MINES

CENTURY of CHANGE

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MINERS' WORDS

Miner2Major
The Real Sherwood Forest

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Coal is Our Business

It was too late to get the Bevin call
But we came anyway
We came with the Windrush, sailing on the horizon.
The sweet tone of Calypso and the base notes of Blue Beat in our hips
The brok-leg walk and shine-teet smile…
But coal was our business.

We came to brighten up the pit village
Walk the long walk –
Spice up the place
Nearly win the village race!
But coal was our business.

We go dung the deep mine
And we dig down deep
And planted ourselves in the history of their tradition.
Because coal is our business.

We grown old now…
And we still sign the songs and wear the colours of those islands we came from.
But we can't forget to say
That even today

Coal is still our business.

Delroy Brown
Coal in the Blood

Like Mice – Like Men

The sun and sky, brutally quiet –
another industrial morning where
corrugated friendships gather
and sleep is wiped out of the corner
of sad red eyes.

Hulks corroded metal
hug the earth, while the
harshness of another day
is softened by comradely
joshing.

Shared crusts of bread are
washed down with ice
cold water, floaters rise
in the glass, like moths.

We grow with each other
aching arms – aching minds
and push forward against it
like mice like men.

Roger Cornish
Coal in the Blood

Big Money

Tha' doesna want ta think owd lad,
That what thee an' they like caw' 'big munny',
Mek a minin' man feel glad
To leave green fields aw' dappled sunny;
To drop inta the depths below,
Wheer no thrush or blackbod sings,

An' God's own leight can niver glow,
In cloos that damp an'clammy cling.

Think on, owd lad, an' think agen,
When fulminatin' o'er the price o' coal,
If thee an'thy sons were the men,
Swearin' an sweatin' in some twofoot hole,
Wi eyes an' nostrils full o' dust,
An' the foul smell o' tainted air;
The creak o' faulty crckin' crust,
An thank the Lord for they office cheer!

Wi' thy chin dern between they knees,
An' thy back aw' raw agenst the roof,
An' the sweat tricklin' inta thy eyes,
Yode not be quite so fulla chuff.
Soo let be, lad, an dunna moan,
Ivery time thar mends the fire,
It might a'cost a trapped man's moan,
The dus'pan full that caused thy ire!

Her many lads bin mained an' killed,
T' kiep thee an' they lie wam?
Does not the blood, yo' know 's bin spilled =,
Iver dow this conscience onny harm?
Coal niver has bin cheep enough
For people such as thee to thole,
An' tha'll niver cease to blow they chuff,
'Til aw' on us is back ont' dole!

Owen Watson
Coal in the Blood

Miners' Words

Addle - to earn
Aurora – boaring machine used at Pleasley
Aye up mi ode, y'alreet? - Hello my friend, how are you?
Balk - to stop something or hold it back
Banksman - A coal face worker
Bantle - The number of men riding on the cage at one time
Cank - can mean hard stone, difficult, mud or siltstone
Club - to be off work and claiming sickness benefit – said to be 'on the club'
Jibber a man working with mine props
Kank – very hard (usually of material)
Lagoon – expanse of water surrounded by slurry
Loco - underground locomotive
Muck – Coal waste product
Mucka - Friend
Motties – each miner had a metal tag with a number. This was used to count men in and out of the mine. Also called checks, tags, tallies and tokens.
On the bank – on the surface
Niffing - Overtime, used in Derbyshire
Nuts – Small pieces of coal
Paddy – a train to take men to the pit
Paid snap – small payment for working through a meal break
Ragarms – nickname for a lazy worker
Riddle the slack – sieve small bits of coal
Scud - coal dust
Scowl – a tunnel through a coal face
Snap – food
Trams - underground wagons
Tub thumper – a man who mends tubs if they are knocked out of shape
Twilight – late afternoon shift
Undercut – a section of the base of a coal seam which has been cut away by hand to make it easier to bring the rest down.
Visitor speed – speed at which a cage moves when occupied by visitors not used the experience to give them a fright
Wall - the coal face
Whitedamp – another name for carbon monoxide gas
Yed in - to advance in

Taken from Pit Talk Coal Miners Dialect of the East Midlands by Natalie Braber, Claire Ashmore, Suzy Harrison