oral history is the inability to directly capture the

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<sup>189</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>190</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Peter Hamill by James Ferns, 28/01/2017

<sup>192</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>193</sup> C. J. Walley, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) p.68

experiences of these people, however, stories of suicide relating to friends or acquaintances were referenced with a tragic frequency. As Ravenscraig's former industrial chaplain Rev. John Potter noted:

Trying to hunt individuals who were affected by the closure of significant plants like Ravenscraig, it would be very difficult to find them. We know from anecdotal things that some folk just – were finished.<sup>194</sup>

Speaking of his former colleagues, Gordon Hatton noted, 'quite a few of them died, a couple of suicides I know personally. Guys that didn't seem to last long at all'.<sup>195</sup> Bensman and Lynch's interviews with former steelworkers reveal deep emotional scars among the former workers of Wisconsin Steel. Dorothy Gomez, a former security guard at Wisconsin Steel, contemplated suicide: 'I "just went crazy" when the mill closed. "If you don't have a job, you don't have a purpose in life"... I had pills under my pillow and I would think that one night I was gonna get up and end it all'.<sup>196</sup> Losing a workplace with such a strong sense of occupational identity shattered workers' sense of self; as Brian Cunningham stated: 'You take dignity away from people and what are you left with? You're left with a shell'.<sup>197</sup> Brian noted, 'Some guys it devastated. Some guys would never recover from it, some guys retired from it, I know one guy who committed suicide'.<sup>198</sup> Industrial ruination precipitated an overwhelming sense of identity disintegration, provoking a crisis of mental health that was not formally addressed through the redundancy process.

There was a general lack of appropriate formal mental health support for heavy industry workers, despite their exposure to potentially horrific occupational accidents and fatalities, as well as the emotional ordeal of redundancy; as Alex McGowan stated, 'it was just a case of – just need to get on with it'.<sup>199</sup> Susan Crow was critical of redundancy packages, citing a lack of mental health support and the

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<sup>194</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>195</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>196</sup> D. Bensman and R. Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard times in a steel community* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988) p.97

<sup>197</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Interview with Alex McGowan by James Ferns, 11/04/2019

inevitable misuse of the money given the bleak economic context workers' found themselves in:

If you give people who are running around not knowing what to do with themselves an excessive amount of money, then that money's going to go on something – a coping strategy that is going to help them not deal with the pressing issue... think the overriding factor was the mental health aspect and the lack of support.<sup>200</sup>

In many ways industrial chaplains and interested trade union representatives acted as informal workplace counsellors, satisfying as best they could the lack of formal mental health support. Alex Torrance remembered how Ravenscraig's Rev. John Potter 'got on well with the workforce', that 'if anyone had any problems mentally or stress-wise, they could talk it over with that minister. He would give them advice and things like that'.<sup>201</sup> McIvor has also highlighted this element of industrial chaplains' role, noting that they 'counselled many workers facing redundancies' in the wake of Clydeside deindustrialisation and its correspondingly devastating impact on workers' mental health.<sup>202</sup> While Scottish steelworkers received substantial redundancy packages following closure, there was no investment made towards the emotional trauma of job loss and the destruction of a major source of community employment and cohesion. When the glitter of their lump sum faded, it became apparent to many that it was a cheap substitute for the stability and identity which heavy industry had provided. When asked about mental health support in terms of steelworks redundancy packages Harry Carlin replied: 'No, no, there was none of that. It was the Rev. John Porter and myself, and one or two of us – used to go round and talk to people and try to help them'.<sup>203</sup>

In the absence of professional counselling, former steelworkers created an informal peer support network to aid those who had an exceptionally difficult time adjusting. Even after he had ceased to be workers' formal trade union representative,

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<sup>200</sup> Susan Crow Interview (Ferns)

<sup>201</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>202</sup> A. McIvor, 'Blighted lives: Deindustrialisation, health and well-being in the Clydeside region', *Revue d'histoire*, 20:21 (2019) pp.1-14

<sup>203</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

James Coyle continued to play a pastoral role as he counselled them through redundancy:

It had a big effect on them, a bad effect because not every worker could cope the same as others. When they got their redundancy, I remember getting the phone calls to say, 'Jimmy that's my redundancy blew, I don't know what to do', and you would try and give advice as best you can. A lot of phone calls like that... it had a devastating effect, a lot of marriages, a lot of marriages would break up because of it.<sup>204</sup>

Former union rep Harry Carlin and Rev. John Potter visited the homes of struggling workers, providing them with company and encouragement:

They loved the steelworks and they became very depressed, some of them became very ill. I saw a lot of that... the Rev. John Potter – he was the industrial chaplain – and he used to phone me and say: 'Harry you need to come along with me, there is somebody here going through a bad time and that'. So I would go up to that boy's house and sit with them a wee while and talk to them, and then try to get them out of their depression.<sup>205</sup>

Rev. John Potter observed a noticeable mental deterioration in workers, losing respect for themselves as they lost their job: 'They walked tall because of the job they did – and they went out and they were a nobody'.<sup>206</sup> Struggling with identity disintegration, the idea of becoming 'nobody' was something Harry Carlin struggled against in his conversations with former steelworkers:

They were nothing. They were nothing. That's why you had to say, 'you are something' – 'no I'm not' – 'you are'. You used to argue and sit with them and say, 'get that out your head, you are no any better or any worse than the one next door to you, stop putting your head down and saying you're nothing now'. See they felt that were nothing because they worked all their days, they brought a wage into the house, then it was stopped.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with James Coyle by James Ferns, 15/02/2017

<sup>205</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>206</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>207</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

The idea of transformation appeared frequently in workers' narratives, with deindustrialisation compelling a move from the positive state of existence as 'something' – as Jim McKeown commented, 'you were something' – to the negative state of nonexistence – as Harry Carlin and Rev. John Potter respectively remarked, 'they were nothing', 'they were a nobody'. Being 'something' was always described in the past tense; the process of deindustrialisation literally unmade workers' identities.

### **Erosion of Camaraderie**

The vibrant social life of heavy industry disintegrated, often replaced with nothing; camaraderie gave way to loneliness as workers struggled to adjust to their new lives. For a social life built around work, job loss brought an abrupt end to countless friendships. Workers suddenly found themselves removed from colleagues they had potentially worked beside for decades. Rev. John Potter verbalised this sentiment: 'We were all scattered to the four winds. You met on a daily basis in a working environment, then closure came... it was impossible to keep in touch with folk'.<sup>208</sup> Workers whose social life was deeply embedded in heavy industry's social fabric often fared the worst. Frank Shannon spoke of people so lonely that they frequented supermarkets in the hope of some human interaction: 'People are going in and out of the supermarkets the now just to talk like you and I is talking, maybe no family, single, never married, but they like talking'.<sup>209</sup> A previously ordered social life faded away as the social structure of heavy industry unravelled following closure. Stewart MacPherson's social group 'died off':

It died off because you were not with them. When you were away from that, you didn't know what days off they were having. You lost touch. There were a couple of boys I kept in contact with over the phone, and some of them will come up to the house. Close pals. But through time, they drifted away... They were looking for totally

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<sup>208</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>209</sup> Frank Shannon Interview (Ferns)

different work from what I was doing. The gap – as time went on the gap just got wider and wider and wider.<sup>210</sup>

Socialising became increasingly difficult for Tommy Johnston: 'It started just fading away. After a year, I stopped playing football, I stopped playing golf'.<sup>211</sup> As a janitor, Tommy felt that annual leave was better spent in steelmaking given its culture of socialising beyond work: 'I've been off work for five weeks, I'm bored out my skull; I mean if I had been off five weeks in Ravenscraig I'd be away golfing, away fishing, away playing five asides'.<sup>212</sup> In *The End of the Line*, Dudley examined autoworkers experience of plant closure, stating, 'when Chrysler stopped building cars in Kenosha Wisconsin, a way of life came to an end'.<sup>213</sup> Dudley describes plant closure as 'devastating', citing how 'workers lose a social structure in which they have felt valued and validated by their fellows'.<sup>214</sup>

When asked what they missed the most about heavy industry, workers invariably referenced its social atmosphere and camaraderie:

I missed the comradery, still do.<sup>215</sup>

I missed the banter, the day-to-day banter with individuals – the repertoire with the guys.<sup>216</sup>

What I missed was probably, I would say the camaraderie, it was good, you knew all the guys.<sup>217</sup>

You missed that. The good laughs and things like that. Like wee daft things... a lot of office environments... There's not the same humour.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>211</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> K. M. Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p.xvii

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* p.134

<sup>215</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>216</sup> James Coyle Interview (Ferns)

<sup>217</sup> Con O'Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>218</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

What I missed when I left the shipyards was beyond doubt the humour, the humour was unbelievable... There was a sense of camaraderie with a lot of guys.<sup>219</sup>

In an interview with *The Daily Record*, Stevie Jeffery, a former Ravenscraig worker similarly reflected, 'I still miss it because we were like a big family'.<sup>220</sup> Displaced Welsh and Yorkshire miners also mourned the loss of the 'social and cultural aspects of mining', with their post-redundancy employment lacking mining's characteristic 'comradeship'; one former miner stated, 'I miss the friendship. In the pits we had a united front and we stuck together'.<sup>221</sup> Blyton and Jenkins found a similar impact on workplace relationships following redundancy in their survey of the female-dominated workforce of a Burberry factory. Although a majority were reemployed, much of this was 'part-time and/or with irregular and unpredictable hours' which damaged workers hitherto stable social life.<sup>222</sup> In a question on socializing and friendships the survey demonstrated a 'marked deterioration', where 'almost three in five (58%) indicated that this aspect of their life had got worse'.<sup>223</sup> As the workforce was scattered with factory relocation, it became difficult to stay in touch, as one worker commented, 'I can pick the phone up and speak to people, but it's not the same'.<sup>224</sup> The scattering of workplace friendships in Scottish heavy industry was also emotionally difficult, as James Carlin recalled:

Your peer group changes, you know, you are no longer friends with people that you were employed with, the camaraderie was gone... I don't know if mental health is the right word, but it does affect you mentally as well... you feel devalued in some ways.<sup>225</sup>

In their study of the downsizing of KEMET Electronics Corporation and its workforce, May and Morrison highlight the 'emotional and relational consequences' of job

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<sup>219</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>220</sup> McIver, 'Closure of Ravenscraig steel works'

<sup>221</sup> S. Witt, *When the Pit Closes - the Employment Experiences of Redundant Miners* (Barnsley: Coalfield Communities Campaign, 1990) p.35

<sup>222</sup> P. Blyton and J. Jenkins, 'Life after Burberry: shifting experiences of work and non-work life following redundancy', *Work, Employment and Society*, 26:1 (2012) p.38

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* p.37

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

loss.<sup>226</sup> They state that, 'perhaps the most dramatic shift in identity for many of KEMET's workers was the perceived "loss of family"'.<sup>227</sup> Typical of other KEMET employees, Tonya recalled a familial workplace: 'we became a family... most of us spent more time at work with people you worked with than you did at home with your children'.<sup>228</sup> Another worker, Lucy, reflected on her feelings of loss on her last day of work: 'It was like losing my children, my friends, an' it was just about as bad, not as bad as ever, but it was bad losing the people I loved'.<sup>229</sup>

Workers reflected that their new employment was generally more individualised than the often team-based work of heavy industry. When asked how his later employment compared to shipbuilding, Thomas Brotherston answered without hesitation, 'Worse. Worse, aye. Infinitely worse' – stating, 'I miss the camaraderie'.<sup>230</sup> Setting the tone of his later working life, Thomas' first job following redundancy, as a mechanical engineer in plant hire, lacked shipbuilding's robust social structure:

It was a really shitty wee job, because it was the opposite of the shipyards, you worked by yourself most of the time. There was none of the socializing that you would get in the shipyards, because that's what helps you get through a day.<sup>231</sup>

Examining the process of deindustrialisation in East Rand, South Africa, Barchiesi and Kenny argue that the large-scale loss of stable manufacturing employment and rise of casualised retail work among the black working class undermined previously strong collective work identities. One interviewed worker highlighted the difference in workplace culture between the factory and their now more individualized retail job:

I used to work for a chemical firm in Benoni. We would work together. Next to each other, right next to each other... we would sing songs all day long... When the company closed, I found this contract [job]. But

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<sup>226</sup> May and Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring', p.272

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* pp.272-273

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*



sometimes I remember that [singing]. Now we can't do that. You can't sing songs with customers all around. Sometimes I sing to myself while working, but it doesn't feel the same.<sup>232</sup>

Reflecting on his own previous employment, Alex Wright noted, 'there was that camaraderie in shipbuilding. It does happen in [financial services] as well but I wouldn't say it was as close-knit'.<sup>233</sup> Alex found his later employment more individualised, stating, 'I missed the camaraderie... a lot of the working week you would spend yourself, whereas in the shipyards... camaraderie is much closer'.<sup>234</sup> Compared to steelmaking, Alex Torrance found his later employment more isolating, noting, 'there was no sense of community in any of the rest of them'.<sup>235</sup> Alex shared an anecdote of how, at British Bakeries, he was removed from a particular shift after becoming friends with another worker. He reflected, '[there was] no comparison. You had terrific camaraderie in Ravenscraig... You had a huge social side to it... you worked as a squad... but in the bakery, no, it was frowned upon... you were left on your own'.<sup>236</sup> Typical of other workers, Stewart MacPherson found that the sense of community in his later employment 'wasn't the same'.<sup>237</sup> He attributed this to material differences in his new employment as a driver: 'You were working yourself most of the time. So you weren't really mixing with the people in the place. The other driver, you wouldn't see him from one week to the other'.<sup>238</sup> While Stewart felt a degree of camaraderie throughout his working life, it was never 'on the same scale' as steelmaking:

I enjoyed my stint with Securicor/G4S. I really did... I met a hell of a lot of nice people... [but] I don't feel I've had the same camaraderie as the steelworks in any other job... parts of that was there at times; but we

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<sup>232</sup> F. Barchiesi and B. Kenny, 'From Workshop to Wasteland: De-industrialization and Fragmentation of the Black Working Class on the East Rand (South Africa), 1990–1999', *International Review of Social History*, 47 (2002) p.58

<sup>233</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

didn't work together. It wasn't like we were all in the one place... we're two individual guys in a van, as opposed to 60 guys on a shift.<sup>239</sup>

After steelmaking, Alex McGowan found employment as a safety officer for a local authority. No longer part of a team, his identity was transformed: 'you became an individual. You weren't really part of any group or any team; so you sort of missed that'.<sup>240</sup> When James Carlin was asked what the main difference was between Ravenscraig and Wisemans Dairy, he answered: 'Camaraderie. There was no camaraderie, there was no team aspect to it, you were an individual and you stayed an individual till the day you went home'.<sup>241</sup> James' comment reflects the sentiment of other workers who expressed feeling 'part of something' greater than themselves in heavy industry. In commenting, 'you stayed an individual', James relates how this transformative aspect was missing outside heavy industry.<sup>242</sup>

Workers partly attributed the reduction in socialising to their move away from a large-scale workforce. Brian Cunningham socialised with colleagues less frequently as a mechanic:

I mean we go out probably about once a year, Christmas night out, that's about it. I mean in Ravenscraig we done it regularly... you had engagements, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries, retirements dos – because you had that number of people there was always something going on.<sup>243</sup>

Brian attributed the reduction in social activity to the size of the workforce, noting, 'the more people you have got the more interaction you have – the more social interaction you have'.<sup>244</sup> James Blair also linked the social atmosphere of steelmaking to its huge workforce:

They were a lot quieter in the numbers, there wasn't as many people... you are talking about 2,000 people. That's a lot of people you were meeting everywhere you went... whereas in the likes of Alcan, there

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>241</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

was only about two or three hundred in it. It was so quiet, people wise.<sup>245</sup>

Given his position as a manager in British Steel, Terry Currie was able to stay within heavy industry, moving into another managerial position in Clyde Iron. Although he was in a similar workplace, Terry nonetheless missed ‘the camaraderie’ of Ravenscraig, attributing its uniqueness to the mass scale of the workforce, ‘Ravenscraig, when I joined it was a huge plant... You had 10,000 on that site. You had lots of friends in it, lots of people. Anywhere you were going to go after that was going to be as quiet as a church’.<sup>246</sup>

The robust sense of community within heavy industry was also attributed to its position as a primary source of local employment, with concentrations of workers living in close proximity to each other and their respective plant. Workers’ immersion in a community was deeply missed, not solely the bonds of solidarity within the workplace, but also the way in which heavy industry was embedded in the local community. This immersion bolstered community spirit according to Derek Cairns, who noted that in Ravenscraig, ‘you were beside people you see in the pub. People you were at school with. People on your street’.<sup>247</sup> Speaking with emotion, Derek Cairns reflected on what he missed most about steelmaking:

Working beside people that I lived beside... I’ve not had that since 1990... I miss it. That’s part of your community, as well. Working beside your community. I live in a community, Wishaw, but I don’t work beside anyone from Wishaw apart from one guy. Disappointing.<sup>248</sup>

When asked what he missed about shipbuilding, Paul Molloy answered: ‘the camaraderie... it’s about the people you work with, the friendship, the jokes, the banter and a little bit about the work environment’.<sup>249</sup> In his current employment as

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<sup>245</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>246</sup> Terry Currie Interview (Ferns)

<sup>247</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

the Service Excellence Director for the Hoist Group, Paul Molloy works remotely, feeling that this does not carry the same degree of camaraderie as shipbuilding:

It's not the same... the guys in my team are all great... but one's in Austria, one's in France, one's in Madrid. So we don't see each other every day. We talk most days but we don't go to each other's houses and go out drinking at the weekend or anything like that... you never get it unless you're kind of actually working side-by-side I think. Day-to-day, day in day out and living with people really. It's a shame.<sup>250</sup>

Like Derek Cairns and other workers, Paul Molloy missed the community embeddedness of heavy industry. His sense of loss was not solely tied to the work itself but more the context it took place in; it wasn't so much about working with people as it was 'living with people'.

Employment transition disrupted workers' previously vibrant social lives, with their new employment lacking the interwoven social aspect. The demise of heavy industry provoked the collapse of the social infrastructure which surrounded it. Former miner John McCormack noted, 'check around the country you'll find closed miners' welfares, football teams, pipe bands, youth clubs-clubs of all kinds – all destroyed'.<sup>251</sup> Harry Carlin described the 'massive impact' the loss of steelmaking had on this infrastructure:

It had a massive impact in the full area... Bellshill, Mossend, Motherwell, Craigneuk and all they places, all the pubs had to shut right, that was one of the things you noticed first right, pubs, clubs, things like that, shops.<sup>252</sup>

When the yards were operational, Colin Quigley remembered Govan being full of various social clubs that catered for shipbuilders. He observed them slowly disappear in tandem with the decline of the industry, 'They all gradually went, even bowling greens... they all slowly closed down'.<sup>253</sup> When asked what impact the closure of heavy industry had, James Cairns similarly stated, 'shut all these social clubs down,

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> G. Hutton, *Coal not Dole: Memories of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike* (Glasgow: Stenlake, 2005) p.60

<sup>252</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>253</sup> Colin Quigley Interview (Ferns)

that's for sure'.<sup>254</sup> Robert Buirds reflected, 'social clubs, drinking clubs. Cabarets at the weekend, dancing, things like that... they have hardly any social clubs left now, there's very few... it killed the community'.<sup>255</sup> Citing population decline, increased poverty and an absence of employment opportunities, Gordon MacLean felt that the gutting of Clydebank's industry tore a hole in the town's social fabric:

It destroyed the town. It completely destroyed the town. It broke up families who would work at these places... Whole families were getting made redundant at a time. It made people probably leave the area... Clydebank was full of places, pubs, nightclubs, places to socialize. Golf clubs, bowling clubs... There was a good social scene, that's gone, that's gone... They're all gone.<sup>256</sup>

The loss of both employment in heavy industry, and the structure provided by trade unions, in tandem with a reduction of structured time off, also weakened many workers' connection to the labour movement, diminishing their political participation. Tommy Johnston explained:

I've left the Labour Party... Didn't have the time, whereas [in Ravenscraig] we were off during the week you could go to Labour Party meetings... go up to the civic centre and listen to the debates... but when you are working Monday to Friday... you couldn't get going anywhere so it just fell away.<sup>257</sup>

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam outlines the deterioration of social capital in North American society, citing a decline in voluntary associations.<sup>258</sup> In a similar way, the erasure of Scottish heavy industry prompted the virtual disappearance of highly socially integrated workplaces, which contributed to a decline in social capital among working-class people generally.

### **Liminality and a 'Stolen' Life**

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<sup>254</sup> James Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>255</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>256</sup> Gordon MacLean Interview (Ferns)

<sup>257</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>258</sup> R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000)

The prospect of a job for life gave workers a sense of security that they could confidently build upon. Reflecting upon the commencement of his apprenticeship, Robert Buirds noted, 'you had a future to look forward to'.<sup>259</sup> Ejected from heavy industry, workers felt unsettled in their later employment. Narrating a sense of displacement, some workers experienced one redundancy after another, while others lived under the expectation of it. Con O'Brien's employment history following steelmaking is indicative of this impermanence. Between 1977 and 1994 Con held various engineering roles, each one punctuated with redundancy:

Babcock's (1977-1980): Again, closed... I got made redundant.

Kelvinbridge Inspection (1980-1983): Again, closed just shortly after I left... I was made redundant.

Costain Process Technical Services (1983-1985): I got a company car in June and I got made redundant in September because the oil game at that time was going up and down like a yo-yo.

Tuboscope (1985-1994): I worked for them for nine years... it was really good. Then again, the downturn in markets – 'need to make you redundant'.<sup>260</sup>

After leaving steelmaking, Derek Cairns kept a close vigil on the health of whatever industry he found himself in. While employed at Baker Oil Tools, Derek noted, 'things were going good for probably eight years... but there was a dip in the oil industry... I could see it coming and things were beginning to slow down'.<sup>261</sup> Seeking out alternative employment ahead of any potential redundancy, he reflected, 'I've never had a day's redundancy in my life. I've come close to it. I've been lucky'.<sup>262</sup> After a relatively stable period of employment in a Boots pharmacy factory, John Christie again found himself facing redundancy, with a tone of resignation he reflected, 'of course, that ended up closing as well'.<sup>263</sup> The stability of heavy industry was replaced with impermanence, with workers later employment perceived as liminal and

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<sup>259</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>260</sup> Con O'Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>261</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> John Christie Interview (Ferns)

temporary. After Boots, John spent the remainder of his working life as an advisor for the Student Loans Company.

In Hareven and Langenbach's interviews with former textiles workers from the company town of Manchester, New Hampshire, one mill worker, Bette Skrzyszowski, was interviewed shortly after the shutdown of Manchester's final mill. The mill provided Bette with a degree of certainty, she noted, 'after you put that many years into a place, it's like a second home... just a nice routine'.<sup>264</sup> Following closure this certainty was replaced with a feeling of dislocation: 'you feel lost. You just have no place to turn. I've spent half my life in the mill'.<sup>265</sup> High frames displaced North American workers through the anthropological concept of liminality, stating:

Liminality proves invaluable in interpreting their stories... liminality refers to the passage between one world and another. As applied to displaced industrial workers, it relates to the time a worker separated from his or her employment took to be reincorporated physically and emotionally into another workplace.<sup>266</sup>

The tendency of closure to uproot and destroy workers' sense of place and identity has been referenced by High, who states that North American workers 'found their ties to place sundered'.<sup>267</sup> High draws attention to the cultural fragmentation of displaced US workers, specifically those who left plants along the Interstate I-75 that cuts through the US rust belt. These workers took on the moniker 'I-75 Gypsies' – deindustrialisation had uprooted them, compelling them to move from place to place in search of transitory employment. In the same vein as High's 'I-75 Gypsies', Thomas Brotherston described the unsettled nature of his post-redundancy employment as 'industrial gypsy syndrome'.<sup>268</sup> Having relocated to Ayrshire for better employment prospects, Thomas found himself amidst the same climate of endemic closure that hung over Glasgow. He reflected:

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<sup>264</sup> T. Hareven and R. Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) p.381

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.43

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* p.66

<sup>268</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

Blackwood and Morton Kilmarnock... It was a huge factory, it was a household name... they were renowned for their quality shoes – disappeared... Have you heard of Massey Ferguson?... world-famous for constructing agricultural machinery... a huge plant just wiped away. There was Skefco Ball Bearing Company, 3,000 workers disappeared. Volvo, built trucks, disappeared. All of that happened in my soldiering through Ayrshire.<sup>269</sup>

As with other workers, an endless cycle of redundancy became normal for Thomas. He jokingly recalled:

Down in Ayrshire I used to say, 'Boys, I'm the storm crew. Start counting your redundancy money because as soon as I walk in the door the place shuts down'. I was in Ayrshire just at that time where closures were sweeping right across the place.<sup>270</sup>

Workers tended to conceptualise their expulsion from heavy industry as having derailed or stolen the lives they had planned out for themselves. John Christie commented that the 'pay was pathetic' in the Student Loans Company, believing that he would have been both happier and better off if he had remained in steelmaking:

I retired at 65. If I was in Gartcosh or Ravenscraig, I would have taken early retirement... You can retire at 50 in the steel industry and come out with a pension, a lump sum... It would have been good. Yes, I would have been a lot better off, probably happier; I would be happier.<sup>271</sup>

John marked the commencement of his career in steelmaking as the point where his chosen working life truly began, noting, 'that's where it all happened' and 'I've never looked back'.<sup>272</sup> As with many former heavy industry workers, John found alternative employment, but there remained a feeling that he had lost something of value, something that he could not regain. Reflecting on his working life John commented, 'I came out of school with next to nothing. I done quite well', but then qualified his statement with, 'well I thought I done quite well, in the beginning of my career, but

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<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> John Christie Interview (Ferns)

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*



latterly, when British Steel closed, I just didn't enjoy it at all'.<sup>273</sup> John evoked a sense that his life had been stolen from under him:

I just look at it as that was what was for me... that was it. That was my life. I would have liked it, as I've said on numerous occasions, if it was a British Steel situation I had throughout my life, my life would be a lot better... I would be a lot happier.<sup>274</sup>

The former manufacturing workers interviewed by K'Meyer and Hart similarly expressed the sentiment of a stolen life. Buddy Pugh, formerly of Johnson Controls stated:

When you work at some place almost thirty-two years, you kind of get in a routine and you miss the people and you miss the work and you miss the money and you miss the benefits. When it's something that you counted on retiring there all your life and they up and kick you in the face and kick you out.<sup>275</sup>

Like other workers, Pat Clark gave the impression that he was forcibly uprooted from a job to which he truly belonged. The general decline of shipbuilding was compounded by the fact that Pat Clark had been identified as a trade union militant and blacklisted, rendering his attempts to re-enter his industry impossible. The sudden and unavoidable redirection of his life's trajectory was upsetting:

The notion begins to sink in, 'I'm not going to get work in my trade again'. That was frightening because that was my life planned out in front of me – that's what I am going to do until I'm 65 or whatever. It was a shock when I realized.<sup>276</sup>

This process also robbed Pat of the expectation of a job for life he had inherited from his father and grandfather, 'I just assumed this is me for life... My father was a plater. He worked at it all his days. His father before him was a holder on. He worked at that all his days.... I was thinking, "What am I going to do?"'.<sup>277</sup> The destruction of heavy industry cut the chain of generational jobs that had informally passed down families

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*, p.127

<sup>276</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

for generations, guaranteeing income and fostering a sense of heritage. Rev. John Potter noted that ‘future generations [had] lost out’, with workers saddened by their inability to pass their work onto family members:

Part of the disappointment that people felt when it came to the crunch, was they couldn’t hand the business on, because it had been an industry where generations had serviced it, and you were working for your family in that sense... the door closed on the community at large.<sup>278</sup>

Feelings of disinheritance are shared across multiple former heavy industry workers’ testimonies; Mackinnon highlights the emotional narrative of a former steelworker from Sydney, Nova Scotia:

It just... it sounds like such a stupid little thing... it just struck me, all that history, all the families that fed their children and maybe put their kids through university and all the rest of it for almost one hundred years. And it’s gone. Gone.<sup>279</sup>

James Carlin had seen steelmaking as part of his heritage, a gateway into the labour movement and central to his working-class identity. Deindustrialisation ruptured this identity, provoking a sense of placelessness:

I just couldn’t settle, I couldn’t settle, you know what I mean, it was always in my head about the steelworks... that will be 25 years [since] the plant actually closed, and I have always classed myself as a steelworker, I don’t know why.<sup>280</sup>

Like James Carlin, Paul Molloy continued to feel connected to the shipyard, referring to a lingering sense of camaraderie with his former colleagues he noted: ‘I think that we still feel it now. Even though I’ve not been in there for 20 years... you still feel that if you met someday... you still feel that link to it’.<sup>281</sup> When reminiscing with former colleagues, Pat Clark noted the continued use of previously held job titles as points of reference, ‘It’s funny when I meet with people... If I was talking to another shipyard

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<sup>278</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>279</sup> L. Mackinnon, ‘Coal and Steel, Goodbye to All That: Symbolic Violence and Working-Class Erasure in Post-industrial Landscapes’, *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 16:1 (2019) p.107

<sup>280</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>281</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

worker – “Aye you know big Willie? Caulker burner” – Even though he’s been driving taxis for the last 30 years or something’.<sup>282</sup> Following his departure from shipbuilding, Pat retrained and secured employment as a Welfare Rights Officer for Inverclyde Council. He held this position for over 30 years and takes great satisfaction in defending the rights of others, noting, ‘you go and represent people at tribunals... You’re basically the poor man’s lawyer. I quite enjoy it’.<sup>283</sup> Nonetheless, Pat reflected, ‘I’ve never identified with a job in the way that I had identified with my previous job’.<sup>284</sup> Compared to shipbuilding, his current role lacks the same intangible but nonetheless intrinsic connection to his identity. Pat described the continued hold of the shipyard over his subconscious:

I don’t want to go all Freudian on you, but this is true – I’ve never told anyone this before. But it’s absolutely true. I can dream at night, and from time to time my dream involves me working in the shipyard. I’ve never once dreamt – in 30 years work with the council – I’ve never once had a dream which involved me doing this job.<sup>285</sup>

After his departure from shipbuilding, Alex Straiton eventually secured employment with Turbine Support Group, working maintenance on steel turbines in nuclear power stations for 13 years until his retirement. The inside of the turbine hall reminded Alex of a ship’s engine room, giving him a sensation of returning home: ‘When I eventually got into the turbine hall it looked for all the world like an engine room on a boat. I kind of felt as though I had come back home, you know’.<sup>286</sup>

### **Fractured Community**

In the story of deindustrialisation, communities represent another important actor alongside displaced workers. Workers narrate how they survived the maelstrom of industrial ruination, and while their lives were changed, the economic realities of

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<sup>282</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Interview with Alex Straiton by James Ferns, 02/08/2019

working-class existence meant that they had to go on. Unlike workers' personal accounts of deindustrialisation, which were of survival and change – albeit mostly for the worst – their depiction of the collective impact of industrial erasure was defined by death and decline, of irrevocably broken communities and a future without hope. Reflecting on the aftermath of closure in post-industrial Lanarkshire, Rev. John Potter commented, 'the legacy has been a struggle for these communities'.<sup>287</sup> As Bensman and Lynch have stated, the 'sum of so much personal suffering is a community in trauma'.<sup>288</sup> Deindustrialisation left a deep cultural wound behind; the destruction of Scottish heavy industry provoked an increase in crime, poverty and ill-health as the social fabric unravelled across industrial communities.<sup>289</sup> Just as radioactive material loses its toxicity very slowly over time, Linkon has labelled these long-term scars the 'half-life' of deindustrialisation. Deindustrialisation 'is not an event of the past', but is rather an 'active and significant part of the present'; the half-life of deindustrialisation 'generates psychological and social forms of disease', made manifest in the 'high rates of various illnesses as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide' that plague deindustrialised communities as they 'struggle with questions about their identities and their place in a global economy that has devalued workers and their labor'.<sup>290</sup> Bright usefully applies Gordon's concept of a 'social haunting' to deindustrialisation and its aftereffects; a social haunting is defined as a 'social violence done in the past', which though 'concealed', is 'very much alive and present'.<sup>291</sup> According to Bright, the social disruption of deindustrialisation resulted in a form of intergenerational trauma in coalfield communities, with the legacy of Thatcherism and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike permeating community memory and

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<sup>287</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>288</sup> Bensman and Lynch, *Rusted Dreams*, p.103

<sup>289</sup> Finlay, *Modern Scotland*; D. McCrone, 'A New Scotland? Society and Culture', in T. M. Devine and J. Wormald (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of modern Scottish history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp.671-687

<sup>290</sup> S. Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization: working-class writing about economic restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018) p.1

<sup>291</sup> A. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) p.xvi.

discourse.<sup>292</sup> Ravenscraig's Industrial Chaplin, Rev. John Potter, shared this interpretation in his own accounting:

It wasn't a thing that happened, it *is* happening. The aftermath of the demise of heavy industry in a place like Lanarkshire has a long-term effect on individuals and the community... a community that is still paying the price.<sup>293</sup>

Words like 'devastation' and 'destroyed' dominate workers' narratives of this era, creating a common tongue of despair which marks a definitive end to a way of life. Workers recounted what industrial closure meant for local communities:

A lot of [communities] was devastated.<sup>294</sup>

Devastating... It was a way of life for people.<sup>295</sup>

Communities like this have been devastated.<sup>296</sup>

It impacts on everything... It's a devastating effect.<sup>297</sup>

I think it was devastating aye, I think it's still recovering.<sup>298</sup>

It devastated Motherwell... Motherwell became a ghost town.<sup>299</sup>

Had a devastating effect on the whole economy on the Central Belt.<sup>300</sup>

Devastating, it was devastating... in Lanarkshire as a whole it just took away a whole culture, just took away a whole culture.<sup>301</sup>

Perchard found similar sentiments among former Scottish miners, concluding that mining's demise had 'left profound psychological scars in coalfield communities', rupturing culture and identity.<sup>302</sup> Miners' narratives captured a 'profound sense of

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<sup>292</sup> N. G. Bright, "'A chance to talk like this': Gender, education and a social haunting in the UK Coalfields", in R. Simmons and J. Smyth (eds.) *Education and Working-Class Youth: Reshaping the Politics of Inclusion* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018) pp.105-129

<sup>293</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns), narrator's emphasis

<sup>294</sup> Frank Shannon Interview (Ferns)

<sup>295</sup> Interview with Brian Glen by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

<sup>296</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>297</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>298</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>299</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>300</sup> James Coyle Interview (Ferns)

<sup>301</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>302</sup> A. Perchard, "'Broken Men" and "Thatcher's Children": Memory and Legacy in Scotland's Coalfields', *International Labor and Working Class History*, 84 (2013) p.78

bereavement and betrayal still felt in mining communities at the loss not simply of employment but of a civilization—one with its own culture and moral codes'.<sup>303</sup>

The impact of closure was often expressed through metaphors of death and undeath, where communities were 'killed' but nonetheless continued on as 'ghost towns'. Tommy Johnston outlined how the closure of Ravenscraig 'killed Motherwell', decimating the local high street: 'Aw it's killed Motherwell, killed Motherwell. If you go up through that precinct the now its pound shops, charity shops; there is no shopping centre in Motherwell'.<sup>304</sup> Motherwell's town centre became a 'ghost town', according to Stewart MacPherson, with surviving retailers dominated by pawnbrokers, cash for gold, and charity shops:

It's a ghost town now. Motherwell town centre's a ghost town. Hamilton town centre's getting the same way. There's more shops shut than there actually is open. The ones that are open are charity shops and cash converters – if you want to pawn your gold jewellery.<sup>305</sup>

Peter Hamill also used the analogy of a 'ghost town', stating, 'Wishaw sort of shut down into a ghost town after the Ravenscraig went'.<sup>306</sup> On an individual level workers positioned deindustrialisation as an event that had robbed them of their respective futures, but they also described it as a force which had destroyed or 'killed' the collective future of their communities. The closure of shipbuilding 'killed' Robert Buirds' hometown of Port Glasgow:

Killed this area. It's killed it. We've got all the social problems in the world here. We've got the highest unemployment rate in Scotland, we've got the highest drug users. You name it, we've got it. And it's down to no work: no future.<sup>307</sup>

Post-industrial Port Glasgow was very different from the future Robert imagined as a young man, where he had spoken of having a 'future to look forward to' at the

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.* p.94

<sup>304</sup> Tommy Johnston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>305</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>306</sup> Peter Hamill Interview (Ferns)

<sup>307</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

commencement of his apprenticeship.<sup>308</sup> The experience of mass closure sapped the collective will from industrial communities, leaving behind an atmosphere of hopelessness. Robert stated that ‘apathy rules at this moment in time’, with Port Glasgow disempowered by deindustrialisation: ‘The disappearance of industry... killed community spirit. No doubt about it. The apathy... they’re being kicked all the time... They can’t be bothered fighting for anything. Even fighting for their self’.<sup>309</sup>

The closure of heavy industry had a substantial ripple effect on the local economy, with a significant amount of local employment dependent upon and/or servicing a respective plant. Alex Torrance outlined the numerous workplaces that were dependent upon Ravenscraig:

When Ravenscraig closed, look at all the suppliers round about here – they went out the game. Brogans was a company with lorries that took away a lot of stuff. Smith and MacLean, another contractor... British Oxygen supplied oxygen for the basic oxygen plant to melt the steel. When that stopped, 80% of their orders was out game... all the catering companies that come in... cleaning companies that come in.<sup>310</sup>

Jim Reddiex speculated, ‘there was a lot of wee firms disappeared... we just knew there was a lot of people out there that was suffering... I bet for every job in Ravenscraig there was a job outside we supplied’.<sup>311</sup> Similarly, Rev. John Potter recalled, ‘the multiplier was at least two, and so there were loads of other jobs as well that fed off and serviced this major industry’.<sup>312</sup> Tommy Brennan, the overall trade union convenor for Ravenscraig and leading figure in the Campaign to Save Scottish Steel, made the case for the industry to politicians and the media, and was familiar with data regarding the impact of closure. Describing the ‘knock-on effect’ of closure, Tommy noted a ‘four to one ratio’ – with ‘four people involved in the community for every one that worked in Ravenscraig’.<sup>313</sup> Shipbuilding was also at the

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<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>311</sup> Jim Reddiex Interview (Ferns)

<sup>312</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>313</sup> Tommy Brennan Interview (Ferns)

centre of the local economy, as Joe O'Rourke noted, 'You probably had about another 10,000 or 11,000 services people [that] were employed outside the shipyard but directly getting work from the shipyard – lorry drivers, bus drivers, all the shops'.<sup>314</sup>

Alastair Hart similarly stated:

The economy of the region was linked to the fact that we were all... working in the shipyard. Then you had the other industries, the support industries, the pipe makers, the valve makers, the steeling gear, the engine builders.<sup>315</sup>

Reflecting on the 'devastating effect' of deindustrialisation in Govan, Alan Glover commented on heavy industry's position at the heart of the local economy:

It's not just the actual – as you say the deindustrialisation... round about Govan there was loads of wee dairies that sold rolls and eggs and this and that, small family businesses; it's the whole infrastructure. It's not just the shipyards. Again, there's the suppliers, the people that supply the cable, the chains, the welding rods, everything. The wee cafes, it impacts on everything... It's a devastating effect.<sup>316</sup>

As a central pillar of their respective local economy, the impact of the loss of heavy industry was mirrored in the decline of town centres. When Derek Cairns was asked about the impact of Ravenscraig's closure, he stated:

Devastated, devastated... People were getting poorer. People who were earning decent money were either in bad jobs or no jobs. Shops were shutting, good shops were turning into lesser quality shops. Everything was going downhill.<sup>317</sup>

Alex McGowan similarly described the loss of steelmaking as 'devastating', adding, 'I mean you just need to go down Wishaw Main Street, or Motherwell'.<sup>318</sup> The decline in the local economy was pre-empted by a short-lived boom, inflated by workers' redundancy packages. As Stewart MacPherson recalled, 'after it shut, it boomed for

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<sup>314</sup> Joe O'Rourke Interview (Ferns)

<sup>315</sup> Alastair Hart Interview (Ferns)

<sup>316</sup> Alan Glover Interview (Ferns)

<sup>317</sup> Derek Cairns Interview (Ferns)

<sup>318</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)



a while, till the money dried up'.<sup>319</sup> Peter Hamill remarked, 'for the first couple of years everybody was flush'.<sup>320</sup> Similarly, Alex McGowan reflected:

I can remember, it must have been shortly after Ravenscraig closed, coming up for Christmas. It was on the television that cash machines in Motherwell and Wishaw were the busiest in Scotland or something. People withdrawing money for their redundancy checks... It's had a huge impact on the place.<sup>321</sup>

This anecdote can be read as a symbolic precursor of how mass redundancy would drain the wealth from the local economy.

The material foundation of industrial culture was demolished alongside the factories, and through the force of inertia the residual culture of industrialism will eventually wear away to nothing. Reflecting on the loss of heavy industry on wider working-class culture, Thomas Brotherston noted, 'It's had a huge impact, of course it has, because that collectivism is gone'.<sup>322</sup> In his examination of the paper-making town of Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, High observed a 'precipitous decline' in David Byrne's 'culture of industrialism' as the industry declined and eventually closed, referencing 'a long-term fragmentation of a relatively stable class formation'.<sup>323</sup> In the context of southeast Chicago, Walley notes that some older residents bitterly remarked that the loss of steelmaking was more profound than even the Great Depression, reflecting:

At least after the Depression... the mills had reopened and people went on with their lives. This time, the steel mills were gone for good. Their closing would tear through a social fabric that had sustained generations.<sup>324</sup>

Robinson warns that the sense of community which typified the industrial North East of England is in danger of 'being consigned to the dustbin of heritage', attributing this to the destruction of its material basis:

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<sup>319</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>320</sup> Peter Hamill Interview (Ferns)

<sup>321</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>322</sup> Thomas Brotherston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>323</sup> S. High, "'They were making good money, just ten minutes from home": Proximity and Distance in the Plant Shutdown Stories of Northern Ontario Mill Workers', *Labour/le travail*, 76 (2015) p.36

<sup>324</sup> Walley, *Exit Zero*, p.1

That sense of community, born of struggle, has undoubtedly declined, alongside the decline of the industries upon which it was based... It has been undermined by changing patterns of life and livelihood. Community, like society, was denied and fractured in the 1980s.<sup>325</sup>

The existence of stable industry which ensured relatively good pay and conditions contributed to the wellbeing of the surrounding community; in turn, the precarious and low paid work which dominates post-industrial communities undermines this stability. Coburn contends that the dominance of neoliberal ideology, erosion of the welfare state, advancement of employer interests, and undermining of workers' economic and political power has created greater income inequality and lowered social cohesion – stating, 'a strong argument can be made that neo-liberal doctrines are antithetical to social cohesion or to social 'trust'.<sup>326</sup> In an interview with *The Guardian*, Wayne Hodgins, an independent councillor for Brynmawr (South Wales), reflected on how the town's connection to industry had built a sense of community, 'that factory environment – your friends, your colleagues – became an extension of your family', before describing the breakdown of this collective solidarity following the loss of industry: 'it's the easiest thing in the world to put your foot on someone's head when they're drowning. And that's what you see around here'.<sup>327</sup> Or as Neil Volentine, a former Ayrshire miner bluntly stated, 'Thatcher won. But the fabric of this society was shredded. Torn up and destroyed'.<sup>328</sup> In their sociological examination of Rotherham, Charlesworth demonstrates how neoliberal economic policy undermined collective social relations, 'transform[ing] for the worse the way people relate to one another, and the way they perceive themselves'.<sup>329</sup> Charlesworth is concerned with how neoliberalism and post-industrialism have disrupted the collective identities of working-class people, diminishing their ability to understand themselves and relate to one another. In the

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<sup>325</sup> Robinson, 'The North East', p.331

<sup>326</sup> D. Coburn, 'Income inequality, social cohesion and the health status of populations: The role of neoliberalism', *Social Science and Medicine*, 51 (2000) p.141

<sup>327</sup> J. Bloodworth, 'There's no life here': a journey into Britain's precarious future', *The Guardian* (16 December 2016) [https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/16/journey-to-heart-of-britain-precarious-future-ebbw-vale?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/16/journey-to-heart-of-britain-precarious-future-ebbw-vale?CMP=share_btn_fb) [accessed 14/05/2018]

<sup>328</sup> Hutton, *Coal not Dole*, p.60

<sup>329</sup> S. J. Charlesworth, et al., 'Living inferiority', *British Medical Journal*, 69:48 (2004) p.49

aftermath of widespread industrial closure, the shared experiences of work, leisure, and general political outlook were replaced with alienation:

The communication, like the community, has gone, and, with the talk of the shared life of work gone, there has emerged an absence of association... its absence is manifest in the emptiness and anxiety felt by so many.<sup>330</sup>

For Charlesworth, post-industrialism has thoroughly worn away the cultural and social centre of Rotherham:

Within fifteen years the destruction of major industries in the area has destroyed the culture of labour that had been at the heart of the ethics of the people here, of their way of life, of their forms of self-respect and of care.<sup>331</sup>

Dorothy Macready, a former clerical worker at Ravenscraig, exemplified this 'absence of association' as she described how the loss of steelmaking fundamentally altered the day-to-day structure of language within Motherwell:

It knocked the heart out of Motherwell, when the Craig closed. The first conversation you had when Ravenscraig was working was: 'what shift is Jim?'... and you would say, 'oh he's night shift, he's day shift'. When it closed it was: 'Has your Jim got a job yet?' Conversations changed.<sup>332</sup>

Similarly, Margaret Wegg, a resident of the former pit village of Cardowan, described a waning sense of familiarity between residents following pit closure:

It used to be that if you walked down the road it was 'hello!, hello!, hello!' Now you could walk down the whole road and you'd never see one person or two people that you know – it's not the same – the community has gone.<sup>333</sup>

Bensman and Lynch uncovered a similar experience of social alienation following the collapse of steelmaking in South Chicago. Describing their neighbourhood, one

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<sup>330</sup> S. J. Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working-Class Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.292

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.* p.49

<sup>332</sup> Dorothy Macready Interview (Ferns)

<sup>333</sup> Hutton, *Coal not Dole*, p.60

resident, Jaime Gomez, reflected, 'It just doesn't have the vibrance it used to... if you see someone, they don't even want to talk. People just stay in their houses'.<sup>334</sup>

In their examination of former mining communities, Waddington et al. describe the dissolution of the collective social formations that once defined mining:

The dismantling of established relationships, lost traditions and fractured daily routines... formed the root cause of current social difficulties. People now felt more isolated and detached from community affairs; one-time colleagues were now perceived as rivals and the social rituals that once reinforced a sense of common identity had suddenly disappeared.<sup>335</sup>

Waddington et al. state that while 'strong vestiges of "community spirit" continue to survive', this is 'tempered by collective feelings of powerlessness' and a 'profound anxiety for the future'.<sup>336</sup> The rapid destruction of the mining industry prompted a violence of its own, as crime, antisocial behaviour, and drug and alcohol abuse among the youth increased amidst a 'general loss of pride, and the breakdown of traditional bonds of family and community life'.<sup>337</sup> The destruction of mining tore apart the social institutions which miners had used to influence behaviour in their community, especially among the youth. As one Hatfield National Union of Mineworkers official stated:

The authority of the NUM in the village to hold things together has gone. Miners have a lot of say, they dictate the social values – what's acceptable and unacceptable – in their village. Take away the pit and you take away all that.<sup>338</sup>

One police inspector attributed most youth crime to community disintegration, commenting, 'There's no close-knitness, no sort of feeling that "I won't steal Mrs so-and-so's jeans because she's a neighbour or friend of my mam"'.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Bensman and Lynch, *Rusted Dreams*, p.103

<sup>335</sup> D. Waddington, et al., *Out of the Ashes: The Social Impact of Industrial Contraction and Regeneration on Britain's Mining Communities* (London: The Stationary Office, 2001) p.94

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.* p.213

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.* p.83

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.* p.89

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.* p.87

Deindustrialisation was conceptualised as having killed off the living source of working-class industrial communities. While discussing the aftereffects of the demise of steelmaking in Homestead, Pennsylvania, Modell and Brodsky summarised testimony from the wife of a retired steelworker, who felt that closure had extinguished the 'spirit' of the town: 'it was not only the work but a "spirit" that disappeared when the mill closed'.<sup>340</sup> In a similar vein, Dorothy Macready described the impact of closure as 'Dreadful, dreadful', reflecting, 'the heart of Motherwell went when the Ravenscraig closed'.<sup>341</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of Ravenscraig was marked in the *Daily Record*, remembered as a 'death knell [that] devastated Motherwell and the surrounding area'.<sup>342</sup> Jim Fraser, a former Ravenscraig engineer, states in the article, 'despite what the politicians say, the towns have never recovered. Closing Ravenscraig has ripped the heart out of the community and it ripped many families apart too'.<sup>343</sup> Just as the 'heart' can be viewed as the central engine of the body – or in this instance the community – Alastair Hart provided a similar, but more mechanical, metaphor of industry as the 'turbine hall' of the local community:

You felt there was a sense that the yard was the turbine hall of everything that was going on round about us. When that disappeared, it's sudden – you're not just talking about a small corner shop with two staff closing. You're talking about... 10,000 people suddenly being out of work... You could see that in the shops declining... a lot of houses empty, being vandalized, clubs closing down, cinemas disappearing.<sup>344</sup>

Representing an example of a working-class community that has had its 'spirit' weakened by deindustrialisation, Govan, located in Glasgow's south-west was an area heavily connected to its once vibrant industry. A number of interviewees considered Govan their home, and these 'Govanites' invariably remarked on how the demise of heavy industry had disordered the area's sense of identity and community. Danny Houston noted, 'Govan's changed a hell of a lot. Govan used to be a massive

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<sup>340</sup> Modell and Brodsky, *A Town without Steel*, p.37

<sup>341</sup> Dorothy Macready Interview (Ferns)

<sup>342</sup> McIver, 'Closure of Ravenscraig steel works'

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> Alastair Hart Interview (Ferns)

community'.<sup>345</sup> Linda Collins described the impact of mass closure as 'dreadful, absolutely dreadful', reminiscing that Govan had been 'a thriving community [with] great big numbers'.<sup>346</sup> Jack Mccusker stated, 'Govan's destroyed now, it's not the same as it was. It was such a hive of activity when these industries were going'.<sup>347</sup> Con O'Brien, another resident of Govan, tied the loss of shipbuilding to the demise of 'community spirit': 'I come from Govan, I've seen it there, that's gone... the community spirit's just disappeared. Just dissipated, you know'.<sup>348</sup> Alex Wright observed that the 'welfare of the place' was deeply connected to shipbuilding, noting, 'it was a very much the community that needed the yard'.<sup>349</sup> After his redundancy Alex moved into financial services. When comparing shipbuilding to his current role, he reflected on the greater level of community embeddedness within heavy industry given its historic ties to the area's identity: 'You don't have the same thing in terms of financial services... it's not linked to a product, it's not linked to tradition'.<sup>350</sup> It is these very ties that make the loss of heavy industry so profound, as Alex noted, 'when a motorcar factory shuts or a mine shuts or a yard closes, it's like tearing very much the community that it's in, and that affects people directly in that community'.<sup>351</sup> Colin Quigley, a lifelong resident and community activist of Govan, felt that the loss of shipbuilding 'demoralized people', speaking of Govan in general, he stated: 'It devastated it. It's so hard to explain... when the shipyards went, the people went'.<sup>352</sup> Colin referenced Govan's coat of arms, which carries the motto, 'nothing without work'.<sup>353</sup> This motto is a poignant example of a community identity built upon and sustained by work, but it also illustrates the destructive impact of deindustrialisation on this identity; with the maxim, 'nothing without work' rendered bankrupt in the aftermath of wholesale industrial ruination. Colin himself reflected on the dark irony

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<sup>345</sup> Danny Houston Interview (Ferns)

<sup>346</sup> Interview with Linda Collins by James Ferns, 19/03/2019

<sup>347</sup> Jack Mccusker Interview (Ferns)

<sup>348</sup> Con O'Brien Interview (Ferns)

<sup>349</sup> Alex Wright Interview (Ferns)

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> Colin Quigley Interview (Ferns)

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

of the town's motto in the context of post-industrialism, noting, “‘nothing without work’ – then all the work gets taken away’.”<sup>354</sup>

Although they survived the destruction of the industry which had defined them, industrial communities lost an important aspect of their identity. As Rev. John Potter stated, ‘it was not just the individual that was redundant, it was communities’; for them the ‘loss of identity was a significant blow’, with communities like Lanarkshire ‘struggling to find a new purpose and identity’ amidst the ruins of heavy industry.<sup>355</sup> The journalist, Deborah Orr, reflected in her autobiography on how widespread closure ‘shattered’ the identity of her childhood town, Motherwell:

Motherwell lost its identity in the industrial restructuring of the 1980s... Personal identities were shattered. But group identity was shattered too. The people of Motherwell were used to being part of something much, much bigger than themselves. When it went, so quickly, Motherwell became a town without a purpose.<sup>356</sup>

In the context of Youngstown, Ohio, where work had been such ‘a source of individual and community identity’, Linkon and Russo highlight how the loss of steelmaking provoked a struggle over collective identity.<sup>357</sup> They state, ‘for the first time, Youngstown and its workers had to ask themselves what their community and their lives might mean without the steel mill’.<sup>358</sup> As a resident of Mossend, a village that had been heavily dependent upon steelmaking, Harry Carlin described how the impact of closure was felt ‘dramatically’ across the local community, noting, ‘this wee village alone, the amount of steelworkers that was in it, no steelworkers now’.<sup>359</sup> Reflecting that ‘everything was slowly dying out’, James Blair referred to a rising trend in commuting longer distances for work: ‘that’s part of the culture now. There’s nothing in Coatbridge. If you want to stay in employment, you’ve got to travel’.<sup>360</sup> Describing the loss of shipbuilding as ‘massive’, Alex Straiton similarly observed a shift

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<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> Rev. John Potter Interview (Ferns)

<sup>356</sup> D. Orr, *Motherwell: A Girlhood* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2020) p.2

<sup>357</sup> Linkon and Russo, *Steeltown U.S.A.*, p.7

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* p.133

<sup>359</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>360</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

towards commuting in Greenock, 'This is now becoming a commuter place for Glasgow, because the views are nicer or whatever... Nobody works here anymore'.<sup>361</sup>

A process of depopulation followed the collapse of shipbuilding in Inverclyde, compounding the effects of closure on local communities. Pat Clark noted: 'The population has been haemorrhaging... as the size of the shipbuilding industry has reduced so has the population'.<sup>362</sup> Pat cited lack of opportunities as a key reason behind this exodus, referencing the short-lived nature of replacement industries:

The problem is once that industry's gone, there's nothing recognizable in its place. Even the sunrise industries which were supposed to take over... They are all gone. You got 50 years out of them; we got shipbuilding here since 1711. These places which are supposed to be the future, they were up and gone within 50 years.<sup>363</sup>

Given that heavy industry such as shipbuilding had dominated regional identity for hundreds of years, Pat's comments highlight the difficulty in assuming that it can be easily replaced. With the collapse of even these substitute industries, Pat questioned the very nature of Inverclyde's existence:

What do we do? What are we here for? What is Greenock for? What is Inverclyde for?... What is this town for? What is this area for? What do we do?... we are just here, we have no purpose as a community.<sup>364</sup>

It is clear from Pat's narrative that community identity was lost with the destruction of shipbuilding, leaving Inverclyde's collective identity an open question. Gordon MacLean felt that industry 'was definitely integrated' in the community of his hometown of Clydebank, and that the loss of this industry devastated the town's well-built community, rendering it 'a big housing estate of nothing':

People did have a pride in what they done and how they done it and that's what made us comrades... they'd play golf together and football together. They would go to the bowls, they would go on a night out, and they'd go to the theatre with their wives and couples. There was a close-knitted community – there was community in Clydebank. Now,

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<sup>361</sup> Alex Straiton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>362</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*



I don't know if Clydebanks a community. To me, it's just a big housing estate of nothing.<sup>365</sup>

Similar to Pat Clark questioning the purpose of post-industrial Inverclyde – 'What do we do? What are we here for?' – Gordon's depiction of Clydebanks as 'a big housing estate of nothing' perfectly captures the absence of a solid sense of identity within post-industrial communities.

### Placelessness and Erasure

Deindustrialisation radically transformed working-class space, with the pervasive destruction of heavy industry provoking feelings of placelessness and erasure. After the closure of their respective workplaces, most workers still continued to live within the same geographical area, with steelworkers concentrated across Lanarkshire and shipbuilders within Glasgow and Inverclyde. High and Lewis contend that 'place is more than a static category, an empty container where things happen. It must be understood as a social and spatial process, undergoing constant change'.<sup>366</sup> They continue:

Place attachment is a complex phenomenon that involves affect, emotion, feeling, and memory... places are constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations that meet and weave together at a particular locus. When people invoke 'place' and its attendant meanings, they are imagining geography and creating identities.<sup>367</sup>

As discussed above, Kirk, et al. have highlighted the interconnectedness of work and place in their examination of regional identity across Europe, stating, 'identity becomes bound up in this historical development, with work, producing culturally distinct traditions that shape everyday life'.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Gordon MacLean Interview (Ferns)

<sup>366</sup> S. High, 'Placing the Displaced Worker: Narrating Place in Deindustrializing Sturgeon Falls, Ontario', in J. Opp and J. C. Walsh (eds.) *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) p.181

<sup>367</sup> High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.32

<sup>368</sup> Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', p.7

Factories and industrial sites, as working-class space, have a deep symbolic value to the communities within which they are embedded. The enduring symbolic meaning of the industry has been highlighted by Mackinnon:

Landscapes are anchors of identity and repositories of memory. Within deindustrialized cities and towns, the memory of industrial work is inseparable from the physical site of the workplace among those who have been displaced.<sup>369</sup>

In the contemporary folk song, *The Shipyard Apprentice*, Glasgow's physical landscape, particularly the river Clyde and its cranes, feature as an important part of the narrator's sense of belonging. The song demonstrates a son's willingness to defend the collective rights his father had won, showing an intergenerational culture of resistance and occupational community that is also deeply connected to its surrounding physical environment:

I was born in the shadow of the Fairfield crane,  
And the blast of a freighter horn  
Was the very first sound that reached my ears  
On the morning that I was born.  
I sat and I listened to my father tell  
Of the Clyde he once knew,  
When you either sweated for a measly wage,  
Or you joined in the parish queue.  
Where life grew harder day by day  
Along the riverside,  
It's oft I heard my mother say,  
'It was tears that made the Clyde'.  
And if ever the bad old times return,  
I will fight as my father fought.  
For I was born in the shadow of the Fairfield crane,

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<sup>369</sup> Mackinnon, 'Coal and Steel', p.107

And the blast of a freighter horn  
 Was the very first sound that reached my ears  
 On the morning that I was born.<sup>370</sup>

Pat Clark commented on how shipbuilding dominated the banks of the river Clyde between Glasgow and Inverclyde, 'the whole way down, the whole shoreline was shipbuilding. All of it.... The entire waterfront of Port Glasgow then into Greenock... Shipbuilding everywhere'.<sup>371</sup> John Johnstone clearly recalled the physical presence of the yards in the community space of Govan:

If you lived in Govan... You walk down our street and you could see the shipyards in the distance. You'd see the cranes and things like that... You were always – if you were in the park, you saw the shipyards. If you were in school, if there was a ship being launched we were in the shipyards... at knocking off time you'd see folk walking out with their overalls. It was there. It was just part of the community.<sup>372</sup>

Similarly, Jack Mccusker reflected on how the sights and sounds of the shipyard were a constant fixture of his childhood:

When I was a wee boy, I always remember the noise, riveters, in the playground in the school. The Clyde was just behind it, and you could sometimes see the top of a ship... It was something you never thought much about because it was always there.<sup>373</sup>

Stewart MacPherson recalled the sense of childhood wonder that Ravenscraig evoked when he was a young boy, where he would marvel as the steelworks deep reds lit up the darkness of the night, reminiscing, 'we used to see the sky lighting up'.<sup>374</sup> Susan Crow described the Ravenscraig site in similar terms:

It's part of the skyline... It was something that you were aware of all the time... you saw it all the time. Even the local swing park, you sat

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<sup>370</sup> *The Shipyard Apprentice* (1973)

<sup>371</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>372</sup> John Johnstone Interview (Ferns)

<sup>373</sup> Jack Mccusker Interview (Ferns)

<sup>374</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

up higher so you could see the whole site... you were aware of it at the time.<sup>375</sup>

In her autobiography, Deborah Orr recalled the dramatic vista that Ravenscraig cast:

That view. That stunning, dystopian panorama. A world unto itself, stretched out perfectly flat as far as the horizon, monochrome, like the telly... you were never, ever quite prepared for the Craig's dark, satanic majesty, no matter how many times you'd seen it.<sup>376</sup>

Ravenscraig steelworks was a powerful symbol of Scottish heavy industry and its associated culture. Constructed in the latter half of the 1950s, Ravenscraig's establishment was intertwined with the post-war consensus of embedded liberalism, which saw state intervention, subsidisation or ownership of industry, and the maintenance of full employment as integral to domestic stability and rising living standards.<sup>377</sup> Despite the predicted economic loss from the high transportation costs of ore – a coastal location would have been more economically viable – the location of Motherwell was selected in part to remedy the areas above average regional unemployment. Over time, Ravenscraig took on symbolic status, emblematic of Scottish heavy industry as a whole. Frank Roy, a former Ravenscraig steelworker and subsequent MP for Motherwell noted, 'it was iconic, it was a real symbol of the old industrial heartland'.<sup>378</sup> Similarly, Terry Currie, a manager in Ravenscraig, noted it 'wasn't just a Lanarkshire plant. It was – it was a Scottish icon; it was a symbol'.<sup>379</sup> Stewart states that the 'campaign to save Ravenscraig transcended economics', with the plant 'seen as the final symbol of Scottish industrial virility'.<sup>380</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* reflected that the plant's closure 'signals not just the end of the steel industry in Scotland but the symbolic end of a whole industrial culture'.<sup>381</sup> Tom Brown, a

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<sup>375</sup> Susan Crow Interview (Ferns)

<sup>376</sup> Orr, *Motherwell: A Girlhood*, p.1

<sup>377</sup> D. Kavanagh, 'The Postwar Consensus', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992) pp.175-190

<sup>378</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>379</sup> Terry Currie Interview (Ferns)

<sup>380</sup> D. Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival: The 1980s Campaign to Save Ravenscraig Steelworks', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 25:1 (2005) p.56, p.48

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.* p.56

journalist for the *Daily Record*, reflected on the loss of ‘a beacon, a special symbol’ following Ravenscraig’s demolition:

From our back door – from practically any back door in our village – you could see the red glow in the sky. Year in, year out, it’s always been there... It was a beacon, a special symbol... Now it’s gone. The flame has been snuffed out and with it, hope and security.<sup>382</sup>

The campaign to save Ravenscraig represented defiance in the face of Thatcherism and a rejection of industrial closure, but ultimately became a symbol of political defeat for the Scottish working class.

The destruction of a physical workplace has wide-reaching cultural and symbolic meanings, as Strangleman has argued, ‘loss is embedded and remembered in material structures, objects, and images’.<sup>383</sup> Strangleman’s *Voices of Guinness*, which explores the closure and demolition of Guinness’ Park Royal brewery, provides an insight into workers’ attachment to their physical workplace and their sense of loss over its destruction:

There was real affection for the buildings and the material surroundings of work. Most of the employees interviewed felt a connection with the plant as a whole and the various individual spaces where they had worked.<sup>384</sup>

Clarke has also demonstrated workers’ connection to their physical workplace, stating, ‘factory spaces have been deeply symbolic of working class life and their decline has coincided with profound changes in the composition and status of the working classes’.<sup>385</sup> In her research on the Moulinex factory in Alençon, France, Clarke highlights how the Moulinex site became ‘the locus of a struggle not just over the memory of industry but also over the place of working-class Alençon in the space and

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<sup>382</sup> Anon., ‘Closure of Ravenscraig’, *Culture North Lanarkshire* <https://culturenl.co.uk/museums/steeling-back-memories-ravenscraig/closure/> [accessed 24/03/2023]

<sup>383</sup> T. Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness, An Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) p.148

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.* p.155

<sup>385</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Afterlives of a Factory: Memory, Place, and Space in Alençon’, in S. High, L. MacKinnon and A. Perchard (eds.) *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-industrial Places* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) p.113

identity of the town'.<sup>386</sup> In *Cultural Geography*, Crang states, 'landscapes may be read as texts illustrating the beliefs of the people. The shaping of the landscape is seen as expressing social ideologies'.<sup>387</sup> Applying this concept to industrial ruination, High and Lewis contend that industrial sites were once 'proud symbols of human progress and modernity', but now stand 'testament to the inability of working people to control the destructive forces'.<sup>388</sup> Conceptualising industrial ruination in a similar way to High, Mah states, 'once behemoth structures at the social and economic heart of industrialization, these buildings now lie in ruins. The scale of this decay echoes the grandeur of fallen past civilizations'.<sup>389</sup> Mah contends that former industrial sites 'are invested with more than cultural meanings', that despite their dereliction 'abandoned industrial sites remain connected with the urban fabric that surrounds them: with communities, with collective memory; and with people's health, livelihoods, and stories'.<sup>390</sup>

The demolition of industrial buildings in and of itself represents a very public form of erasure. High and Lewis have conceptualised demolition as a 'secular ritual', which serves to legitimise and cement deindustrialisation as unavoidable, noting that the 'cultural meaning of deindustrialisation is embedded in these universalized images of falling smokestacks and imploding factories'.<sup>391</sup> They continue:

Ceremony and ritual are often used to lend authority and legitimacy to particular persons, interests, world views, and moral orders. Secular rituals, like sacred ones, are traditionalizing instruments mounted with the intention to establish a sense of stability and continuity through repetition and order.<sup>392</sup>

High and Lewis usefully apply Bourdieu's concept of established order to industrial demolition, arguing that just as an 'established order must make its world view

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<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.* p.113

<sup>387</sup> Crang, *Cultural Geography*, p.27

<sup>388</sup> High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, pp.1-2

<sup>389</sup> A. Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) p.3

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.39, p.10

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.* p.27

appear taken for granted', the levelling of industry 'lent authority and legitimacy to the idea that specific towns and cities were making the transition to a post-industrial era'.<sup>393</sup> In the context of the demolition of the Moulinex factory, Clarke observed that the event 'stirred up considerable emotion', as the 'demolition gave a spectacular form to the much-feared erasure of industrial and working-class culture from the local landscape'.<sup>394</sup>

The demolition of Ravenscraig in 1996 was a major public spectacle. Drawing a large crowd and broadcast on television, it represented a secular ritual that marked the death of heavy industry in Scotland. During the destruction of the iconic plant, 4,400 black balloons were released in an act of mourning, each one representing a job lost at Ravenscraig and the Clydesdale over the previous two years, giving physical expression to the community's grief. In the documentary *Steelmens*, former Ravenscraig steelworker Kevin Harper experienced a mixture of grief and powerlessness watching the demolition, 'we could see it just happening. And it was – it was soul destroying'.<sup>395</sup> Dorothy Macready described the sadness she felt while attending the demolition of the steelworks in an episode on Ravenscraig of the BBC Radio Scotland programme *Our Story*. For her, Ravenscraig was more than a workplace, it was where she had grown up:

I thought I'll go up, and I went up and I thought no I canne. I think it was, part of my life, my childhood, my teen years, I went in as a wee, daft, never been kissed or manhandled and I came out a married woman you know, and I thought, I grew up in the Craig, you know, its maybe like my youth.<sup>396</sup>

Ravenscraig was similarly invested with emotion for Stewart MacPherson, who had worked in the plant since he was 16 years old:

It was a sad day when I seen the tanks coming down... I walked through the gates by those tanks every day, every working day from when I

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<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.* p.39, p.10

<sup>394</sup> Clarke, 'Afterlives of a Factory', p.118, p.117

<sup>395</sup> *Steelmens* (2019) Directed by M. McCuaig (PurpleTV)

<sup>396</sup> 'Ravenscraig', *Our Story*

was a 16-year-old boy. It was a sad chapter to see them coming down.<sup>397</sup>

Living in such close proximity to the steelworks, Susan Crow and her father watched the demolition of Ravenscraig from their back garden:

Where we lived, our back door looked on to the back of the Ravenscraig. So he stood at the back door watching it. Watching the big towers come down, that day it was done. That was almost an ending of an era, wasn't it, for everyone, but I suppose he wanted to watch it himself to see it happen.<sup>398</sup>

Susan's father was compelled to mark the momentous occasion of Ravenscraig's destruction, as a secular ritual of such significance he needed to 'see it happen' for himself. The public act of demolition delivered an unambiguous message that this was truly the end, obliterating the notion that 'maybe there was still hope' so long as the plant was standing:

I think there's a lot of disbelief as well around it that it got to that point... maybe there was still hope there, until they knew it was completely closing, and then that was it actually finalized. That was almost part of that process. That ending and a new beginning.<sup>399</sup>

This finality took an emotional toll on Susan's father, 'I think that was pretty painful for him. It was a pretty big thing, to see it, although he talked it down, not showing the emotion. Absolutely, it affected him'.<sup>400</sup> Like Susan, Jim McKeown reflected on the sadness evoked by witnessing demolition and the finality it represented:

I remember watching when they pulled the cooling tower, I remember I went over to watch it come down, it was actually very sad... I didn't realise how much it was going to affect me until I seen it falling down, you are thinking that was the final act – it was closed then you know. Because deep down a lot of us thought, 'it will open up in a year or two and we will be back in it'.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>398</sup> Susan Crow Interview (Ferns)

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)



Lees' novel *Steelmen* further captures the emotion felt by those who witnessed the destruction of Ravenscraig's iconic blue cooling towers: '[Harry] stopped and turned to look back at the big blue cooling tower, for so long the beacon of the areas industrial strength. Jack noticed and stopped with him and saw his eyes begin to fill with tears'.<sup>402</sup> Former steelworker Martin Kerr, quoted by McIvor, additionally captures the emotion stirred up by Ravenscraig's demolition, aptly reflecting, 'I never saw so many men cry'.<sup>403</sup> Like others, Gordon Hatton acknowledged the finality of Ravenscraig's demolition, noting, 'that was it, definitely over then'.<sup>404</sup> While some workers felt drawn to the spectacle of demolition, others could not bring themselves to witness the end of something so significant. Gordon stated:

I wouldn't have went to see that, that would have been horrible watching that... I just think it was dancing on somebody's grave or something, do you know what I mean? I grew up with those things... you knew they were there. I used to pass them every day... Then to have seen them getting blown up, I wouldn't have liked to have seen that.<sup>405</sup>

In the context of demolition of Park Royal brewery, Strangleman notes that some workers' narratives have 'a moral quality to it, an ethic of care for the site'.<sup>406</sup> Terry Aldridge, a former Park Royal worker, recalled, 'I was very saddened by that. I was a bit angry in some ways because I thought they were going to [deep inhalation] use a bit of it, maybe the brew house, as a museum'.<sup>407</sup> Another former Park Royal worker, Henry Dawson, stated that he had avoided both the demolition and pictures of its aftermath, wishing to remember the brewery as it was:

No, I stayed away. I didn't want to see it being knocked down... Now there's nothing, there's just a hole... [a former colleague] tried to get me to have a look at the pictures... but I don't particularly want to see

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<sup>402</sup> J. Lees, *Steelmen* (James Lees, 2020) np.

<sup>403</sup> A. McIvor, "'Scrap-heap' stories: oral narratives of labour and loss in Scottish mining and manufacturing", *Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen*, 31:2 (2019) p.4

<sup>404</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>406</sup> Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness*, p.158

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*

it... I'd rather remember it how it was working... people smiling while they were at work.<sup>408</sup>

Former mill workers in Hareven and Langenbach's analysis of life and work in the former mill-town of Manchester, New Hampshire, expressed similar concern over the dereliction of the former mill, with its dilapidated state almost representing contempt for both their own and their parents' legacy of labour:

It's so bad to see so many beautiful buildings in ruins and to think that so many people earned their living there. Today, everything is falling down. If our old parents, who worked so much in these mills, if they'd come back today and see how these mills are, it would really break their hearts.<sup>409</sup>

This 'ethic of care' surfaced across multiple workers' testimonies, the sense of heritage they derived from their work, particularly for those with intergenerational ties, meant that former workplaces were spoken of almost as family heirlooms worthy of respect and care. Stewart MacPherson commented that 'they could have put up some sort of memorial' where the former iconic blue gas tanks once stood.<sup>410</sup> Gordon felt that an element of the site should have been preserved, 'they should have kept some of it, something... One of my brothers, he suggested they should have kept one of the blast furnaces, just sitting there as a thing'.<sup>411</sup> Jim McKeown also felt that the blast furnace should have been preserved, 'I would have personally left the blast furnace standing you know... they could have built houses round about it, just to sort of symbolise that was there at that time'.<sup>412</sup> In the end, Jim McKeown reflected that he was 'glad' to see a monument established on the grounds of the former site, noting: 'I am glad they put something up, I want something to say it was there, so in ten, fifteen years' time going by in a zimmer I can still see it sitting there, remember it was there'.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.* p.159

<sup>409</sup> Hareven and Langenbach, *Amoskeag*, p.11

<sup>410</sup> Stewart MacPherson Interview (Ferns)

<sup>411</sup> Gordon Hatton Interview (Ferns)

<sup>412</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

In their accounting of deindustrialisation, workers narrated the loss of familiar fixtures that had defined the local landscape. They inscribed cultural meaning on prominent industrial landmarks – with cranes, pitheads, smokestacks, and cooling towers embodying the industrial culture of the communities surrounding them, standing as physical place markers that represented feelings of ‘home’. Something intrinsic to the emotional geography of the area was lost in the destruction of these place markers; they had left behind an ‘emptiness’ or wrought a ‘hole’ in the town. In Richards’ *Miners on Strike*, a Derbyshire miner reflects on becoming overcome with grief when he first sees his pit after its closure: ‘they’d pulled the headstocks down. I wept, it was very upsetting... I worked at this colliery for forty years, you just can’t divorce yourself from that, it’s a part of your life’.<sup>414</sup> In *Industrial Sunset*, High comments on the empty space left by industrial demolition:

Gaping holes could be found in cities across the region and mirrored the emotional loss felt by residents and industrial workers. As always, emptiness disturbs and empty spaces beg for explanation.<sup>415</sup>

Bruno gives a vivid depiction of industrial abandonment in Youngstown, stating:

By the late 1980s, the devastation of mass shutdowns had left an industrial wasteland stretching for miles along the Mahoning River. Where the view from Wilson Avenue in Campbell had been fields of steel and a sky holding the tips of burning smokestacks, now there was only cold metal and weeds.<sup>416</sup>

Depictions of emptiness are common among workers narratives of closure. Bill Sorensen, a former autoworker interviewed in Dudley’s *The End of the Line*, reflects on how the demolition of his factory created a ‘huge gaping hole’ that ‘physically as well as psychologically’ altered his understanding of the city: ‘The building itself is something I’ll miss... It’s gonna be this huge gaping hole where this huge chunk of my life was... literally, just a huge gaping hole’.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> A. J. Richards, *Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division in Britain* (Oxford: Berg, 1997) p.32

<sup>415</sup> High, *Industrial Sunset*, p.6

<sup>416</sup> R. Bruno, *Steelworker Alley: How Class works in Youngstown* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999) p.149

<sup>417</sup> Dudley, *The End of the Line*, p.173

Walkerdine and Jimenez examined the loss of steelmaking within in a former steel-dependant town in Wales. Reflecting on the destruction of the steelworks they state, 'what had stood at the centre of the town, with belching furnaces, noise and activity, became an enormous flat space, a nothing where something had once been'.<sup>418</sup> Of particular value, Walkerdine elsewhere notes the significance of the steelworks as a material and 'psychic' object, with its destruction and absence leaving an 'affective empty space' at the heart of the community:

It was geographically placed at the centre of the town and people recount the central and iconic importance of the lights, sounds and fire as central sensory aspects... But it was also a psychic object in that it could be said to contain all the projections of the townspeople: the steelworks was that which provided the possibility of life for the town... it was, after all, the source of life when it was operating and extreme hardship when it closed... After its closure, it was razed to the ground within a month, so what was left was a huge material and affective empty space where there had once been an object.<sup>419</sup>

In the context of Ravenscraig, Deborah Orr uses similar language to describe the 'big hole' that the destruction of the steelworks left in Motherwell: 'After the Ravenscraig site was decommissioned, its buildings flattened and shovelled away, its earth decontaminated, there was just a big hole, in the town, in the shire, in so many people's lives'.<sup>420</sup> In the BBC Radio Scotland programme, *Our Story*, Mark Stephen described how demolition had 'completely erased' all sign of the steelworks:

When the gates were closed, all the parts were demolished and the ground was cleared. With the exception of all the bolts and bits of metal underfoot, all sign of what was once one of the most advanced steel making plants in Europe had been completely erased.<sup>421</sup>

Dorothy Macready was full of emotion when she described the loss of the Ravenscraig site, a location that for her and many other residents of Lanarkshire had

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<sup>418</sup> V. Walkerdine and L. Jimenez, *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation: a psychosocial approach to affect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.9

<sup>419</sup> V. Walkerdine, 'Communal beingness and affect: An exploration of trauma in an ex-industrial community', *Body & Society*, 16:1 (2010) pp.98-99

<sup>420</sup> Orr, *Motherwell: A Girlhood*, p.292

<sup>421</sup> 'Ravenscraig', *Our Story*

represented home: 'If you were coming from abroad or coming up from England in a car or a bus or a train, you would say, "Ravenscraig I'm home"... It's just, it's just sad'.<sup>422</sup> Jim McKeown similarly viewed Ravenscraig's iconic blue cooling tower as a reference point for home, noting, 'you could always pick out where we were in Motherwell':

You know the biggest thing I miss about it? See when you come back from holiday, and you used to fly in or you come up the M74, you could see the big cooling towers, the big blue cooling tower with Ravenscraig on it; I think that was terrible that they knocked that down, they should have left it just as a symbol of the community – it's things like that you miss.<sup>423</sup>

Like Dorothy and Jim, Colin Quigley had seen Glasgow's cranes as a place marker for home, reflecting, 'the Fairfield cranes, you could see them from all over Glasgow, you knew you were near home when you'd seen them'. Colin felt that the destruction of the cranes diluted the 'physical identity and pride in the area':

[They] decided we can't maintain them, we're just going to pull them down. Every other city... they've made a feature of their cranes, they've lit them all up, and they're a feature of the skyline of the city... I think Glasgow, in terms of our heritage over the years, has been really terrible, all these bright ideas that we'll have this clean, new, wonderful place. We'll move people out of the city and put them in these satellite towns, where it's just concrete... you just killed Glasgow.<sup>424</sup>

Donny O'Rourke's poem, *The Cranes*, poignantly conveys the significance of Glasgow's cranes to the city's sense of heritage and identity, with the final two verses illustrating how their loss left a 'huge hole in the sky':

The last time I lay my eyes on  
Our city's steel horizon  
That the sun will never rise on-  
Til' the river drains; We'll mourn the cranes

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<sup>422</sup> Dorothy Macready Interview (Ferns)

<sup>423</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>424</sup> Colin Quigley Interview (Ferns)

When there's a huge hole in the sky  
 About a hundred meters high  
 We'll ask the silent river why  
 Glasgow maintains, only memorials to cranes.<sup>425</sup>

The loss of the cranes was mourned by a former shipyard worker interviewed in *The Herald*: 'their removal is hugely symbolic. Why remove them now when there is no need to do so?... These iconic structures are part of the Glasgow skyline'.<sup>426</sup>

The destruction of heavy industry dramatically transformed the local landscape, evoking feelings of cultural erasure within industrial communities. Mackinnon applies Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to industrial erasure, stating:

Symbolic violence exists as an experience of having been dispossessed from a space within which one was once comfortable. In deindustrialized spaces, former industrial workers often express anxiety, feeling out-of-place, and an inability to connect their memories to the physical landscape.<sup>427</sup>

Glasgow became increasingly unrecognisable during the 1980s, as industrial decline and reckless city planning oversaw the razing of the city's built heritage and a forced migration of residents into satellite towns. This process was captured in *Clyde Film*, a local arts and community group production filmed in 1984, which contrasts scenes of a once vigorous Glasgow alongside contemporary footage of relentless demolition and an increasingly pervasive wasteland. Shots of active demolition and newly rendered wasteland are accompanied by an ironic adaptation of 'I Belong to Glasgow':

I belong to Glasgow

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<sup>425</sup> D. O'Rourke (2013) *The Cranes* (The One Show, BBC One)

<sup>426</sup> Anon., 'Fears over Govan yard as cranes removed', *The Herald* (2 November 2013) [http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13129894.Fears\\_over\\_Govan\\_yard\\_as\\_cranes\\_removed/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13129894.Fears_over_Govan_yard_as_cranes_removed/) [Accessed 14/08/2018]

<sup>427</sup> Mackinnon, 'Coal and Steel', p.109

Dear old Glasgow town.  
 But there's something the matter with Glasgow  
 For they're pulling the whole place down.  
 'Let Glasgow flourish' our emblem says.  
 It doesn't seem right to me.  
 For it's hard to see what can flourish  
 When they are clearing it all away.<sup>428</sup>

The juxtaposition of Glasgow's industrial vibrancy to its post-industrial ruination is powerful, with the film conveying an element of the dissolution and upheaval that working-class Glaswegians experienced as their city was torn down around them.

The intense scale of industrial closure that took place between the 1970s and 1990s gave the impression of a collapsing social order. Alex Torrance borrowed lyrics from the Proclaimers' *Letter from America* – 'Bathgate no more, then Linwood no more' – as he described with emotion witnessing one factory after another close.<sup>429</sup> Commenting on the destruction of this built environment, Jack Mccusker stated, 'it destroys communities when they do that'.<sup>430</sup> Mah usefully points out that industrial ruination is a lived process, especially for those that continue to live adjacent to the ruins of industry:

Deindustrialization and industrial ruins are not simply matters of historic record, but represent legacies of industrial ruination: enduring and complex lived realities for people occupying the in-between spaces of post-industrial change.<sup>431</sup>

Workers reflected on the previous density of industry within Lanarkshire's now post-industrial landscape:

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<sup>428</sup> *Clyde Film* (1985) Directed by I. Venart, C. Tracy, I. Miller, M. Merrick, A. McCallum and K. Currie (Cranhill Films) <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/3789>

<sup>429</sup> Alex Torrance Interview (Ferns)

<sup>430</sup> Jack Mccusker Interview (Ferns)

<sup>431</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p.201

You had engineering companies in Coatbridge. Well established companies. Lamberton's. You had Murray and Paterson's. You had R. B. Tennent's. You had the steelworks in Gartcosh.<sup>432</sup>

When you think about roundabout here you had Ravenscraig, you had the Lanarkshire, you had Etna, you had Clyde Alloy etc. etc. you had the Clydesdale Works... so aye it had a big effect, a big effect.<sup>433</sup>

When I was younger, within that area... you had Lanarkshire steelworks. You had Anderson Boyce making the coal cutting machines, you had Ravenscraig... you had Etna, you had the Clyde Alloy... The whole place has completely changed.<sup>434</sup>

Harry Carlin reflected on the lost bustle of local employment that had defined the beginning of his working life:

Everybody was working... a multitude of people going out to work in the morning and a multitude coming back at night... the buses were full... it was always full, you look at them now, there's nobody in it, there's no buses running up and down.<sup>435</sup>

The full buses reflect a vibrant community sustained by its local industry, whereas Harry's observation of the now empty buses is indicative of a wider emptiness in the community at large. McIvor highlights a similar narrative, where Margaret Cullen, a resident of Springburn who worked in the local Cooperative store, reflects on how the bustle of the area during the 1950s was silenced by successive waves of closure:

You would see the men comin oot, oot the factories... they used to come up three deep coming up Springburn Road... The place was black with people... It was a busy, busy place then. Industrial. But then it just... once they closed all these places then Springburn died.<sup>436</sup>

Gordon MacLean gave an impression of the vibrancy that had typified industry in and around Clydebank:

You had the shipbuilding. You had the engine building... you had the ship's laundry company, Mandlove Tullis, in Clydebank. You had a soot blower company, Clyde Blowers, in Clydebank. You had J&T Lawrie,

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<sup>432</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

<sup>433</sup> James Coyle Interview (Ferns)

<sup>434</sup> Alex McGowan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>435</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>436</sup> McIvor, "Scrap-heap" stories', p.4



who made all the specialized paintwork in Clydebank... Just outside the area, you had Weir's Pumps... You had companies like Babcock & Wilcox down in Dumbarton... We had Turner's Asbestos down in Dalmuir, next to Beardmore's shipyard. Then you come into John Brown's shipyard. Then you went up into Barclay Curle's shipyard, Yarrow shipyard, and Scotstoun shipyard... You had the Govan Shipbuilders... Singer's factory in its heyday would employ somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 people... The whole area was just thriving.<sup>437</sup>

After giving this vivid picture of a town built upon work, Gordon noted, 'by the mid-80s, it was gone. It was all gone'.<sup>438</sup> During the intense industrial closure of the 1970s and 1980s, Gordon felt that 'Scotland just fell apart': 'If you think from the mid-'70s onwards into the mid-'80s, the whole of Scotland just fell apart, as far as industry was concerned... it just all crumbled'.<sup>439</sup> Such a dramatic change implanted in Gordon a sense of displacement, of being a survivor or remnant of a time past, he noted, 'I'm probably the last of the generation that could probably remember that'.<sup>440</sup> Pat Clark observed that Clydeside heavy industry was increasingly becoming a 'folk myth', as its legacy drew further into the past:

There are people coming up now for whom it's just a folk myth... Whereas, back in the day, it defined the place... when you think of the *Song of the Clyde*: 'From Glasgow to Greenock, towns on each side. The hammers ding-dong is the song of the Clyde' – that's absolutely true. The whole way down. Shipyards everywhere. Now that's just gone.<sup>441</sup>

## Conclusion

It is clear from workers' testimonies that heavy industry represented much more than a job. Workers described their immersion within a culture that had been defined by strong bonds of solidarity and a real, tangible sense of community. The workplace

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<sup>437</sup> Gordon MacLean Interview (Ferns)

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>441</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

functioned as a nexus of social activity for a plethora of voluntary associations, social clubs, educational programmes, and political groups. Heavy industry formed the foundation of a broad, vibrant and often all-encompassing culture, which extended well beyond the confines of the workplace and into the social life of the surrounding community. At the centre of this industrial culture was a prevailing 'structure of feeling', which promoted communal cultural values and acts of mutual aid, creating a good degree of social capital within industrial communities. The robust social structure that heavy industry underpinned provided the basis for an assertive working-class culture and identity – one that stressed the values of unity and had a strong sense of its own worth and place in history.

Deindustrialisation obliterated the material basis of working-class industrial culture. The seemingly unstoppable, relentless scale of industrial closure sundered a deep-rooted culture in a matter of decades, provoking an overwhelming sense of identity disintegration across Scotland's industrial communities. The structure and routine of workers' lives were shattered, leaving in its place anxiety over an uncertain future. Workers' testimonies expressed the loss of something intangible but nonetheless essential, conceptualising their expulsion from heavy industry as having 'stolen' the lives they had expected to live. The occupational community and socially embedded nature of heavy industry was destroyed. Nothing of the same scale rose to replace workers' vibrant social life as it disintegrated. In place of the camaraderie workers had described, they now noted a sense of social isolation or disconnectedness from their wider community. Importantly, workers' feelings of loss were not explicitly tied to work itself, but rather its context; for them, it wasn't so much about working with people as it was 'living with people'. Job loss untethered countless friendships built and sustained through the workplace, and workers found themselves separated from colleagues they had described through metaphors of family. Beyond their own lives, workers positioned deindustrialisation as a force which had 'destroyed' the collective future of their communities; conceptualising this through metaphors of death and undeath – although industrial communities had been 'killed', they now haunted the living as 'ghost towns'. The theme of

transformation was evoked throughout workers' narratives. Mass industrial ruination radically transformed working-class space, provoking feelings of placelessness and cultural erasure, as the emotional geography of industrial communities was unmade through the destruction of prominent industrial landmarks with deep emotional significance. Not only had the process of deindustrialisation 'devastated' and thusly transformed workers' communities, but they themselves had been transformed. Indicating how the economic violence of industrial ruination literally unmade workers' identities, deindustrialisation was described as having compelled the move from the positive state of existence as 'something' – 'you were something' – to the negative state of nonexistence – 'nothing', 'a nobody'. Ultimately, the physical destruction of heavy industry doomed the culture that had been sustained by it. In the absence of its material basis, the culture associated with heavy industry began to wither away; deindustrialisation signalled the end of working-class industrial culture in Scotland.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion: Surviving Deindustrialisation

Employing an oral history approach, this thesis has interrogated understandings of the process and impact of deindustrialisation. It has reconstructed the post-redundancy employment transitions of Scottish heavy industry workers displaced as a result of deindustrialisation, placing an emphasis on the experience and emotions associated with work, as well as the survivability of occupational identities in workers' post-redundancy employment. Deindustrialisation has been conceptualised as a 'breaching experiment' by Strangleman, with the significance of industrial employment exposed through its destruction and absence.<sup>1</sup> In a similar sense, this thesis offers a more complete understanding of deindustrialisation by examining and comparing workers' experiences of employment within both heavy industry and the post-industrial workplace. The full extent of deindustrialisation cannot be understood without an appreciation of what workers lost, likewise, the value workers attached to their employment in heavy industry was laid bare through its absence. Although workers' post-redundancy employment destinations varied – ranging from factory work, mechanics, taxi driving, janitorial work, social care, teaching, and politics – they described a remarkably similar experience. The most pervasive representation of deindustrialisation within its respective literature is the deterioration thesis, evident, for example, in the seminal works of High and Linkon, which outlines the collapse of working conditions and community cohesion.<sup>2</sup> Former heavy industry workers' post-redundancy experiences in Scotland generally aligned with this portrayal of deindustrialisation, with a few qualifications. Workers largely found their post-redundancy employment inferior to heavy industry: conditions were lost, trade unions disempowered, occupational communities shattered, and workers

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<sup>1</sup> T. Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness, An Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) p.146

<sup>2</sup> S. High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); S. Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization: working-class writing about economic restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018)

atomised. Although overwhelmingly negative, workers' employment transitions did engender some positive outcomes, specifically in relation to a healthier and less hazardous working environment. For workers, the fundamental problem of deindustrialisation was its frantic speed and the seemingly all-encompassing extent of industrial ruination; change in and of itself was not the problem, the problem was wanton destruction condoned by a government determined to see entire communities freefall into oblivion.

Overwhelmingly, heavy industry was remembered as a dangerous and potentially lethal form of employment. The sense of danger of the workplace was acknowledged as one which was ever present, with each day carrying the potential for extreme violence. The work was often physically demanding and performed under dirty, uncomfortable conditions, and the workplace itself was a volatile environment where lethal machinery could maim or kill. Beyond immediate physical injury or death, workers were routinely exposed to toxic substances, present in the materials they handled and carried in the dust they breathed. Employment within this environment increased the likelihood of developing a host of long-term, debilitating illnesses and disease. Whereas in most other instances workers had portrayed their post-redundancy employment as inferior to heavy industry, this was not the case in terms of narratives surrounding health. In this respect, workers' departure from heavy industry was typically seen as beneficial, expressed in language which evoked a sense of escape or liberation. Overwhelmingly, workers' descriptions of their new employment emphasised cleaner, healthier, safer, and more comfortable workplaces, with the metaphor of 'night and day' commonly used to distinguish between the two. It is interesting then, that in spite of heavy industry's capacity for brutality, most workers mourned its loss and stated without reservation that they would return if able. In stating their preference for heavy industry, workers were making an informed choice, believing that its merits outweighed its dangers – reflecting the unfortunate position working-class people often find themselves in, trapped between a rock and a hard place; forced to choose either healthiness with relative poverty, or prosperity with potential lethality.

Although employment in heavy industry undoubtedly brutalised workers' bodies, and the transition into alternative employment can be seen as one of the few positive outcomes of deindustrialisation, it is important to situate workers' escape narratives in a wider understanding of deindustrialisation and its long-term effects upon community health. Deindustrialisation disrupted the social fabric of working-class communities, rupturing social cohesion and engendering a rising sense of alienation, which itself had a profoundly harmful effect upon health. Poor mental health and higher rates of suicide plague the post-industrial landscape, and drug and alcohol addiction feature prominently in post-industrial communities. As region-defining employment in heavy industry collapsed, to be replaced with precarious service-sector employment or nothing at all, communities struggled with issues around identity disintegration and hopelessness. In the Scottish context, the aftereffects of deindustrialisation had an acutely devastating impact upon public health. Given the centrality of state-ran heavy industry to the Scottish economy, the scale and ruthlessness of UK deindustrialisation had a profound effect, essentially precipitating a freefall into socio-economic oblivion. The 1980s shattered Scotland's sense of identity; the nation that 'made things' became one defined by unemployment, poverty and hopelessness. From this deprivation and despair, physical and mental health deteriorated, giving rise to the widely discussed 'Scottish Effect'. At first glance deindustrialisation appears to have freed Scottish workers from a dangerous occupation, but, as workers themselves narrate, the harmful aftereffects of deindustrialisation have proven much more persistent and difficult to escape.

The presence of powerful trade unions was a prominent feature in workers' recollections of heavy industry. Unions gave workers a sense of security and dignity, safe in the knowledge that they were protected from potential managerial abuse. Yet unions represented much more than membership organisations that defended conditions and advanced pay. They were hubs of politicisation, labour militancy, and education, they were social organisations that cast a broad net over the workplace and the surrounding community, and they constituted the foundation of the culture and bonds of solidarity which, for many, had been the defining experience of heavy

industry. Robust trade union representation was missing from workers' post-redundancy employment, which in turn permitted the development of a power imbalance between workers and management, expressed eloquently in the interview testimonies. In the absence of collective organisation, the workplace lost an integral check and balance on the abuse of power, allowing the ascendancy of unrestrained and sometimes exploitative management practices. The narrative – that heavy industry was good and what came after was bad – is tempting for a reason: because it contains elements of truth. Workers' union narratives were not simply renditions of rose-tinted nostalgia, they described real material differences in job quality and working rights between unionised heavy industry and their typically non-unionised post-redundancy employment. The unions of heavy industry had been powerful, and the employment workers gained outside of the industry did contrast poorly in its lack of collective strength, with unions unable to effectively resist abusive management. Heavy industry had been the perfect environment for the development of labour militancy. Dangerous work had cultivated solidarity and trust, obvious class divisions between management and workers encouraged radicalism, the high density and mass scale of the workplace, with potentially thousands of workers on-site, experiencing hardships, grievances and victories in close proximity to each other, was the perfect conduit for the formation of collectivist identities and bonds of solidarity, as well as large-scale mobilisation. The destruction of heavy industry demolished the source of this culture of solidarity. Trade unions survived, as did workers' attachment to the labour movement, but without their material foundation, the culture of solidarity and style of trade unionism within heavy industry began to evaporate.

Scottish heavy industry was a male-dominated workplace, with the shop floor staffed almost exclusively by men. The spartan working conditions of heavy industry forged in workers a physical and emotional hardness. Emotional vulnerability was generally discouraged, as were symbols which could be interpreted as 'effeminate'. Older workers enforced workplace cultural norms, with deviation from these behaviours potentially resulting in ridicule or ostracism. In this way, younger workers were inducted and socialised into workplace masculinity. The maintenance of such a

prohibitive masculinity was often oppressively restrictive, and workers confessed their objection to it, but its pervasiveness was perceived as immovable – it was simply ‘the way it was’. Workers’ narratives demonstrated that this sense of hardness – or ‘hardman’ mentality – was not some simplistic display of male swagger, but rather a form of defensive masculinity which operated as a protective psychological shell. The detached hardness of heavy industry masculinity essentially functioned as an imperfect coping mechanism, allowing workers to tolerate the hardships of a brutal, sometimes terrifying industry. The intergenerational workforce of heavy industry lent itself to the development of an informal, organic, and intergenerational mentorship. This mentorship, while it existed alongside the harshness of the wider work culture, tended to be softer, more encouraging, and almost fatherly in expression. These two seemingly conflicting aspects did not appear contradictory to workers; workplace masculinity is complex, and this complexity was woven with ease into workers’ testimonies. The masculinity of heavy industry workers, and of working-class men in general, has often been portrayed as aggressive, emotionally distant, and repressed, but oral history testimonies reveal a much more colourful, expressive culture laced throughout this harder masculinity. There was a full range of personality and emotion demonstrated within heavy industry; as workers themselves pointed out, ‘it wasn’t all dour gloom and militancy’. Workers described a vibrancy which challenged one-dimensional depictions of stunted masculinity, demonstrating that a range of masculinities can co-exist at the same time. Beneath the harsh veneer of heavy industry masculinity, there flourished creativity and collaboration over shared passions. Workers’ masculinity was nuanced, it was harsh, at rare times violent, but it was also caring and empathetic.

The process of deindustrialisation, which propelled men into female-dominated or mixed workplaces, has been commonly understood as a potentially emasculatory experience, perhaps even triggering a ‘crisis’ of masculinity within deindustrialised communities. This idea has been critically interrogated in this thesis. As has been demonstrated, the masculinity of former heavy industry workers was not challenged by their experience of female-dominated employment, they continued to



express stable work-based identities and quickly adapted to the workplace culture of their new employment. Largely, the association between female-dominated employment and emasculation is overly simplistic, it overlooks the infinite mutability of masculinity, as a set of acceptable and expected male behaviours, to continually evolve and manifest in a diverse range of forms to suit specific contexts. The emasculatory effects of deindustrialisation are not a consequence of the decline of traditionally 'male' industries and rise of 'female' ones, but rather the destruction of employment which allowed working-class men to secure a stable income for themselves and/or their families. In terms of masculinity, workers' core identity was primarily provider based, importance was attached to being 'a worker', as this allowed men to fulfil this provider identity; the type and form of work were largely irrelevant. The idea that 'women's work' is naturally emasculatory is not only crude, but it promotes a one dimensional view of working-class men's masculinity; it severely undermines their agency, limiting their ability to choose and enjoy a wide range of employment. Former industrial workers described a diverse assortment of life experiences and interests, and many found themselves in female-dominated work as a result of these interests, not in spite of them. Given the fact that women have been marginalised into precarious, non-unionised, low-paid and part-time employment, the sense of emasculation articulated by other former industrial workers who entered female-dominated employment relates more to the exploitative working conditions of typical 'women's work', rather than the supposed shame of working an 'effeminate' job. For the most part, the 'emasculation' of men in female-dominated employment has been imposed on workers by external observers, typically by those with no direct experience of working a 'female' job as a man, or by academics guilty of a one-dimensional interpretation of working-class masculinity. The relationship between deindustrialisation and emasculation is more complex than has been suggested, the two are linked, but working-class masculinity is primarily challenged by unemployment or underemployment, not reemployment into traditionally female industries. The security, pay, trade unionism, and camaraderie of heavy industry was remembered fondly by workers, but the decline

in jobs which exhibit these characteristics relates more to a crisis of class rather than a crisis of masculinity; it is not that 'men's jobs' have vanished, but that jobs with exploitative working practices have increasingly become the only source of employment available for both working-class men and women.

Workers' recollections of heavy industry emphasised an intense feeling of camaraderie, of an immersion within a culture that was defined by strong bonds of solidarity and a real, tangible sense of collectivism. There was a prevailing 'structure of feeling' within industrial communities which informed culture, promoting communal cultural values and acts of mutual aid.<sup>3</sup> Not a job that could be left at the factory gates, heavy industry formed the bedrock of a broad social fabric, encompassing most aspects of workers' lives beyond work. The workplace functioned as a nexus for a wide array of social activity, with voluntary associations, social clubs, educational programmes, and political groups attached to the shop floor. Workers had access to a great deal of social capital by virtue of these organisations, and the duality of a large workforce, which was both highly organised and defined by a strong sense of social embeddedness, fostered a culture of mutual aid. Heavy industry represented an integral hub of regional employment, supporting countless ancillary industries that relied on its products as well as a local service sector that catered for its employees. As such, heavy industry formed an essential component of the socioeconomic infrastructure of the communities where it was located. In this context occupational identity overflowed from the workplace, informing the character of communities, regions, or, in the case of Scotland, national identity. Heavy industry gave birth to a form of working-class industrial culture that transcended the workplace in its influence. The culture of collectivism that formed in heavy industry seeped into the labour movement and national politics, as well as into regional and national identities.

Deindustrialisation obliterated the material foundation of industrial culture. Industrial ruination precipitated an overwhelming sense of identity disintegration, as

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<sup>3</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp.132-134

unrelenting closures obliterated an established culture in a matter of decades. A feeling of losing something essential or intangible was expressed by multiple workers. Deindustrialisation shattered the structure of workers' lives, disordering routine and leaving a sense of uncertainty over the future. After a lifetime of work dedicated to one industry it was difficult to consider starting anew. Narrating a sense of displacement, some workers experienced one redundancy after another, while others lived under the expectation of it. Workers tended to conceptualise their expulsion from heavy industry as having derailed or 'stolen' the lives they had planned out for themselves. The idea of transformation appeared frequently in workers' narratives, with deindustrialisation compelling a move from the positive state of existence as 'something' – 'you were something' – to the negative state of nonexistence – 'nothing', 'a nobody'. Being 'something' was always described in the past tense; the process of deindustrialisation literally unmade workers' identities. The vibrant social life of heavy industry disintegrated, often replaced with nothing; camaraderie gave way to loneliness as workers struggled to adjust to their new lives. For a social life built around work, job loss brought an abrupt end to countless friendships. Workers suddenly found themselves removed from colleagues they had potentially worked beside for decades. Workers' sense of loss was not solely tied to the work itself but more the context it took place in; it wasn't so much about working with people as it was 'living with people'. For them, deindustrialisation fundamentally shattered occupational community, rupturing social lives and bringing an abrupt end to socially embedded workplaces. On an individual level workers positioned deindustrialisation as an event that had robbed them of their respective futures, but they also described it as a force which had 'destroyed' the collective future of their communities. The impact of closure was often expressed through metaphors of death and undead, where communities were 'killed' but nonetheless continued on as 'ghost towns'. Deindustrialisation radically transformed working-class space, with the pervasive destruction of heavy industry provoking feelings of placelessness and erasure. Something intrinsic to the emotional geography of the area was lost in the destruction of prominent industrial landmarks; they had left behind an 'emptiness'

or wrought a 'hole' in the town. The physical destruction of heavy industry doomed the culture surrounding it. Cultural disintegration was often rapid, like the closing down of workplace social clubs, while in other instances it was gradual, with the cultural attitudes associated with heavy industry lingering on, but the trend was nonetheless terminal – deindustrialisation signalled the end of working-class industrial culture. In their narration of this loss workers spoke with great emotion, mourning both the loss of a job and a way of life.

### **Agency and Multivalence**

Industrial workers are often accused of remembering their industry through a rose-tinted lens, guilty of first-degree 'smokestack nostalgia'. While incredibly insightful, an overzealous fixation upon subjectivity can risk suffocating an essential tenet of oral history: that workers are able to effectively recall and narrate their own experiences. In their accounts of deindustrialisation workers critically reflected on their working lives, offering nuanced and complex narratives. The idea that workers' memories were lost in the smog of 'smokestack nostalgia', resulting in an overly positive depiction of heavy industry which suppressed its brutality, is completely inaccurate. The problem with this interpretation, besides the implicit dismissal of workers' ability to accurately recount their own lives, is that in regards to health and safety, workers' narratives of heavy industry were anything but rose-tinted. Alongside the positive social aspect and strong sense of collectivism, workers readily discussed the inherent danger and adverse health effects of the industry, as well as darker aspects present within workplace culture. The issue of rose-tinting was often brought up by workers themselves, with many asides or addendums to depictions of the workplace clarifying that what was being described was the general not the absolute, particularly in relation to the anti-Irish racism and anti-Catholic bigotry that was entrenched throughout Scottish heavy industry. Strangleman considers the notion of 'smokestack nostalgia' in *Voices of Guinness*, defending the ability of workers to narrate their own experience, stating, 'the voices recorded here were not

giving a rose-tinted account of a fictional past but one that critically evaluated that past both in its own terms and in historical context'.<sup>4</sup> It is possible to both criticise the most dangerous aspects of industrial capitalism as well as oppose deindustrialisation and the destruction of employment which constituted the lifeblood of entire communities. As Richards argues in *Miners on Strike*, while mining communities held a deep attachment to their past, this was not expressed as a 'romantic hankering' but instead had a 'double image', whereby the hardship of the industry was acknowledged alongside its positive aspects.<sup>5</sup> Richards goes on to state:

While the demise of a brutal industry in and of itself may be a legitimate measure of progress, there seems little reason to celebrate the demise of the traditions of solidarity and community which such an industry engendered.<sup>6</sup>

The argument in this thesis supports and builds on the conversation developed in the literature by authors such as High, Strangleman, K'Meyer and Hart, and Frisch around the complexity of working-class experience, referred to by Frisch as 'multivalence' – that workers can hold many values simultaneously and without confusion.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately this is a matter of agency, a demonstration of how much oral historians trust that workers are able to effectively narrate their own lived experiences. The coexistence of both positive and negative narratives not only emphasises the complexity of deindustrialisation, but it also highlights the often-complicated experience of work itself – workers' experiences are seldom one dimensional.

### **Normality of Constant Change**

Working-class jobs have become endemically low-paid, exploitative, and insecure. Decades of neoliberalism have crippled the labour movement, delegitimised working-class history and identity, almost erasing working-class collective memory

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<sup>4</sup> Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness*, p.127

<sup>5</sup> A. J. Richards, *Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division in Britain* (Oxford: Berg, 1997) pp.33-34

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.231

<sup>7</sup> M. H. Frisch in C. Chatterley and A. J. Rouverol, *I Was Content and Not Content: The Story of Linda Lord and the Closing of Penobscot Poultry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999) p.xii

and action. For many young workers, low-paid precarious work is norm. Yet 'post-industrialism', the 'end of the job for life', and the 'gig economy' are not a shocking new postmodern phenomenon. They are simply the latest elements of a social system which has disrupted working-class communities and employment since its beginning. The profound sense of upheaval wrought by deindustrialisation is reflected in Marx and Engels' depiction of the relentless change inherent to capitalism: 'Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty... All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned'.<sup>8</sup> Adaptation to unrelenting change is a necessary component of working-class existence, and something displaced workers were more than familiar with. Expanding upon this, as well as providing a little historiography to Marx's analysis, former shipbuilder James Cloughley stated:

Marx said... 'the only thing that's constant is change', right? That's always been alluded to Marx. It's not Marx, it's a Greek philosopher called Heraclitus... he spoke about the fluidity of everything in the world. Everything is in constant change.<sup>9</sup>

In a similar sense, Berman argues that feelings of powerlessness in the face of seemingly constant change are a fundamental aspect of capitalist modernity.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, the post-war consensus of stable, decently paid working-class employment represents an effective blip in the history of work. Walkerdine and Jimenez have rightly cautioned against the tendency to cast working-class communities before the advent of deindustrialisation with a 'salt-of-the-earth stability'.<sup>11</sup> In truth, industrial communities have always been characterised by periods of struggle and change. As Harry Carlin stated, 'there is nothing changed, working-class people will always be down, they have always got to fight'.<sup>12</sup> The distinguishing feature of deindustrialisation, especially in Scotland where it was both

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<sup>8</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: The Merlin Press, 2003) pp.38-39

<sup>9</sup> Interview with James Cloughley by James Ferns, 08/04/2019

<sup>10</sup> M. Berman, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity* (London: Verso, 2010)

<sup>11</sup> V. Walkerdine and L. Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community after De-Industrialisation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.7

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Harry Carlin by James Ferns, 18/01/2017

rapid and pervasive, was the accelerated destruction of the material basis of organised working-class culture through the demolition of heavy industry. Workers did not cease to exist with the closure of their workplace, neither did their occupational identities and values, which they brought with them into their new places of employment.

## **Survivability of Industrial Culture**

As has been shown, the collapse of heavy industry precipitated the identity disintegration of numerous workers, and wrought devastation on whole occupational communities. Therefore, it is easy to understand this destruction as final, as an ending. This position, however, is one which unfortunately minimises, if not completely neglects the reality of working-class resilience and survival in response to deindustrialisation. Former heavy industry workers continued to exist following the demolition of their factories. Driven by the same economic pressures, workers sought to gain alternative employment; the need to pay rent and feed their family gave little opportunity for mourning.

Although its foundations were shattered, the culture of heavy industry partially survived deindustrialisation, remaining embodied in workers themselves. The solidarity, mutual aid, and collectivism which had defined industrial culture remained important values and were brought by workers into their later employment. The continuation and transmission of industrial culture beyond heavy industry represents a form of 'residual culture', which has been defined by Williams as:

Experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social formation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> R. Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980) p.41

Byrne has also applied Williams' concept of 'residual culture' to post-industrialism, demonstrating the continued significance of 'industrial culture' in the North East of England.<sup>14</sup> In reference to the industrial culture which defined the Clydeside region, Phillips, et al. have stated that, 'the culture was challenged in the prolonged age of deindustrialisation but survived'.<sup>15</sup> McIvor has highlighted contemporary activism around the issue of health within post-industrial Clydeside, conceptualising groups such as Clydeside Action on Asbestos as 'ripples of "Red Clydeside"'.<sup>16</sup> This activism can be seen as a continuation, or residue, of the culture of mutual aid that had defined the ethos of the region. Drawing on an example from Gall's statistical analysis of union membership, Phillips, et al. state that higher collective bargaining coverage in Strathclyde, compared to regions with similar employment structures in England, demonstrates the 'lasting effects' of Clydeside's radical 'historical tradition'.<sup>17</sup> Donny O'Rourke's poem, *The Cranes*, demonstrates the survivability of Glasgow's radical 'industrial culture'; standing as symbols of the city's industrial culture, the loss of Glasgow's iconic cranes are mourned in the poem, yet there remains a sense of hope, with the culture that was embedded in heavy industry remaining as a form of residual culture even after their destruction:

In the setting sun the Clyde's still red  
Jimmy Reid's ideas aren't dead  
Rent strikes Mary Barbour led  
Hope sustains, outlasts the cranes<sup>18</sup>

Deindustrialisation undoubtedly had a destructive effect upon trade union organisation, yet it would be inaccurate to remove agency from displaced workers, to forget their ability to shape their new workplaces. Deindustrialisation did not

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<sup>14</sup> D. Byrne, 'Industrial culture in a post-industrial world: The case of the North East of England', *City*, 6:3 (2002) p.287

<sup>15</sup> J. Phillips, V. Wright and J. Tomlinson, 'Being a "Clydesider" in the age of deindustrialisation: skilled male identity and economic restructuring in the West of Scotland since the 1960s', *Labor History* (2019) p.14

<sup>16</sup> A. McIvor, 'Blighted lives: Deindustrialisation, health and well-being in the Clydeside region', *Revue d'histoire*, 20:21 (2019) p.11

<sup>17</sup> G. Gall, 'Still brothers and sisters in arms? A note on trends in union membership and statistics', *Scottish Labour History*, 53 (2018) pp.73-83; J. Phillips, V. Wright and J. Tomlinson, 'Being a "Clydesider"', p.14

<sup>18</sup> D. O'Rourke (2013) *The Cranes* (The One Show, BBC One)



weaken workers' attachment to trade union *values*. Reflecting on his move from shipbuilding into local government, Pat Clark stated: 'I remember when I started in local government, the first thing I asked was – "What's the appropriate union?"'.<sup>19</sup> Workers strove to unionise their new workplaces, demonstrating that former heavy industry workers can transmit their culture of trade unionism into their new employment. Gilmour has usefully highlighted this culture transmission, describing how former shipbuilders brought their culture of trade unionism with them as they moved into Linwood's automotive industry following the decline of shipbuilding.<sup>20</sup> As a mechanic, Brian Cunningham remained committed to the politics of collectivism he had experienced in steelmaking, reflecting on his efforts to unionise his new workplace he stated:

I've been trying to get them unionised for 24 years... I keep saying to them, we are the power in the business, us, us, not them, not that manager, we are, we don't work nothing happens. But we need to be 'we', we cannot be 'me', because that's what they play on.<sup>21</sup>

One of James Carlin's first jobs following redundancy was in Wisemans Dairy, where he took on the role of shop steward, drawing on what he had seen within steelmaking:

I took up the role of representing people down there when they were getting disciplinaries and sacked, without having any great knowledge of employment law... I just sort of... just basically used knowledge I had gained through the years.<sup>22</sup>

James maintained his commitment to trade unionism throughout his career, later becoming a senior member of his union whilst employed with Warburtons:

I was a shop steward for maybe four or five years before I got the branch secretary's role... being involved in national negotiations and

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Pat Clark by James Ferns, 28/03/2019

<sup>20</sup> A. J. Gilmour, *'Examining the hard-boiled bunch': work culture and industrial relations at the Linwood car plant* (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010)

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Brian Cunningham by James Ferns, 19/01/2017

<sup>22</sup> Interview with James Carlin by James Ferns, 24/01/2017

stuff like that, and then involved in the ruling body of the union, which is the executive council.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, when Harry Carlin first began work in elderly care homes it was wholly non-unionised and subject to an authoritarian manager – a fact he quickly changed by unionising his colleagues: ‘I became the union man down there right away... when I went in I had to get them all in the union... [the workers] were all afraid you know... I said, “this is the way we will be doing it from now on”’.<sup>24</sup> Harry directly challenged his manager’s power, attacking their belittlement of workers: ‘she had a great habit of saying she was going to sack people, I said, “you’ve not got the authority to sack anybody”, I said, “the time I’m finished with you you’re going to get sacked”’.<sup>25</sup> Linda Collins, previously a union convener for office staff in Yarrow Shipbuilders, applied her experience to her later role as a union rep in teaching, stating ‘[I would] go round and hassle the people all over there that had been procrastinating for years about joining the union and not doing anything’.<sup>26</sup> Robert Buirds’ commitment to trade unionism as a shipbuilder was intensified in his later employment as a union official in the offshore oil industry:

By that time I had a different perspective in life. It wasn’t about enjoying work, it was about advancing trade unionism. My perspective changed completely. I had the experience, I was skilled to the level I required to do my business as a trade unionist.<sup>27</sup>

As a union rep for the Public and Commercial Services Union in the National Codification Bureau, former shipbuilder Alan Glover noted, ‘virtually every new person that’s come on I’ve got them to sign up with the union’.<sup>28</sup> Inspired by the tactics of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Work-In, Alan and his fellow reps launched a successful campaign to prevent the closure of their workplace, lobbying politicians

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Linda Collins by James Ferns, 19/03/2019

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Robert Buirds by James Ferns, 04/03/2019

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Alan Glover by James Ferns, 10/03/2019

and engaging with the media, Alan reflected, 'I was actually using the model of the Work-In to a degree'.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond trade unionism, workers also transmitted the cultural values of mutual aid and collectivism into both education and their new workplaces. An influx of steelworkers into local colleges – a part of their redundancy packages – brought a unique ethos to the Lanarkshire colleges in the 1990s. Forming the majority of students in certain classes, steelworkers brought elements of their industrial culture into the classroom, such as their readiness to collectively stand up against injustice. Frank Roy recalled a one-day classroom strike:

We brought a culture to Motherwell College that year, I remember we had a strike one day, Linda [the tutor] was seven months pregnant and the heating wasn't working in the class... at some point during the class I said, 'Linda I want you to stop'... she went out and brought her boss in, and I said to him, 'you are breaking the law because it's too cold in here, it's alright for us, but not for your staff', and he panicked and he brought fires in... So that was the culture we brought.<sup>30</sup>

Paul Molloy 'brought the camaraderie' of shipbuilding into his workplace when employed as a call centre worker, and strove to create a similar ethos of mutual aid:

If somebody's not doing very well, then we'll all help him and try and help that person to do better... There was even times when people were not doing well with sales, and I'd say to somebody else, 'Log in as them, and throw a couple of sales in for them'.<sup>31</sup>

Pat Clark remained committed to the same values he fought for as a trade unionist in shipbuilding in his later employment as a welfare rights officer. Despite a seemingly dramatic change in employment, defending the rights of working-class people had remained a central element throughout Pat's working life, or as he put it, he was 'always on the side of the angels'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Frank Roy by James Ferns, 01/02/2017

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Paul Molloy by James Ferns, 15/03/2019

<sup>32</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

While deindustrialisation did not mark the end of industrial culture, it did destroy the specific material conditions of working in these industries, which had functioned as the foundation for this culture. The important point here is that the source of this culture has been removed, its material base was destroyed alongside the factories that forged it, and although it remains embodied in surviving heavy industry workers, it is now footloose, and as this generation of workers passes on so will it. Robinson warns that the sense of community which typified the industrial North East of England is in danger of 'being consigned to the dustbin of heritage', attributing this to the destruction of its material basis, stating: 'That sense of community, born of struggle, has undoubtedly declined, alongside the decline of the industries upon which it was based'.<sup>33</sup> Kirk et al. have similarly stated:

Economic restructuring, and processes of deindustrialisation set in train in Western Europe from the end of the 1970s... powerfully undermine traditional collective identities. The material world and cultural life of working-class communities across Europe have come to be regarded, it seems, as extinct or as increasingly obsolete and, in recent years, the object only of heritage spectacles and exercises in nostalgia.<sup>34</sup>

Questions posed by Tovar et al. – 'what will happen in a generation or two, when the traditional industry is no more than a memory... how long can memories of an industrial past survive when there are no material traces of the formerly dominant industrial activity?' – shows that while the working-class culture of heavy industry survived deindustrialisation, it did so only within the identities of workers themselves.<sup>35</sup> While industrial culture had been central to the identity of Govan and a source of local pride, Colin Quigley reflected that it now lacked a tangible relevance to the area's youth: 'I think they've been too long away for that. There's a whole, more than one generation, there's that gap, it's gone past, you know, that pride'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> F. Robinson, 'The North East: a journey through time', *City*, 6:3 (2002) p.331

<sup>34</sup> J. Kirk, et al., 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', in J. Kirk, S. Contrepois and S. Jefferys (eds.) *Changing work and community identities in European regions: perspectives on the past and present* (Palgrave Macmillan, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) pp.8-9

<sup>35</sup> F. J. Tovar, et al., 'A tale of two cities: working class identity, industrial relations and community in declining textile and shoe industries in Spain', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 17:4 (2011) pp.339-340

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Colin Quigley by James Ferns, 13/02/2019

Similarly, Alex McGowan described a sense of a culture fading away, noting younger generation's lack of knowledge concerning their industrial heritage, he recalled an instance in a local industrial museum where his grandson could not identify coal as anything more than a 'rock', failing to see its value and place in history.<sup>37</sup> Pat Clark observed that Clydeside heavy industry was increasingly becoming a 'folk myth', as its legacy drew further into the past.<sup>38</sup> While James Blair commented on the waning legacy of Jimmy Reid and Red Clydeside, 'just through the years, going away back, to what they term the Red Clydeside... Jimmy Reid... Going back to his era, that's getting phased out now'.<sup>39</sup> Just as residual electricity allows a lightbulb to glow for a moment when switched off, industrial culture did not immediately collapse, but with its core in ruins it is no longer a self-sustaining culture, more an echo fading as each generation is further removed from the experience of heavy industry.

## Deindustrialisation and the 'Crisis' of Work

Deindustrialisation has sparked and contributed to a debate on the nature of work itself. Scholars contend that work has lost its ability to shape identity, declining in significance as a result of profound economic and technological change.<sup>40</sup> Such a catastrophic prognosis has been contested by other scholars, who have stressed continuity in the relationship between work and identity, arguing that 'the end of work' has been overstated.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Alex McGowan by James Ferns, 11/04/2019

<sup>38</sup> Pat Clark Interview (Ferns)

<sup>39</sup> Interview with James Blair by James Ferns, 19/02/2019

<sup>40</sup> D. Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); J. Rifkin, *The End of Work* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995); U. Beck, *The Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); C. Casey, *Work, Self and Society after Industrialism* (London: Routledge, 1995); Z. Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998); A. Gorz, *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-based Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999)

<sup>41</sup> T. Strangleman, 'Work Identity in Crisis?: Rethinking the problem of attachment and loss at work', *Sociology*, (2012) pp.411-425; K. Doogan, *New Capitalism? The Transformation of Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); Berman, *All that is solid*; A. McIvor, *Working lives: work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); C. Wall and J. F. Kirk, *Work and Identity: Historical and Cultural Contexts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character* and Bauman's *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, respectively claim that the formation of work-based identity is undermined by 'flexibility' and the disappearance of the 'steady, durable and continuous' career.<sup>42</sup> For Sennett, the intensification of precarious employment within modern capitalism has eroded the space within which workers had previously formed meaningful work-based identities; prompting them to pose the question, 'how can mutual loyalties and commitments be sustained in institutions which are constantly breaking apart or continually being redesigned?'.<sup>43</sup> These sentiments were echoed by a small number of workers, who expressed doubt over whether work conveyed the same meaning for younger generations. Citing the rise of short-term employment, Jim McKeown and Frank Roy respectively commented:

Youngsters... change their work quite regularly, move from job to job, and I think that identity is lost... we were loyal and proud because we were there. I think if you only work for a place for six months in a short-term contract you are not going to take the same pride in the place... you can't develop a feeling for the place, a kind of loyalty to your brand or where you work.<sup>44</sup>

I mean people are far more likely to change job an awful lot quicker... that transient workforce you have got we didn't have... Society has changed, people are a couple of years then they move on.<sup>45</sup>

However, Jim and Frank's reflection on the youth's relationship with work was not informed by personal experience, and although some other interviewees shared their view, they were unanimous in stating the continued importance of work to their own identity. In *New Capitalism? The Transformation of Work*, Doogan highlights 'a substantial gap... between many public perceptions of change in the world of work and a more objective assessment of change and continuity in the labour market and the wider economy'.<sup>46</sup> This suggests that while interviewees were perfectly able to describe their own experiences, their descriptions of younger generations relied on

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<sup>42</sup> R. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (London: Norton, 1998) p.10; Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, p.27

<sup>43</sup> Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, p.10

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Jim McKeown by James Ferns, 13/02/2017

<sup>45</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>46</sup> Doogan, *New Capitalism?*, p.5

representations of work informed by the cultural circuit; perhaps indicating the need for a systematic study of younger workers' identity in relation to their employment. According to Strangleman, a great deal of the work in decline literature 'overstates or over-generalises' the situation. In doing so, these theorists undermine workers' 'collective and individual agency', casting them as 'passive victims of globalisation', and romanticising industrial work as highly stable in contrast to the 'permanent flux of the post-modern'.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, McIvor argues that although the introduction of disruptive technologies and concurrent deskilling and upskilling have transformed the nature of work, it still remains a 'deeply emotional experience', which continues to give workers a source of purpose and identity.<sup>48</sup> The centrality of work was further reinforced by Wall and Kirk's *Work and Identity*, which, based upon interviews with railway workers, bank employees, and teachers, concluded that 'work remains central to our lives'.<sup>49</sup>

Despite what were at times very drastic employment transitions, workers' testimonies stress the continued importance of work to identity. Deindustrialisation took their job title, demolished their workplace and its associated culture, but it did not annihilate their work ethic or their sense of working-class identity. Though heavy industry was remembered fondly, its loss did not precipitate a catastrophic break in the importance of work itself. When asked about the importance of work across the entirety of their life – not just within heavy industry – workers continued to affirm its significance:

It moulds your character.<sup>50</sup>

It's very important... it gives you a sense of purpose.<sup>51</sup>

It gave you stability... your job is very important to you, and it gives you a quality of life. You've always got something to fall back on.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> T. Strangleman, 'The nostalgia for permanence at work? The end of work and its commentators', *Sociological Review*, 55:1 (2007) p.100, p.96

<sup>48</sup> McIvor, *Working lives*, p.75

<sup>49</sup> Wall and Kirk, *Work and Identity*, p.230

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Con O'Brien by James Ferns, 03/04/2019

<sup>51</sup> Paul Molloy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>52</sup> James Blair Interview (Ferns)

I think work is probably everything, actually... I revolved around my work... That was the thing that made me survive, or gave me money to survive and allowed me to live.<sup>53</sup>

Ian Harris extolled the 'discipline' and 'rewarding' nature of work, which allows individuals to support themselves and their families.<sup>54</sup> Frank Roy considered work critical to cultivating 'self-esteem... that's what your work is... it brings a worth and it brings a self-esteem'.<sup>55</sup> Jahoda understands work as a mechanism which facilitates participation in society; it structures and offers meaning to the day, facilitates participation in collective endeavours, confers social status, and provides financial independence, which for most people represent 'deep-seated need[s]'.<sup>56</sup> In *When Work Disappears*, Wilson elaborates on this point further, stating that employment 'provides the anchor for the spatial and temporal aspects of daily life'.<sup>57</sup> Workers described work in a remarkably similar way, as Brian Cunningham stated:

It is absolutely critical, you have got to have a structure in your life... you take that structure away from people, James, and it can have a devastating effect on them. You need a reason to go to your bed and get yourself up early. People reach for alcohol, or they end up snorting it or jaggging themselves... then that filters down to the next generation and the next generation... Probably one of the most important things, definitely – gives you a focus, gives you a function, gives you a direction, and it can also give you a great deal of satisfaction: a good day's work, fantastic.<sup>58</sup>

Tommy Brennan reflected on how work exposes oneself to wider and more diverse social interactions:

It's character building, it helps a person find out who they are, it gives them the experience of meeting people, of mixing with people, of making conversation, all this is important to the individual – it brings people out of themselves.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Alan Brown by James Ferns, 05/03/2019

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Ian Harris by James Ferns, 09/01/2017

<sup>55</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)

<sup>56</sup> M. Jahoda *Employment and Unemployment: A social-Psychological analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1982) pp.83-84

<sup>57</sup> W. J. Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban poor* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) p.73

<sup>58</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Tommy Brennan by James Ferns, 16/01/2017



The social aspect and sense of purpose provided by employment was also important to Jim McKeown, who chose to postpone his retirement from teaching: 'I need to be doing something every day, I live in the house myself, I live myself, I couldn't imagine sitting watching [TV] all day, you know just doing that, I think I have got to be doing something, and I think work for me it is important'.<sup>60</sup>

A work ethic-based identity survived deindustrialisation and continued to define identity. It is clear from the interviews undertaken for this thesis that workers attached importance to work itself, rather than its form. Brian Cunningham subscribed great importance to his work ethic, he had 'always worked', had 'never been workshy', stating: 'I always had a work ethic... so when I went to work, I went to work... and to this day I'm still the same believe it or not, 55 years of age, and I've got scars to prove it'.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Jim McKeown stated: 'you are supposed to be at work to get paid, and I think that is my sense of identity'.<sup>62</sup> A life full of work was a source of achievement, as Alex Straiton reflected, 'I worked for 48 years without a break. I think I was off sick twice. That was my motivation for getting up in the morning'.<sup>63</sup> Tommy Brennan recalled with pride: 'I've only lost six weeks work in my whole life'.<sup>64</sup> Equally, James Coyle attributed importance to his continuous employment: 'I've worked all my days... I was maybe idle for a week... I've always worked, always had a job'.<sup>65</sup> The importance they subscribed to hard work and continuous employment mirrors Wight's *Workers Not Wasters*, which identifies the centrality of fulltime paid employment to working-class masculinity.<sup>66</sup> As outlined in chapter 3, workers' core identity was primarily provider based, with importance given to securing a stable income for the family; the loss of heavy industry employment was not devastating so long as they were able to attain alternative reemployment.

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<sup>60</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>61</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>62</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Alex Straiton by James Ferns, 02/08/2019

<sup>64</sup> Tommy Brennan Interview (Ferns)

<sup>65</sup> Interview with James Coyle by James Ferns, 15/02/2017

<sup>66</sup> D. Wight, *Workers not Wasters: Masculine Respectability, Consumption and Employment in Central Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993)

Although employment transition was often dramatic, it did not significantly alter workers' identity as members of the working class; significance was invested in being 'a worker', with the type and form of work largely irrelevant. As James Carlin stated, 'I didn't ever feel anything other than working class, I couldn't, I just can't switch it off, and that's just what I am'.<sup>67</sup> As a taxi driver, Andrew Kane joked that the basic principle of work remained the same, 'It's still just the same, just putting bread on the table, isn't it?'<sup>68</sup> Harry Carlin admitted that he lost a 'sort of identity' as he left steelmaking, but felt that his identity as a 'worker' overshadowed his 'steelworker' identity: 'at the end of the day, as I used to say, you are a worker, you're nothing else, that's your identity, you're a worker, a working-class person'.<sup>69</sup> Like Harry, Brian Cunningham's status as a worker superseded the sense of identity he had derived from steelmaking, he stated, 'I've always been a worker'; irrespective of his role or title Brian expressed a pride in this status: 'I have a pride in myself. I have a pride in what I do'.<sup>70</sup> Through the lens of oral history, it becomes apparent that statements of work's irrelevance are guilty of oversimplification. While deindustrialisation shattered their occupational identity, workers' class and work-based identities remained intact.

## **A Political Attack: Workers' Narratives of Deindustrialisation**

Deindustrialisation is frequently presented as a natural disaster, an inevitable force of nature, rather than a deliberate political/economic outcome or practice. The depoliticisation of deindustrialisation and its depiction as an inevitable, non-partisan but wholly necessary economic process serves not only to justify factory closure itself, but also to position workers and community members resisting deindustrialisation and its aftereffects as noble but ultimately misled luddites on the wrong side of history. This characterisation appears in Clarke's research on workers'

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<sup>67</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Andrew Kane by James Ferns, 25/01/2017

<sup>69</sup> Harry Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>70</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

resistance to the closure of Moulinex in France, where factory closures were represented in the media as ‘unstoppable forces of nature’, while workers’ opposition was portrayed through the lens of ‘suffering and victimhood’ in the face of unavoidable economic events.<sup>71</sup> High and Lewis have similarly explored how industrial demolition and media reporting create a sense of inevitable finality, functioning as ‘secular rituals’ which denote ‘the transition to a post-industrial era’.<sup>72</sup> Within the context of Thatcherism, Dickson and Judge have spoken of the substantial effort made to ‘depoliticise the issue of closure and to acclimatise labour, specifically, and the public, more generally, to the ‘inevitability’ of closure’.<sup>73</sup> In an effort to ‘legitimise its attack upon the fundamental rights of organised labour’, Thatcherism and factory closure were presented as the remedy for unproductive industry and an overly militant labour movement – the medicine was bitter but there truly was ‘no alternative’.<sup>74</sup> This representation of deindustrialisation as unavoidable normalised neoliberal political practices, reinforcing what Bourdieu has termed the ‘established order’ in ‘the naturalization of its own arbitrariness’.<sup>75</sup> Or as Fisher argues in reference to his concept of ‘capitalist realism’ – according to which it is impossible to even imagine an alternative to capitalism – it became ‘impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative’ to the official narratives of neoliberalism and closure.<sup>76</sup>

Former industrial workers’ narratives of deindustrialisation are often marginalised within official accounts. Where workers’ testimonies are consulted it is often to express a sense of loss, rarely to offer an explanation as to why deindustrialisation took place. High praised K’Meyer and Hart’s *I Saw it Coming* for contesting this marginalisation, for asking workers the ‘why question’: why had

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<sup>71</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Closing Moulinex: Thoughts on the Visibility and Invisibility of Industrial Labour in Contemporary France’, *Modern & Contemporary France*, 19:4 (2011) p.449, p.452

<sup>72</sup> S. High and D. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007) p.10, p.38

<sup>73</sup> T. Dickson and D. Judge, ‘Introduction’, in T. Dickson and D. Judge (eds.) *The Politics of Industrial Closure* (London: MacMillan, 1987) pp.vii-viii

<sup>74</sup> T. Dickson and D. Judge, ‘The British State, Governments and Manufacturing Decline’, in T. Dickson and D. Judge (eds.) *The Politics of Industrial Closure* (London: MacMillan, 1987) pp.25-26

<sup>75</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) p.188

<sup>76</sup> M. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (London: Zero Books, 2009) p.2

closure taken place, who or what was to blame.<sup>77</sup> As well as K'Meyer and Hart, High and other scholars have also utilised oral history to prioritise working-class perspectives and reveal workers' complex and often highly political narratives of deindustrialisation. Poor management, government hostility and capital flight feature heavily in these accounts.<sup>78</sup>

Former Scottish heavy industry workers articulate a highly politicised account of deindustrialisation which corresponds closely to what scholars have labelled the 'political attack thesis'.<sup>79</sup> Harvey's description of neoliberalism as 'a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites' is of prime importance here.<sup>80</sup> Rapid deindustrialisation, erosion of council housing, government abandonment of full employment and the assault on trade union rights and the welfare state are fundamental aspects of the political attack thesis.<sup>81</sup> Among former heavy industry workers, the Thatcher years are remembered as a dark age for the working class, with images of dole queues, frustrated resistance, redundancy, and hopelessness etched into popular memory. A sense of despair overshadows depictions of this era:

Dreadful, absolutely dreadful... a horrible, horrible time to live.<sup>82</sup>

They were horrible times... Britain was a dark place at times in the '70s and '80s.<sup>83</sup>

Something happened, people refer to it as the Thatcher years. Basically the tide went out.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> S. High in T. E. K'Meyer and J. L. Hart, *I Saw It Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

<sup>78</sup> K'Meyer and Hart, *I Saw It Coming*; S. May and L. Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring: Narratives of Accommodation among Downsized workers', in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds.) *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization* (New York: Cornell, 2003) pp.259-284; D. Bensman and R. Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard times in a steel community* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988); High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*; M. Rogovin and M. H. Frisch, *Portraits in Steel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993)

<sup>79</sup> C. Collins and G. McCartney, 'The impact of neoliberal "political attack" on health: the case of the "Scottish effect"', *International Journal of Health Services*, 41:3 (2011) p.501

<sup>80</sup> D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p.19

<sup>81</sup> S. Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010* (London: John Murray, 2015)

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Gordon MacLean by James Ferns, 23/03/2019

<sup>83</sup> Linda Collins Interview (Ferns)

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Alex O'Hara by James Ferns, 22/02/2019

Collins and McCartney have described the impact of Thatcherism as a 'sustained attack against the organized working class' in which 'deindustrialization figured prominently', noting that 'deindustrialization elsewhere in Europe during the same period was not as politically driven', its 'consequences more mitigated'.<sup>85</sup> Through redundancy industrial workers lost their collective status as the long-time vanguard of the labour movement; deindustrialisation clipped the wings of the trade union movement, with the resulting unemployment and precarity welcomed by government as a strategy to further undermine trade union power.<sup>86</sup> Thatcherite politicians themselves were not reticent to invoke metaphors of war and language of political attack when they were confined to confidential papers. Former Conservative MP and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Nicholas Ridley unambiguously outlined his strategy for winning a war against trade unionism in *The Ridley Plan* (under a 'confidential annex' titled 'Countering the Political Threat'):

We might try provoke a battle in a non-vulnerable industry, where we can win. This is what happened when we won against the postal workers in 1971. We could win in industries like Railways, B.L.M.C, the Civil Service and Steel. A victory on ground of our choosing would discourage an attack on more vulnerable ground.<sup>87</sup>

Dividing the unions, 'cut[ting] off the supply of money to strikers', and provoking a battle with an industry that the government would be able to defeat ('the most likely area is coal') would, according to Ridley, 'enable us to hold the fort until the long term strategy of fragmentation can begin to work'.<sup>88</sup> Ridley had previously taken aim at Scottish shipbuilding, demonstrated by confidential documents leaked to *The Guardian* in May 1970, which had been drawn up following a meeting between Ridley and Scottish shipbuilding executives and contained 'conclusive evidence of a squalid plot against [Upper Clyde Shipbuilders]'.<sup>89</sup> In these letters, Ridley demonstrated an

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<sup>85</sup> Collins and McCartney, 'The impact of neoliberal "political attack" on health', pp.504-505

<sup>86</sup> Todd, *The People*; F. Gaffikin and M. Morrissey, *The New Unemployed* (London: Zed Books, 1992)

<sup>87</sup> Conservative Research Department, *The Ridley Plan* (1977) p.24

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p.25

<sup>89</sup> J. Foster and C. Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986) p.179

early eagerness for the rapid dismantling of heavy industry which would later become fundamental Thatcherite doctrine:

We could put in a government 'butcher' to cut up UCS [Upper Clyde Shipbuilders] and to sell (cheaply) to Lower Clyde, and others the assets of UCS to minimise upheaval and dislocation. I am having further views on the practicability of such an operation, which I will report. After liquidation or reconstruction as above, we should sell the government holding in UCS, even for a pittance.<sup>90</sup>

If Ridley was describing preparations for a governmental war on the working class, then former heavy industry workers' narratives tell the story from the side that lost this war:

Devastated. Devastated Britain. Devastated the working classes in Britain... [Thatcher] was more interested in breaking Trade Unionism. She wanted to break the power of working people.<sup>91</sup>

Curse the workers it was wasn't it... They had no time for the working class, they were not interested. Just crush you, put you down.<sup>92</sup>

The Iron Lady? She devastated the country.<sup>93</sup>

Words like 'devastation' and 'destroyed' dominate workers' narratives of this era, creating a common tongue of despair which marks a definitive end to a way of life. For these workers, politically accelerated deindustrialisation was a deliberate strategy to disempower the organised working class:

Well it's killed the unions. It's definitely killed the unions... The culture changed. For a lot of people, they just said 'we can't beat them. Can't beat Maggie and her troops'.<sup>94</sup>

The government don't want any group of organised people, and heavy industry lends itself to that. It leads to a lot of people working in the same type of job and becoming unionised and becoming vocal.<sup>95</sup>

She didn't like anybody militant. She didn't like anybody who said 'no' to the masters... She didn't want any heavy industry because the seeds

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* pp.179-180

<sup>91</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>92</sup> Andrew Kane Interview (Ferns)

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Frank Shannon by James Ferns, 23/01/2017

<sup>94</sup> Robert Buirds Interview (Ferns)

<sup>95</sup> Alan Brown Interview (Ferns)

of militancy and the seeds of opposing or feeling or accepting being oppressed was all done in manufacturing.<sup>96</sup>

The power of the trade union movement has been severely diluted since the 1980s... that was obviously their sort of masterplan, to deindustrialise the nation and do away with the power of the trade union movement; so in my eyes [deindustrialisation] was a purely political decision.<sup>97</sup>

A maelstrom of emotion, which does not translate to text, sits in the voice of former heavy industry workers as they narrate their collective sense of loss. Having described the decimation of Scottish heavy industry as an act of 'industrial vandalism', Derek Cairns was overcome with emotion as he reflected on the disempowerment of the working class:

Make sure that the country wasn't relying on the working man. Make sure the working man didn't have any strength... It was a horrible atmosphere. Horrible times. Your government's doing this to the country. They were putting worker against worker... It was horrible, horrible times.<sup>98</sup>

When discussing this destruction of working-class culture with former heavy industry workers it became evident that there exists a buried well of unprocessed emotion. Painful memories of an unforgiving era defined by relentless personal and collective loss – which may have never been spoken about publicly or privately – unexpectedly came to the fore during oral history interviews. This gave an impression of a mass suppression of working-class emotion, representing a collective trauma for an entire generation of working-class people.

Political attack was not simply waged upon steelmaking or shipbuilding, but on all unionised strongholds as well as the wider working class itself:

[Thatcher] wanted to destroy the unions, she destroyed the steel union, she then destroyed the miners' union... she destroyed the periphery groups... a lot of places that were unionised closed down –

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Joe O'Rourke by James Ferns, 30/07/2019

<sup>97</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Derek Cairns by James Ferns, 12/04/2019

no, no, no, no she was, I don't want to swear at her but she – she was a terrible woman... she was nothing but a bully.<sup>99</sup>

The shipyards were getting attacked, steelworks were getting attacked, what was left of the coal industry was being attacked... it was an attack on our community, our working-class community.<sup>100</sup>

As with others, Jim McKeown struggled to empathise as he reflected on Thatcher's death:

When Thatcher died it was on Facebook and a lot of people were dancing in George Square [Glasgow] and different things and a lot of people were going 'that's terrible'. I couldn't – there is no pleasure in seeing someone die – but I couldn't feel any sympathy... she was a horrible person and she tried to destroy society. I couldn't feel anything for her.<sup>101</sup>

Few workers had the opportunity to confront Thatcher in person, despite the impact she and her ideology had upon their lives. Yet shortly after his election as MP, former steelworker Frank Roy was presented with this opportunity in the Houses of Parliament:

Margaret Thatcher was the reason I got into politics... when I got elected, I was walking down the corridor, I was only in there a week, and who was coming toward me, but Margaret Thatcher, I could just feel this, twenty years of – anger – you know... when it came to it I just turned away... I just didn't want to speak to her... it was this whole evil piece of, you know, dogma was coming towards me but all I could see was an old lady smiling at me.<sup>102</sup>

For Roy, confronting Thatcher would have achieved nothing – she had already won her war and cemented her legacy.

The sheer scale and speed of deindustrialisation was commented on by former workers. Brian Cunningham acknowledged that 'you can't run business indefinitely', but that 'the scale [Thatcher] done it on and the timeframe she done it

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Jim Reddiex by James Ferns, 10/01/2017

<sup>100</sup> James Carlin Interview (Ferns)

<sup>101</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>102</sup> Frank Roy Interview (Ferns)



on was absolutely devastating'.<sup>103</sup> While Jim McKeown expressed 'maybe the future wasn't going to be in steelmaking or coalmining', he felt that the government 'could have done it in a more humane way, they could have done it in a more caring way'.<sup>104</sup> As has been elaborated on by Phillips, deindustrialisation is not a phenomenon confined to the Thatcher years; industrial closure was a fact of life throughout the post-war period.<sup>105</sup> The distinguishing feature of this earlier period was that deindustrialisation was shaped by a 'moral economy' framework which 'guaranteed economic security' through the consultation of unions and the creation of 'comparably paid, alternative employment'.<sup>106</sup> Operating under neoliberal auspices, the Thatcher government was distinguished by its rejection of the moral economy. Instead, deindustrialisation was rapid and 'deliberately willed', it sought to break trade union power, was enforced without consent and no serious effort was made to create comparable employment for the thousands of dislocated workers.<sup>107</sup> Reflecting on the underlying motivations of Thatcherism, James Cairns observed:

Basic principle: sack everybody; let's see what they'll work for... That's what you've got now, isn't it? Zero-hour contracts and that. That was the principle. Sack everybody, let's start from the beginning.<sup>108</sup>

For the Scottish industrial working class this meant freefall into an abyss of privatisation, redundancy and low pay.

The mythology of the 1970s often depicts a decade of unreasonably greedy workers and destructive unions, with Thatcher presented as the country's harsh but ultimately necessary saviour. The testimonies of former heavy industry workers offer a different interpretation. For them, Thatcher oversaw a political assault on the organised working class, of which accelerated deindustrialisation was a major component. Trade union power was purposefully smashed, workers' social lives

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<sup>103</sup> Brian Cunningham Interview (Ferns)

<sup>104</sup> Jim McKeown Interview (Ferns)

<sup>105</sup> J. Phillips, 'Deindustrialization and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields, 1947 to 1991', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84 (2013) pp.99-115

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* pp.101

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p.112

<sup>108</sup> Interview with James Cairns by James Ferns, 01/08/2019

ruptured, and working-class community cohesion considerably weakened. To a large extent, decades of neoliberalism have delegitimised working-class history and identity, almost erasing working-class collective memory and action, especially within former occupation-dependent communities and regions. Public history in museums in Glasgow, for instance, have virtually ignored or erased the history of working-class struggle and notions of 'Red Clydeside'.<sup>109</sup> Simplistic nostalgia for industrial employment is ultimately futile, but numerous aspects of industrial work culture themselves are worthy of remembrance. In *Voices of Guinness*, Strangleman demonstrates the value of testimonies which explore working-life in the post-war era – in which workers held more power in the workplace and social status in society – contending that these narratives open up the possibility of challenging modern assumptions about work:

[Workers' testimonies] help in this process of reimagination, increasing our capacity to think more critically about the past, present, and available futures. These images help us see; they act as a breaching experiment, showing that the structures of contemporary working life are not fixed and immutable.<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, Linkon argues that rather than 'being foolishly nostalgic', workers' accounts of deindustrialisation function as a means of understanding the changing social status of the working class:

They (and we) are wrestling with the contrast between the memory of an era when being a worker had social value and the difficult reality of a present in which wages have stagnated, jobs have become more tenuous, and workers feel they have lost status and power in society at large.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> A. McIvor, 'Where is "Red Clydeside"? Industrial heritage, working-class culture and memory in the Glasgow region', in S. Berger (ed.) *Constructing Industrial Pasts: Heritage, Historical Culture and Identity in Regions Undergoing Structural Economic Transformations* (New York: Berghahn, 2020) pp.47-67

<sup>110</sup> Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness*, p.172

<sup>111</sup> Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization*, pp.1-2

In *Radical Nostalgia*, Glazer contends that ‘in certain circumstances, the performance of radical nostalgia can serve valuable ends, reinfusing lost histories with credibility, substance, and emotional resonance’.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Smith and Campbell observe:

Central to progressive mobilisations of nostalgia is an emotive reminiscing about the past that does not turn away from the negatives of that past. Rather it utilises a critical balancing of loss and pride to identify those values that many wish to re-engage with, values that ultimately derive from collective experiences of economic and class disenfranchisement and disregard.<sup>113</sup>

In their shared reflections of heavy industry and deindustrialisation, the workers interviewed for this thesis mobilised a progressive nostalgia their own, one which emphasised stable employment, a strong sense of occupational community and identity, and a culture of solidarity and dignity maintained by powerful trade unions. This contributed to the expression of a confident working-class culture which, juxtaposed with the legacy of deindustrialisation, stands as a concrete alternative to neoliberal precarity and atomisation.

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<sup>112</sup> P. Glazer, *Radical Nostalgia* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005) p.7

<sup>113</sup> L. Smith and G. Campbell, ‘Nostalgia for the future’: memory, nostalgia and the politics of class’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 23:7 (2017) p.624

# Appendix

## Interviewees' Employment History

Name; Date of Birth	Industry	Pre-Closure Employment*	Retraining/Education After Redundancy	Post-Closure Employment*
Alan Brown; 1956	Shipbuilding	19??-19??: Blacksmithing Apprenticeship, Govan Shipbuilders 19??-1983: Blacksmith, Govan Shipbuilders 1983-2011: Supervisor, Kvaerner Govan 2011-2018: Production Manager, BAE Systems 2018: Retired	N/A	N/A
Alan Glover; 18/04/1955	Shipbuilding	1971-1971: Glasgow Optical Company 1971-1975: Apprentice Welder, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders 1975-1984: Shipbuilder Welder, British Shipbuilders	N/A	1984-1989: Welding Engineer/Inspector 1989-1991: Radiographer Ultrasonic Technician, MoD, Faslane 1991-Current: Engineer, Business Development, National Codification Bureau, MoD, Glasgow
Alastair Hart; 15/01/1955	Shipbuilding	1973-1977: Glasgow University, B.Sc. (Hons) Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering 1973-1977: Lithgows Ltd., Student Apprentice Programme 1977-1979: Lithgows Ltd., 2 Year Graduate Programme 1979-1981: Lithgows Ltd., Assistant Ship Manager	N/A	1981-1984: Ship and Offshore Surveyor, Det Norske Veritas, Glasgow 1984-1988: Ship Surveyor, Det Norske Veritas, London 1988-1990: Manager of South England Operations, Det Norske Veritas, London 1990-1995: Country Manager, Det Norske Veritas, Jeddah Office 1995-1997: Country Manager, Det Norske Veritas, Kuwait Office 1997-2013: Local Manager Southern/Central Scotland, Det Norske Veritas 2013-2017: Operations Manager UK & Ireland, Det Norske Veritas 2017: Retired
Alex McGowan; 22/12/1949	Steelmaking	1966-1971: Apprentice Engineer, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1971-1983: Maintenance Fitter; Chargehand Fitter, Clyde Alloy Steel Company	N/A	1983-1986: Safety/Training Officer, Cunningham District Council 1986-1988: Safety Officer, Renfrew District Council 1988-1990: Company Safety Advisor, Redpath, Dorman Long, Cambuslang 1990-2001: Health, Safety & Environmental Manager, Kvaerner 2001-2002: Health and Safety Adviser, Babbie Group, Glasgow 2002-2004: Health and Safety Adviser, Aims Group Services 2004-2012: Health and Safety Adviser, Miller Construction, Edinburgh 2012-2017: Health and Safety Adviser, Unnamed Health & Safety Consultancy 2017: Retired
Alex O'Hara; 22/10/1943	Shipbuilding	1957-1959: Milk delivery, Glasgow South Co-operative Society 1959-1960: Laundry delivery, Castlebank Laundry Ltd. 1960-1965: Apprentice Chartered Accountant, Adam Ker & Sangster CA 1962-1963: Commercial Law, Accountancy, Economics, Glasgow University 1966-1968: Accounts Assistant; Accountant; Financial Accountant, Alexander Stephen & Sons (Shipbuilders) 1968-1970: Divisional Accountant, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders	N/A	1971-1981: Company Accountant; Chief Accountant; Company Secretary; Finance Director; Managing Director, Scottish Machine Tool Corporation, Glasgow 1981-1982: Finance Director, Strathclyde Process Engineering, Irvine & Aberdeen 1982-2008: Chief Accountant; Group Finance Director, Adam Wilson Group (Timber), Ayr 2008: Retired 2010-16: Trustee and Board Member; Honorary Treasurer, East Park Charity, Maryhill, Glasgow

Alex Straiton; 14/05/1954	Shipbuilding	1970-1970: General Shipbuilding Apprentice, Scott-Lithgow Training Centre 1970-1971: Apprentice Electrician, Scotts Cartsydyke Yard 1971-1974: Apprentice Electrician, Scotts Cartsburn Yard 1974-1975: Electrician, Scotts Cartsburn Yard 1975-1976: KB Armature Winders Sea Train 1975-1976: Electrician, Scotts Cartsburn Yard 1976-1977: Leading Hand Electrician, Scotts Cartsburn Yard 1977-1979: Staff Electrical Foreman, Scotts Cartsburn Yard 1979-1984: Electrical Manager, Scotts Cartsburn Yard	N/A	1984-2005: Electrician; Chargehand, Andrew Halliday Electrical Contractors 2005-2018: Electrician; Supervisor, Turbine Support Group 2018: Retired
Alex Torrance; 05/05/1947	Steelmaking	1963-1967: Electrical Apprentice, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1967-1988: Shift Electrician, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1988-1991: Shift Chargehand/Foreman, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1992-1993: HNC - Business Studies in Quality Management, Bell College	1991-1991: Process Production Manager, Bothwell Park Brick Company 1994-1994: Electrical Fitter, Nelson's Ltd., Mossend 1995-2010: Maintenance Electrician British Bakeries, Glasgow 2010: Retired
Alex Wright; 22/06/1956	Shipbuilding	1971-1972: Apprentice Welder, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders 1972-1986: Time Served Welder, Govan Shipbuilders	N/A	1987-1987: Part-time Driver/Guard, Security Express (6 Months) 1987-1993: Home Service Consultant, Prudential Assurance 1993-1998: Home Service Consultant, Scottish Legal Life 1998-2000: Financial Adviser, United Assurance Group 2000-2001: Financial Adviser, Scottish Legal Life 2001-2011: Customer Service Representative, Royal London Mutual 2011-Curent: Mortgage Adviser, Vertex Financial Services / Capita
Andrew Kane; 06/09/1956	Steelmaking	19??-19??: Lees Factory (few months) 1971-1974: Steelworker, Martins Steelworks 1974-1975: Steelworker, Victoria Steelworks 1975-1977: Steelworker, Clydesdale Steelworks 1977-1980: Steelworker, Martins Steelworks 1980-1983: Unemployed 1983-1991: Steelworker, Clydesdale Steelworks	1991: Domestic Appliance Repair Retraining Course 1992-1993: Catering Course, Unnamed Collage	1991-1992: Security Job 1993-Current: Taxi Driver
Bill Burt; 30/10/1941	Steelmaking	1956-1966: Miner, Unnamed Pit 1966-1971: Fitter, Clydesdale Steelworks 1971-1978: Machine Operator, Clydesdale Steelworks 1979-1980: Crane Operator, Clyde Crane 1980-1981: Railway Worker, Motherwell Station 1981-1991: Tool Setter, Clydesdale Steelworks	N/A	1991-2004: Labourer; Fitter; Electric Engineer, Railways 2014: Retired
Brian Cunningham; 21/3/1961	Steelmaking	1978-1978: Steelworker, Victoria Steelworks 1979-1992: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1992-1993: Car Mechanics Retraining Course, Lanarkshire Automobile Training Group Association	1992-1996: Mechanic, Beaufort Trucks 1996-Current: Mechanic and Team Shift Leader, MAN Diesel
Brian Glen; 24/03/1956	Shipbuilding	1971-1979: Shipbuilder, Govan Shipbuilders 1979-1981: Ritchie Taylors Engineers 1981-1991: Shipbuilder, Yarrow's Shipbuilders	N/A	1991-1994: F.P. Castings 1994-1996: Shipbuilder, Yarrow's Shipbuilders 1996-1999: F.P. Castings 1999-Currrent: Shipbuilder, BAE Systems
Con O'Brien; 05/01/1947	Steelmaking	1965-1968: Clerical Officer, Ministry of Defence 1968-1977: Metallurgist, Hallside Steelworks (Clyde Alloy Steelworks)	197?-197?: Advanced non-destructive testing and quality assurance, Paisley College	1977-1980: Q.A. Engineer, Babcock Power 1980-1980: Brief Period Of Unemployment 1980-1983: Q.A. Engineer, Kelvinbridge Inspection Ltd. 1983-1985: Inspection Engineer, Costain Process Technical Services Ltd.

				1985-1994: Inspection Engineer, Tuboscope, Aberdeen 1994-1996: Inspection Engineer, Freelance 1996-1999: Inspection Engineer/Expeditior, Fluor Daniel (S.Q.S. Department) 1999-2019: Inspection Engineer/Expeditior, Freelance
Danny Houston; 01/09/1958	Shipbuilding	1975-1980: Scotstoun Marine Ltd. 1980-1989: Shipbuilder, Govan Shipbuilders, Kvaerner 1987-1987: Redundancy Counsellor, British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd.	N/A	1987-1990: Variety of odd jobs; Window-fitter; Joiner; Driver 1990-1991: Shipbuilder, Yarrow Shipbuilders 1992-1994: Shipbuilder, Kvaerner 1994-1996: Plater, John Brown Engineering 1996-19???: Plater, Hounding Engineering 19??-2008: Shipbuilder; Leading Chargehand, Yarrow Shipbuilders 2008-2012: Shipbuilder, BAE Systems 2012-Current: Steelwork Trainer in Govan Training Centre, BAE Systems
Derek Cairns; 24/11/1966	Steelmaking	1983-1990: Maintenance Fitter, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	1990-1996: Senior Technician, Cooper Cameron, Aberdeen 1996-1998: Engineer, Monkland Extrusion, Coatbridge 1998-2007: Mechanical Maintenance Technician, Baker Oil Tools 2007-Currant: Engineer, Scotrail, Glasgow
Dorothy Macready; 1945	Steelmaking	1958-1962: Taggart Royals Coach Building 1962-1976: Typist; Assistant Manager Printing Department, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1976-Current: Housewife	N/A	N/A
Frank Roy; 19/09/1958	Steelmaking	1978-1991: Steelworker, Ravenscraig	1991-1992: Marketing HNC, Motherwell College 1992-1994: Consumer and Management Studies, Glasgow Caledonian University	199?-199?: Part-time Barman 1994-1997: PA, for Labour MP Helen Liddell 1997-2015: Labour MP, for Motherwell and Wishaw
Frank Shannon; 11/12/1940	Steelmaking	1956-19??: Steelworker, Dalzell Steelworks 19??-1999: Trade Union Convenor, Dalzell Steelworks 1999: Retired	N/A	N/A
Gordon Hatton; 05/11/1960	Steelmaking	1977-1982: Apprentice Welder; Welder, Lanarkshire Welding Ltd., Wishaw 1982-1983: Welder, Motherwell Bridge Engineering Ltd. 1983-1983: Unemployed 1983-1991: 1st Hand Operator, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1992-1993: Personal Certificate N. D. T. Ultrasonics Level 1, Motherwell College 1993-1993: Unemployed	1993-1994: Roll and Shear Mill Operator, Glacier Vandervell Limited, Bathgate 1994-1995: Operations Consultant, Durgapur Steel Plant, India 1995-2003: Production Technician, Alcan Rolled Products 2002-2003: Pre-Entry Certificate Course, University of Strathclyde 2003-2007: Master of Arts (Social Sciences) in Sociology, University of Glasgow 2004-2008: Volunteer work at Greenhead Moss Community Park, Wishaw 2004-2012: Porter and Handyperson; Head Porter, University of Strathclyde 2005-2005: 7.5 Tonne Delivery Driver and Stockroom Controller, Next 2008-2009: Masters Degree (MSc) in Urban Regeneration, University of Glasgow 2009-2010: IT Vol Computer Course, Wishaw Volunteer Centre 2012-2013: Unemployed 2013-Current: Maintenance Operative, New Lanark Trust, New Lanark
Gordon MacLean; 11/12/1959	Shipbuilding	1976-1980: Broad-based apprentice, John Brown Engineering 1980-1986: Mechanical Fitter, John Brown Engineering	N/A	1986-1989: Mechanical Fitter, Trafalgar House 1989-1994: Engineer, Process Services, Trafalgar House 1994-1996: Manager Engineer, Customer Service Division, Trafalgar House 1996-2000: Manager Engineer, Customer Service Division, Kvaerner Engineering 1997-2000: Project Manager, Customer Service Division, Kvaerner Engineering 2000-Current: Tool Center Manager, Clydebank Tool Centre, General Electric

Harry Carlin; 18/07/1944	Steelmaking	1961-1961: Steelworker, Smith and McLean Steelworks 1967-1967: Unspecified 'Wee Jobs' 1967-1967: Bookmarker; Signaller, British Rail 1967-1967: Various Labouring jobs 1966-1991: Steelworker, Clydesdale Steelworks 1991-1994: Demolition, Clydesdale Steelworks	1993-1994: Communication and Literature Course, Motherwell Collage 1995-1996: Social Care Course, Unnamed College	1995-2009: Social Care Worker, Elderly Homes 2009: Retired
Ian Harris; 22/11/1944	Steelmaking	1977-1977: Dalzell Steelworks Sponsored Metallurgy Degree, Strathclyde University 1970-1972: Quality Control, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1972-1979: Technical Manager; Production Manager, Gartcosh Steelworks 1979-1981: Strip Mill Assistant Manager, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1981-1991: Strip Mill Manager, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	1991-2000: Strip Mill Manager, Llanwern 2000: Retired
Jack Mccusker; 09/04/1947	Steelmaking	1964-1968: Lab Assistant, Wallace & Co. (Bleachers And Dyers), Newton Mearns 1968-1980: Chemist, Hallside Steelworks 1980-1981: Senior Chemist, Hallside Steelworks	1981: Electronics And Instrument Maintenance, City And Guild Certificate	1981-1982: Electronics Technician, Chemistry/Engineering Department, Caledonian University 1982-2010: Electronics Technician; Chief Technician, Caledonian University, Electric and Electronic Engineering Department 2010: Retired 1982-2010: HNC in E&E, Stow College; Postgrad Certificate in Management, Caledonian University; various other courses at Caledonian University
James Blair; 25/07/1941	Steelmaking	1956-1957: Office boy, Smith and McLeans (Steel industry) 1957-1961: Engineering Apprentice, Smith and McLeans (Steel industry) 1961-1987: Roll Grinder; Chargehand Fitter, Gartcosh Steelworks	1987-1988: Welding Retraining Course	1987-1987: Ad hoc engineering work for a 'one man band' type employer 1987-1987: Shanks Engineering (Six weeks) 1988-1989: Funeral Undertaker 1989-1989: R.B. Tennent Engineering 1989-1996: Roll Grinder, British Alcan 1996-1996: Three weeks of unemployment 1996-1996: Sales Assistant, Golf Shop 1996-1997: Albion Motors, Grinder 1997-1977: Sales Assistant, Gold Solutions 1997-1999: Odd jobs 1999-2004: Roll Grinder, Glacier Vandervell 2004-2004: Dowding Mills, Turner 2004-2004: Various Agency Delivery Driving Jobs, PL Workforce 2004-2006: Driver, En-Con, Cambuslang 2006: Retired 2007-2077: Part-time Driver, Ardrrie Savings Bank 2077: Retired
James Cairns; DOB not stated	Shipbuilding	1977-1968: Patternmaker Apprenticeship, Scott's Foundry 1968-1983: Patternmaker, Scott's Lithgow 1983-1984: Joiner, Caledonian Joinery Company, British Shipbuilders 1977-1984: Senior Trade Union Official	N/A	1977-1977: Manager, Brass Foundry 1984-1986: Patternmaker, Freelance, Barrhead 1977-1977: Pension and Self-Certification Advice for Former Shipbuilders (6 years) 1986-1977: Patternmaker / Building Furniture, Self-Employed Shop Owner, Greenock 1986-1990: Building Furniture Course, Nottingham Trent University 1986-1977: Record Production, Greenock

				198?-19??: Design Company, Kilmarnock 198?-19??: Musician / Sound Engineer, Stiff Records (2 years) 1985-1996: Secretary Musicians Union, Musicians Union 1996-19??: Trades Council, Greenock 20??: Retired
James Carlin; 13/10/1971	Steelmaking	1988-1989: Youth Training Scheme, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1989-1991: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1991-1991: Demolition, Clydesdale Steelworks	1991-1992: Mechanics Retraining Course 1992-1995: Unemployed	1995-1995: Production Worker, Wisemans Dairy (5 months) 1995-1995: JVC (One Week) 1995-1995: Explosives Production, Unnamed Company (5 months) 1995-1998: Finance HND, Unnamed College 1999-2003: Financial Advisor, Cooperative 2003-2006: Taxi Driver 2006-2017: Production Worker, Warburtons
James Cloughley; 06/09/1938	Shipbuilding	1954-1959: Marine Engineer Apprenticeship, David Rounds (five years) 1959-1964: Marine Engineer, Merchant Navy 1964-19??: Fitter, various jobs , including Yarrow 19??-19??: Fitter, Yarrow Admiralty Research Department 19??-19??: Fitter, Ministry of Defence 19??-19??: Fitter, Stevens 19??-1975: Fitter, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders	N/A	1975-1977: Engineer, Eastern Bechtel Corporation, Abu Dhabi 1977-2004: Engineer, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Abu Dhabi 2004: Retired
James Coyle; 23/08/1944	Steelmaking	1959-19??: Waiter, Unnamed Hamilton Hotel 19??-19??: Waiter, Turnberry Hotel in Ayrshire 19??-19??: Waiter, Glasgow Central Hotel 19??-1964: Packaging Shop, Anthony Carp 1964-1965: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1965-1991: Steelworker, Clydesdale Steelworks	1991-1992: HNC in Social Care, Unnamed College	1992-2009: Social Care Worker, Children's Homes 1988-2017: Labour Councillor, North Lanarkshire 2017: Retired
James McKeown; 24/11/1962	Steelmaking	1978-1982: Engineering Apprenticeship 1983-1992: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1992-1993: Multi-Disciplinary Engineering, Motherwell College 1993-1996: Teacher Training, Jordanhill Collage	1996-2000: Supply Tech Teacher, Various Schools 2000-Current: Tech Teacher, Cardinal Newman High School
James Moss; 26/04/1931 (Janet Moss spoke about her late father)	Shipbuilding	1945-19??: Apprentice, Fairfield Shipyards 19??-198?: Plumber, Kvaerner	N/A	198?-1996: Self-employed Plumber 1996: Retired
James Quigley; DOB not stated (Colin Quigley spoke about his late father)	Shipbuilding	1963-1967: Govan Ropeworks 1967-1979: Stager and Red Leader (Hull Painter), Fairfield Shipyard 1979-1980: Cleaning out sewage and oil tanks, Govan Graving (Dry) Docks	N/A	1980-1983: Residential Coal Delivery 1983-2013: Unemployed 2013: Passed Away
Janet Moss; 1963	Shipbuilding	1981-1982: Shop Assistant, Goldberg's Department Store, Glasgow 1981-1982: Highers, Cardonald Collage 1982-1983: HNC, Computer Data Processing, Cardonald Collage 1983-1986: HND, Computer Data Processing, Glasgow College of Technology	N/A	1990-1997: Analyst/Programmer; Project Manager, Scottish Milk Limited 1997-Current: Project Manager, William Grant & Sons Distillers Limited, Strathclyde Business Park



		1986-1987: Computer Operator, Tennent Caledonian Brewery, Glasgow 1987-1990: Computer Programmer; Analyst/Programmer, Yarrow Shipbuilders Limited		
Jim Macready; DOB not stated (Dorothy Macready spoke about her late husband)	Steelmaking	1967-1991: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	19??-19???: Part-time Security Guard 19??-19???: Supermarket Worker 19??-19???: Part-time Postman
Jim Reddiex; 30/01/1933	Steelmaking	19??-19???: Horticultural Worker, Bannatyne Jackson 19??-1953: Armed Forces 1953-19???: Unnamed Furniture Factory 19??-19???: Roofer (5 years) 195?-196?: Power Station Pump Attendant, Ravenscraig Steelworks 196?-196?: Re-Entered Education, Ordinary Nationals 1967-1992: Steelworker; Strip Mill Safety Procedures Trainer, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	1991: Retired
Jimmy Dunbar; 08/12/1938	Steelmaking	1961-1977: Engineering Foreman; Supervisory and Senior Management Roles, Various Steelworks, British Steel Corporation 1977-1982: General Manager, Clydesdale 1982-1985: Director, Ravenscraig and Gartcosh Steelworks 1985-1987: Director and Group Chief Executive, North British Steel Group (Holdings) PLC	N/A	1987-2015: Director, Trade Development Partnership Ltd. (Own Business) 2015: Retired
Joe O'Rourke; 04/02/1951	Shipbuilding	1967-1971: Apprentice Plater, Kingston Yard 1971-1976: Plater, James Lamonts & Co.	N/A	1976-1978: Fabric Cutter, Playtex 1978-1985: Plater, Kingston Yard, Lithgows 1985-1995: Plater, Oil Rigs 1995-1999: Plater, Ferguson's 1999-2003: Supervisor Ferguson's 2003-2004: Plater, Unspecified Govan Yard 2004: Retired
John Christie; 07/12/1951	Steelmaking	1967-1970: Window Dresser, John Collier 1970-1973: Tennent Caledonian Breweries 1973-1983: Observer, Gartcosh Steelworks 1983-1986: Senior Observer, Gartcosh Steelworks 1986-1991 Development Technician, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1991-1994: HNC and HND, Bell Collage	1994-1996: Warehouseperson, Global Direct Mail, Greenock 1996-2004: Manufacturer, Boots Contract Manufacturing, Airdrie 2004-2016: Advisor, Student Loans Company, Glasgow 2016: Retired
Rev. John Potter; 02/11/1935	Steelmaking	1973-1991: Industrial Chaplain, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	N/A
Linda Collins; 26/04/1953	Shipbuilding	19??-1974: Weirs Pumps 1974-1976: Admin, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders 1976-1986: Printing; IT, Yarrow Shipbuilders	1986-1988: Teaching HND, Unnamed Collage 1988-1993: BA Hons Education, Glasgow University	1987-1992: Debt Collector 1987-1992: Agency work 1992-1993: Supply Primary School Teacher, Glasgow 1993-2013: Primary School Teacher, Glasgow 2013: Retired
Malcom Moore; 21/10/1941	Steelmaking	1960-1970: Butcher, Motherwell 1971-1975: Shop owner, Jerviston 1975-1983: Building Trade	1990-1992: Chef Retraining, Motherwell College	1992-1995: Chef, Fire Service

(Susan Crow spoke about her late father)		1983-1990: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks		
Nicholas Howe; 08/06/1952	Shipbuilding	1969-1981: Apprentice Draughtsman, Lithgows 1981-1983: Senior Naval Architect, Lithgows	N/A	1983-1985: Business Development Manager, Seaforth Maritime, Aberdeen 1985-1988: Worldwide Marketing Manager, Floating Technology Co., London 1985-1988: Worldwide Marketing Manager, Dan Smedvig and Smedvig Limited, London and Aberdeen 1990-1991: Owner and Director, Howe International Limited (Consultancy) 1991-1999: Contracts and Marketing Manager, Diamond Offshore, Aberdeen 1999-2002: Vice-President Contracts and Marketing, Diamond Offshore, Aberdeen 2002-2003: European Regional Vice President, International Association of Drilling Contractors 2003-2010: Managing Director, Diamond Offshore Netherlands, The Hague 2011-Current: Owner and Director, Howe International Limited
Pat Clark; 18/01/1956	Shipbuilding	1972-1982: Plater, Scott Lithgow Ltd., Port Glasgow	1983-1987: Student, Strathclyde University	1987-Current: Welfare Rights Officer, Strathclyde Regional Council/Inverclyde Council
Paul Molloy; 04/02/1972	Shipbuilding	1988-1996: Fabricator Welder, BAE Systems 1996-1997: Fabricator Welder, Progenitive Services Limited	1997-1998: IT HNC, Collage 1998-1999: Network Computing HND, Collage 1999-2003: Network Computing Degree, Edinburgh Napier University	2000-2003: Call Centre Sales Rep; Business Manager, Strategic Business Solutions, Vodafone 2003-2005: System Engineer UK, Isrighthere Ltd. 2005-2009: Technical Sales Manager; Project Manager EMEA, Guest-Tek International 2009-2011: Senior Account Manager UK/Ireland, Swisscom Hospitality Services 2011-2013: Segment Development Manager, Philips Electronics 2013-Current: Managed Network Services and Technical Project Manager, Swisscom Hospitality Services 2013-Current: Senior Service Delivery Manager EMEA, Hoist Group 2016-Current: Service Excellence Director EMEA, Hoist Group
Peter Hamill; 03/04/1950	Steelmaking	1965-1966: Steelworker, Lanarkshire Steelworks 1966-1970: Plater Apprenticeship, Lanarkshire Steelworks 1970-1991: Fitter; Boilermaker; Chargehand, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1991-1992: Pipe Fitting Retraining Course	1992-1994: Pipe Fitter, Red Path Engineering Services 1994-1999: Making Exhausts, Unnamed Company 1999-2005: Pipe Fitter; Boilermaker, Ryanx 2006-2008: Steelworker, Dalzell Steelworks 2008-2010: Skilled Maintenance Worker, Dalzell Steelworks 2010-2014: Steelworker, Dalzell Steelworks 2014: Retired
Robert Burids; 1949	Shipbuilding	1966-1970: Apprentice Marine Plumber, Scott's Shipyard, Greenock 1970-1972: Marine Plumber, John Browns Shipyard, Clydebank	N/A	1972-1974: Pipefitter, Power Gas Ltd., BP, Grangemouth 1974-1976: Instrument Pipefitter, Hynes Instruments, Shell Carington Manchester and Stanlow 1976-1977: Pipefitter, Arnold's Holland, Bloom and Voss Hamburg and Stada Aluminium Smelter, Germany 1977-1979: Pipefitter & Shop Steward's Convenor, Wirral Pipework, Monsanto Teesside 1979-1980: Pipefitter, Clyde Pipes, Glaxo Labs, Annan 1980-1982: Instrument Pipefitter and Shop Steward, Haig and Ringrose Shell St Fergus, Banff & Buchanan

				1982-1991: Pipefitter and Shop Steward, Blandford Offshore, North Sea Various Offshore Platforms 1991-1999: Trade Union Official, Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union, Responsible For Offshore And The North Of Scotland Offshore Fabrication Yards 1999-2009: Trade Union Official, Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union, Responsible for all Scottish Mechanical Construction, Glasgow 2009: Retired
Sam Thompson; 22/06/1938	Steelmaking	1953-1970: Electrician (Final Year in management), Clyde Iron Works 1970-1971: Industrial Relations Officer, Clyde Alloy Steelworks 1971-1977: Industrial Relations Officer, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1977-1980: Project Personal Manager, Hunterston 1980-1982: Ironworks Personal Manager, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1982-1988: Industrial Relations Manager for Engineering and Services, Ravenscraig Steelworks as well as Project Personal Manager, Hunterston 1988-1991: Safety Manager, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1991-1992: Manager, Hunterston	N/A	1992-1996: Personnel Safety Manager, UIE 1995-1996: Overall Safety Manager, UIE 1996-1998: Manager, Petrology 1998-2004: Personnel Manager, Murdoch Mackenzie Construction 2004-2006: Retired 2006-2012: Personnel Manager, Murdoch Mackenzie Construction Company 2012: Retired
Sidney Johnstone; 24/12/1940 (John Johnstone spoke about his late father)	Shipbuilding	1956-1959: Apprentice Slater and Plasterer 1959-1961: Slater and Roofer 1961-1965: Glasgow Corporation Buses 1965-1969: Blacksmiths Helper, Govan Shipbuilders 1970-1975: Blacksmith, Govan Shipbuilders	N/A	1975-1976: Blacksmith, Nigg Bay Oil Rig Yard 1976-1978: Machine Operator, Scottish Farmers 1978-1979: Shunter, British Rail 1979-1980: Blacksmith, Govan Shipbuilders 1981: Unknown (Moved to London and broke contact with family)
Stewart MacPherson; 1961	Steelmaking	1977-1991: Casting Operator, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	1993-1993: Driver, Cannon Hygiene Ltd., Blantyre 1995-2015: Cash and Valuables Transit Driver, Securicor/G4S Cash Solutions, Glasgow 2015-2016: Pharmaceutical Delivery Driver, L. F. & E. Refrigerated Transport, Coatbridge 2016: Retired
Terry Currie; 02/04/1951	Steelmaking	1969-1981: Middle-management Accountant, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1981-1984: British Steel [Industry] Ltd.	N/A	1984-1987: Lanarkshire Industrial Field Executive 1987-1991: Monklands Enterprise 1991-2011: Scottish Enterprise 2011-Current: NHS State Hospital (Voluntary)
Thomas Brotherston; 26/11/1947	Shipbuilding	1963-1965: Apprentice Engineer, S. & J. Collingwoods, Glasgow 1965-1975: Mechanical Engineer, Fairfields Shipyards, Glasgow	N/A	1975-1976: Mechanical Engineer, SGB Plant Hire, Stevenson 1976-1976: Barclays Diesel 1976-1979: Mechanical Craftsman, Monsanto Textiles, Irvine 1979-1980: Millwright, SKF Bearing Manufactures, Irvine 1980-1983: Mechanical Craftsman, Hunterston Ore Terminal, Fairlie 1985-1986: Mechanical Craftsman, Apollo Engineering, Troon 1986-1989: Training Officer, Cunninghame District Council, Irvine 1989-1992: Copywriter, Editor and Director, Contract Video Services, Saltcoats 1992-2003: Residential Social Worker (Child Care), Quarriers, Androssan 2003-2008: Pastoral Support Worker (Child Care), Quarriers, Androssan 2008-Current: Vocational Skills Instructor, Spark of Genius, Irvine

Tommy Brennan; 20/08/1932	Steelmaking	19??-19??: British Navy 19??-1974: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks 1974-1991: Trade Union Convenor, Ravenscraig Steelworks	N/A	1991: Retired 1992-2015: Board member, New Lanarkshire Limited (Voluntary)
Tommy Johnston; 18/05/1952	Steelmaking	1967-1969: Glenkerrin Laundry 1969-1973: Steelworker, Lanarkshire Steelworks 1973-1973: Steelworker, Bridgework Steelworks 1973-1992: Steelworker, Ravenscraig Steelworks	1992-1993: Car Mechanics Retraining Course	1993-1993: Cleaner, Unnamed Centre for Disabled People 1993-Present: Janitor, Unnamed Glasgow Primary School 2017: Retired
William Robertson; 02/03/1923 (Margaret Fraser spoke about her late father)	Steelmaking	1937-1941: Message boy, Grocers 19??-19??: Miner, Unnamed Coal Mine (worked for 1/2 a day, went on strike over death of co-worker, never returned) 1941-1946: Royal Navy 1946-1981: Steelworker, Gartcosh Steelworks	N/A	N/A

N.B.: Question marks denote dates interviewees were unable to recall or did not report.

\* The categories of ‘pre-closure employment’ and ‘post-closure employment’ are imperfect, as a number of workers remained in or returned to steelmaking and shipbuilding after redundancy. However, it is the clearest way to communicate the break in continuity that deindustrialisation represented for the majority of workers’ careers.

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## Film

- Brassed Off* (1996) Directed by M. Herman (Prominent Features, Channel Four Films, and Miramax Films)
- Clyde Film* (1985) Directed by I. Venart, C. Tracy, I. Miller, M. Merrick, A. McCallum and K. Currie (Cranhill Films) <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/3789>
- Exit Zero: An Industrial Family Story* (2017) Directed by C. Boebel (Christine Walley and Chris Boebel)
- The Full Monty* (1997) Directed by P. Cattaneo (Redwave Films and Channel Four Films)
- On a Clear Day* (2005) Directed by G. Dellal (Dorothy Berwin and Sarah Curtis)
- Shadow of the Craig* (1992) Director unknown (BBC Scotland)
- Steelmen* (2019) Directed by M. McCuaig (PurpleTV)
- Still the Enemy Within* (2014) Directed by O. Gower (Sinead Kirwan, Mark Lacey, Angelique Talio)

## Music

*Letter from America* (1987) Artist: The Proclaimers. Producer(s): Gerry Rafferty & Hugh Murphy. Label: Chrysalis Records Ltd. Album: *This Is the Story*

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