



“**No.92 - An Eminent Engineer:**

We endeavoured to form an institution for the purpose of supporting disabled men, the widows and children, to which the coal owners consented to subscribe one halfpenny per chaldron on all the coals exported, to which the men were requested to join and contribute sixpence in the pound from their wages, both which together would have formed a fund which would have supported the disabled men, the widows and children, in great comfort. The men thought well of it at first, but after meetings and discussions their jealousy got the better of their prudence, as they thought it impossible that their employers could offer such a boon without having some selfish motive in it and that it was in fact what they called ‘a take in,’ intended as a fraud upon them.”

Report by Dr. Mitchell, South Durham Coalfields, *Royal Commission on Employment of Children in Mines* (1842)

“Our men only get a fair crack of the whip when they have their hands and brains and muscles in the industrial world, and when they are not able to stand up and play their part it is a terrible thing for them.”

RJ Taylor, MP for Morpeth, Thursday 5th March, 1936

“Ma faither was a miner all his life, working at Auchlochan Collieries except for the years he did service in the army during the Boer War... From the time of his serious injury in the pit, he had to have a stick to get him about but he was uncomplaining. I think miners considered themselves lucky to survive to old age without having some completely crippling injury or being killed.”

Nancy Prosser in Jim Hamilton, *Lanarkshire Coalminers and their Wives: Reminiscences from Coalburn & Surrounding Villages*, (Edinburgh, 2003), c. early 1900s

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“His father’s toil had been so excessive as to make him stoop like a victim of curvature.

That had been just as well, because his father’s wages were so low it would have been impossible to count them standing up straight.”

Gwyn Thomas, *Sorrow For Thy Sons* (1937)

Mural image by Michael Edmunds, *Untitled*, 1959.  
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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

**Disability and Industrial Society** is a collaborative interdisciplinary project, funded by the Wellcome Trust. Focusing on the coal industry, the project investigates the effects of industrialization for disabled people between 1780 and 1948.

Sources from three key coalfields – Scotland, South Wales and North East England – are employed to explore attitudes and experiences of industrial disease and injury. Ultimately, the findings generated will shed light on the relative importance of industrialization in shaping modern conceptions, experiences and literary interpretations of disability.



Led by Professor Anne Borsay and Dr David Turner of Swansea University, the project team comprises academics from Swansea, Aberystwyth, Northumbria, Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian Universities.

Sources examined by the research team range from colliery and trade union records to parliamentary papers and medical reports.

A PhD student is also focusing on disability in coalfields literature through an extensive examination of novels, plays and poems from coalmining communities.



## EVENTS

The project will present its findings in books, articles, and at conferences, as well as through a series of public events. These include:

- Annual Public Lectures in each of the coalfields.
- Roadshows featuring talks about coalmining and disability, alongside stalls and opportunities for visitors to bring their own artefacts.
- Professional Workshops which offer a chance for healthcare professionals to discuss the contemporary relevance of the research.
- An Exhibition at the National Waterfront Museum which will then tour Wales.

