# **MEMOIRS 1999**





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#### by Michael Gill

The village of Cononley is in the area known as South Craven, about three miles south of Skipton and twenty miles west of Leeds, in Yorkshire. It stands in the mouth of Nethergill, a small tributary valley on the south side of the river Aire, and is dominated by a hill called the Gib. Since the early 1850s, the Gib has been topped by a chimney from a lead smelting mill. The village is linked to the Keighley-Kendal Turnpike, now the A629, and the Leeds-Liverpool canal by the same short road. Except for the 1970s, Cononley has had a railway station since 1847. It is a picturesque, if somewhat shaded, village with its houses built of the local sandstone with flagstone roofs. It once had four pubs, but now has two, of which the New Inn is the oldest. The old part of the village, running between the Main Street and Back Lane, is based on tofts and crofts which have been infilled with tightly packed houses. This has led to a complex pattern of narrow, crooked streets with a highly irregular roof-line and gives the village a distinct character.

Until recently, the people of Cononley, like those of its neighbouring villages, have worked at farming and textiles. Farming is now almost totally pastoral and employs few people. From the mid-19th century, however, the villagers had easy access to two textile mills, one within its bounds and the other, immediately outside them, in the township of Farnhill. For around 40 years in the 19th century, however, Cononley also had a prosperous lead mine. For that reason, the village was included in the Society's study of populations in the lead mining areas of the Yorkshire Dales.



Fig. 1 Location Map.

## THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Textiles was by far the largest employer in Cononley and, unlike the mine, it gave work to both sexes. That part of the West Riding of Yorkshire around Keighley and the Craven dales was an early centre of water-powered, cotton-spinning mills, but, as George Ingle points out, "*The every-day association of the wool textile industry with Yorkshire together with the association of cotton with Lancashire, has led us to the assumption that one excluded the other*".<sup>1</sup> By the mid 19th century, many of these small watermills were superseded by the large, steam-driven mills of Lancashire, but in the censuses from 1841 to 1881 most of the weavers in Cononley described themselves as weaving worsted and cotton.



Plate I. Bay House, formerly the Bay Horse Inn until 1907 (M.C. Gill, 1999).

The village's first cotton mill was in Nethergill, opposite the church, and is now a dwelling called Gill Cottage.<sup>2</sup> This small mill was insured by its owner, William Watson, for £300 in 1796 and, when it was advertised for sale in 1810, its machinery included three mules with 120 spindles each. Interested parties would be shown round by Mr Nathan Horrocks. He was described as a farmer and Watson as a cotton spinner in 1803.<sup>3</sup>

As the 19th century progressed, cotton gave way to weaving worsted, which is a fine yarn, spun from combed wool. Power looms for cotton weaving had been used in Lancashire for over 10 years when they were introduced into Yorkshire c1825, but it was not until the 1850s that hand looms were abandoned. Both hand looms and early power looms wove cloth which was

around 27 inches (686 mm) wide. This, and the looms' relative simplicity, meant that weavers could work with cotton or worsted as demand dictated.

In 1820, five men agreed to raise £262 to buy a plot of building land. They were known as a 'Terminating Society' because their partnership would dissolve when the project was done. Between 1822 and 1832 they built a row 32 of houses, called Union or Club Row, which were designed to accommodate hand looms in their rear, upstairs rooms.<sup>4</sup> The 1841 Census records that Club Row had 89 weavers, 9 woolcombers and 14 bobbinwinders, whereas in 1851 there were 89 weavers (54 hand, 33 power and 2 not specified), 3 woolcombers and 7 bobbinwinders. In the latter year, however, there were also 17 men and boys who worked at the mine. The number of weavers in the Row fell steadily and was 34 in 1881.

The last textile process to be mechanised was woolcombing, in which the individual fibres were drawn out ready for spinning. This happened around 1850 and led to a fall in the number of men thus employed from 34 in 1841 to three in 1861.

From the 1840s, two steam-powered mills, both owned by John Turner, stood on the site of Cononley Mill, which is near the railway station. These were the High Mill, run by John Turner, and the Low Mill, run by James Midgley. In 1865, the former had 120 hands and 190 looms, whilst the latter had 50 hands, including short-timers. These mills were later demolished and the Station Mill was built to replace them. Around 1905 it was taken over by Peter Green, who had a mill in Bradley, and he sublet part of the building to Horace Green for the manufacture of electric motors and dynamos.

Another large mill, across the river Aire and in the township of Farnhill (but detached from that village), was built by Middleton & Answorth around 1867. It too was acquired by Turner in September 1880. This mill had been closed for some years when it was gutted by fire in March 1992.

## LEAD MINING

The Main Vein runs nearly east to west across Glusburn Moor, where it outcrops, onto Cononley Moor, where it is covered by glacial drift. For that reason, mining at Cononley was only important between 1840 and 1872, whereas there is a long, if sporadic, history of mining on Glusburn Moor.<sup>5,6</sup> The *Dissolution Rental of Bolton Priory*, *1538-9*, has the following note:-

"Manor of Kildwick with village of Cononley. For any profit coming from the issue of lead mines in and upon the moor at Cononley during the time of this account he does not answer because no such lead was found there."

As this refers specifically to Cononley, it may mean that the narrow vein near the Gib's summit was known, but that trials had failed to find any ore.<sup>7</sup>



Plate II. Club Row, built 1822 to 1832 (M.C. Gill, 1999).

Undeterred by this, Lady Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, and Richard Cavendish, of London, took a 21 year lease on 100 acres on Gib Moor, at Glusburn, in September 1589.<sup>8</sup> The precise area involved is not known, but it is likely to have been on the outcrop of the Main Vein, near Manor House Farm. Any success they had must have been short lived, however, because Cavendish died in 1600 and the Countess became estranged from her husband and went to live in Clerkenwell.<sup>9</sup>

The next activity was on November 20th 1666, when William and Anthony Garforth, both of Steeton, leased the right to mine for lead and coal in the demesnes, moors and wastes of Steeton, Eastburn and Glusburn to:-<sup>10</sup>

PARTNER	SHARE	FROM	STATUS
John Carr	3/12	Waltham in Derbyshire,	Gent.
William Garforth	3/12	Warleywise, Cowling, Yorks	Gent.
William Garforth(Yng	r) 2/12	Steeton, Yorkshire,	Gent.
Peter Alcock	2/12	Burnsall, Yorkshire,	Yeoman
Henry Hudson	2/12	Glusburn, Yorkshire,	Yeoman

That they did some mining is suggested by Webster, the vicar of Kildwick, who in 1671 wrote that he had obtained samples of Ghurr (a mineral juice) from two miles away.<sup>11</sup> This must have been from the Main Vein. It is, however, not until 1728 that the registers of Kildwick parish church include miners. Nineteen are listed between 1728 and 1746, plus 15 colliers between

1721 and 1781, in surrounding villages.<sup>12</sup> In order of their importance, the colliers were working in pits at Silsden, Bradley and Cowling.

#### LEAD MINERS LISTED IN THE KILDWICK PARISH REGISTERS

It is possible to trace the origins of some of these men. For example, Robert Birch, the son of William Birch of Hebden, married a local woman at Kildwick when he was 23.<sup>13</sup> They had returned to the Grassington area by December 1739, where he was also a miner. Mathew Peart had moved his family to Grassington by 1744. Benjamin Carrington may have been from Greenhowhill, but had moved to Grassington by 1748. Edward Parkin does not appear in the Linton parish registers, but he was a miner at Grassington. In 1731 he had one meer on Ripley Vein and in 1748 he purchased a share of three meers on Piper Plett Vein.<sup>14</sup> In 1751 he was smelting ore from two meers at Yarnbury.<sup>15</sup>

It is likely that they, too, worked on Glusburn Moor and had enough success to need a smelt mill. This was built at Lumb Clough, near Sutton in Craven, about two miles away. Their activity prompted interest in the Gib Vein and, in 1744, some 11 meers (302 metres) of ground were granted on Cononley Moor. The vein, which carries about 250 millimetres of barytes, produced no ore.

Apart from some 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tons of lead raised from a vein at Parkhead, in the adjoining township of Carleton, in 1774 and 1775, nothing else appears to have been done at Cononley or Glusburn until 1820. In the latter year, James Garth produced six tons of lead from a shaft onto the Main Vein, 140 metres

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east of the Engine Shaft. By 1825, Messrs Hall & Company, of Newcastle, had leases for both the Glusburn and Cononley ground. This allowed them to plan the systematic exploration of the vein by starting the Upper and Deep adits from Nethergill. Unfortunately, the Halls were forced to abandon the mine around 1830 because of a major slump in lead prices.

Apart from 14 tons of lead from the Glusburn liberty in 1828 and 1829, the mine stood until July 1836, when George Gill & Co. took a bargain "to clear a heap of stuff from the mouth of the Deep Level, at Glusburn Moor" for 14 shillings. That summer, Stephen Monday and partners took the bargain, at  $\pounds 2.38$ /fathom, to drive the level.<sup>16</sup> It took 17 months to reach the vein, which was then developed in earnest, with the first sale of lead, which was also smelted at Cononley, being made in September 1840.

The Main Vein was followed east from the head of the Deep Adit Crosscut and an ore-shoot was found dipping westwards from its outcrop near Garforth's Shaft to a depth of a little over 15 fathoms below the adit at Taylor's Shaft. Long drives, both to the east and west, beyond this oreshoot failed to find much new ore. A deep trial at the Engine Shaft was also a failure. In 1858, therefore, the Duke of Devonshire's mineral agent, Stephen Eddy, noted that "At the Cononley Mines, for instance, although profitable for many years past, the levels (which are very extensive) have laid open more than 20 fathoms of totally unmetalliferous [ground], for every fathom of productive ground."<sup>17</sup> Apart from the Main Vein, the only other significant source of ore was a South Vein, which was of very limited extent.

Annual expenditure rose steeply from 1838 to 1846, as the mine was developed, and then fell steadily until it was abandoned in 1882. Except for a trough in 1842 and 1843, output also rose sharply until the early 1850s, fell steadily until 1868, then sharply until 1872 when most of the mine closed. The mine went into profit in 1846 and from then until 1867 made small losses in only two years. After that, the mine made fairly small losses until the mid 1870s, when it went onto care and maintenance and earned almost nothing. As near as can be judged, making no allowance for interest payments, the Duchy of Devonshire's accumulated profit was around £53,000 in 1882, having fallen from a peak of £60,000 in 1870. This was on a total expenditure of around £140,000 in the same period. A large proportion of the latter sum was spent on wages and went into the local economy.

#### THE POPULATION OF CONONLEY

Censuses were taken every 10 years from 1801, but it was not until 1841 that they began to give information about individuals and their occupations. Nevertheless, the *Craven Muster Roll*, a list of men between the ages of 17 and 55 which was prepared in 1803 in case of an invasion by Napoleon, gives an indication of how the 167 males listed in the combined townships of Farnhill & Cononley were employed:-





Mining Transport

**Domestic Service** 

Farming

Services

Professional

Textiles









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Tailors	2		Woolcombers	17	
Surgeon	1		Weavers	89	
Slater	1		Spinners	7	
Shopkeepers	2		Carder	1	= 114
Mason	1				
Joiners	2		Labourers	15	
Inn keepers	2		Farmers	14	= 29
Gardener	1				
Cordwainers/Cloggers	10		Unspecified	1	= <u>1</u>
Butcher	1	= 23			167

It is, however, difficult to reconcile those figures with the census total (876) given for 1801. For example, examination of the census returns shows that a little under half of the population were females, 10 per cent were boys under 17 and 10 per cent were men over 55. As this leaves 263 men who would seem to be eligible, the Muster Roll appears to be under-reporting nearly 100 of them.

The total population of Cononley, from the 1801 to 1901 censuses, is given in the following table.<sup>18</sup> It shows a steady increase until 1851 and then falls away. This paper, however, concentrates on the period between 1841 and 1881, when the mine was working and for which the complete census returns for Cononley have been entered into a Microsoft Access database.

## POPULATION TOTALS FROM THE CENSUS RETURNS

1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Cononley } [600]	[715]	[924]	[1072]	1159	1272	905	1012	829	881	786
} 876	1045	1350	1567							
Farnhill } [276]	[330]	[426]	[495]	459	581	464	490	561	655	626

**Notes:** Between 1801 and 1831 the populations of Cononley and Farnhill are combined. The figures in the square brackets are the estimated populations of each using the mean ratio (68:32) between the two villages from 1841 to 1871.

The pie charts (fig.3) show the percentage proportion of each occupancy group.

#### MINING

The 1851 to 1881 censuses allow us to distinguish where people came from, but the 1841 census does not give a place of birth, but has a 'Yes' or a 'No' to show whether or not a person was born in the county in question – in this case Yorkshire. However, by sorting the database by order of an individual's surname, given name and census year, and then comparing the 1841 entry with subsequent ones, it has often been possible to find the place of birth of half of the population. In the case of the 33 mine workers, only five went untraced and, of these, it is highly likely that two were from Hebden, two were from the Greenhow area and one from either Cononley or Cowling.



Because Cononley had no pool of local miners on which to draw, we are in an ideal position to examine the make up of the labour force, especially where it was recruited from. Moorhouse wrote that "*men came from Wales and Cornwall*" to work in the mines and this has sometimes been taken to infer that these in-comers had a greater impact than they actually did.<sup>19</sup> For example, Dickinson wrote that "*the main street echoed to the dialects of Cornwall, Derbyshire and Wales, as immigrant mines arrived to work in the lead mines being opened by the Duke of Devonshire*".20

As figure 2 shows, however, very few miners came from further than 20 miles away. Examination of the origins of those given as the heads of partnerships in the mine's tutwork and tribute books shows that they were dominated by these men for the first 10 years or so. By 1851, however, the number of miners born in Cononley was growing and in 1861 equalled the others. Some of them were, of course, sons of immigrant miners, but others were locals. Of those from greater distances, most were agents, or managers, and other specialists. Biographical notes on the three principal agents at Cononley, listed below, plus Stephen and James Ray Eddy, were given in British Mining No.33, *The Yorkshire and Lancashire Lead Mines*.

	Time at	
Mining Agent	Cononley	From
James Shummers	1841-1842	Scotland
Josiah Remfrey	1842-1853	Tavistock
Thomas Ward	1853-1869?	St Austell

Examples of the specialists include George Gill, from Allendale, who was present in the 1841 and 1851 censuses and is described as a lead miner. In the mine accounts, however, he was looking after pit work.21 John Davies came, with his family, from Flintshire in the 1840s and drove the mine's steam engine. He had probably worked at the Duke of Grosvenor's Mold Mines, which were managed by John Taylor, who was also the Duke of Devonshire's mineral agent, and from which Stephen Eddy had moved to Grassington. Also in the 1840s, Thomas Daniels and his son, also called Thomas, came from Cornwall to work at the mine as blacksmiths.

By far the greater number of in-comers, however, were from established Yorkshire lead mining areas, so the Main Street echoed to a variety of Yorkshire dialects! Those from Grassington and Hebden had transferred from the Duke's mines on Grassington Moor.<sup>22</sup> Those from around Greenhow Hill, however, were escaping from a down-turn in the fortunes of the mines there. The Prosperous & Providence Mine was in serious trouble, the Cockhill Mine was poorer than it had been and the Appletreewick Mines were in the doldrums until the mid 1850s.<sup>23</sup> Miners from these two areas form the two peaks at radii between 7½ to 10½ and 10½ to 15 miles from Cononley on figure 2.

Two of this group are worthy of remark, as they advanced within the industry.

William Brown was born in Hebden and trained as a smelter at Grassington, where he is recorded in 1838. By the 1841 census, however, he was living in Cononley and was described as a miner. He was probably in charge of the smelt mill there when it began smelting in 1842, but it is not until 1849 that a record of him in that position survives. Around 1854, Brown returned to Grassington where he oversaw the Cupola Mill for a while, but he was dead by 1861, when his widow Maria, aged 63, was living at Cononley.

Henry Daykin, the son of Jonathan Daykin, a miner of Grassington, was born March 1800. It is likely that his father had moved to Grassington, probably as a boy, from the Marrick area of Swaledale. Henry and his wife, Sarah, were living at King Street in Cononley by 1841 and were still there in 1851. Like George Gill, from Allendale, Daykin is mentioned in the mine accounts as looking after pit work. He spent 18 months working at a developing lead mine in Sicily around 1850, but had returned by the 1851 census.<sup>24</sup> Probably in recognition of this experience, he was promoted to agent and worked at Grassington mines from 1852 until 1871, when he was recorded as a farmer.

What became of the mineworkers as the mine ran down? The censuses show that most miners left the village and they have not yet been traced. Others died, but around two dozen remained and took up new jobs, including cordwainer (cobbler), farmer, grocer, labourer, quarryman, mason, river bailiff and weaver.



Before moving on, it is worth noting that a few lead miners also lived in neighbouring villages:-

Crosshills	Σ	Grass'ton	Hebden	G'how	Littleboro'	Flints'	Oxford	Cornwall
1851	10	6	1	2	1	-	-	-
Glusburn								
1851	5	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
1861	11	-	-	10	-	-	-	1
1871	6	-	-	2	-	2	1	1

The Cornishman was William Henwood, a miner, who was living as a lodger in Cononley in 1851. He was working at the mine by April 1844. There were also four calc spar (barytes) miners living near Cowling Hill in 1881. They may have been working the small mine at Gill Bottom, which also produced some lead, or at Raygill Mine, in Lothersdale.

#### TRANSPORT

Transport includes carriers, using horses and carts, as well as railway workers. The latter worked on the then Leeds and Skipton Railway, which was eventually extended into Lancashire. None of the carriers are known to have worked for the mine.

#### **DOMESTIC SERVICE**

This was principally a female occupation and probably includes daughters looking after the home whilst their mothers worked at the mill. Women described simply as wives have not been included in this group.

## FARMING

Most Farmers grazed sheep and cattle, the latter probably being mainly for fattening, but increasingly for milking. When 740 acres of land in Cononley were offered for sale by auction in July 1865, most of them were described as being under grass.<sup>25</sup> The number of farmers listed varied between 33 and 36, but only the size of around 26 farms was ever given. This gave them an average area of 42 acres. Most farms employed one agricultural labourer who, in many cases, was the farmer's son.

### SERVICES

This category includes all those trades which a village needed to function. They include blacksmiths, shop-keepers, dressmakers and tailors, shoemakers and inn keepers. For a while, around 1861, Cononley even had a small brick and tile works.

## PROFESSIONS

This group includes annuitants, teachers, policemen, landowners and the vicar. Some of these people may have moved into Cononley and commuted into local towns using the railway.

### TEXTILES

By far the largest category, it not only gave work to adults of both sexes, but children as well. In 1841, for example, half of the 411 weavers were women. This proportion remained in 1851, when 68 per cent of the women had moved from hand to power looms, as opposed to 32 per cent of the men.

As figure 4 shows, most of the textile workers came from Cononley and its neighbouring villages (see figure 1 - location map). A small number were from miner's families, from Grassington, Hebden or Greenhowhill. Others, like the Fieldings, may have had special skills. John Fielding came from Barnoldswick, a local textile town, but his wife Sarah and their three children came from Norwich. John and Sarah and their eldest son, also John, were all worsted weavers.

## CONCLUSION

The mine was important and, in both the 18th and 19th centuries, experienced miners were brought in from the Grassington and Greenhowhill areas to supervise local labour. At its peak, around 16 per cent of the male workforce worked at the mine, but throughout the 19th century, Cononley's principal employer was clearly textiles. This is a much less than in many Dales mining villages and it would, therefore, be wrong to think of Cononley as a mining village. Nevertheless, the mine was competing with the mills for labour to some extent and, whilst no details of textile workers' earnings between 1841 and 1871 have been seen, it is likely that this inflated the earnings of both groups slightly. This may explain the difference, of around one shilling per week less, in the earnings of tutworkers at Grassington, where there was little alternative employment.



Plate III. Cononley Mill and Green's Electric Motor Works (M.C. Gill, 1999).

There was no dedicated miners housing, as one might expect on the coalfields, and the miners lived in all parts of the village. It is likely that the crofts were infilled with housing to accommodate the growing population as Cononley changed from its almost mediæval layout to a 19th century industrial village.

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