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**THE WANDESFORDES:**  
**THE IDEOLOGY OF LANDLORDISM**  
**IN NORTH KILKENNY**

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## Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements.....1**

**Introduction:** This section will give a brief summary of what was hoped to be achieved within the study as well as what is in each chapter.....**2 -5**

**Chapter 1:** An introduction to the Wandesforde Ideology and the ideology of the Irish landowning class.....**6 -29**

**Chapter 2:** The discovery of the coal in the Castlecomer area and the Trammers Strike of 1932.....**30-56**

**Chapter 3:** The strike of 1949 and gradual disengagement.....**57 -77**

**Concluding Remarks.....78-82**

**Appendices.....83-86**

**Glossary.....87-89**

**Bibliography**

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# **INTRODUCTION**



*Capt R.H. Prior-Wandesforde,  
1870-1956. Founder and promoter of  
Castlecomer Collieries Ltd. 3*

## INTRODUCTION

The primary concern of this study is to investigate the unique survival of the Wandesforde family into the middle of the twentieth century. The investigation of this matter is offered by way of an enquiry into the ideological position of the Wandesforde family, and the historical explanation of it.

As a preliminary to this, the first chapter provides a general background as to how the Wandesforde family came to live in North Kilkenny. The central argument of the chapter is the discussion of how individual family members are influenced by the ideology of the century they lived in as well as by their own personal conception of what the family ideology is. It also highlights how Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde, the final Wandesforde family member to inherit the Wandesforde landed Estate in the twentieth century, achieved the loyalty and respect of the Castlecomer Community by the continuation of various concepts from his ancestral ideology. It is also noted that significant changes have occurred to the Wandesforde capitalist institution by this time and that the ideology which is central to the continuation of Wandesforde domination over the Castlecomer people has adapted and changed to ensure the families economic survival.

In Chapter Two, we attempt to show the change in the Wandesforde ideology, by examining the new economic power base i.e. the family coal mines. This chapter attempts to discuss the economic domination of the Wandesforde capitalist institution and it outlines the continued acceptance of the Castlecomer people of this economic situation. The rise of class consciousness and the militant Mine and Quarry Union are described as the first real challenge to the Wandesforde capitalist institution and its ideology. There is also a general discussion about how the subsequent loss of power and the right to demand unconditional loyalty, force the Wandesforde ideology to adapt and change again to a new economic position.

The final chapter, illustrates the Wandesforde strategy for survival by placing them in the broader pre-Second World War economic picture. The strengthening of the Wandesforde power base by substituting local power for national is highlighted, while the scene is set to discuss the reasons why Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde felt he could retain his dominating stronghold over the Castlecomer community against mass opposition.

There were many Primary Sources available for consultation for this study. The Wandesforde Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland provided much of the background material for the three chapters. But the fact that they were an unsorted private collection meant that they were hard to access and much of the research was spent sorting them out. The Newspapers that were consulted were also hard to access. The Kilkenny Journal was available in the National library of Ireland and some editions were available in the local Kilkenny County Library. The Workers Voice proved more difficult to find some were in the care of the Irish Labour History Society, others were in the head quarters of SIPTU. The Kilkenny People is available to look at by written request from the Kilkenny People Newspaper office in Kilkenny City and/or the Kilkenny library. Some informative contemporary sources were consulted in the Local History Studies Room again in the Kilkenny County Library and there is photocopying facilities available.

The study of secondary sources were also available. With many books written containing some information about the area. These books are available in most academic libraries. In this study the knowledge of the local area by the area proved invaluable for the author and many private collections were consulted. The Deenside Magazine a local history magazine was available and it contained many secondary sources and local contacts not hitherto known by the author.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## CHAPTER ONE

**"Castlecomer in North County Kilkenny is a junction where shale meets limestone, hill meets lowland and miner meets farmer. " (1)**

When one looks at the initial history of the Wandesforde family one is immediately struck by the many similarities between this Anglo-Irish landowning family and many of their Anglo-Irish contemporaries. They came to Ireland like many others in the sixteenth century, they took possession of an Irish Estate and remained for three centuries, loyal to the English Crown. Indeed like so many Anglo-Irish landowners each individual member who came to live in Castlecomer House, did in some way or other touch the minds, hearts and the landscape of their Irish tenants. But unlike the vast majority of the Irish landowning families, who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lost their income, power and status from increasing debts and the Land Acts, the Wandesfordes lived on and continued to wield a powerful hand over both communities in Castlecomer well into the late twentieth century. The question we must ask is, why did they remain in possession for so long ?

The truth of the matter is that they were different. The Wandesforde family were different, because they did not solely rely upon ground rents from their tenants. Instead the Wandesforde power was based upon an unique ownership and control of capital and by its influence on the social, political and economic life in North Kilkenny. They were different in two ways, firstly because their estate was situated in an area rich in coal deposits, an area which was later to become known as the Leinster coal field and secondly they possessed a vast fortune, which they could use to enter into such a precarious and market dominated industry. They in fact held a dual capitalist power base, (land) or agricultural capital, which was a characteristic that they shared with other Anglo-Irish families and (coal) or industrial capital which was their own unique characteristic. But this is not the sole reason behind the Wandesforde dominance and survival into the late twentieth century. Their power and influence was also based upon an ideology. This ideology can be described as the families personal conception of their "rights and duties". It is also important to realise here that most

titled and landed families had some notion of their “rights and duties”, some sense of who they were. It would also be true to say that a vast amount of these “rights and duties” were based upon original feudal dues and titled privileges. Again the Wandesfordes were different because their “rights and duties” were based upon the dual system of capitalism and these were constantly changing under the influence of individual family members, who were in turn influenced by the century they lived in. However if one looks closely one can see a common conceptual thread running through the family tree, as if certain common themes were passed on from one generation to another. Firstly, one can identify the idea of duty, an obligation to look after their tenants. The concept of "paternalism" falls under this heading. It often took the various forms of welfare provision for the estate tenants and can be seen clearly through the implementation of “charity works”. Secondly, there can be seen the notion of a “property owning and developing ascendancy”. This aspect clearly stems from the families ancient feudal dues or inheritance. It encompasses land, coal and even labour, the Wandesfordes thus believed they had a natural right to develop the land and the coal which lay beneath it. Their ideology was thus a legitimatising ideology it stressed and acknowledged the Wandesforde power and authority, while also underling the community relations between the people of Castlecomer and the Wandesforde family.

Another question we must ask is can we truly use the concept of “ideology” to describe the continuing dominance of a Anglo-Irish family ? The author believes that the use of the concept of “ideology” to summarise the rules and the conduct of successive members of the Wandesforde family is quite justified, especially when one sees the family as an institution, a well established capitalist institution. Evidence for this can be seen by looking at the routine of everyday life in Castlecomer. The Wandesfordes as landlords and employers controlled the “opportunity to work” and the “opportunity to be housed” within the communal sphere. What this meant for the vast majority of tenants and their families was the difference between eating or starving, between being sheltered or being homeless. With community relations being defined then, within the confines of ownership and control of human and material resources, the Wandesforde family can be described as a capitalist institution. An institution

that truly dominated the lives and the well-being of the Castlecomer people. The author thus believes that the Wandesforde survival into the late twentieth century was because of this ownership and control of a dual system of capital. Equipped with this dual system of capital and a versatile ideology they were able to survive and to change with time, to adapt economically and culturally in a century of turbulence and violence.

The purpose of this chapter then is to provide an introduction to the Wandesforde ideology . It will therefore try to trace the landlord ideology of the previous centuries. Taking examples from the Wandesforde family, while noting their differences and similarities the author will attempt to place this unusual Anglo-Irish landowning family within a broader twentieth century ideological sphere. Lastly this chapter will introduce Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde the individual with whom this study is primarily concerned with and the last family member to inherit the landed estate of 20,000 acres in the twentieth century. The author will trace his ideological evolution by examining what she believes to be two major watersheds in his life and as a consequence two major challenges to the Wandesforde power and Ideology. These two watersheds will be discussed in chapters two and three. But first we must now turn and describe how the Wandesforde family came to live in North Kilkenny.

The plantation and settlement of Idough alias Castlecomer must be seen as an on-going process from the arrival of the Anglo-Norman Strongbow to the land settlements of the beginning of this century. H.B. Mc Call notes in his book The Wandesfordes of Kirklington and Castlecomer, that the territory of Idough was part of the grant which was given to Strongbow from King Henry II in the seventeenth year of his reign (1170). This grant was the whole province of Leinster except the city of Dublin. The territory of Idough alias Castlecomer was part of this grant. Upon Strongbows death Idough descended to his five sons, who each in turn died without issue. This extensive estate thus descended within the royal grant to their five sisters as "heirs partioners". H.B. Mc Call says;

The territory of Idough which even at that early time was known as Brennan's Country was by partition allotted to Isabel the third sister, who took to husband

Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester. (2)

H.B. Mc Call adds that the genealogy from this point is well known but that it maybe useful to repeat it again so he describes how Idough came into the possession of the Tudor Kings of England. He surmises it thus, Isabels son, who succeeded her was Richard de Clare, and he had a son and three daughters of which only the second eldest daughter Elizabeth survived. She was married to John de Burgh, Earl of Ulster and from her, Idough passed to her son and heir William, Earl of Ulster. William had only one daughter Elizabeth, who married Lioniel, Duke of Clarence and her daughter and heir, Philippa, who succeeded to Idough became the wife of Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March. Mc Call concludes that Roger Mortimer her son succeeded to Idough and had two children Edmund and Anne. Anne who latter married Richard, Earl of Cambridge succeeded to Idough when her brother died without issue. She was the mother of Richard the Duke of York, he later became the father of King Edward IV of England. Thus Idough fell into the hands of the Tudor Kings and their descendants. Mc Call notes,

Idough descended to Henry VIII and successively to his three children, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth. These monarchs all dying without issue, King James I next succeeded. (3)

Mc Call says that on 5 August 1618, King James I granted the lands and the territory of Idough to Francis Edgeworth the then Lord Deputy of Ireland. "His heirs and assigns under a fee farm rent and tenure in soccage as of the Castle of Dublin". (4) According to William Nolan in his book called Fassadinin, he says that "there is no evidence to suggest that Edgeworth ever occupied or even attempted to occupy any portion of the territory of Idough". (5) He argues that one can ascertain why this was so by looking at the Calendar of Ormonde deeds, which says that the Gaelic hills occupied by the four O'Brennan septs were avoided by "civil citizens" who lived in "walled towns or other places of strength for their securitie, saufgarde and succour". (5a) It is therefore not surprising to learn that he subsequently transferred the lands of Idough through "several mese assignments, two thirds to the earl of Ormond and the residue one third to the earl of Londonderry". (6) Both Nolan

and Mc Call elaborate the process by which the land fell into the possession of the first Wandesfore who came to Ireland in 1635, Christopher Wandesforde.

Early in the year 1635, the O' Brennans refused the new proprietors Ormond and Londonderry, the peaceful possession of the land. They notified the King, Charles I and a commission was called on the 21 May 1635. This Commission was directed under the great seal of Ireland to "inquire what are the limits and bounds of Idough alias Castlecomer, what title the King had to them and who were the occupiers and what their yearly value was." (6a) According to William Nolan, the commission stated that the "O'Brennans were mere Irish and had held the territory by force of arms not having any rightful title". (7) They were classified as intruders into the territory and the King was informed that the territory was found to be his proper right and inheritance. He confirmed Ormonde and Londonderry in Possession. And the lands were conveyed to them to be held under such "rents and reservations as they should think fit for the advancement of the Kings profit and the civilising of that country." (8) However the quest for the ownership of Idough was not settled by this transaction, and Nolan comments that in fact it intensified in the following year 1636. Between April and August of that year four transactions concerning Idough are recorded in the Records of the Rolls. And on the 13 May 1636, the lands were granted to Sir Charles Coote by Ormonde and Londonderry. Nolan adds that on 18 May the second and third entries concerning Idough were to do with Sir Charles Coote. The first was to do with trespass the second recorded his peaceable possession upon the payment of a fine of £4. With trespass to Sir Charles being proved " the Court of the Chauncery ordered the High Sheriff of County Kilkenny to establish Sir Charles Coote in peaceable possession". (9) This he did. However, Sir Charles Coote did not remain proprietor for long, and Nolan says that this can be seen by the final entry which was written on July 5 1636. For it was upon this date that the lands of Idough were "for valuable consideration of money conveyed by indenture tripartite, to Christopher Wandesforde esq. Master of the rolls in the administration of the Earl of Wentworth". (9a)

Wentworth, or the Earl of Strafford as this gentleman is better known, was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1633. H.B. Mc Call argues that he was a very good friend of Christopher Wandesforde. Indeed he goes on to say that he was even godfather to one of the Wandesforde children. It seems that both their political careers were tied together in mutual friendship. Perhaps this is why Christopher Wandesforde was invited over to Ireland, to take up the position of the Master of the rolls within his friends new administration. However Nolan argues that the arrival of Christopher Wandesforde to Ireland had more to do with the fact that he was, like so many others of the period, affected by the spirit of his own time. Nolan continues to say that he was part of a new class of administrators-cum-entrepreneurs who had come to make their fortune by settling and planting. He concludes by saying that it was the presence of “large quantities of virgin woodland and unknown amounts of ironore” which attracted the first Wandesforde to North Kilkenny and that is why he began his colony here “for the good of the Church and the Commonwealth.” (10) Mc Call notes that the Castle and the lands of Castlecomer in the territory of Idough were totally undeveloped, but concludes that this was a temporary situation and that even though;

Mr Wandesforde lived little more than three years after the acquisition of this property and that he was at the same time deeply engaged in the affairs of state..... we can only marvel at the extent of the improvements he was able to affect. (11)

According to Tom Lyng in his book called Castlecomer Connections “Wandesforde set about developing on a Yorkshire pattern of coal, iron and sheep, the first and only industrial plantation in Ireland” at the time. (12)\* Lyng adds that in order to do this he says that, “he imported a work force of some 600 Yorkshire men who could carry out projects in housing, farming, forestry, mining, manufacture, hunting and Church promotion”. (13) No doubt these men helped him to build the Manorial home and the town of Castlecomer, whose foundations were laid around 1637. Locally it is said that the layout and design of the town

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\* The reference here to ‘Yorkshire’ by Tom Lyng comes from the fact that the Wandesforde family are originally from Yorkshire in England and have ancestral homes in Kirklington, Hudswell and Hipswell.

was modelled on a town called Alsinore in Italy. Tom Lyng notes this is based not upon fact but more upon fable but he adds that “it was Irelands first town of houses built with stone and lime mortar”. (13a) He also notes that Christopher Wandesforde introduced manufactures of pottery, textiles and ironware to the area. “The textiles included ‘fustians and broadcloth’, (fabrics of cotton and wool)” (14). The ironware included scythes which introduced “the art of mowing and hay making, an art hitherto not practised in Idough.” (14a) Indeed it was also he who was responsible for the foundation of the family coal collieries.

In the turbulent politics of the period Christopher Wandesforde had little time to profit from his new speculation. After the recall of Strafford in 1641, Wandesforde became Lord Deputy of Ireland but died in the December of that year. However, if the years 1636-1641 mark the foundation of the town of Castlecomer. There is little evidence to indicate it. According to William Nolan in a book called Irish Country Towns. He notes that even though claims made in 1653 by William Wandesforde to the commonwealth for the return to him of his brothers estate referred to. “Coalpits, woods, Ironworks, which were lying waste and inhabited by strangers and Irish not paying any rent”. (15) The contemporary Down survey shows nothing more than a bawn and castle. While the civil survey notes only a “little house with Iron mine and coal at Castlecomer”. (15a) He also adds that the self same petition also asserted that there was a population of five hundred English Protestants which had settled in Idough, alias Castlecomer, but that these had fled. It also said that the natives were also encouraging the return of priests to say mass. These claims again seem to be greatly exaggerated. The 1659 census proves that Castlecomer had but a population of 40 (4 English and 36 Irish). William Nolan says that the only “other major settlement in the barony, had 127 adults of whom 23 were English”. (16) Hardly enough to have a population of 500 strong. He concludes that the town must have been a ‘rudimentary urban place’.

It seems from the Wandesforde manuscripts that Castlecomer belongs firmly to the late eighteenth century. William Nolan says a “1759 map depicts the demesne with plantations and the inevitable gazebo”. while a “1783 painting shows Castlecomer house east of the

Dinin river". (17) Castlecomer received its formal layout with a central square, four intersecting streets, market house, big house, demesne and Church of Ireland Church under the developing eye of Lady Anne Wandesforde\* . She succeeded to the estate in 1784, after the death of her father Lord John Earl of Wandesforde. She later married John Butler of Garryricken and thereby became the Countess of Ormonde. It must be said that the Countess of Ormonde or Lady Anne Wandesforde, exemplifies the landowning ideology of her time. The Irish country house was in its element. A society that held dear to its heart the importance of rank. As Peter Somerville-large comments;

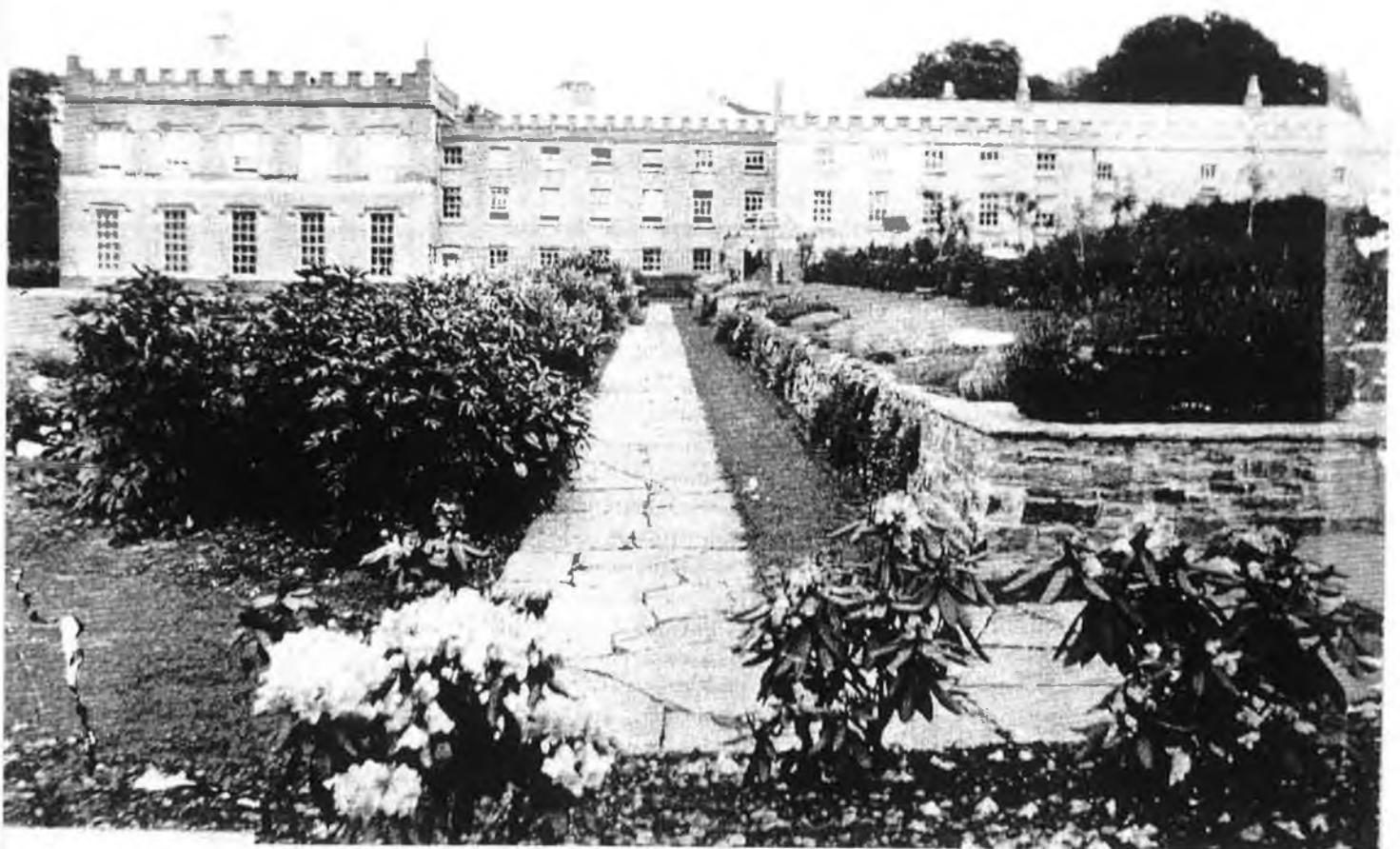
“An elevation in rank was a signal for improvements overspending on houses which reflected their circumstance was common among newly elevated peers who faced ruin rather than deny their new status.” (18)

It was an age of servants, hunts, balls and long formal dinners. Mary Wollstonecraft describes it as a time where “the ladies bored, cooped up in their earthly paradise.....nothing to do but to read, chatter, play chess and wash in ass’s milk”. (19) For isolated gentlemen and ladies of taste and education. “Boozing squireens and middlemen offered nothing in the way of company”. (19a) No wonder there were absentees. However it must be remembered that an Irish peerage was not worth as much as an English one. And one tended to go and live on the estate with the biggest form of Income. Thus it is not surprising that Lord Eyre described his own elevation to the Irish House of lords as being “secured a ward in the infirmary, the House of Lords, where it astonished me to find men with one leg in the grave as open to corruption, and as eager in the pursuit of worldly advantage as if they were fifteen”. (20)

An invitation to visit Lady Ormonde at Castlecomer House was an important occasion. The Manuscript collection contains several printed invitation cards. One dated from the early 1780 says;

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\* This woman is Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde’s Great-Great Grandmother. She married at 15 years of age. C.F. Family Tree in appendices.



*Castlecomer House:  
South side, commanding a view over a  
ha-ha wall, of the Deen Valley, with its  
ancient Dysart, and of Knocknadogue –  
Hill of Idough – homeland of the Brenan  
Chiefs whom the Wandesfordes of Castle-  
comer House re-placed.*

“Sir Edward and Elizabeth Littlehales, will have the honour of waiting on Lady Ormonde at dinner on Thursday the 20 March”. (21)

As with most of her fellow Irish peers Lady Ormondes interest in her estate lay more with improvement and ornamentation of the estate on the inside of the wall rather on the outside. Nolan argues that Castlecomer house with its “carefully contrived architecture of the Big house and its environs reflected a set of human values and preferences which had little in common with the world of the colliers and under tenants living in the shadow of its walls.” (22) When one looks at photographs of the house one can see that the Wandesforde ideology was not purely abstract it also had a physical presence in the lives of the Castlecomer people\*. Both Nolan and Lyng agree that the house under Lady Anne Ormonds careful planning, held an “isolated and commanding location”, and that the “lodge house and long symmetrical tree lined avenue symbolised social dominance and separateness.” (23) Lady Ormonde lavished great care on her esoteric demesne another characteristic she shared with her fellow peers. In a period when land hungry tenants were voraciously extending settlement to the harsh infertile hill lands, it only further illustrates the detachment of Irish landlords from their dependant tenantry. The Wandesforde Manuscripts contain other examples of late seventeenth century Wandesforde ideology. Lady Ormondes lease book from between the years 1758-1797 shows her attitude to leasing land outside the walls.

“6 Aug. 1794

Between the right Hon. Anne Countess of ormonde, wife of the right Hon. John Earl of Ormonde of the one part and John Hendriekan of Ballycoma gent of the other part, of all those lands of Ballycoma containing 162 acres plantation measure, more or less, for the *lives* of Ralph Clarke of Moneenroe in the County of Kilkenny”. (24)

The important word here is “lives”, for it provides evidence of the existence of long leases and it clearly demonstrates the presence of middlemen tenants who no doubt held “discretionary rights over their sites.” (25) Nolan argues that Lady Ormondes role within the Castlecomer townscape was purely that of “planning authority rather than town

developer.” (26) Indeed the Wandesforde manuscripts do contain examples of this from the rental accounts of the Castlecomer estate in 1821. The rental amounted to £7, 339 in this year with arrears which remained after payment of rent coming to £3, 102, Nolan estimated that a relatively minor expenditure, approximately twenty four per cent of total outgoings concerned “payment for new buildings and other town improvements.” (27)

After the death of the Countess of Ormond her son Charles, Harvard, Butler, Clarke, Southwell Wandesforde\* began a programme of rationalisation. For the middlemen in the area this was a new and unwanted aspect of the Wandesforde landlord institution but it was particularly successful in breaking the strength of the middlemen interests in the area. Largely under his influence it can be said that by 1850 over half of the towns 262 housing units were in landlord hands.

The Wandesforde ideology at this time was again following a similar pattern of development in line with their fellow peers. Landlords such as the Wandesfordes whose predecessors had facilitated and encouraged the growth of the middlemen system, now found that it drastically reduced the revenue they received in the form of rent. They were compelled to rid themselves of the scourge of the middlemen. In the case of the Castlecomer estate it is probably more mature to assume that Charles Harvard Wandesforde was influenced more by the financial considerations than by the damaging social effect which uncontrolled subdivision led too, when he chose to terminate this system on his estate. But as Tom Lyng notes the necessity of rationalisation was not fully understood by the Castlecomer tenants and it generally led to in the case of land “evictions and to land war agitation, while an attempt to rationalise mining led to murders which middlemen accused miners and miners accused middlemen.” (28)

The Wandesforde ideology still held the basic features of “paternalism” and “property owning and developing ascendancy” but manuscript evidence suggest that Charles Harvard

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\* Charles, Harvard, Butler, Clarke Southwell Wandesforde is Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesfordes Great-Grandfather, he died at Kirklington in 1860 and is buried there.

Wandesforde was becoming increasingly involved in the day to day administration of the estate a new and third dimension which was soon to become a future common characteristic with later Wandesforde generations. Charles, Harvard Wandesforde was actively engaged in trying to improve drainage, rebuilding tenant farmhouses and rationalising existing field systems. Nolan says that "landlord assistance was given either in the form of materials such as timber for the erection of dwellings or fences, or as financial help to defray tenant expenses". (29) According to L.J. Proudfoot for many Irish landowners between 1700-1900 there is evidence of low level investment in agriculture this he argues was due to the "survival of considerable numbers of lengthy leases". (30) He concludes that the propensity among landowners to invest directly in agriculture was "conditioned by their previous success in regaining such control by letting directly to occupying tenants as the earlier middlemen leases fell in". (31) From the Wandesforde Manuscript evidence it is possible to suggest that in the case of the Wandesforde family there was a high level of agricultural investment, they were in fact not so financially strained as most of their contemporaries and they took a keen interest in their landed estate. It is possible to see this by the fact that at this time they began a campaign to regularise tenant activities through the implementation of set rules and regulations. The "Regulations to be observed by the Tenants in Castlecomer Estate", were issued in 1850 by Charles, Harvard Wandesforde. (32) Under these "Regulations" the tenants could not for instance, break up grassland to erect buildings or make drains within one mile of the town. Outside this well-defined area they were to keep their buildings and yards in a proper state of repair and cleanliness. Failure to comply with these regulations was punishable by an increase in rent or in some cases eviction. The manuscripts also suggest that the Estate farm was important as a centre of innovation. "Dairying was the major farm enterprise here and the estate papers indicate that the fattening of store cattle was an important subsidiary activity." (33) It is thus possible to say that the scope and range of estate management had developed considerably upon the Wandesforde estate by the late eighteenth century. Charles, Harvard Wandesforde occupied by 1850 1, 413 acres of his property which was 19, 920 statute acres, a stark contrast to his mothers occupation in 1812 who at this time, Nolan estimates only held a mere 416 acres. (34)

However the same control cannot be said to have existed within the family coal mines. The mines which began on a commercial basis in the late seventeenth century, were no longer generating £10,000 a year profit for their Wandesforde proprietors. In fact the Wandesfordes failed to break the middlemen interests in this area so they in reality exercised a considerably lesser degree of control over the collieries than they did over their land. But the Wandesfordes still retained an economic interest in mining, which was later to become more than a supplementary income. Their involvement and their relationship in connection with the mines will be elaborated and examined in chapter Two and Three.

When one examines the Landlord ideology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century one is amazed to discover that it did not change much in its transgression from one century to another. Indeed one might be tempted to argue that twentieth century landlord ideology differed little from the previous century except for the fact Irish Landlords as a class were in decline. Hunting and long formal dinners were still an important occasion. The Shoot being very formal indeed and these were seldom enjoyed by women. As Peter Somerville-Large comments, "the men went out after breakfast, and all the wives sat around in the drawing room making unattractive things in wool." (35) This was the time in which Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde inherited the estate from his Grandmother Sarah Prior-Wandesforde in 1894\* . The Wandesforde manuscripts show that like his ancestors, he was an astute gentleman with a good head for business. His accounts show a diligent man and are in order and are well kept. According to Tom Lyng, in his book Castlecomer Connections. "The Captain", as he was styled locally, "lived through more changing times and was more part of the Castlecomer Community than any previous Wandesforde". (36) Perhaps this has more to do with the fact that his role within the community had changed greatly and was nothing like that of his ancestors. The Irish land Acts are the key to understanding this change which was slowly occurring within the Wandesforde ideology. The Land Acts between the years 1870

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\* This is Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesfordes Grandmother. She was married to Rev. John Prior. She succeeded to the Wandesforde estate by Royal-licence on 30 August 1882 and took for herself and her descendants the surname and arms of Wandesforde. She died at Castlecomer House in December 1812 and is buried at Mount Juliet, Co. Kilkenny.

and 1903 were part of a universal settlement of the Irish land tenure situation . These Acts were brought about by continuous agitation on the part of Irish tenants and the Irish land league and they culminated in the inevitable rise of Parnell and the Irish Land War. Indeed Pauric Travers argues that “the land settlement of the years 1870-1903 effectively replaced landlordism with a peasant proprietorship or more accurately owner occupancy.” (37) He adds that “Landlord tenant relations though never as bad as sometimes suggested, were certainly a significant source of conflict and tension and contributed to underdevelopment and crisis.” (38) Peter Vaughan seems to share his view and he stresses that the system of owner occupancy did not essentially undermine Landlordism, instead he argues that “it was the changing fortunes of agriculture as much as the land war that undermined Landlordism”. (39) Basically “land ceased to be an attractive investment and land purchase offered the prospect of exchanging land for money.”(39a) Landlords realised that despite their developing interests, inefficiency and under development would remain a constant problem in Irish agriculture and in the end they decided that it was better to get out. The significance of this major change for Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde and to the Wandesforde institution of landlordism was not the undermining of his ancestral ideology but the shifting of its dual power base system to a single but industrial oriented power base system. Under the conditions of the 1903 Wyndham Land act he decided to take advantage of the opportunity to turn his inheritance into money and the bulk of the estate lands of 20,000 acres were, “sold out to Castlecomer Estate tenants for £175,550 @ 3 % thereby (removing) the opprobrium of Landlordism.” (40) According to William Nolan he Wandesfordes were as a result "thrown back on the coal which had lured them to Comer in 1636 and the town which it partly financed". (41) But this author would like to disagree with the use of the term “thrown back”. The result of the 1903 Act was not so traumatic as Dr Nolan has assumed. Indeed Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde still perceived himself as a landlord and indeed this was in fact still the case. The family owned several housing units, in the town (Florence Terrace) and particularly within the mining districts of Moneenroe and Clogh. These houses were built by the Wandesforde family and rented to the miners and their families on short term leases. These houses were supposed to be subjected to landlord improvement on a

yearly basis however, as we shall see in later chapters, this was not the case and poor housing conditions were often seen as an issue of unrest when disputes occurred at the mines. Even Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesfordes lifestyle still reflected that of a landed gentleman. The Wandesforde demesne still vast and beautiful from the days of his Great, Great-Grandmother now became a virtual hunting paradise and an economic investment. From the Manuscript evidence it is possible to see the large expenditure lavished upon Game and in organising shoots for family and friends. Pheasants, grouse, fox, rabbit and ferret's all were available to hunt upon the Wandesforde estate with no shortage of labourers to act as guides and beaters. For example, a Mr "Thomas morrins" paid Edward Cooke (Gamekeeper) "for three days putting out rabbits at 1s per day". His friend a Mr "John Smith" who was also included on the receipt paid for "two days ferreting and smearing rabbit holes at 1s-10d per day." The total cost of the whole expedition including the provision of men for beating and pulling rabbits out was £2-10s-6d" (42)

However, the Land Acts did seal the fate of many landed gentry, since without their land they had no income. For them it meant that, as Peter Somerville-Large comments, "the demesne which they were left with after their tenants had been awarded their holdings did not possess the sort of acreage to give them a living". (43) He goes on to add that without the cushion of rent whatever misery the gathering of it caused in the past, "life began to look bleak, as the Big Houses with its acres of roof vulnerable to wind and rain, and basement glistening with damp, became an increasing burden". (44)

The Wandesfordes were then part of a "lucky few" who did not experience a sudden loss of income which so many of their fellow peers did. Instead the Wandesfordes learned to adapt to the changing economic circumstances and they turned their attention to their mining operations and to the improvement of them and the town. William Nolan says that Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde was an "inventive and energetic man", who, "became a passionate campaigner for the town." (45) He invested private money in coal mining and took personal control of the mines which had previously been worked through leasing

and sub-leasing. He founded the Castlecomer basket factory, the Castlecomer Agricultural Bank to assist small farmers. The Colliery Co-Operative Society and the Castlecomer Tramway Company Ltd. He also set up the local creamery in 1913. His status and rank was enhanced when he became a district councillor. We can see then that his role within the community did not seem to lose its prominence, even though his estate was virtually gone. He was still held to be a man with a rank of importance and not just a mere businessman and employer. The loyalty and affection which Richard, Henry Prior Wandesforde experienced, maybe due to the fact that from the outset he was determined to continue the Wandesforde ideology that of an improving patriarchal figure head. The Manuscripts do contain examples of this. The receipts entitled "sundry repairs and improvements", show the cost and the extent of his expenditure on his tenants. While the receipts entitled "personal" show how he employed local labour to carry out all necessary work;

James Mulhall

Dec. 1894

Joiner, contractor and undertaker, Castlecomer.

Sawing of all kinds done in the best manner at moderate charges.

Roofing and repairs of cottages at Ardra as per contract

£55-0s-0d (46)

The Manuscripts show how interested he was in the day to day living arrangements of his tenants. Again under receipts entitled "Personal" we can see the Wandesforde Ideology at work. Here we learn that he held a contest for the best kept cottage and most improved land, the cost of which was £12. He left an account open for this much in "John Quinns Est. Drapery, Grocery, Bakery, Boot and Leather Warehouse" and enclosed a list of the names of the winning tenants for future reference. (47) A testimony to Wandesforde power and influence can be plainly understood when one examines the large amount of World War I casualties from the Castlecomer area. Young Men urged on by the Big house set off to fight the first World War. Peter Somerville-Large notes how for others the Great War descimated them. Not so for Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde, whose power wilted only slightly under

the pressure from Sinn Fein and the anti-conscription rally held in the town in 1918. In Chapter two the real test to his power and influence has yet to be examined.

To conclude then, we can plainly see that the Wandesforde family were not a stereotypical landowning family. Although they shared many characteristics with their fellow Irish landowners, a vast estate and a legitimatising Ideology, that stemmed from feudal dues and titled privileges. The Wandesforde family were different, because their ideology was based upon a dual capitalist power base, agricultural and industrial. Their survival as a powerful landowning family into the twentieth century, a century of dwindling incomes, loss of power and turbulent politics provides evidence of their uniqueness. That is why this author believes that Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde, the last family member to inherit the landed estate in the twentieth century exemplifies the last of a "dying breed". Indeed the last of a vanished landed elite. "His death in 1956", Tom Lyng notes, "proclaimed the end of Castlecomer house and virtually proclaimed the end of Castlecomer Collieries, for which he had provided baths, a clinic and a welfare society". (48) But perhaps much more than this Captain Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde's death brought an end to an ideology. That of the Irish landed elite, who they were and what they stood for. By the middle of the twentieth century, this landed elite, upon which so much nationalist hatred and blame was placed had disappeared. In chapter two and three, the author will show this gradual disengagement taking Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde as an example of this vanished class.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

## The Miner Rests

Few now the whiteness when.....  
Proud men flecked with blue scars,  
Knowing an obscured geography,  
Veterans of the damp darkness a lost  
league below the Deer Park.

Only relics and lore remains-reflected  
by a removed generation,  
Forged once far from the sun,  
And the fields and the sky,  
From an era of sweat and firestone.

And all the Fathers who braved for daily  
bread, the perils of the Rock and the Vera,  
And other hellish holes.  
And broke their bones in the black underground.

Josh Wiloughby KWG



Collier working at pit face, 1924 - 1969

## CHAPTER TWO

**“Coal has been mined in the Castlecomer area since the earliest times, but it was not until the seventeenth century that the mining was tackled on an organised basis.” (1)**

The origin of commercial coal mining in the Castlecomer area can be traced back to the late sixteenth, early seventeenth century. Sir Christopher Wandesforde Master of the rolls, in the administration of the then Lord Deputy of Ireland, Thomas Wentworth began the Wandesforde association, when he discovered coal in 1640. According to William Nolan it was evident right from the beginning that commercial mining was going to be an important agent of change in the Castlecomer district “as the increased traffic of people, commodities and money had important repercussions on society and settlement”. (2) The Wandesforde family welcomed this change and they attempted to create a stable rural society of miner/farmers by planning the countryside and the town. However, it was only a matter of time before “the lure of the black gold buried under shale and sandstone (had) thrown landlord, farmer and miner together in uneasy juxtaposition”. (3) Here in the small community where nuances of class are more visible it might be suggested that escape from confrontation was impossible. But not for the Wandesforde family who remained confident in their power. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they proved time and time again, that neither bitter industrial disputes nor social or political differences could ever deny the grudging respect and loyalty demanded and given to them by their tenants. Yet by the middle of the twentieth century the Wandesforde power was in decline having suffered two major defeats to their power. What happened to the dominating Wandesforde capitalist institution ?

This chapter will discuss the discovery of coal in the Castlecomer area and will briefly outline the several methods which were used to mine it. The main focus of this chapter will be on however what the author believes to be the first major defeat for the Wandesforde

family power the Trammers\* Strike of 1932. The author believes that the strained labour relations between the militant Castlecomer Mine and Quarry Union and Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde were a major influence on the miners when they decided to call the strike. In this respect the chapter will also attempt to analyse Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde his actions and his ideology.

Boate, an English Mining Engineer observed; “that in the search for Iron in Castlecomer the miners met with sea coale.” (4) The coals he added were sufficient “to furnish a whole country”. (4a) Yet as Nolan adds the absence of knowledge as to the extent of the coal *Seam* and also the lack of navigable waterways prohibited it from being exploited on a larger scale during the period. Christopher Wandesforde began to work the Seam about 1640. The first seam he opened was called the “old three foot”. “This extended for about eight square miles at depths varying from 40 to 100ft”. (4) The coal here was *anthracite* and the depth of the *veins* were not as deep as in the *bituminous* coal fields of Britain. Tom Lyng says; that “*opencast* mining called *Bassett* work was the earliest method of procuring the coal as it was within a few feet of the surface”. (5) The “old three foot” seam was mined however using the *bell pit method*. Pat Feeley describes it as two *shafts* sunk “about fifty yards apart and these were joined by an underground passage in order to allow free circulation of air. When this was done the miners went down and began to dig out the coal on each side of the connecting passage”. (6) As can be imagined air and water, the absence of one and the presence of the other were always a problem in early mining. Nevertheless, Pat Feeley estimates that the Castlecomer miners still managed to remove up to 85% of the coal. This must be seen as a major achievement in such adverse conditions. Especially when one compares it with their English counterparts, who around the same time, Feeley says only removed about 60%.

Mining continued in Castlecomer on a relatively small commercial scale. But by 1689, a mining company was working the Castlecomer coal. William Nolan adds that they were

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\* The Trammers strike 1932., C.F. Glossary for explanation of italicised terms.

transporting the coal overland by horse drawn carts to Leighlinbridge. From there it was sent down the river Barrow “to be sold at St. Mullins and New Ross fro transport to the Dublin market”. (8) By the mid seventeenth century however, contractual verbal agreements between the *colliers* and Lord wandesforde had been reached. This highlights the increased economic importance of Irish coal and the increasing power, influence and interest that the Wandesforde family had in Castlecomer. Coal mining was becoming more than a summer occupation and in 1755 the colliers signed a written agreement with the current Lord Wandesforde. In this the colliers agreed to go to work “whenever Lord Castlecomer told them”. (9) And they did not expect any payment more than “the *colum* and the picking of it for our firing”. (9a) The Landlord in return guaranteed them security of tenure provided “they worked with him and for him the terms above mentioned”. (10) This security of tenure was limited to four acre holdings and a house and for those who held “over and above four acres and a house would hold the portion above four acres during Lord Castlecomer’s pleasure.” (11)

The disadvantages of an inland location continued to be evident. And it is estimated that in 1716 transportation costs of moving coal to Leighlinbridge and then down stream to New Ross, amounted to 44% (£478) of the total cost (£1,077) of running the collieries and Iron mines. However the Wandesfordes were still deriving a considerable income from the collieries in the second half of the eighteenth century. William Nolan says that a “Thomas Campbell stated they were drawing at least £10, 000 a year in 1718.” (12) Despite the contractual system of 1755 from the beginning to the mid 1800 the social system of coal mining was badly organised and relatively haphazard. Before 1755 very little professional information existed regarding the extent of the coal field and pits were sunk here and there with no real indication as to whether the coal seam existed there or not. As before the agreement responsibility for sinking the *pits* lay with the proprietor who then leased the *pit* to a *Master collier* or middle man. His job was to provide a crew and to work the coal in return for a share in the profits. The largest group of this underground crew consisted of the colliers who were sub divided into three categories *cutters*, *cleaners* and *breakers* . Once the

coal was broken it was then loaded into trams which were operated manually by *trammers* and *pushers*. These two categories worked together to bring the trams to the pit head. From there it was loaded onto horse drawn carts and transported to Leighlinbridge. Within this complex mining community there was no mixing of jobs, a trammer never worked as a *cutter* nor would *abreaker* ever do a carman's job. It was the Master colliers job to ensure all members of the crew did their job. It is not surprising therefore to learn that the Master collier was indeed a very powerful man who could make or break you within the mining community.

William Tighe, observed that the Master colliers power extended to the commercial area also. He also noted that the Master collier paid his crew in notes which were passed on at depreciated rates. In the end the collier was obliged "to pay a half penny more [for e.g.] on the price of a pottle of meal when he pays in tickets as they are called". (13) The status enjoyed by the Master collier was certainly a result of their economic dominance in society. As employers they provided work, as landowners they allocated potato land and as huxters they supplied essential commodities at exorbitant prices. Yet if they took advantage of the poor collier they did nothing for the Wandesfordes for them they were certainly an economic thorn in their side. Tighe refers to a report on colliery affairs compiled circa 1826. This stated exactly how much of a thorn they were. It spoke of the fact "that for some years back the produce of collieries had been declining rapidly and instead of producing a £10, 000 profit like a few years previously the net profit for the previous year (1825) was £954". (14) A new system of production was therefore deemed necessary and attempts at rationalisation were made. This rationalisation process was as much to do with the change in economic circumstances caused by increased competition from the English and Welsh fields, as it had to do with the Wandesforde bid for total control over their mines.

The Wandesforde Manuscripts suggest that this procedure began in 1826. When a David Aher, eminent surveyor and engineer was suspended by the colliery trustees from his position as manager. Needless to say the Master Colliers vigorously resisted the attempts of change refusing to give up their contracts or to have the pits held under these contracts worked under

any other system. For the Wandesfordes this rationalisation of mining followed a similar chronological sequence as their attempts to eliminate middle men in land. William Nolan remarks that both commenced on the death of the Countess of Ormonde. He adds that the ensuing conflict in the colliery district “was symptomatic of the general social and economic unrest in Pre-famine Ireland. The depression in the colliery trade was accentuated by the general impoverished state of the country in the decade before the famine.”(15) In 1826 colliery supervisors were brought from Durham coalfield to try and effect these changes in the mining methods in Castlecomer. They suggested the small uneconomic pits should be closed and deep pits with ventilation should be sunk. The new plan was to confine the collieries to a certain space i.e. to sink one pit and to work that until it was exhausted. They also suggested that the contract system or Master collier system should be discontinued. Opposition to these new methods led to open hostility between the management and the middle men. So that by 1841 there were no real innovations and very little improvement in the Castlecomer mines. The Master collier retained his influence within Colliery culture where it remained strong until the establishment of the Castlecomer Colliery Company Ltd in 1924.

But what affect had this challenge by the Master-colliers on the Wandesforde capitalist institution and its ideology ? Already it would seem that from the birth of their interest within the Castlecomer coal field their power and ideology\* have been questioned. What must be remembered here is that the Wandesforde economic power and influence within the Castlecomer community was based upon a legitimatising ideology. An ideology that was made up of various concepts, but the principle concept was the notion of “rights and duties”. These “rights and duties” can be described as feudal like ties which bound the Wandesforde master and tenant/miner in an unequal alliance. The Wandesforde family believed in these rights and the tenant/miner acknowledged these rights by paying rents and working for the family. However, with the introduction of the Middleman/Master-collier, the Wandesforde family ideology was being challenged. The resolute and stubborn Master collier who denied

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\* For full explanation of the term ideology see chapter 1.



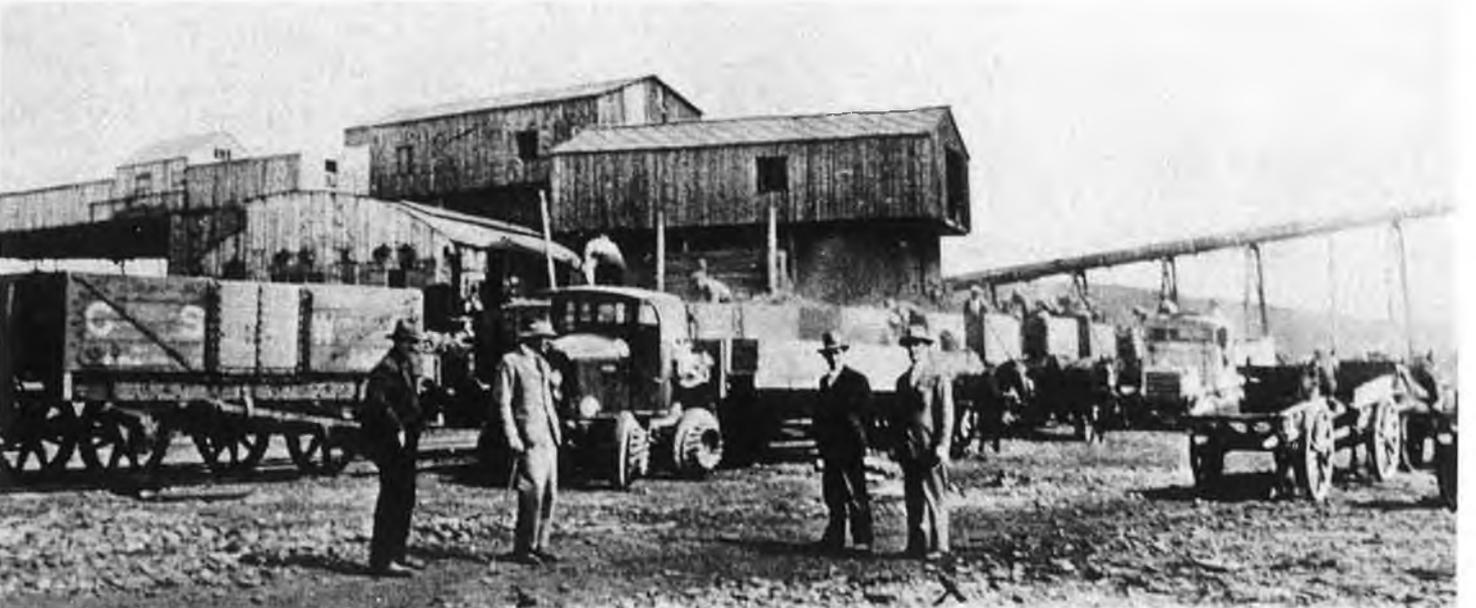
the Wandesfordes access to their coal was directly contradicting the Wandesforde ideology, i.e. their right to mine the coal on their land. This in itself should have had severe consequences for their defined community role of total dominating landlord. But another important aspect must be remembered here. The Wandesforde economic power base consisted of two types of capital, agricultural and industrial. In this period in question however, the Wandesforde economic power base relied heavily upon its agricultural income i.e. ground rents, rather than the industrial income, i.e. the money they should have been receiving for the leasing of the colliery to mining companies and the share of profits from the sale of the coal. One can say then that the industrial capital income was only supplementary in this period, and that therefore the Wandesforde capitalist institution was not really affected by this questioning of its ideology. It was able to remain powerful and dominate other aspects of Castlecomer life. But this did not mean that the Wandesfordes gave up their right to the coal mines. Indeed they continued their attempts at rationalisation until they regained control from the Master-colliers. Until the Wandesforde capitalist institution truly controlled the economic life of the Castlecomer people.

When Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesfordes inherited the estate and the Castlecomer collieries from his grand mother, Sarah Prior Wandesforde in 1894, things were not so different from one hundred years before. There were still the social divisions within the community, Colliers and Master-colliers, rich and poor. Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde was still the Landowner and Proprietor. But whatever challenges his ancestors had to face during the 1640 and even the 1820, the 1930 and the 1940 were to prove the real testing time for the Wandesforde power and ideology .

With the near exhaustion of the "Old three foot seam"\* , the Wandesfordes sunk another pit. This became known as the Jarrow seam after the famous colliery in Northumberland. Altogether seven Jarrow pits were sunk and all were worked until they were exhausted. However just before the outbreak of the first world war another seam was discovered at



*Coal Screening Machinery at Deerpark, 1926.*



*Latel Tractor at Deerpark Colliery 1930. Included are Fred Prior-Wandesford and R. B. Gahan.*

Skehana . This seam was first worked at a pit in West Skehana. And then at the Deerpark, which opened in 1924. This same year saw the establishment of the Castlecomer Colliery Company Ltd. Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde had made an ideological transition it would seem from an Anglo-Irish landowner to and Anglo-Irish Managing director. To fully understand this, one must look back to the Land Act of 1903. Under its terms and conditions Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde had divested himself of the bulk of his 20,000 acre inheritance. Thus in real terms he was no longer a Anglo-Irish landowner. At this point it must be added that Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde continued to have an active involvement in Castlecomer which as Anna Brennan notes; “contrasted sharply to the steady retreat of many of his gentry compeers to new colonial pastures”. (16) He in effect adapted the Wandesforde power base from a dual capitalist system to a single industrial one. As a result his ancestral legitimising ideology adapted too, combining landlord and industrialist into one unique weapon for economic survival. Yet as will be shown this transition was not complete. The ambiguities of his role within the collieries can be blamed for much of the trouble which culminated in the 1932 strike and the rise of a militant union. It must be assumed then that Richard, Henry Prior Wandesforde was aware of this ambiguity and the way his men perceived him.

Pat Feeley describes Wandesforde as a paternal autocrat who looked on the miners not so much as his employees but as his people. He also adds that in manner he was withdrawn and reserved and regarded by the men as stern and hard. He concludes “most of the miners in the nineteen twenties saw him as their total lord and master determining salaries and conditions.” (16) This could be seen as an example of Wandesforde power and influence. Yet when one examines the strength of the local union branch of the Irish transport & general workers union. One can readily see why the men accepted what contract they were offered. And why the Wandesforde family boasted of never having yielded to pressure or to strikes. Right from the outset (1924), the Irish Transport and General Workers Union was involved in the Castlecomer Colliery Company Ltd. Yet of the 500 strong workforce, less than 5% were actually members. And as the 1920 progressed it was increasingly felt by these unionised

workers, that the ITGWU was ineffective in dealing with the problems of all miners. For one thing miners wages were directly linked to the market price of coal. If the price rose, the miners got an increase. If it fell, their wages were reduced. However, it must be added here that they did not always regard this as unfair, but wage reductions when they did come undoubtedly brought with them hardship and suffering. Even among the miners themselves the rigid social divisions of work, Fireman, Collier, Trammer led to different pay conditions. And There were others like pushers, who were paid less than the colliers on this “sliding scale”.

According to Anna Brennan, the homogenous mining society described by Tighe in the early nineteenth century never really existed. She adds that mining society was not a homogenous society under one leader, the Master-collier but an interdependent one. And that this “interdependence was created through the primary tasks of mining, hauling, storing, transporting and selling coal and culm.” (17) She also says that later on in the twentieth century the “nuances of class” were the product of this division of labour and that this can clearly be seen when one looks at the pyramidal structure of the management at the Castlecomer Colliers. At the apex of course was Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde\*, below him were the agents, engineers and the pit managers who may be defined as the professional class among the mining community. Even though the colliers were considered the elite of the workforce their wages were very much controlled by the physical availability of coal. Anna Brennan notes that lack of coal was usually determined by “geological faults, impure coal seams, bad roofs on underground roads, excess water and poor ventilation”. (18)

Adding to the “sliding scale” from his wages the miner had to pay for fuses, gelignite, candles, detonators and so on. The rent was deducted and during 1928 there was also a weekly payment towards the church then being built in Moneenroe. Feeley in his article cited the pay packet of a Jimmy Walshe to illustrate this point . Walshe’s total earnings for the fortnight, ending December 15 1928 came to £8 3s 7d for 96 hours. After total deductions Jimmy Walshe took home £4 0s 11d, less than half. Given the conditions in which the miners worked and the dangers they had to face daily the miners felt that their

wages were too low, and rightly so. There was then a general dissatisfaction with the management and the Wandesforde Family. Whose increasing wealth only further emphasised the increasing need of the poor collier. The Wandesfordes were also blamed for inadequate housing conditions and accidents in the pits. Accidents were a particular bone of contention, since there seems not to have been any adequate insurance scheme for miner compensation. These conditions served to highlight the need for a strong union and strong leadership. Feeley comments that there was a “general feeling about the Transport union at the time.....it knew little about mining and did not understand miners problems”. (19)

However worker consciousness was sharpened by events further afield and the Castlecomer miners began to look across the channel at their English counterparts, who they saw had their own union. And many in Castlecomer felt that they should have something similar. What they got in Nicholas Boran, known locally as Nicksy, was a radical and innovative leader. A man who knew, first hand colliery life, a man who was prepared to try and improve both the living and working conditions of his fellow workers. Boran was born in Massford at the site of the Jarrow coal seam. He was sent into the pits while still a child and began work as a trammers assistant at the Modubeagh Colliery Company, at the age of fourteen. From 1919 to 1921 Boran was tending pumps in the pits at Glenmullen, a 10 hour day for 4s 3d. During the civil war he took the republican side, in which he was wounded and hospitalised in Limerick. Later on he became attracted towards communism and he formed a branch of the Revolutionary Workers Group (RWG) in the mines in the 1930. The first members were Nicksy Boran, Paddy O’Carroll, Tom Walshe and Jimmy Walshe.

“The Kilkenny people” newspaper, wrote at the time of his death in 1971 how much he was perceived in the Castlecomer area as something of a “folk hero”. This was really an under estimation of his life, which seems at points to be totally unlikely. For example, Feeley recalls Boran’s journey to Moscow, to represent the miners of the RWG at the Red International of Labour Unions. He recounts how, when Boran was refused a passport and visa by the Irish Government, he was smuggled out of the country. In Russia he apparently

spent three months travelling up and down the country visiting farming collectives and the coal mining area of the Donetz Basin. According to the "Workers Voice" newspaper, when Boran returned from Moscow at the end of November. The bus in which he was travelling in was stopped just as he came into Castlecomer by two guards. Who took him to the police barracks at Massford for questioning. It also says that the "miners had waited outside and when he emerged they cheered and then walked him home." (18) Thus we can see the first stirrings of a new ideology, that of Communism in Castlecomer.

Surprisingly much of the tension and agitation which followed was carried out between the catholic church and Borans communist cell. Which formed into the Irish Mine and quarry Union on December 3 1930 in Moneenroe, the heart of the mining district. The "Workers Voice" comments how Bob Stewart, a prominent member of the British communist party came to give "advice and help" in setting up the new union. He told them to expect "total opposition from the combined forces of church and state." (19) He also congratulated them on their fighting spirit and encouraged them to be ambitious, pointing out that; "there was a wide field of unorganised workers in mining and quarrying and that these could become a base on which to build a really big union". (19a) As can be seen there was no attempt made to pretend that the new union was politically non-aligned. Even the Government knew about Boran. In a confidential report submitted by the Department of Justice to the government around this time described him as a "worker in a small coal mine who has since his return from Moscow formed a communist club amongst his fellow workers". (20) Having said this Nicky Boran and his Mine and Quarry Union are a perfect example of the first real challenge to Wandesforde power and ideology. Despite the fact that the union was communist in orientation, and that it appeared at a conservative period in Irish Free State history. This author believes that it was the first real conscious, organised attempt at questioning an established order or ideology, that of capitalism and landlordism. It is felt by the author that Boran had an added advantage over the ideological challenges of the Master-colliers in the early nineteenth century, an advantage that suggested the possibility of winning. This advantage was simply based upon the fact the Wandesforde capitalist

institution now had a single capitalist base and was therefore more vulnerable to open conflict than ever before. Although Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde owned several housing units within and around the town of Castlecomer in this sense he was still a landlord, the rent he received from them was not sufficient enough to maintain his almost gentry lifestyle. Unfortunately for him but not so for Boran it was this vulnerable aspect of the Wandesforde institution he had forgotten. Perhaps this example clearly shows the extent of Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesfordes personal confusion about who he really was Anglo-Irish landowner or Anglo-Irish managing Director.

This almost obnoxious self-centred ambiguity can be seen in the way Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde conducted himself and family community relations before the inevitable Trammers\* strike of 1932. At this period the Wandesforde family seem to have refrained from comment and stood back content in the knowledge that they were too powerful to be defeated. They in effect let the anti-union campaign launched by Fr. Kavenagh of the Roman Catholic Church fight their corner for them. Evidence of this aloofness can only be seen through the amazing letter correspondence published in the local papers the Kilkenny people and Journal between 1930 and 1932. In the end the Editors had to close the column to this subject as it was becoming too heated. It can also be seen from the way the Company dealt with the initial union grievances put forward in the early days of the union. Namely the housing conditions and the type of coal which the miners were allowed to use for private consumption. This type of coal was of very poor quality and it was really the waste left behind by cleaning and separating. Boran described it as a “stone with a thin coal covering”.

Indeed when the union asked the Company for one ton of coal per household per month to be sold to the miners at production costs. (This would amount to 100 tons per month or less than half a days production.) It was at a time when the men were on half time due to the reason that there was no demand for coal. Boran felt that the coal that was stockpiled in the yards anyway should be given as a goodwill gesture on the part of the Company and would not have impaired the financial state of the Company. The management responded to this demand as “so unreasonable that it could not be considered”. (22) Another source of unrest

among the miners was the imposing of a time check introduced six months previously. Whereby the miners had to be at the pithead 5 minutes before going down or lose a day's work.

As time went on Fr. Kavenagh was becoming more and more concerned with the evils of communism. His sermons became increasingly personal and in one sermon he described Nicksy as the "gent with the cloven hoof and that communists were in receipt of Russian gold". (23) The miners increasingly refused to take these attacks lying down and in the "Workers Voice" newspaper of the 20 December 1930, the committee of the union sent a long statement in which they attacked the activities of Fr. Kavenagh. They said that they were fighting a "combination of the boss, the police and the priest". (24) From this evidence it is plain to see that the priest supported the employer against the workers even though he looked to the workers for financial support.

From December 1930 to January 1932, Boran effectively used the media to highlight miner grievances and through his writings in the "Workers voice" he increased worker solidarity. For example on the 6 December 1930 he graphically described the ramshackle timber house which was home to miner Jack Brien, his wife and fourteen children in the Timber Row. He called it a "wooden hut" with a corrugated iron roof full of holes, the walls of which "consisted of two single boards and a four inch mud cavity with the rain coming through the roof broken windows and drains". (25) He further stated that the houses were fifty years old and that no repairs had been carried out by the coal company since 1919. By January 1931 the "Kilkenny People" had painted an even gloomier picture of life in the Kilkenny coal field. The miners working a two day week and living in "vile, unsanitary huts under the threat of eviction". (26) This was an attempt at propaganda yet some of Borans accusations were true. Indeed through out the Autumn of 1932 things were bad at the colliery, with the management claiming there was no sale for the tons of coal stockpiled high in the yards. In September, the miners had enough and the Trammers threatened a strike unless there was a wage increase of 3d a ton. Boran handed in notice to this effect.

In the "Irish Workers Voice", in October. Boran wrote of the widespread discontent among the mining community. He claimed that the rates in the Jarrow and Skehana seams fell well short of what miners should be getting in accordance with the "sliding scale". The Company ignored the union's threats and demands and on the 17 October an all out strike of 400 miners supported by the militant Mine and Quarry union took place. The strikers held a rally in the Square in Castlecomer to put their case and to appeal for support. Feeley says "they marched in formation through the town to the music of melodeons". (26) He adds that the strike began "with a militant flourish but the men and their families were soon in difficulties. The union had no funds and by the third week the strikers were feeling the pinch". (26a) Local shopkeepers and publicans were canvassed for food and money. Anna Brennan says that they "responded positively to appeals for assistance and a distress committee was established to collect aid throughout the south-east of Ireland." (27) As the strike continued Boran waged his class war in the Newspapers. In the "Irish Workers Voice" in November 1932 Boran invoked history and anti-planter sentiment by saying

four hundred Irish workers are battling bravely for a decent standard of life,  
for their women folk and their children. Their enemy is an imperialist,  
Mine owner, a planter for whom Castlecomer is but an economic pocket  
Borough; he owns every sod of it. (28)

The Government became alarmed at this type of propaganda and in an attempt to try and settle the dispute the Department of Industry and Commerce invited Boran and the other leaders to a meeting in Dublin. They suggested that the miners return to work pending the conference of all parties concerned. However, the strike committee did not agree to this suggestion although it meant another period of indefinite hardship for the strikers. The Wandesforde ideology was under threat and it was clear some sort of reply or defence was necessary. What is strange to learn at this point is that Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde did not present his own defence but chose Captain Gahan Secretary to the Company. In an interview with the "Irish independent" he put forward, what was clearly the Wandesforde ideology. Captain Gahan said that the contract under which the miners worked was unaltered for years and that conditions had not changed that much. He therefore questioned the miners

reasons for a strike now. He also pointed out that the *clean coal agreement* was the same as that in other collieries abroad. In the "Irish Workers Voice" of the 19 November 1932, Nicky Boran replied to this saying that the contract had been forced upon the miners. He said that the overtime the miners were doing were in direct breach of the coal miners Regulation Act which had fixed the number of hours they had to work. At this point more moves were made to bring an end to the dispute. Two local T.D.s, the Labour TD. William Davin and Sean Gibbons, the Fianna Fail TD. were asked to act as mediators. These two men met the union and managerial representatives and as a result two proposals were put forward. The second proposal was the more important of the two since this was the one that was accepted by both sides.

This proposal stated that there would be no return to work until some form of assurance of an increase in tonnage rates was received. After further deliberations it was agreed that two half pennies increases in tonnage was an adequate offer. The miners accepted this offer and agreed to return to work immediately. The strike was over but there were repercussions. Feeley says that the "union leaders boasted of the miners glorious victory. There was in fact very little glory. The strikers had been brought to their knees through lack of funds and were glad of any offer that would allow them to return to work with some semblance of dignity".  
(27)

Buoyed up by their success the union decided to continue with their plans to build a workers hall because during the strike Fr. Kavenagh had refused them access to the local school. The clergy naturally saw this independence as a further challenge to their power and authority. What followed was the fiercest part of the ideological struggle between Catholicism and socialism/communism. Dr. Collier the local Bishop of Ossory could not ignore such a deliberate provocative step on the part of the miners and he travelled one Sunday to Moneenroe church to warn the people against communism and to denounce the activities of the revolutionaries. It was here that he condemned the union, and the Revolutionary Workers Group and called the "Workers Voice" the voice of the devil. Fr. Kavenagh also continued his attacks on the union and the colliers who supported it although he was now stationed in

Kilkenny City. And in the "Kilkenny Journal" of the 26 November 1932, it reported that the following Sunday Fr. Kavenagh was still speaking on the same subject. "Communists", he said, "were avowed enemies of Catholicism and religion and guilty of sacrilege, desecration and sacerdotal murder". (27) He advised people to defeat them for if they didn't, he warned them that the communists "would drench the world in blood and bring untold misery to ordinary people". (28)

The final blow to the militant Mine and Quarry Union came in the form of Bishop Collers New year pastoral in January 1933. According to Anna Brennan the "pastoral letter was a vehement denunciation of communism and was clearly directed against the Revolutionary Workers Group, the Mine and Quarry Union and the "Workers Voice"". (29) The Bishop outlined the need for the clergy in the area to be on their guard against communist activity. He described the strike as being a "communist push" which was very small scale "but it was real and it had the mark of the beast". (30) Collier claimed that soviet agents had pretended that they were labour leaders and in this sense had deceived the working class. "Their object was achieved", he wrote, "when these efforts disrupted the lawful Trade Unions of the country and threw labour back 100 years". (31) He added that they pretended to be Catholics and that;

They make it a point to be seen at Church, at Mass, at Devotions and at the Sacraments. In Ireland this is one of their most dangerous weapons, and I know it has deceived and worried a good number of real catholic workers. They say to the worker: I am a Communist, but I am also a Catholic. I go to Church just as you do. (32)

He then proclaimed that he would dispose of this subtle dishonesty for once and for all and he added;

No Catholic can be a Communist, no Communist can be a Catholic. For the formal professed Communist, any attendance at Church or Sacraments is a mockery, a sacrilege, a profanation of holy things and must not lead people astray. (33)

He concluded his pastoral by adding;

Wherefore it is my duty to tell my people plainly that the Revolutionary Workers Group, also all and every local union, cell or 'contact' which is Communistic in aim and object has come under the ban and censure of the Church. No Catholic can be or remain a member of such unions, no matter what name they may adopt. Also no Catholic can buy, sell, read, receive or support any Communistic literature, journal or paper such as 'The Workers Voice'. (34)

In short all true Catholics were told they should renounce their association with this evil organisation and return immediately to the flock. In one fell swoop the Catholic Church had crushed Nicksy Boran and his supporters by hardening local opinion against the union. The following weeks were ones full of pressure for the socialist miners. The majority of union supporters had fled fearful of complete exclusion from the local community and public condemnation from the clergy. The Mine and Quarry Union was broken. According to Anna Brennan "the Revolutionary Workers group was beaten but uncowed". (30) And it issued a statement in the "Irish Workers Voice" on the 28 January 1933. They asserted that planter, priest and prelate had combined to crush the union.

The planter saw his friend the parish priest. The parish priest saw the Bishop. The Bishop came to the mining village. And he brought with him an awesome piseog. Man, women, child, fool or four footed animal that had truck or treatings with the accursed Miner's Union was placed under the ban of the church: bell, book and candle would succeed where six weeks hunger had failed". (31)

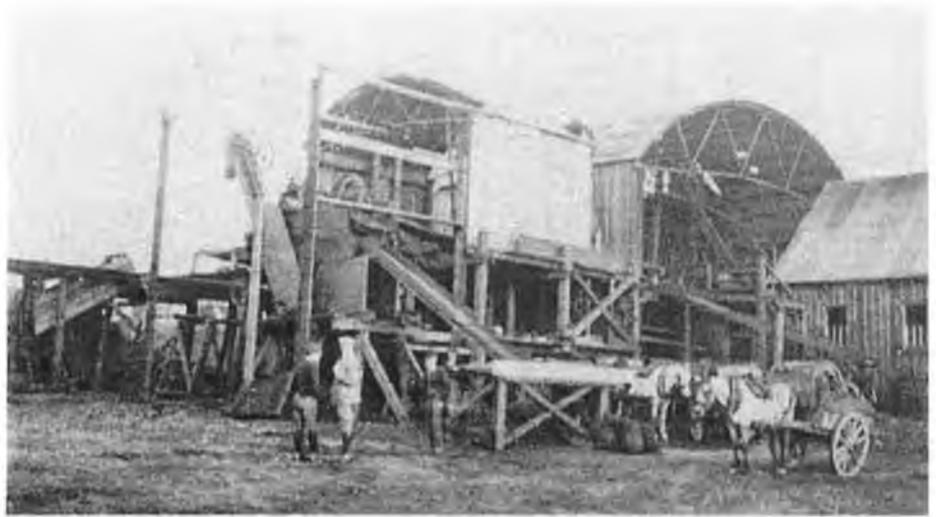
To the Boran and his supporters Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde, the capitalist mine owner, having failed to defeat the miners in the strike had engineered the pastoral from Dr. Collier. This they claimed was through his friendship with Fr. Grant the parish priest of Clogh. Feeley says that this friendship certainly existed. "However independent of this the

Bishop and clergy saw socialism as a threat to the faith and a danger to the establishment, and were determined to crush it at every opportunity". (32) This was certainly true.

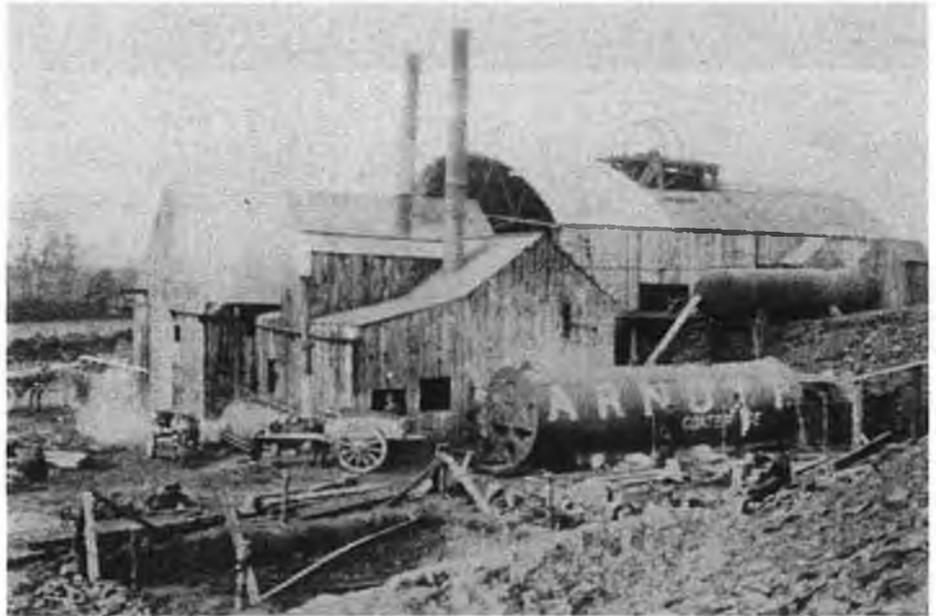
In conclusion the author feels that this last quote has a larger significance, for it truly shows the ambiguity of Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde's identity in the Castlecomer community. To the vast majority of his tenant/miners Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde was still the dominating, capitalist Landlord. He still controlled their "opportunity to work" and their "opportunity to be housed". But his position had changed for he was not the local landlord in the old historical sense with an ideology based upon feudal "rights and duties" he was different. The essential difference between the way he was before and now lies in the concept of paternalism. He no longer was compelled to look after his tenants he was a businessman. Thus in his ideological transition from Anglo-Irish Landowner to Anglo-Irish managing director he had changed his role within the Castlecomer community. For his tenants the air of confusion lay with the fact that even though he had divested himself of his vast landed inheritance, his economic position had remained unaltered upon the Castlecomer town and its people. To them he still lived behind the walls of the Big House and lead a gentry lifestyle. The question we must ask is was Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde aware of the confusion that surrounded him or was he too confused ? Whether landlord or industrialist the fact still remains he had suffered a defeat. So much so that he would never again hold the power and influence over the community that he did before the 1920. Yet having said this if the socialists/communists failed to learn from their victory in the Castlecomer Colliery Company with their militant Mine and Quarry Union, Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde did from his defeat and evolved and adapted to the new era.



*Skehana Colliery—photo extract from  
'The Irish Homestead' 1906.*



*"Washes" at Skehana, 1908.*



*Skehana Pit 1908.*

## EndNotes

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Spring 1981

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## The Colliery

Only the black mound remains,  
The raped earth sleeps,  
The tracks are silent, and the wagon trains lie dead in mangled heaps.

The strikes are still fresh in the mind,  
They fought for workers rights,  
For months they silenced the mine,  
Took the hungry days and nights.

The Landlords they were stubborn,  
But the men would not succumb,  
'tis history now their trouble,  
And in the end they won.

Joe O'Neil Castlecomer

## CHAPTER THREE

**"Coal mining [was] not merely the job of the miners,  
it was the way [which] the country got some fuel and  
a prolonged stoppage was not also a loss to the men,  
it was also a loss to the country" (1)**

The year 1933 saw the re-entry of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, as the official union in the Castlecomer Colliery Company Ltd. According to Anna Brennan a veil of silence was drawn over the whole "communist controversy", so much so that it seemed that "the class war and the revolution had yielded to a pragmatic acceptance of the status quo". (2) In some respects this was true Richard Henry Prior-Wandesforde was still the capitalist landlord, he still owned and controlled the Castlecomer coal industry. His tenant/miners still paid him rent and worked the family coal mines, but there was one fundamental difference to this status quo. His tenant/miners did not see the Wandesforde capitalist domination as part of an immutable social and economic order. They had proved this fact with their sudden rise to class consciousness and the Trammers strike of 1932. They now realised that if they wanted improvements in the conditions of the Castlecomer coal mines they no longer had to wait upon the Paternal obligation of the Wandesforde ideology to kick in. They had discovered that through the power of strike action and combined support it was within their own power to achieve them. However, with the dawning of a new decade Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde began to fully embrace the role of business man, entrepreneur and industrialist. He had learned from his defeat and was now determined to hold onto his dominating capitalist power base within the Castlecomer community. What occurred when both capitalist Landlord and new proletariat miner consciousness clashed was another challenge to the Wandesforde power and ideology and another victory for the miner community of Castlecomer.

This chapter will concentrate then, on the last stage in the development of Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde ideology. It will also trace the disengagement of the Wandesforde power and ideology from the Castlecomer community and collieries. While it would be true to say

that the Wandesforde family had suffered a loss of power and influence after the first challenge i.e. the Trammers strike of 1932. The family quickly adapted to changing economic conditions and this loss of power was largely compensated by the advent of World War II. Now the Wandesforde power extended to National rather than the local sphere, because of the necessity of home produced fuel. The main focus of this chapter will be the miner strike of 1949. For while the Wandesforde family retained their economic hold over the Castlecomer people from local and national level, the tenant/miner community were preparing to challenge the Wandesforde capitalist landlord institution again. They did so by calling a strike in 1949, "the longest strike in the history of trade unionism". (3)

According to Marie Downy in her unpublished thesis, the new ITGWU union set out right from the beginning to try and increase membership that they had lost from the previous years. To this end they began to champion the need for improvements in the mines. She adds that "as a result of continuous agitation on the part of the union conditions began to improve steadily". (4) A nurse was employed by the company in 1935 to treat any minor cuts and bruises that the miners may have sustained. While later two local doctors Dr. Dunne and Dr. Farrell, were asked to hold clinics in the colliery yard. According to Anna Brennan "the provision of baths and clothes drying facilities at the Deer park pithead in 1939 was particularly welcomed by the men's wives and is remembered by them as the most significant improvement in the history of the collieries." (5) However, dissatisfaction with the "sliding scale" system of payment remained a central issue at this time and from 1938 onwards the miners in Castlecomer began to agitate for the abolition of this system of payment. Marie Downy says that the management refused however, to agree to the abolition of the system and the miners issued strike notice. This was handed in by Nicksy Boran who was now, Chairman of the Castlecomer branch of the ITGWU. She adds that despite the strike action, management remained resolute and it appeared as if an impasse had been reached. It was only after an appeal by the Government who asked the miners to return to work because of patriotic duty, that the miners resumed work. This ended the highly publicised "stay down strike of 1940". (6) Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde gave an important concession on the old "sliding scale" system. It was

agreed to pay the miners a percentage compensation for *Breakage's* . This in short became known as the "Soft Coal Agreement" 1939 . This agreement provided that when the proportion of small coal (breakage's) reached 43% of a colliers total output, the rate paid to the colliers for large coal was to be increased by 1d per ton. When the small coal reached 45% of total output then the rate for large coal was to be increased by 4d per ton. Each additional increase of 2 % up to 60% of total output resulted in the large coal rate being raised by an additional 4d. If the proportion of small coal lay between 60% and 62%, a further addition of 6d would be made. In those cases where it exceeded 62 % the case would be given special consideration. According to Anna Brennan although this arrangement provided additional income when coal seams lacked uniformity "it added another complex dimension to the wages structure which in many respects was responsible for the strike of 1949." (7) The "soft coal agreement" was however a major advancement for pay and conditions for the men.

The Second World War gave a new impetus to the search for Irish coal. And Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde became a respected figure on Government committees, set up to help achieve the drive for self sufficiency. The necessity of SaorStat Independence and neutrality were dependent upon her ability to obtain fuel. Coal was an important source of economic sustainability and that is why perhaps the Government decided to intervene in the "Stay down strike" of the 1940s. The extent of the Wandesforde power and influence which extended within the Department of Industry and Commerce can only be guessed at. But evidence suggests that Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde was around this time petitioning the Government to build the new electric generating station in Castlecomer . From as early as 5 February 1937 Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde had contacted the Government with his proposal. In a memo to Sean Lemass dated the same day we are given evidence of the power and influence of the Wandesforde family. In a personal statement written by Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde he outlines the reasons why he felt that the Castlecomer railway junction was suitable for the "erection.....of a power station of 37, 500 K.W. generating up to 100 million units of electricity per annum". (8) He argued that the "manifest advantages" for the scheme were;



*Transport of Castlecomer coal before  
the railway was made in 1921 and  
before lorries were on the road.*

Native fuel would be used, and employment opened up for a large number of men. Comparative safety in war time on account of distance from seaboard. The Pigeon House Station, where it is proposed to centralise so much of the total electric power of the state, could be destroyed by single shells from a Submarine, or bomb from an aeroplane. Independence of imported fuel, which may be impossible to obtain in war time, or which is liable at any time to a large increase in price. (Finally the) Distribution of power units, half way from Dublin to cork thus saving distribution costs. (9)

He also added that the power would be used "in the development of the local coal field and in the running of the short line of railway". (10) However, the station was built instead at Pigeon house in Dublin. The reasons given by the Government was that plans were already under way there and that it would be too costly to change now. Nevertheless this shows how vital the Wandesfordes were to the Irish economy. The fact that Castlecomer received its own generating station later on further testifies this. During the 1940 the Castlecomer Colliery Company Ltd were in fact the ESB biggest consumer of electricity and Castlecomer was one of the very select few rural towns to have street lighting. Needless to say, the work at the pit face improved vastly with this increased mechanisation. "A digger to dig the coal on the pit face and *Fillers* to shovel it onto a rubberised belt which fed another conveyor belt at right angles to it.....delivered the coal to an underground roadway. From here trains of tubs waited to bring the coal to the surface where screening and grading took place." (11) Before this modernisation Tom Lyng notes that pit ponies were used for under ground hauling at the Rock and Vera collieries approximately between 1910 and 1925. He adds that in "1915 the mining office applied to Durham for pit ponies, remarking that none of the right size were available in Ireland". (12) These ponies spent their working lives underground and were usually blind when finally retired over ground.

Modernisation was therefore necessary, in order to maintain production levels which reached an all time high of 96, 000 tons in 1941. Although productivity and sales increased, miner wages were frozen by the standstill imposed by the Government in 1941. This was imposed under the Emergency Powers orders. According to Anna Brennan "in January 1943 the

☐ Castlecomer Coal is used for Malting, Milling, Grain-drying, Wool-drying, Lime-burning, Steam-raising, Suction Gas Plant, the heating of large public buildings and offices, also of glass houses, and domestic use generally. Some manufacturers have affirmed its superiority to all other coal.

Briquettes made from the Culm produced from the Skehana Colliery form a lasting, clean and useful fuel.

☐ GRAPHITE of the best quality (suitable for pencils and electric light carbons) has been manufactured from Skehana Coal.

1916

*The Royal Commission on Coal Supply estimated the coal still to be worked in the Leinster Coalfields at*

## 180 MILLION TONS

*For the last 10 years or more the average annual output of these Collieries has been 60,000 tons.*

*The fortnightly output at the present time averages 2,500 tons. 450 men and boys are at present employed. It is an established industry.*

*If a Railway were built to connect these Collieries with the main line of Railway near Kilkenny the output could shortly be increased 10,000 tons per fortnight.*

*The line which is at present being built by the Government to Wolfhill Colliery will not serve the Castlecomer Collieries, as Wolfhill is 9 miles distant at the extreme Northern end of the Coalfields.*

*The area of the Royalties now being worked by these Collieries amounts to over 20,000 acres, and only a limited portion of this area is worked out. With increased transport facilities the output is capable of great extension.*

*This coal (especially from the Skehana Seam, which is at present not being worked owing to lack of transport) is of a very high quality, and is equal, if not superior, to the best Welsh Anthracite.*

1916

*Wartime Promotion Publicity 1916.*



*Castlecomer Colliery Stand at the Dublin Horse Show 1953.*

miners stopped work and demanded the introduction of a standard rate of pay throughout the industry” (13) So vital were the miners of the Castlecomer(Leinster) coal field that the Government accorded the miners a concession from the national pay freeze. And in the following year they were permitted to receive a 10% bonus on their wages. Marie Downy adds that "a system of bonuses for attendance was also introduced in an attempt to eliminate absenteeism among the mining work force". (14)

There is no doubt then, that both the miners and management were aware of their importance during the 1940s. And this is perhaps why the eleven month strike of 1949 lasted as long as it did. Richard, Henry, Prior Wandesforde was a businessman. It would seem that he now fully embraced this role and his motivations to abolish the “sliding scale” system in March 1949 must be seen in this light. The annual report of the ITGWU in 1948 gives a clear account as to why he took this management decision. It maintained that the management continued to maintain the contract system during the war years when Ireland was not importing coal from Britain and the Irish Government did not permit any price increases for coal. The “sliding scale” system meant that the miners were paid on a tonnage rate which was related to the “sliding scale” agreement (contract agreement) dated from 1927. This contract stated the price of coal at 33s 4d per ton in this year. The colliers were paid 7s per ton for all coal of a specified size cut and put into trams. The “sliding scale” agreement provided that this rate should rise or fall by 6d. For each rise or fall of 1s 8d in the price of coal. In effect what this meant was under this contract system, when the Government allowed the Colliery Company to increase the price of coal in June 1948 by 26s 8d per ton, the colliers were entitled to an automatic wage increase of 8s per ton. What the management proposed instead was to replace this system with a new static system of payment. A system that included rates which were not based on the selling price of coal. Marie Downy says that “the colliers were unwilling to accept the abolition of this system, particularly once it began to be of benefit to them. Management was adamant however that the static system of payment would be enforced”. (15) The result of this conflict was an eleven month strike by the Castlecomer miners, five hundred in number, which began on 12 March 1949.

Why did Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde refuse to compromise with his five hundred strong workforce and thereby avert the 1949 strike ? Surely he had learned from the Trammers strike of 1932 ? The reason behind his stern resolve not to give in lies in the family ideology. Even though this had evolved and adapted to accommodate Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde's ideological transition from Anglo-Irish landowner to Anglo-Irish managing director. The author believes that Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde still clung to some aspects of it, and reverted back to these in times of trouble. In the last chapter, we saw how there was a certain amount of confusion and ambiguity surrounding the Wandesforde capitalist landlord institution and that this blurring and changing of the defined community roles had created a situation where the Castlecomer community of tenant/miners found it difficult to define Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde's role. We also saw that Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde had failed to define his new role within the Castlecomer economy. But one couldn't be quite sure if this was a conscious decision by him or that it was the result of the 1903 Land Act and the selling off of the landed part of the estate. The author believes that when the Trammers strike of 1932 occurred the Wandesforde family did not perceive any need to re-define their role, for there was really no change to their economic domination within the community. For this reason and this reason only, the Wandesfordes thought that the loyalty and dedication of their tenant/miner community was assured. Of course as has been shown this was not the case and the tenant/miner community challenged the Wandesforde institution and won. The 1949 strike was not however history repeating itself. And the author argues that this was not only another watershed for the Wandesforde capitalist landlord institution but it was also the last stage in the development of the Wandesforde ideology. Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde was determined to hold onto his dominating economic position in the rural community which had become relegated by the increased involvement of local and national Government. In this sense the author believes that the Wandesforde capitalist institution wanted to revert back to a similar brand of feudal ties between capitalist landlord and tenant/miners. This was the type of ideology it had found it necessary to evolve from in order to remain powerful after the 1903 Land Act.

With this in mind it is easy to understand the actions of the Management of the mining company during the strike and why they attempted at the beginning to try to approach individual miners, in the hope that there was no strong workforce solidarity. However these attempts failed. According to Anna Brennan "public conferences were heard on both sides". (16) And in the "Kilkenny People" of the 21 May 1949, Boran alleged that despite mechanisation working conditions had little improved and that mining was still a dirty and unhealthy job. He added that the "torturous, irregular coal seams afforded no regularity of work and pneumoconiosis left the colliers as lingering shadows coughing away the last years of life". (17) Anna Brennan says that "the Company responded by enumerating the benefits employed by the workforce -- work, pit baths, welfare society, grants for births, marriages, deaths and an annual coal allowance to married miners." (18) But the miners could not be bought and so the strike continued.

According to the "Kilkenny People", in 11 June 1949 it appeared as if a solution to the problem might be found, for on the 5 June previously there had been open sittings of the Labour Court in Castlecomer and Moneenroe. A "Mr R J P Mortished was presiding chairman and he was flanked by Mr T Johnson and Mr P Mc Loughlin". (19) They appealed to the miners to resume work pending the "promulgation of their decision on the dispute". (20) They put forward a return to work on the basis of the new proposals which the management had put forward. This was the abolition of the "sliding scale" system and the introduction of a static system. This was of course rejected by the men. A second proposal was put forward by the union. This was according to Downy "that the miners should return to work under the old system pending the Labour Courts decision." (21) An open debate ensued with the miners expressing and holding the general opinion that if they did return to work then their grievances would never be rectified. Mr Jimmy Walshe said, according to the "Kilkenny Journal", that the miners had been locked out and that they had returned to end wartime strikes out of a sense of patriotism. He resented an "English Company" coming to the country and taking advantage of the workers. He concluded by saying; "two and a half years ago the Labour Court was to visit the mines but that visit never materialised. (we) were told then to go back to work and the

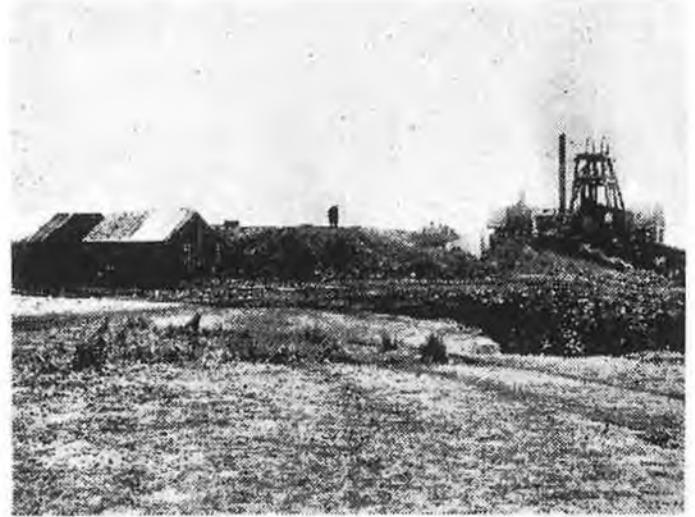
same promise was being made to them again and that would never materialise either". (22) In the same article a Mr. Tom Brennan stated that "the present management regarded the miners as the ignorant Irish and that they had nothing to do but walk on them". (23) Again in the same article a Mr James Byrne asked the Labour Court to take into consideration "that this strike was not only a strike for wages, but that there was also a principle involved and that was the principle that they were fighting British rule in the area --- the last remnants of British rule." (24) From this re-activated radical language of the nineteen thirties we can clearly see that there was much more to this strike. It is plainly obvious that the community of tenant/miners could sense what Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde wanted from them. The evidence for this can be seen in the final word from the miners quoted from Jimmy Walshe. He declared "there is blood on the coal in this area and the same ascendancy crowd is dominating today as domineered down through the centuries and want to keep us miners slaves as they did in the past." (25)

Downy notes that this was the crux of the matter and "the miners voted against any resumption of work and the Labour Court left Moneenroe with a flood of figures from the company and the union". (26) Tom Lyng describes in his book Castlecomer Connections the life and times of a miner Jack Doyle. Who barely managed to survive these turbulent times. He did so by killing his own pigs and eating his own "ample supply of vegetables (which) eased the problem considerably". (27) Others were not so lucky and many emigrated to the English coal fields because they could not survive the long wait for reconciliation. The Labour Court recommendations when they did come were published on 14 August 1949. In a very intensive article the Court examined and described the system of wages in the Castlecomer Colliery Company. They found that in February 1949 there were ten categories of workers underground numbering 411; surface workers divided into fourteen categories amounted to 75. An earlier union list of workers had distributed an estimated 468 men as follows, "180 miners, 28 trammers, 10 firemen, 160 day wage men underground and 90 day wage men overground". (28)

The Labour Court also found that the complex wage structure of colliers was composed of six elements; “(a) sliding scale rate (b) soft coal agreement (c) ten per cent of the total of these combined (d) cost of living bonus of fifteen shillings per week (e) attendance bonus of six shillings per week and (f) a final addition of two and a half per cent of the total of all preceding items.” (29) They thus recommended the abolition of the “sliding scale” which they said was designed for a different era when price fluctuations were limited and when production costs were relatively low. They outlined in effect what the management was offering. This was to pay “25s a ton for large coal and 1s 8d for small coal” (30) If the proportion of small coal did not exceed 65% or a “through rate of 10s 9d a ton for all coal, large and small, would be paid”. (30a) This was a totally new system, based neither on the sliding scale agreement or the soft coal agreement. The Labour Court recommended however that “the rate of pay for cutting and filling coal should be 27s 6d a ton for large coal and 1s 6d a ton for small coal.” (31) With regard to surface workers who were previously paid on time rates, the Court recommended that the lowest rate of pay for an adult worker should be fixed at 72s 6d per week. Its final recommendation was that underground workers, because of the dangers involved in their job, should be paid 10s per week more than the surface workers. However, the Court’s recommendations which gave the trammers no increase at all were not favourably received by the union. And according to the “Kilkenny People” of 10 September 1949; “at a general meeting however these recommendations were rejected. Shortly after this general meeting negotiations began between the head office of the ITGWU and the miners”, as to what the next course of action should be”. (32) Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde began to revert back to the old ideology of landlordism in an attempt to make the miners return to work. Stencilled letters were sent out on the 25 of November 1949 to all employees stating that those who returned to work “on and after Monday next, 28 November and until Monday 5 December (inclusive) but no longer, and who work at least four shifts in that period will receive special consideration.” (33) Earlier he reminded the miner occupiers of company houses that their rents would be doubled if they took on alternative work. The tenant/miner community of Castlecomer refused to be intimidated and they remained strong in their opposition.



*Row Colliery 1916.  
Depth of shaft 80 yards. Daily output 100  
tons. Total men and boys employed 160.*



*Monteen Colliery 1916.  
Depth of shaft 40 yards. Daily output 40  
tons. Total men and boys employed 103.*



*Row Colliery 1916.  
Depth of shaft 80 yards. Daily output 70  
tons. Total men and boys employed 124.*



*Rock Bog Colliery 1916.  
Depth of shaft 60 yards. Daily output 40  
tons. Total men and boys employed 63.*

Downy describes the next couple of months as being another example of an “impasse, with neither side willing or capable of making any new proposals”. (34) She goes on to say that as a direct result of Mr Martin Ring of the Castlecomer Development Association there might never have been the opportunity for more negotiations. He wrote to Mr D Morrissey the Minister for Industry and Commerce and Deputies Patterson and Crotty of Kilkenny. Discussions between union and management began again with Deputy Crotty acting as mediator. The meetings continued with some agreements being reached but nothing was really formalised. Downy notes that in desperation the “head office of the ITGWU decided to place the matter in the hands of Mr William Mc Mullen, general President of the ITGWU, Mr J Conroy and Mr J Gilhooley.” (35) Once these men were in control it was felt by everyone, “management and union alike that a solution would soon be found”. (36) As a result of their inept analysis and excellent negotiation skills, the great strike ended in February 1950. They management had been asked to make an improved offer to the miners. This offer was the new system recommended by the Labour Court but the fundamental difference was the trammers were given a pay increase, which was in accordance with the pay rises given to their fellow workers .

Having achieved their targets the new half century seemed to fore shadow a golden era for mining. But what affect had the new agreements upon the Castlecomer tenant/miner workforce and the Wandesforde power and ideology ? Ultimately for the miners it was another victory and they felt that their future looked safe. They had yet again fought the capitalist Landlord and won. However, as Tom Lyng comments there were others who felt that the future of the mining operation was not so stable. The “manager Major Bell said it was a pyretic victory and that the miners had now priced themselves out of the market”. (37) This was indeed the case, the miners now found themselves within the income tax bracket. But as Tom Lyng adds it was the “escalating costs of power and extended workings with extended mechanisation coupled with increasing use of oil fuel” that damaged the profits on coal, rather than the rise in miners pay. (38) Perhaps the most significant aspect of the 1950 agreement was the fact that the

Castlecomer collieries could not afford to continue to offer employment for the vast majority of the five hundred workforce. And gradually there was a steady flow of redundancies. For many of the Castlecomer miners the price of winning the class war was losing the battle against emigration. And many had no other choice but to join the emigration tide of the 1950s flowing towards the post war earnings in England. For the Wandesforde family the new wage increase meant defeat. Not just in the sense that they had lost the power to determine their own wage levels in their family coal mines. They had also suffered another but more devastating defeat to their power and ideology. No longer could they count on their ideology to back up their economic domination over the Castlecomer people. No longer could they demand unconditional respect and loyalty from their tenant/miner community. The strike proved the end of the Wandesforde capitalist landlord institution and the Wandesforde ideology gradually disengaged itself from the Castlecomer community and collieries. In the end it was not the increased wages of the miners nor the turbulent politics of the century that closed the Deer park Mine but the fact that the miners had reached the end of the coal or the "Washout". Despite efforts to try and keep the mines open the Deer park collieries closed its gates on the 25 January 1969. That closure ended Castlecomer Collieries Ltd, Castlecomer mining office and 333 years of Wandesforde association with mining.

Richard, Henry Prior Wandesforde died in 1956 well before the final close. During the last six years of his life he preferred to remain out of the dealings between colliery management and miners. He returned to a type of life that was his by inheritance, that of Anglo-Irish aristocrat and he remained on his estate, now greatly reduced. What becomes apparent from his ideological evolution from Anglo-Irish Landowner to Anglo-Irish Managing Director and industrialist is the fact that he succeeded where others failed, that is to remain powerful and in control of the Wandesforde inheritance well into the twentieth century. The unionisation of the Castlecomer miner in a century where new ideological forces were challenging the well established order, forced him to change and adapt. In the end both strikes must be seen as two great watersheds to the Wandesforde capitalist institution both of which had far reaching repercussions than just the triumphant miner and the defeated management.

## ENDNOTES

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(12) Ibid

(13) Brennan, A. "Nixie Boran and the Colliery Community of North Kilkenny", (ed)  
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(16) Brennan, A. "Nixie Boran and the Colliery Community of North Kilkenny", (ed)

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(17) The Kilkenny People 21/5/1949

(18) Ibid

(19) The Kilkenny People 11/6/1949

(20) Ibid

(21) Downy, M. Labour relations in the Deer Park Colliery 1920-1969.

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(23) Ibid

(24) Ibid

(25) Ibid

(26) Downy, M. "Labour relations in the Castlecomer Colliery 1920-1969".  
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(27) Lyng, T. Castlecomer Connections. (Westbrook Press, Dublin) 1984.

(28) Labour Court Recommendations. 14 August 1949. Signed by Nial Mc Liam,  
Officer of the Court.

(29) Ibid

(30) Ibid

(31) Ibid

(32) The Kilkenny People 10/9/1949

(33) Brennan, A. "Nixie Boran and the Colliery Community of North Kilkenny", (ed)  
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(Geography Publications, Dublin) 1990.

(34) Downy, M. "Labour relations in the Castlecomer Colliery 1920-1969".  
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(35) Ibid

(36) Ibid

(37) Lyng, T. Castlecomer Connections. (Westbrook Press, Dublin) 1984.

(38) Ibid

# CONCLUSION

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The primary concern of this study has been to investigate the unique survival of the Wandesforde family into the middle of the twentieth century. It has been suggested by many Historians that after the introduction of the Local Government of Ireland Act and the settlement of the Irish land tenure situation, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy began to go into a state of twilight. Before the beginning of the twentieth century they had virtually disappeared from Ireland leaving only the dilapidated remains of their Big Houses and demesnes behind them. The Wandesforde family were part of this landed elite, possessing many similar characteristics with their fellow peers. A vast landed Estate of 20,000 statute acres and a legitimatising ideology. However, while it is true to say that a large majority of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy had disappeared, the Wandesforde family remained powerful and dominated the economic and social community relations where they lived.

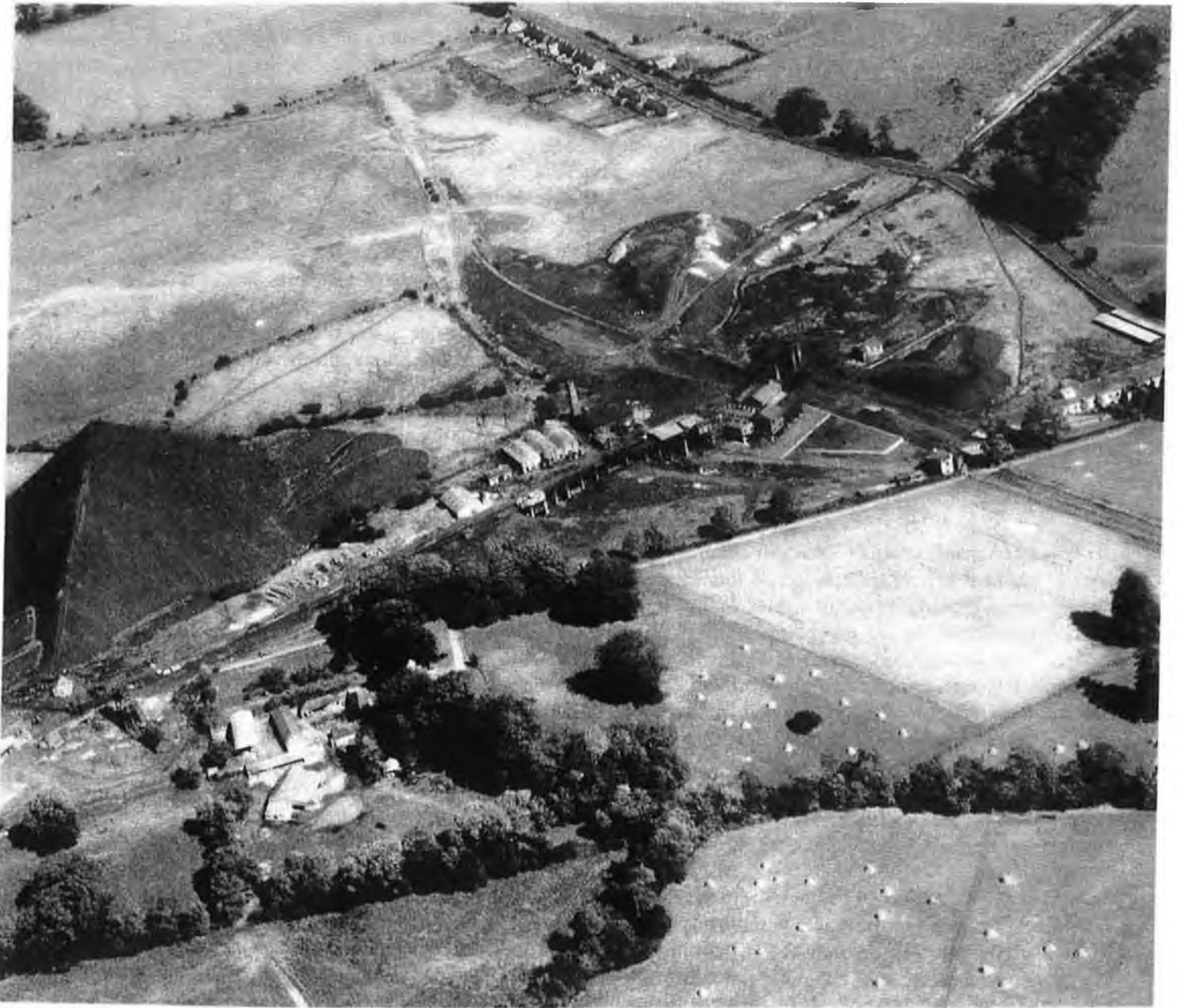
In an attempt to provide a historical explanation as to why they remained powerful while others did not, it was decided to take a closer look at the families ideological position and compare its similarities and differences to their fellow peers. It was found through the course of this investigation that their ideological position was different because of their unique economic power base. Quite unlike their fellow compeers who only processed one form of capital and therefore one form of income. The Wandesforde family had two forms of capital, land and their own unique capital, coal. They thus had a dual capital system and therefore a dual system of income. Their ideology it was discovered provided them with a legitimatising hold over the Castlecomer Community. So much so that they felt that they were entitled to demand unconditional loyalty and respect from their tenant/miner community. Through the course of examining the Community relations between Landlord and tenant/miners, it was discovered that the latter never questioned the Wandesforde ideology and accepted the domination as part of the immutable economic order. However, this all change when a change occurred within the Wandesforde institution which had a ripple-like affect upon the Wandedforde ideology. With the selling off of the landed Estate under the terms and conditions of the 1903 Land Act,

Richard, Henry Prior-Wandesforde had lost one aspect of his economic power base, the income from his land. He now had only one source of income which he derived from his family coal mines. The Wandesforde ideology also had to change, for it was a necessary feature in ensuring the continued domination of the Wandesforde capitalist institution. This change in the Wandesforde economic power base and ideology was not as traumatic as might be suggested. For the role of the Wandesforde capitalist institution seemed to remain the same within the communal sphere. This was not as has been shown unprofitable for the Wandesforde family, as the community still continued to act within the confines of the old type of relationship. However, as the twentieth century progressed, Richard, Henry, Prior-Wandesforde began to become more immersed in his family coal mines and he took on a new role to suit his involvement i.e. Managing Director. With this perceived change, his role within the Castlecomer community had changed and although a certain ambiguity surrounded his role, (for he still lived a almost gentry lifestyle) the community still continued to see him as the Anglo-Irish Landlord. This, as it has been suggested was one of the factors for the strained labour relations between the Wandesforde family and the colliers. In the end the Wandesforde capitalist institution was challenged in the strike of 1932 and suffered a blow to their power base and ideology.

The ambiguity and confusion which surrounded the Wandesforde family had led to the emergence of new ideologies that of Communism and socialism and a subsequent rise of class consciousness among the miners. What is unusual about this fact, is that it was not the Wandesforde capitalist institution that feared these ideologies the most but the Roman Catholic Church. The local parish priests and the Bishop of Ossory fought for the established order more out of fear for themselves than for love of the Wandesforde family. This fight shaped future battles as the Wandesforde family, conscious now that the old way of things was changing, sought to retrieve their power base by refusing to give into future miner demands. Again the Wandesforde ideology adapted and changed but in doing so it reverted back to a shadow of its original form, and once more it demanded unconditional loyalty from the tenant/miner community in times of economic distress. The post-war boom promised new

found wealth for almost every industry but coal, whose importance began to subside in the face of newer and cleaner forms of fuel. The Wandesforde capitalist institution suffered another confrontation in the strike of 1949, but this time the triumphant Miners had summoned the death knell for the Wandesforde capitalist institution and its ideology.

In this study it is felt, that the enquiry into the Wandesforde Ideological position has offered a substantial re-evaluation of the historical viewpoint that all of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy had disappeared by the beginning of the twentieth century. And it is believed that although much of the research has been attempted before that this study has provided new observations that have not been extensively investigated in this area.



Deer-Park Colliery, 1924 - 1969

# Appendix I

**CHRISTOPHER WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, descendant in the 10th generation of Geoffrey Wandesford of Alnwick 1338, b. 1592, Master of the Rolls and Lord Deputy of Ireland, d. 3 Dec. 1640.

**GEORGE WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, b. 1623, drowned in the Swale 31 March 1651, bur. at Kirklington. = **Alice**, only dau. of Sir Hewit Osborne, sister of Sir Edward Osborne of Kiveton, and aunt of Thos., Earl Danby, and Duke of Leeds.

**CHRISTOPHER**, b. 20 March 1617, d. 1627. = **Eleanor**, dau. of Sir John Lowther of Lowther, co. Westm., m. 1651, d. 1714.

**SIR CHRISTOPHER WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, b. 1627, Bart. 1662, M.P. for Ripon 1679-80, d. 1686. = **John**, b. 1634, d. unm. 1666.

= **Catherine**, b. 1615, mar. to Sir Thos. Danby of Thorpe Perrow, bur. at Masham 22 Sept. 1645.

= **Joyce**, b. 1615, mar. to Sir Thos. Danby of Thorpe Perrow, bur. at Masham 22 Sept. 1645.

= **Alice**, b. 13 Feb. 1626, m. 1651, Wm. Thornion of East Newton, bur. at Stonegrave 1 Feb. 1707.

**SIR CHRISTOPHER WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, Bart., b. 1653, created Baron Wandesford, and Viscount Castlecomer 1706, d. 1707. = **Elizabeth**, dau. of Geo. Montagu of Horton, aunt to Geo., Earl of Halifax, d. 13 Nov. 1731.

= **John**, b. 1654, d. 1655.

= **John**, b. 1657, d. 1658.

= **George**, m. Elizabeth Foulkes, and had a son, Osborne-Sydney, and a dau., Ann-Charlotte, was living in 1725.

= **Rev. Charles**, b. 1669, ordained deacon 1693, d. s. p. 1695.

= **Mary**, b. 1665, founder of the Old Maids Hosp. at York, d. unm. 1726.

= **Eleanor**, b. 1656, m. Amias Bushe of Killan, co. Kilkenny.

= **ANNE**, d. young 1665.

= **Catherine**, b. 1664, m. Sir Richard Pyne, Chief Justice of King's Bench in Ireland, d. 1731.

= **Elizabeth**, b. 1666, m. Edmund Swettenham of Somersford, co. Chester, m. 12 May 1691.

= **Alice**, b. 1667, mar. Henry Bosville.

= **Frances**, m. Col. Robert Maude of Ripon and of Kilkenny, d. 5 Jan. 1690, he d. 21 April 1685.

= **Christian**, b. 1672, m. Rich. Lowthe of Swillington, d. May 1698.

**CHRISTOPHER WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, 2nd Viscount Castlecomer, b. 1683, M.P. for Morpeth 1710, for Ripon 1715, d. 1719. = **Francis**, dau. of Thomas, Lord Pelham, and sister of Edward, Duke of Newcastle, m. May 1715.

**GEORGE WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, 4th Viscount Castlecomer, captain in the army, d. at Dublin 1751. = **Susanna**, ds. of Rev. John Griffith of co. Cork, Archde. of Kilmaloe, d. 1757.

= **Rev. John Wandesford**, Rector of Kirklington 1717, and of Caterick 1722, d. 1747, et. 55.

= **Richard**, d. unm. Dec. 1719.

= **Henrietta**, b. 1695, m. 12 Aug. 1714 to Wm. Maynard of Curryglass, co. Cork, who d. 4 April 1734, she d. at Dublin, 19 April 1736.

**CHRISTOPHER WANDESFORD** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, 3rd Viscount Castlecomer, b. 4 July 1717, d. unm. 8 May 1736. = **John Wandesforde** of Kirklington, &c., 5th Viscount Castlecomer, b. 1725, created Earl Wandesforde 1758, d. 1784.

= **Agnes Elizabeth**, dau. and heir of John Southwell of Enniscough, co. Limerick, m. 1750, d. 1781, et. 51.

= **Christophe**, d. 1728, et. 10.

= **Susanna**, d. inf. 1721.

= **Katherine**, d. inf. 1725.

= **Mary**, d. inf. 1717.

= **Susannah**, m. 12 Aug. 1750, Thomas Newenham of Coolmore, co. Cork, M.P. for city of Cork.

= **Elizabeth**, b. 1726, d. unm. at Fulham, 9 October 1806.

**LADY ANNE WANDESFORDE** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, b. 1754, m. 13 Feb. 1769, d. 1830. = **John Butler** of Garryricken, Earl of Ormond, d. 1795, et. 56.

= **John Wandesforde**, b. 23 Apr. 1753, d. v. p.

**CHARLES HARWARD BUTLER-CLARKE-SOUTWELL WANDESFORDE** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, fourth but second surviving son, heir of his mother 1830, d. at Kirklington 1860, et. 81. = **Sarah**, dau. of Henry-Thomas, Earl of Carrick, m. 1812, d. 1838.

= **Lucy**, Countess-Dowager of Carrick, m. 1842, died 1884.

= **Walter**, eldest son, heir of his father, 18th Earl of Ormond, created Marquess of Ormond, d. s. p. 10 Aug. 1820.

= **Anne-Maria**, dau. of Job Hart Pryce Clarke.

= **John Wandesforde**, 2nd son, d. unm. 1795, et. 24.

= **James Wandesforde**, 19th Earl of Ormond, K.P., created Marquess of Ormond 1825, from whom the noble house of Ormond descends.

= **Grace-Louisa**, dau. of the Right Hon. John Staples.

= **Elizabeth**, m. Thos. Kavanagh of Borris, who d. 20 Jan. 1837, she d. 14 Dec. 1823.

= **Eleanor**, m. 1808 Cornelius, Viscount Lismore, d. 1859.

**SARAH** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, assumed the additional surname of Wandesforde 1882, d. 1892, et. 78. = **Rev. John Prior**, of Mount Dillon, co. Dublin, Rector of Kirklington 1852, d. 21 Dec. 1867.

= **John**, b. 1813 d. s. p. 26 June 1856.

= **Emily-Selina-Frances**, dau. of M'Clintock of Drinacree, John, Lord Rathdonnell.

= **Henry**, of Uicombe, co. Kent, b. 1815, d. unm.

= **Walter**, b. 1825, m. 1849, d. vita patris, 15 June 1853.

= **Hannah**, dau. of Thos. Hutton, d. 1868.

= **Anne**, d. 1836, et. 7.

**Charles Butler Prior** of Crossogne House, co. Tip., J.P. and D.L., d. 7 Jan. 1875, et. 35. = **Dora**, dau. of Richard Phillips of Gaile, co. Tip., J.P. and D.L., m. 1866.

= **Sarah**, d. 1863.

= **Alice Maria**, d. unm.

= **Henry**, of Lechlair, co. Gloucester.

= **Mary Anne**, dau. of Richard Phillips of Mt. Rivers co. Tip.

= **Sophia Elizabeth**, m. 8 July 1864.

= **Maj.-Gen. Henry Fred. Winchilse Ely**, of Copse Dale, co. Tipperary.

= **CHARLES WANDESFORDE** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, Sheriff of co. Kilkenny 1879, mar., 1 July 1881.

**RICHARD HENRY PRIOR WANDESFORDE** of Kirklington and Castlecomer, J.P. and D.L. High Sheriff of co. Kilkenny in 1894. = **Florence Jackson von Schwartz**, dau. of the late Rev. Ferdinand Pryor of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

= **John**, d. inf.

= **Chas. Butler** of Colorado.

= **Mary**, dau. of John Mahon of Colorado, U.S.A.

= **Harold Astley Somerset**.

= **Mary**, Carolina Wandesforde.

= **Sarah Emily Edith**.

= **John Wandesforde Wallis**, b. 1882, d. 1897.

= **Sarah Maude Butler**.

= **Gertrude Anne Ormonde**.

= **Thos. Butler**, Lieut. in the Army, d. 1900.

= **Sarah**, in the Army.

= **Florence Wandesforde**, mar. Rev. J. Tongue.

= **Ellnor Victoria**.

Christopher-Butler    Ferdinand Chas. Richard.    Richard Cambridge.    Vera.    Charles.    Francis.    Dora.

83

## Appendix II

### Castlecomer collieries Management and Workforce

Captain Richard Henry Prior-Wandesford  
(Managing Director)

Directors  
Secretary  
Mining Agent  
Manager  
Under-Manager  
Clerk  
Fireman  
Collier  
Trammer  
Pumpsmen  
Surface Workers  
Coal Carters

1. The fireman was in charge of a mine section which was worked by up to twenty colliers.
2. Colliers worked in companies. Each company had their own 'tallies' which were attached to the boxes so as to enable surface workers manning the weighbridge and the check weighman (Boran's job in the Deerpark) to assign quantities to individual companies.
3. Trammers worked the hardest when the coal seams were uniformly good. Usually these seams would be more vertical and the trammer would have difficulty bring a fully loaded skip or box from the coal face to the main road. They used iron wedges called 'guns' to prevent the box wheels from skidding on the iron rails. Hence the term 'gunning a tram' which was Nixie Boran's first job in Modubeagh colliery. From the late 1920's an endless rope known as Bell's rope was used to haul the coal and duff from to the surface.
4. Pumping of excess water was central to efficient coal mining. Handpumps were used to dewater working seams. Excess water was pumped to 'levels' and then drawn up by the electric pumps.
5. Surface workers were divided into a number of categories. The mine store which supplied the all equipment was supervised by a store-manager; checker and check weighman recorded production amounts; fitters, carpenters, electricians, provided maintenance; coal was washed, graded and tipped by other surface workers.
6. Coal carters worked as independent agents buying and selling coal/culm. Their remuneration was derived from haulage.

### Appendix III

#### The New terms of Agreement

The new terms agreed upon were seen by the miners as a large improvement on the recommendations of the Labour Court. The terms were as follows :-

- (a) The miners were to receive 27s 6d a ton for round coal.
  
- (b) The rate for "breaking" or slack, which represented 50% of total output was moved up to 3s 4d in lieu of 1s 6d recommended by the Labour Court.
  
- (c) The day rate for both underground and surface men was increased by 9s per week and for those men who were trammers it was recommended that they were also to get increased rates.
  
- (d) Until working conditions were restored, the men were to get compensation pay at the rate of 10% of their earnings for the first fortnight, 7 % for the second, 5% for the third and 2 % for the fourth fortnight. (19)

## Appendix IV

The following chart illustrates more clearly the details of the final agreement which was subject to review without prejudice after six months.

### Final terms of agreement in the 1949 strike

Mining of Large Coal	27s 6d per ton
Breakage	3s 4d
'Through' Coal	12s
<i>SHOT FIRING</i>	13s
Road Making	15s
<i>MEETS</i>	7s 6d
Debris	7s
<i>CANNEL</i>	4s 4d
<i>BACK BRUSHING</i>	26s per yard
Day Wage Men	9s (increase)
TRAMMERS	2d per ton
<i>LONG WALL PANEL</i>	1s for 20 yards 1s 1d for 20-40 1s 3d for 40-60 1s 4d for 60-80 1s 6d for 80-100

(20) Kilkenny people Saturday February 18 1950.

# Glossary

<b>Anthracite</b>	Type of hard coal, which is almost 100% carbon, found in the Lenister coal field.
<b>Bituminous</b>	Type of soft coal, which has 80% carbon and a high sulphur content, found in the coal fields of England.
<b>Back Brushing</b>	Road maintenance - ensuring the underground roads are level.
<b>Bell Pit Method</b>	An early method of coal mining whereby two shafts are sunk a number of yards apart. Tall chimneys were then built over these shafts allowing the necessary supply of ventilation in the mines.
<b>Belt Shifters</b>	A person who sorted the coal before it was loaded onto the rubber conveyer belts.
<b>Breaker</b>	A person who broke the coal into smaller pieces, in order to load it onto trams.
<b>Clearer</b>	A person who kept the workings clear.
<b>Collier</b>	A person who worked directly at the coal face
<b>Cutterman</b>	In the twentieth century, this came to refer to the person handling the coal cutter.
<b>Cutter</b>	The person who built the roads in the mines during the seventeenth century.
<b>Cannel</b>	A poor quality coal which was little more than stone with a thin covering of coal.
<b>Contract</b>	This was an agreement between a Master collier and the mine owner whereby the master collier agreed to work in the mines for a percentage of the profit.

<b>Fillers</b>	A person who filled the coals, stones and shales into the trams.
<b>Guns</b>	Iron bars which were used as brakes to trams - generally operated manually.
<b>Jarrow</b>	This was the name of a pit in Castlecomer which took its name from a mine in Great Britain.
<b>Long Wall Panel</b>	Branching out from the coal face at intervals of 16 yards were roads, these roads were known as long wall panels.
<b>Master Collier</b>	The person who was responsible for supplying the crew for the mines, from the late seventeenth to early twentieth century, he could be equated with Middleman.
<b>Meets</b>	Underground lay-bys which were built to enable two trams to pass each other.
<b>Miner</b>	The general term used to describe the various categories of workers in a mine.
<b>Pit</b>	Colloquial term used to denote a coal mine.
<b>Pusher</b>	A Trammers helper
<b>Seam</b>	A name given to a vein of coal which may differ in thickness and width.
<b>Shaft</b>	A vertical tunnel built in order to gain access to the coal face. Miners were lowered and elevated to the horizontal tunnel beneath this shaft by means of an open lift.
<b>Shift</b>	Term used to describe an eight hour working period.
<b>Shot Firing</b>	This was a method of loosening coal from the coal face. It included boring a hole in the coal face, filling this hole with gelignite and the subsequent explosion of this gelignite loosened the coal.
<b>Trammer</b>	A person who brought the coal from the coal face to the main road in the mine.

## **Wash out**

This was a geological formation found in the Deer Park colliery. It was formed millions of years ago, when the coal was been formed. An underground river or lake washed away the coal constituents leaving instead large sand deposits, which over the centuries was pressed into sandstone.

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