

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore a series of issues relating to the relationships between industrial enterprises and the communities of workers which depended on them. The thesis particularly seeks to explore the transfer of artefacts between these enterprises and their communities.

These relationships are investigated by exploring the following questions:

- In typical nineteenth and early twentieth century coal mining communities, what elements of moveable cultural material end up in museums?
- What are the implications of this for understanding the archaeology of the mining sites and their communities?

It was identified that, whilst historical and industrial archaeology have undertaken much research into the nature of industrial enterprises and their communities there has been little analysis of the interactions between the two. This thesis explores the recognised need to adopt a social landscape based approach to the analysis of industrial enterprises and their communities and seeks ways of identifying systemic relationships in this context.

The relationships between coalmining enterprises and their communities are specifically studied through:

- Application of the concept of habitus to industrial and mining communities
- Identification of the social characteristics of a “typical” mining community
- Application of these characteristics to Australian coalmining communities to determine to what extent they can be regarded as “typical” of mining communities.

Following this attempts are made to identify the total range of personal material culture from a mining context which is associated with these communities. A survey of relevant collecting institutions undertaken in 2000/2001 identified the number and frequency of coalmining artefacts held by museums in New South Wales and Victoria. This survey identified the nature of artefacts held in museums and provided some indications of the sources of these artefacts. It was identified that museum collections are generally not representative of the full range of artefacts used in coalmines. These collections provide some indication however of what types of items are valued by communities.

It is concluded that coalmining museum collections have some usefulness for the interpretation of mining enterprises and their communities. It was also noted that additional research needs to be undertaken to identify the nature and extent of artefacts from mining enterprises which have been incorporated into the fabric of buildings and other constructions in coalmining communities. It is proposed that the acceleration of urban development and population growth in former coalmining areas, particularly in New South Wales makes this task reasonably urgent if the patterns of dispersal of these items is to be fully understood.

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