

Morris and Devon Great Consols¹

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Most Morris enthusiasts know that he came from a very well-off family, a major source of whose wealth was the Devon Great Consols mine, about three miles (5 km) west of Tavistock, Devon (Figure 1). Biographers have told us much about Morris's early life, family, friends, marriage, work, colleagues, writings, designs, comrades and political activities, but most of the information on the origins of his family fortune can be found in two books, and a few articles.² Morris was, of course (from 1855 to 1877), a shareholder in the mine, and for a shorter period (1871–1875) a member of its Board of Directors, just before his interests turned, almost for the first time in his life, to politics. An interesting question, therefore, and one which biographers have not really addressed, is 'What, if any, was the impact of Morris's association with Devon Great Consols on the development of his political ideas?' What we therefore propose is to examine the history of the mine before, during and following Morris's directorship, in the search for ideas and episodes which may have influenced his political thinking, and then to discuss key aspects of his writings which may (or may not) help us evaluate our case.

One problem with this approach is that Morris was not a particularly vocal member of the Board, and only made direct written reference to it in a few of his letters. The beginning of Morris's relationship with Devon Great Consols pre-dates his own acquisition of shares, in that his father, William Morris senior, was a founder shareholder of the mine: following his father's early death in 1847, his mother (Emma Shelton Morris), relied heavily on the family interest in the mine in order to maintain her own standard of living and that of her children. And even after Morris resigned his directorship in 1875, his uncle Thomas Morris continued to act until 1879 as 'Resident Director' (see below), and his brother Stanley remained a director until 1890, by which time the mine was almost moribund.

And of course, his other siblings also owned shares in Devon Great Consols, given to them on their maturity – like his own – by their mother, and Emma Shelton Morris remained a shareholder in the mine until her death in 1894.



Therefore, although Morris terminated his formal relationship with Devon Great Consols during the mid 1870s, his family relationships surely meant that he could scarcely have missed hearing about events at the mine, and in particular the prolonged period of industrial unrest which broke out soon after he resigned from the Board. How and whether any of this experience influenced the development of his political ideas, is the subject of our article.

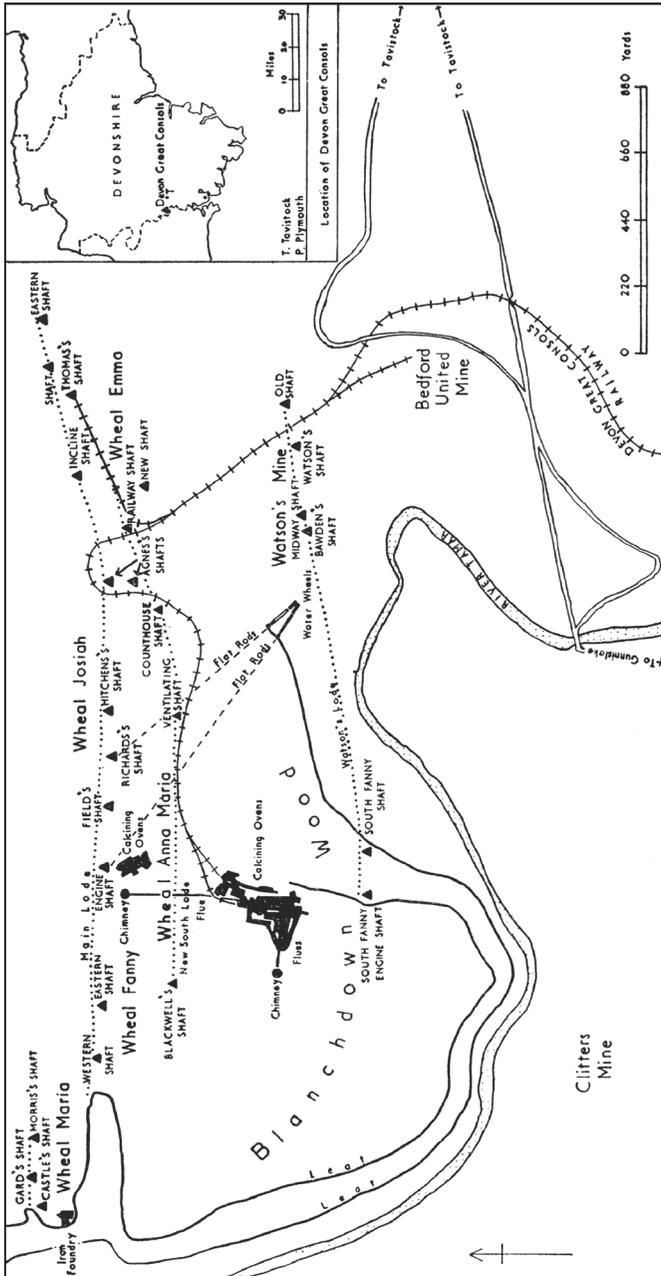
I THE RISE AND FALL OF DEVON GREAT CONSOLS

Work at Devon Great Consols began in March 1844, when the noted mining engineer Josiah Hitchens obtained a licence from 'the Lord of the Soil', the seventh Duke of Bedford, to prospect for copper. The original lease was for twenty one years, at 1/15th royalties, rising to 1/12th when annual profits reached £20,000, which they soon did. Operations began during August, and in November, the main lode was struck at Wheal Maria at the western end of the site (Figure 2).³ It was soon clear that here was the largest copper sulphide (chalcopyrite, CuFeS_2) lode ever discovered in Southwest England,⁴ and very rich – the ore being 17% copper. Other workings were then established eastward, culminating in Wheal Emma, opened in 1848.

A total of 1024 shares was issued in May 1844, at £1 each. The original shareholders were Hitchens (144 shares), Richard Gard, a partner in the same stock broking firm as Morris's father (288), the brothers William (W.A.) and John Thomas (144 each), Thomas Morris, uncle of William Morris (32 shares), and William Morris senior (272). The original directors were Gard, Hitchens and W.A. Thomas, with Thomas Morris appointed in May 1845 as 'Resident Director', with overall responsibility for day-to-day operations. In May 1846, the mine was reconstituted as the joint stock Devonshire Great Consolidated Copper Mining Company (hence 'Devon Great Consols'), and John Thomas and William Morris senior added to the Board. Besides share income, directors received an annual fee of 100 guineas (£105; *ca* £5400 in modern terms).⁵

For the next twenty years, Devon Great Consols remained the largest copper supplier in Europe. Between 1861 and 1870, it produced 142,000 tons (*ca* 130,000 t) of an estimated global production of 900,000 tons (*ca* 820,000 t) of copper.

Figure 1 – Devon Great Consols today from the main Gunnislake-Tavistock road. Spoil heap from Wheal Anna Maria right middle ground. (Photograph copyright Brendan O'Sullivan).



During the height of its prosperity (1855–1856), some 20–30,000 tons (18–27,000 t) of ore was raised per year, generating annual receipts of £100–160,000 (£4.5–9.5 million). By 1865, the mine had paid its original shareholders more than £920 (*ca* £47,000) for every original £1 share; during the same period the Duke of Bedford, in true Ricardoan fashion, collected more than £210,000 (*ca* £10.8 million) in royalties.

At its peak, more than 6,000 jobs in the Tavistock/Caradon district of West Devon and East Cornwall depended on Devon Great Consols: the mine generated annual expenditure of some £50,000 (£2–3 million), as well as £1200 (£52–55,000) in local rates and taxes, and by 1864, it directly employed 1230 workers. Miners received £3 12s (*ca* £160) and surface workers £3 5s (£145) per month, while ‘bal-maidens’ – young women who broke up the raw ore at the surface – were paid 1s–1s 3d (£2.20–£2.75) per day, and child workers (271 boys, 161 girls), some as young as eight, 4d to 8d (75p–£1.50). Engineers designed and constructed lathes, sawmills, water-wheels, railways, an on-site foundry, hauling-, punching- and cutting-machines, complex platforms to support shaft interiors, and elaborate systems of ovens, pipes and baths for refining copper (and later arsenic, see below). In 1857, the company’s lease was renewed, and a railway built from the mine to the port of Morwellham some 4½ miles (7.2 km) to the south, a measure which considerably reduced the cost of transporting ore to the River Tamar from 5s (£11) to 1s per ton.

By the later 1860s, however, the copper began to be worked out, world prices fell with development of new sources overseas, and the mine began to lose profitability. But the lodes, as at many other Southwest mines, were lined with ‘mispickel’ (arsenopyrite [arsenic sulphide]; FeAsS), which until then had been left *in situ*, and in 1866–8 it was decided that while copper would still be extracted, production at the mine would begin to switch mainly to arsenic, at that time used very widely indeed in pesticides, dyes, glass, paints, enamels, textiles and wallpapers.⁶ The ore was roasted (‘calcined’) on site, and condensed at the top end of flues, a two-stage process producing the white crystalline powder arsenic trioxide (‘white arsenic’; As₂O₃). Conditions for surface workers who shovelled these crystals out of the condensers were primitive; mouth-masks and hessian sacking which covered their ears, feet and ankles were all the protection available to most of them. By 1870, Devon Great Consols was already supplying half the world’s arsenic, eventually yielding some 72,279 tons (66,708 t). Annual output overtook copper production by about 1880, and peaked during the 1880s at *ca*

Figure 2 – Site map of Devon Great Consols, from Goodridge, p. 230 (see Note 2). Reproduced with the permission of the Devonshire Association.

3200–3300 tons (*ca* 3000 t), with highest annual receipts reaching some £26,000 (£1.25–1.5 million).⁷

From this time, however, the mine went into decline. By 1872, with a few exceptions, it had ceased to earn a dividend, and in 1873 the ninth Duke was asked to forgo his dues (he refused). Instead, he favoured expansion; at his stipulation a new lease was granted to explore for tin, widely believed to lie, as at many mines farther west, beneath the copper – first at Wheal Josiah, then at Wheal Emma. In order to raise funds, Devon Great Consols was reorganised in 1872 as a public liability company with 10240 £1 ‘new’ shares, ten times the original number.⁸ However, no great quantities of tin were found, and by 1888 the search was abandoned. By 1880, the mine was losing £5,000 (*ca* £240,000) per year, although it is interesting to note that, on the strength of two good years (1880–1881), the directors raised their annual fees from 100 guineas (by then *ca* £5,000) to 500 (*ca* £25,000).⁹

In 1885 the Duke finally agreed to forgo his dues, provided no dividend was paid. In 1899, the last of these, on a £1 share, was £2s 6d (£7.13). During 1900–1903, work ceased, the mine closed, and its equipment and other fixtures were sold. By then, Devon Great Consols had paid out some £1,225,216 (£55 million) in dividends, more than £119 (*ca* £5300) per original share. The land reverted to the eleventh Duke, who ordered the site cleared and restored; hence few traces of the original Devon Great Consols now exist. Several attempts were made during the twentieth century to reactivate the mine, but with very limited success. According to Frank Booker, some 2,000 t of recoverable minerals lie beneath its surface, and there are indeed romantic exploration geologists who still believe that workable deposits of tin exist somewhere below the abandoned workings.

II WORKING CONDITIONS, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Devon Great Consols considered itself a model employer. Especially during the prosperous years (1844–1864), its directors tried to maintain the appearance of benign treatment of their workers. They employed a resident doctor, provided baths, heated changing and drying rooms – highly necessary in the wet conditions underground – lockers in which to keep dry clothes, hot water for tea and coffee, ovens supervised by surface workers to heat meals, and warm rooms in which to take them. They also hired a schoolteacher for the younger children—as the Factory Acts of 1833 required—although parents were charged ‘a small fee’.¹⁰ In 1859 – a year in which the total dividend from the mine was £45,056 (*ca* £1.95 million), or £43 (£1856) per share – they paid out 100 guineas (£105, *ca* £4500; later reduced to 20 guineas, £21 or *ca* £900) for the children’s elementary education.¹¹

Once employees began to earn more than 8d (£1.50) per day, they were charged up to 1s 6d (ca £3.25) per month on a sliding scale for medical care, and 4s (ca £8.65) per month if they actually fell ill. These charges seem small, but compared to a miner's monthly wage for 1864 (£13 12s; ca £160) they were not, at least for those required to pay them. Victims of onsite injuries received subsistence of £1 (ca £45) per month, and miners were expected to collect for the families of those killed in accidents.

The directors also encouraged what they regarded as the virtues of temperance and abstinence. Boys and girls were kept separate at meal times, and – surely a rarity for those days, except in coal mines and munitions factories – the mine was a complete no-smoking area. Seven hundred copies of *British Worker* and *Band of Hope* were sold monthly in and around the mine, and funds were provided to support a brass band, a glee club, and a choir. Apparently, no 'singer' ever failed to find a job at Devon Great Consols,¹² and those workers and managers (a minority) who lived at the mine itself formed a tight-knit community.

Within the mine, iron tamping tools for drilling blast holes were forbidden (as they caused sparks), and copper tools used instead; gunpowder was strictly rationed. Despite these measures, 'as early as March 1846, (the mine) had acquired a reputation for fatalities'.¹³ All work below ground was conducted by candlelight; as well as wet, the mine was also, like many in the region, very hot at depths – up to 30° C – although linking shafts ('winzes') were used to keep the 'levels' ventilated. Most workers did not live at the mine, but in Tavistock or Gunnislake, or in the surrounding villages. Many were therefore required to walk 4–5 miles (6.5–8 km) to work, and of course the same distance home again, often while carrying their exhausted children. Three shifts were originally worked (6 am–2 pm, 2 pm–10 pm, 10 pm–6 am), but later, as prosperity declined, the night-time shift was abandoned.¹⁴

Levels were connected by near vertical ladders, and at the end of their shift, it often took men an hour to climb back to the surface. Not everyone worked in the deepest parts of the mine, of course, but those who did faced a near-vertical climb from the bottom (e.g. of Wheal Joseph) of ca 225 fathoms (ca 405 m).¹⁵ Up to one third of miners' total daily energy conversion was therefore often expended on going to and returning from work. Even so, younger men considered it a matter of honour to make the entire climb without once pausing for breath. Later, two examples of the fearsome 'man engine' – on which men rode up and down the rods used to transmit power from the surface to the pumps below, jumping by candlelight from the 'up' rod to the 'down' – were installed, at Wheal Josiah (664 feet; 200m), and Wheal Emma (1140 feet; 340 m). Conditions for surface workers were scarcely better. 'Bal-maidens' spent most of their time breaking rocks of ore into fragments small enough to go to the crusher, and 'pickers', surface workers who separated the crushed ore from the waste, worked their entire shift kneeling

on tables in order to perform their task.¹⁶ As they were on piecework (see below), miners were charged for blasting powder, candles, and the use of crushing and separating equipment.

Industrial relations at the mine during the early, expansionist years were, however, generally quiescent, although in 1850, two hundred 'pickers' (mostly young people) staged a one-day strike in order to protest against reduction of wages. They were all instantly dismissed, although re-engaged the following day, at even lower rates.¹⁷ By 1865, with mining becoming less profitable, and food prices rising, the miners of the Caradon (East Cornwall) district, many of whom worked at Devon Great Consols, formed a Miners' Mutual Benevolent Association (MMBA) which drew up draft rules regarding wages, and proposed establishment of wages committees for each mine, to settle disputes over wage fixing.

Despite figures widely quoted, precise historical wage rates at Devon Great Consols, as well as at other mines in the Southwest, are difficult to assess, mainly because of the methods of allocating work. Of these, the simpler was 'tutwork', whereby pairs¹⁸ of experienced miners – who then took on extra men as partners – agreed to work a certain section of lode – a 'pitch' – at a fixed price per fathom (see Note 15), according to the nature of the ground, and always for two months. A more complex method was 'tribute', where rather than a fixed price per fathom, miners were paid a percentage of the royalty received on each ton of ore. Thus 'tribute' wages fluctuated both with the price of copper, and the quality of the ore, as well as factors affecting 'tutwork'.

Both methods therefore involved piecework, and both were speculative, 'tribute' the more so. On the bimonthly 'Setting Day', always a Saturday, miners gathered at the mine, and the Clerk described each pitch in turn, stating how many men were needed in order to work each one. An auction then took place, in which 'pairs' would bid against each other for the right to work each pitch. Clearly the lowest bid for each pitch won, and so things went on until all were taken.

Thus wages were fixed as a result of competition between the men, and might vary a great deal according to the value of each 'pitch', and the 'bargain' struck in order to secure it.¹⁹ During the prosperous 1840s, about 130 men were employed at Devon Great Consols annually on 'tutwork', and about the same number on 'tribute', although the latter number increased later in the decade. Tutwork wages were about £3 (£155) per month, and 'tribute' *ca* £4 6s (£220). By 1864, however, with the decline in quality of the ore, there was very little 'tribute'. During the 1860s, 'tutwork' prices varied between £18 and £22 (£800–£980) per fathom, whereas during the 1850s, the highest 'tribute' ever paid was 10s (£25) in the £, the lowest 4d (8 p).²⁰

Miners in Southwest England were therefore essentially self-employed in a speculative occupation, one of the main reasons, it is often argued, why trade unionism has historically never been very strong in that region. One of the min-

ers' principal grievances was that overseers ('mine captains') often let pitches to 'diluted labour' – 'pairs' consisting either entirely of, or including, men unskilled at mining, such as agricultural labourers.²¹ Such 'diluted' teams slowed up the work, and also tended to strike lower 'bargains'. This practice, and low wages generally, were the main grievances the proposed wages committees were designed to address.

However, in March 1866, as soon as the MMBA issued its draft rule book, twenty mine managers in the Tavistock/Caradon area issued a public declaration that they would 'withhold employment from all persons who shall become members of the society', on the grounds that it was 'subverting the authority invested in mine agents and causing irreparable damage to mining enterprise'.²² The local magistrates reacted hysterically to the prospect of a lock out, calling out 130 police officers, 130 special constables, 150 soldiers from the 66th Regiment stationed at Plymouth, and 'a body' of Marines. On Setting Day (3 March 1866) two thousand people – mostly onlookers not miners – assembled at the mine. The Chairman, W.A. Thomas, told them that 'if you go on this way, (the mine will close)', and that 'my friends and I are carrying a number of mines; we are spending money without a farthing of remuneration, and all has gone for your support': he then sat down amid silence. But of twenty-four pitches auctioned, only four were 'set'. Thomas then jumped to his feet and delivered 'a sermon on market forces the like of which was not heard again until the 1980s', but still no bargains were agreed. The pitches were left open until Monday, while the miners 'consider(ed) their duty to God, and to their fellow men'.²³

On learning the employers' reaction, the miners, somewhat charitably one feels, rewrote their rulebook to omit the contentious clause about wages committees, but the owners maintained that their other objections, to 'diluted labour', and to 'taking pitches from another member' (i.e. underbidding) were still untenable. They would support formation of a 'benefit society' for the assistance of the old, weak or infirm, but no rules which interfered with the working of the mine. Despite support from local clergy, and from the *Tavistock Gazette*, but probably because of recruitment of blackleg labour from West Cornwall, many MMBA men eventually drifted back to work, although some left the area or even emigrated.

A second major grievance was the 'five week month', or the 'thirteenth pay-day'. In Southwest England, by custom, mine workers were paid 'monthly' (i.e. every four weeks), and Setting Day was also pay day; thus there were thirteen pay days per year. Surface workers were paid fixed wages, but as explained, fixing miners' pay was somewhat more complicated, with 'bargains' set on alternate months.²⁴ During intervening months, miners received 'subsistence', based on an estimate of their first month's earnings, and adjustments were made the following month. From 1844 to 1872, there had been only twelve pay days per year,

four of which therefore took place in 'five-week' months, during the last week of which miners, who were, after all, on piecework, believed that they more-or-less worked for nothing.²⁵

In 1872 an extra, thirteenth Setting Day was introduced, a measure which went some way toward reducing the impact of diminishing returns at the mine on wages. However, in 1878, the Board decided to cut costs by reintroducing twelve pay days, a move the workforce interpreted as a thinly disguised pay cut. An immediate withdrawal of labour followed, including 150 workers at Wheal Emma.

Again the strikers received considerable local support, including both that of the Vicar of Tavistock and the Portreeve,²⁶ the Duke, and even the now-ailing W.A. Thomas. But a principal figure in this dispute was Peter Watson, who joined the Board in 1877, and became its Chairman in 1880 with the resignation of W.A. Thomas. Unlike most directors of Devon Great Consols, past or present, Watson had first hand, practical experience of running a mine, but unfortunately for the work force, he also possessed an even more uncompromising attitude to disputes. At a Board meeting to discuss the strike, he accused the local clergy of having 'irritated the people and brought this strike on'.²⁷ So when Thomas Morris, the Resident Director, promised the men that there would be no reduction of wages, they stated they were prepared to accept his word, but not that of the 'London Directors' – Watson, and Morris's brother (Hugh) Stanley Morris, who together had restored the 'five week month' in the absence of other members of the Board.

This time the strike lasted two months, and was successful, mainly because on this occasion there were no blacklegs available. Watson was adamant that the five week month was 'an absurd matter', but eventually was forced to withdraw. However, he contrived a settlement by stating that he would concede on the 'five week month' if the men would take a substantial pay cut, from £14 9s (£35.60) to £13 7s (£32.80) per month (8%), and also agree, in turn, that the masters alone possessed the right to determine wage rates. When they unwarily agreed, and returned to work, three more reductions followed over the next eighteen months.²⁸

The subsequent history of industrial relations at the mine is of more disputes, wage cuts and arguments among the directors. After *ca* 1880, no one seemed able, or inclined, to raise sufficient funds to upgrade the mine or its facilities (e.g. by introducing electric light). The number of workers at the mine gradually fell, from more than 700 in 1880, to *ca* 400 by 1900.²⁹

III THE MORRIS FAMILY AND DEVON GREAT CONSOLS

Two members of the Morris family – the ‘seasoned risk-takers’³⁰ William Morris senior, and his brother Thomas Morris – were among the founder shareholders of Devon Great Consols. From the outset, the Morris family held an approximate 30% stake in the mine – W. Morris senior 272 shares, Thomas Morris thirty two – which it maintained almost until closure. Subsequently, three other members also served on its Board – Morris’s uncle Francis Morris, who took over when William Morris senior died in 1847, Morris himself, a director from 1871 to 1877, and (Hugh) Stanley Morris, his brother, who succeeded him.

After the first full year of operations (1845–6), the original £1 shares were worth £800, and the first annual dividend £7, 622 (*ca* £920,000) or £71 (*ca* £3650) per share. Thus within eighteen months of the opening of the mine, William Morris senior had become – by modern standards – a millionaire. When he died his estate – one of the top 1% of those declared intestate that year – was valued at £60,000 (*ca* £3.5 million). Two thirds of this sum (£40,000, *ca* £2.3 million) represented his stake in Devon Great Consols.³¹

Nevertheless, Emma Shelton Morris, his widow, needed to liquidate some of these assets in order to pay off her husband’s trading debts. With the loss of his bond-broking income, and his share capital, she was now heavily dependent on Devon Great Consols, and sold twenty two shares in 1850, and fifty in 1851, realising *ca* £20,000 (*ca* £1.17 million).

Twenty of these shares were sold to her brother-in-law Francis Morris so that he could assume her husband’s seat on the Board. Together with Thomas Morris, the ‘Resident Director’, he advised Emma to retain her remaining shares (*ca* 200?), which would have brought in a regular annual income during the 1850s and 1860s of *ca* £51 per share (*ca* £115,000).³² These sums would have been redistributed over the years, as she also decided to endow each of her nine children, sons and daughters alike, with thirteen shares at their majority, a generous gift intended to confer independence. By the time she died in 1894, her Devon Great Consols stocks were almost worthless, but the rest of her estate was assessed at over £16,000 (*ca* £960,000).³³

Thomas and Francis Morris participated in thirteen other mining ventures between 1847 and 1874, all unsuccessful.³⁴ As we have seen, during the 1878 strike, Thomas travelled to London to present the miners’ views to the Board, assuring them that their wages would not be cut. He loyally supported their demands, and accused Peter Watson of ‘improper use of proxy votes’, but the shareholders’ ballots went against him.³⁵ His downfall as Resident Director came a year later, when the ‘London directors’, including his nephew Stanley, reprimanded him for allegedly buying timber without consent, and granting miners a small

number of unauthorised extra holidays. Thus confronted, he declined to seek reelection and retired. He died nine years later in 1888, leaving a more modest estate than that of his sister-in-law to his disabled son and four unmarried daughters of £9,500 (*ca* £570,000).³⁶

It seems likely that when his uncle Francis resigned in 1871, Morris's mother urged him to take the 'family seat' on the Board of Devon Great Consols. But the Board was run more or less autocratically by W. A. Thomas, and the sole personal record of Morris's attendance is a series of passages in four letters to his mother.³⁷ In the first, provisionally dated 11 June [1872?], he reported the Board's intention to reconstitute itself as a limited-liability company, multiply its shares by a factor of ten, and assume liability for a call of £48 per (old) share. He also reassured her that there was 'no chance of all this money being called for', and added that she could tell his brother Arthur that 'the price of copper is high and like to remain so'.

In the second, dated 23 November 1872, he wrote to her neutrally that 'last Friday we had the new contract for arsenic, & got a very good price for it', and in the third, written on 25 May [1874?], he remarked that he was

... expecting Arthur here this morning to talk about the D. G. C. I don't know what may happen at the meeting, but think that nothing will be done: things are looking a little better there, & the last sale was (comparatively) good as I daresay you have heard.

Finally, in the fourth letter, dated 27 May 1875, he notified his mother that

I have just come from the DGC meeting &, I suppose, ended my business there, except for receiving my 100 pounds which they were once again kind enough to vote us. Stanley will tell you all about the meeting.

On the whole, these dutiful and rather laconic passages seemed designed to avoid any serious discussion or confrontation. Morris was also very much otherwise engaged. During his five year tenure on the Board, he composed *Love Is Enough*, illuminated more than two hundred manuscripts, temporarily ceded Kelmescott to his *quondam* friend Dante Rossetti, studied old Norse and modern Icelandic in preparation for his two journeys to Iceland, and managed during interstices to fulfill his obligations as manager of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

When he became a director in 1871, Morris bought fourteen shares, and one more in 1872³⁸—bad investments in monetary terms, for they nullified any financial advantage he gained from his director's fees. He sold his last shares in 1877. After he left his last directors' meeting in 1875, he reportedly sat on his obligatory top hat,³⁹ an interesting gesture. It is difficult to imagine him in this garb in the first place, but contemporary pictures of miners and mine agents bear

witness to the rigidity of a dress code of suits, hats and constricting neckwear as class-stratified marks of respectability. Haberdashery may have been a 'lesser art,' but purgation took precedence in the case at hand. Years later, in 1895, Morris converted his inheritance from his mother to art, and at his death in 1896 left his books, his two homes, and his shares in Morris & Co and the Kelmscott Press—but no securities.⁴⁰

Much has recently been made of Morris's income from Devon Great Consols, and the 'fabulous'⁴¹ wealth it produced. Charles Harvey & Jon Press, however, give a more sober account, and show that his net income over the twenty-three years during which he held, bought and sold shares (1855–1877) was £8,803 (*ca* £392,000), or *ca* £380 (*ca* £17,000) per annum.⁴² Thus although Morris was indeed initially made financially secure – his mother's strategy – by his ownership of Devon Great Consols shares, unlike his father, he did *not* become a millionaire, although he was, of course, vastly better off than most of his later political comrades. During 1861–2 he sold two of his original thirteen shares – an act for which his family thought him wicked and mad⁴³ – but these were bought by his mother and given to his brother Stanley. Later, on becoming a director, as indicated, he bought fifteen 'old' shares for £1660 (*ca* £76,000), but subsequently (1874–77) made a considerable loss, when selling all of his 260 'new' shares (i.e. 26 'old' shares) for £755 (*ca* £35,000).

Morris's income from shares declined steadily after 1869, so that what had been a regular financial support during his twenties and early thirties fell quite rapidly over the five years of his late thirties to almost nothing at all. By the mid 1870s, with declining copper prices, imports from abroad, and the failure to find tin, Devon Great Consols no longer provided Morris with reliable income. Partly as a result, in 1875, he took the decision to reorganise 'the Firm', from Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co to Morris & Co, under his sole ownership, an episode which biographers describe as 'saddening and disillusioning', and which earned the disapproval, and even the enmity of some of his oldest friends.⁴⁴

After Morris's resignation, (Hugh) Stanley Morris, the second surviving brother, took over the 'family seat'⁴⁵ and held it until 1890, when he too was forced out. He and another director attacked Peter Watson at a shareholders' meeting, asserting that he had displayed 'enormous and everlasting egotism' in his negotiations with the Duke, and chosen to 'overlook the valuable assistance that he had received in this matter', and other transactions. The shareholders supported Watson, however, and Stanley was ousted by the man whom he had helped marginalise his own uncle eleven years earlier.⁴⁶

IV DEVON GREAT CONSOLS AND MORRIS'S SOCIALISM

In this section, we discuss Morris's experience of Devon Great Consols as a template for his indictment of nineteenth-century capitalism. We argue that our analysis confirms Charles Harvey & Jon Press's view that

[Morris's] personal knowledge of Victorian capitalism was one factor which made his critique of modern industrial society so powerful and influential ...⁴⁷

As indicated, much has been made of the belief that Morris took advantage of the wealth he received from his father's speculation without any consideration for the workers who produced it, to say nothing of showing any 'remorse' for their plight.⁴⁸ However, one year *before* he resigned from the Board of Devon Great Consols (1874) – and one might well write 'that' for 'as if' – he wrote to Rosamund Howard that

... when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal I always feel, quite apart from my aesthetical perceptions, a sort of shame *as if I myself had some hand in it* [italics added].⁴⁹

Morris's departure from the Board may also have prompted his hopes – expressed during a period of renewed repression at the mine – that others of his background would join him in his political work:

The middle classes will one day become conscious of the discontent of the proletariat; before that some will have renounced their class and cast in their lot with the working men, influenced by love of justice or insight into facts.

Hinder [such justice], and who knows what violence you may be driven into, even to the renunciation of the morality of which we middle-class men are so proud; advance it, strive single-heartedly that truth may prevail, and what need you fear? At any rate not your own violence, not your own tyranny?⁵⁰

and the next year that

... when the mask falls from the face of this huge tyranny of the modern world, and it is shown as an injustice conscious of its own wrong *to the honest and just of the upper classes themselves*[,] the risks of destruction will seem light compared with the degradation of championing an injustice. Yes[,] I believe that if the intelligent of the working classes and the honourable and generous of the employing class could learn to see the system under which we live as it really is, all the dangers of change would seem nothing to them and our capitalistic society would not be worth 6 months purchase.⁵¹

It also seems quite possible that Morris may have had in mind his Uncle Thomas's dismissal, and Peter Watson's attacks on the miners during the disputes of 1878–1879, when he wrote that

... the Trades Unions claimed some share in the increase of the profit of the capitalists; that also had to be yielded, how ungraciously[;] accompanied with what unmanly complaints, what base slander of the workers at the hands of their masters, some of you may forget but I remember ...⁵²

The rise and fall of Devon Great Consols may also almost be read as an allegory of Morris's view of industrial capitalism as an instrument for the creation of 'illth'.⁵³ Again in 'Socialism,' for example, he argued that

... [feudal] groups have since the full development of the commercial period been resolved into two great classes, those who possess all the means of production of wealth save one, and those who possess nothing except that one, the power of labour. The first class[,] the rich[,] therefore can compel the latter, or the poor, to sell that power of labour to them on terms which ensure the continuance of the rich class, and therefore properly operating own the poor class and indeed are called their masters ...⁵⁴

'Freedom of contract' in such contexts has always been hypocrisy, for destitute workers must sell their labour for whatever the market may bring, and

... the [masters] are able nowadays to dispense with the exercise of visible force in compelling them to work which in earlier days of the world masters used towards their slaves.⁵⁵

Mineral wealth, in his view, was an especially exploitative as well as extractive case. Not only did it stoke addictive, thinly-disguised get-rich-quick fantasies, but also provided a windfall for landowners such as the Duke of Bedford, when

... the earth beneath the surface is found out to be rich in mineral and [the landowner] is paid enormous sums for leave and license to labour them into marketable wares. And all the while in each case he has been sitting still doing nothing, or it may be worse than nothing.⁵⁶

Morris also condemned not only the payment of subsistence wages and 'employment ... of women and children of whom it is not even pretended that a subsistence wage is given', but

... an elaborate system of cooperative organization [which] has gone along with the invention of the machines: the increased wealth so produced has notoriously not gone to the labourer but has enriched the classes who live upon his labour ... the upper classes can now with a cheap generosity afford to declare all classes

equal before the law; ... a sham equality I say, so long as men have not economical equality ...⁵⁷

He also evoked the mine's everyday practices in his description of how workers must

... pay to a benefit society or a trade union a tax for the precariousness of his employment brought about by the gambling of his masters, he has to help them to pay their poor rates and thus actually enables the master to shut his factory gates on him when there is an open trades dispute between employers and employed; since otherwise the master would be taxed for his subsistence in the workhouse.⁵⁸

As for diligent managers, most of these are more destructive than the idle rich they serve:

[Y]ou will say[,] do not the masters[,] or what you call the possessing class[,] work? Undoubtedly a large part of them do work, but for the most part their work is unfruitful or sometimes directly harmful ... [apart from those engaged in a few useful occupations] the rest are engaged in gambling or fighting for their individual shares of the tribute which their class has compelled the working class to yield to it; they are never producing wealth[,] hard as they may work. ... mostly he does seem to be doing something and receives his pompous title of an 'organizer of labour,' but what he does even then is nothing but organizing the battles with his enemies[,] the other capitalists who happen to be in the same way of business as himself, and so both his idleness and his industry do but serve to make life hard and anxious for all of us.⁵⁹

Particularly repellent were members of the master-class who styled themselves providers of opportunity:

... the rich and well-to-do, the usurpers of property[,] ... mostly protest loudly that they are friends of the workers and wish them well, and that they dread a change in the basis of society quite as much in the interest of the workers as in their own interests ... *I have been almost forced to believe in the genuineness of such professions as far as individuals are concerned:* I have talked with people who, at least for the moment, believed that it was not only good and right in the abstract for the mass of mankind to be overworked & underpaid[,] to dread starvation daily, to be forced to have neither education or leisure or pleasure or hope, that it was not only good for the universe, but good for the slavelings themselves, and that the wise among them see it to be good, the ignorant among them feel it to be so, and that they have nothing to gain & everything to lose by any possible change in the basis of society.⁶⁰

More poignant echoes of the doomed strikes at Devon Great Consols may also be read in Morris's elegiac comments regarding the fate of trades unions ('some of you may forget but I remember'). Confronted with the bleak alternative of 'my way or the highway', he wrote that

... they can no longer be considered as fighting bodies ... chiefly I believe because the issue has been changed since the time when they were most vigorously at strife with the masters: the Trade Unions claimed a mere rise of wages when the selling price of the article they made rose, admitting the necessity of their accepting lower wages when it fell ... the real question now is whether the masters have any claim to profits at all.⁶¹

The 1866 strike, over 'diluted labour', represented a significant defeat for the unions in the Caradon district, and while the 'five week month' strike of 1878 was initially hailed as a victory, the outcome for the miners soon turned sour as successive wage reductions followed.

At their worst, Trades Unions could become a force for reaction:

[T]he class struggle in England is entering into a new phase, which may even make the once dreaded Trades Unions allies of capital, since they in their turn form a kind of privileged group among the workmen: in fact they now no longer represent the whole class of workers as working men but rather are charged with the office of keeping the human part of the capitalists' machinery in good working order and freeing it from any grit of discontent.⁶²

Similar spectres of cooptation underlay Morris's sceptical refusal to accept the *bona fides* of any 'reform' not predicated on the basic assumption of equal rights for all participants. In another, later essay he did permit himself a countervailing hope that such limited organisations might be replaced by something broader, more autonomous and more egalitarian:

... this older form of limited trades-unionism is, I firmly believe, now in process of transformation into a new unlimited combination of the workers from which everything may be hoped. I must refer you to the International Congress just ended in London as a very encouraging sign of the times: for ... at that Congress there was a general recognition of the fact of that unhappy struggle of the classes which is the inevitable result of inequality[,] and which it is our business to bring to an end.⁶³

He also reminded listeners that the same employers who condemned unions for their alleged coercion had established protection rackets – 'cartels' – of their own. One of these, the 'Association of Smelters,' organised Devon and Cornwall mining companies throughout the mid-nineteenth century in order to fix wages and set prices 'in restraint of trade'.⁶⁴

Competition is getting so fierce among the privileged that they are reducing profits to a minimum, . . . nay to such a pitch is this getting that as you know, the last new discovery of commercialism is an elaborate scheme for shutting down the safety-valve and sitting on the boiler [i. e. the hope of gain through competition]. The rings and trusts which are now being elaborated . . . indicate the decrepitude of Competition and are a forecast of its fall . . .⁶⁵

In passages such as these, Morris expressed his conviction that the pyramid-scheme of capitalist waste will consume the wealth it pretends to create in a technologically accelerated Hobbesian war of ‘all against all,’ and he saw signs of this ‘commercial war’ in imperial Britain’s frenetic trade cycles, and its searches for cheaper labour and new markets. And in its abuse of its workers, the constant searches for new foreign markets, its dependence on fickle and costly cycles of trade, and its failure to offer steady employment, the history of Devon Great Consols provided miniatures of all these phenomena. Moreover, by defeating their workers’ attempts to better their conditions, the directors of Devon Great Consols, and other mines, contributed partly to their own downfall, as the most highly skilled miners left the district, many of them to work in competing mines abroad.

[And then] there are the unemployed. Nothing has been done for them in the mass, and nothing will be done for them, because nothing can be done while the present system lasts.

The captains of industry[,] like other captains cannot always keep their armies on the highest war footing, and at times are obliged to disband a great many of their men, as too many people know practically at the present moment.⁶⁶

Appalled by all this, Morris convinced himself, as did almost every principled nineteenth-century socialist, that capitalism was doomed to self-destruct:

Cut-throat competition, ever cheapening means of production, and exhausting markets on one hand; on the other, the unceasing struggle of the workers to improve their condition at the expense of the capitalists, will make employment for profit more difficult both to get and to give; will, in fact, bring about deadlock and ruin in spite of occasional improvements in trade. But if the workers have learned to understand their positions . . . that very increase in the productivity of labour, which will ruin capitalism, will make Socialism possible.⁶⁷

Grimmest of all for Morris was the grotesque maw of ‘overproduction’ in the midst of scarcity, and its last recourse to the most insatiable ‘market’ of all: war.

... trade is said to be suffering depression caused by over-production: over-production of what? Of wealth? ... What! You have created too much wealth? You cannot give away the overplus; nay you cannot even carry it out into the fields and burn it there and go back again merrily to make some more of what you don't want; but you must actually pick a sham quarrel with other people and slay 100,000 men to get rid of wares which when rid of you are still intent on producing with as much ardour as heretofore: O lame and impotent conclusion of that Manchester school which has filled the world with the praises of its inventiveness, its energy ...⁶⁸

Like most of his comrades in the Socialist League, Morris—who entered active political life as part of an antiwar movement—would have been stunned to see how quickly professions of ‘internationalism’ and ‘working-class solidarity’ crumbled to dust during the late summer of 1914. But what if ‘military Keynesianism’ and ‘military-industrial complexes’ had not become part of our vocabulary, but minerals were nonetheless part of our everyday technological life? What might Morris have thought of a hypothetical ‘Devon Great Peoples’ Mine’, say, organised on socialist, or at least social-democratic principles? Morris, in the end, unlike most of his comrades, would have none of it.

Now, as to occupations, we shall clearly not be able to have the same division of labour in them as now ... we shall either make all these occupations agreeable to ourselves in some mood or to some minds, who will take to them voluntarily, or we shall have to let them lapse altogether.⁶⁹

Why did he embrace this apparently ‘Luddite’ view? ‘Some minds, who take to [technological intricacies] voluntarily’ may consider this aspect of his socialism naive, but he was not politically naive. Part of his lifelong passion for all things green and natural (literally, politically and metaphorically) was deeply embedded in his temperament. But part of it derived from his desire to distance himself from the managerial class of his origins and the military and technological advancements they hoped would make them rich. Consider, for example, the following passage:

... how is it with the professional classes? The noble class of hangers-on to which I myself belong? Here at any rate I am at home, and I think I can tell you something about them. ... here I stand before you, one of the most fortunate of this happy class, so steeped in discontent, that I have no words which will express it: no words, nothing but deeds, wherever they may lead me to, even [if] it be ruin, prison, or a violent death. ... I can only say we are driven by discontent and unhappiness into a longing for revolution: that we are oppressed by the

consciousness of the class of toiling slaves below us, that we despise the class of idle slave-owners above us.⁷⁰

Morris's intermittent involvement with Devon Great Consols brought him into direct contact with the exploitive origins of 'technological advancements,' as well as the free-riders, pyramid-schemers and market-cornerers who hoped to 'make a killing' from them. Repelled by what he had seen, and inspired by an antiwar movement and 'the beauty of the earth,' he decided (so to speak) to throw away the ring, and embrace the shire.

V CONCLUSIONS

Throughout his life, William Morris encountered less starkly destructive manifestations of the class-divide than Devon Great Consols. During his darkest moments, his own work for Morris & Co. seemed to cater to 'the swinish luxuries of the rich'.⁷¹ And that for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings brought him into contact with well-off people who wanted to tear down their ancestors' work in the name of Victorian progress.

But crassness and heedlessness are one thing, and gross exploitation another. It would have been possible for a nineteenth-century artist with no direct experience of large-scale venture capitalism to see through the exponentially multiplying theft of surplus profit, the avidity and general uselessness of corporate directors, the destructiveness of economic cycles of scarcity, overproduction and depletion, and the resemblance between economic activity and thinly disguised class-warfare, and its all-too-real extensions by other means. It might have been possible to understand all this without first-hand experience, but the latter certainly helped. Among major British socialists, only Friedrich Engels possessed more first-hand experience of a large-scale capitalist enterprise than Morris, and his role as a partner in the firm of Ermen & Engels seems to have involved no active resistance to the company's labor practices.⁷²

It would of course have clarified matters had Morris at some point written something such as the following (say, in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones):

Although I felt distaste for my family's mining enterprises, it took me years to work out why, or rather to understand what I could do to attempt to remedy society's monstrous organization 'for the misery of life'. Within my lights I tried to be a dutiful family member, and behave cordially toward Stanley, Arthur, my mother, Uncle Thomas and others. But it seemed an effort when I could not feel any kinship with their habits of thought and life; my friends and immediate family were all to me, and those with whom I have shared my love of art.

Morris, one of the more candid figures in the history of British literature, left no such statement. But it seems reasonable to conjecture that his experiences at Devon Great Consols reinforced, if they did not create, his evolution from a hopeful 'advanced' Liberal to a committed socialist, utopian communist, and even pioneer environmentalist.

Thus in *News from Nowhere*, he wrote that

... whatever coal or mineral we need is brought to grass (*sic*) and sent whither it is needed with as little as possible of dirt, confusion, and the distressing of quiet people's lives. One is tempted to believe from what one has read of the condition of those districts in the nineteenth century, that those who had them under their power worried, befouled, and degraded men out of malice prepense: but it was not so; like the miseducation of which we were talking just now, it came of their dreadful poverty. They were obliged to put up with everything, and even pretend that they liked it; whereas we can now deal with things reasonably, and refuse to be saddled with what we do not want.⁷³

This passage does not read all that differently from a description of the mine from 1860

... the surface of Devon Great Consols is, considering the extent of the mines, but little disfigured with burrows, and does not show those peculiar features of mining desolation characteristic of the great mines ... The work and buildings are in many places closely surrounded by thick woods ... At Wheal Maria, one would never suspect from the surface that it had [until very recently] been one of the most productive mines in the West.⁷⁴

Apart from the mysterious 'force barges' sailing silently up the Thames, power in *Nowhere* is supplied by human labour, horses, wind, or water. Steam engines are not mentioned, and were in any case anathema to Morris.⁷⁵ There were six of these at the mine, but thirty-three water wheels, so that 'probably no other mine of its complexity made (such) efficient use of water (power) ... as did Devon Great Consols'.⁷⁶

At the end of 'The Society of the Future,' Morris reflected that

[o]ne reason which will make some of you think [my visions] strange is a sad and shameful one. I have always belonged to the well-to-do-classes, and was born into luxury, so that necessarily I ask much more of the future than many of you do; and the first of all my visions, and that which colours all my others, is of a day when that misunderstanding will no longer be possible; when the words poor and rich, though they will still be found in our dictionaries, will have lost their old meaning.⁷⁷

William Morris's abilities to acknowledge, reflect on, and act to resolve the con-

traditions of his life and those of the society in which he lived evoked one of nineteenth-century Britain's most wide-ranging attacks on the assumptions of market capitalism. But they also enabled him to understand and reconcile the potential inconsistencies of a principled private life.

NOTES

1. This article is based on a talk with the same title given at Kelmscott House on 26 November 2011. We thank the William Morris Society for the opportunity to rehearse our ideas in public. Sections on Devon Great Consols are chiefly by PO'S, and those on Morris's socialism mainly by FSB.
2. Devon Great Consols Mine', in Frank Booker, *The Industrial Archeology of the Tamar Valley*, Newton Abbot: David and Charles, rev. ed., 1971, pp. 143–177 (Afterwards Booker); John Goodridge, 'Devon Great Consols: A study of Victorian mining enterprise', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 96, 1964, pp. 228–268 (Afterwards Goodridge; *TDA*); Charles Harvey & Jon Press, 'The City and Mining Enterprise: The Making of the Morris Family Fortune', *Journal of the William Morris Society* IX, No.1, 1990, pp. 3–11 (Afterwards Harvey & Press, 'City'; *JWMS*); *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, 257 pp. (Afterwards Harvey & Press, *Design*); Jackie Latham, 'Thomas Morris, Resident Director of Devon Great Consols', *JWMS* XIV, No.3, 2001, pp. 41–46 (Afterwards Latham); Gerry Woodcock, 'Strike!', *Tavistock's Yesterdays, Episodes from Her History No. 9*, Callington, Cornwall: Woodcock, 1993, pp. 57–65 (Afterwards Woodcock). Information on the mine included here without attribution therefore comes from these authors, with specific citations to their work, and of other authors, where appropriate. A new book on Devon Great Consols, by Rick Stewart, which we have not yet seen, will be published later this year. Research into newly available parts of the Bedford archive at the West Devon Record Office, and at Woburn Abbey (the Bedford family seat) is also now being conducted (Barry Gamble, personal communication).
3. Individual mines were named using the Cornish generic 'Wheal' (English, *shaft*), and a specific denoting members of the Board, their families, or the Duke's. Thus Wheal Maria (Figure 2) was named for Maria Hitchens, wife of Joseph, Wheal Fanny for Fanny their daughter, Wheal Ana Maria for the 7th Duchess of Bedford, Wheal Josiah for Hitchens himself, and Wheal Emma for Emma Shelton Morris, wife of William Morris senior, and mother of William Morris.

4. Henry Dines, *The Metalliferous Mining Region of Southwest England*, London: HMSO, 1956, Vol. 2, p. 655. (Afterwards Dines)
5. What these sums amount to in modern (2005) money may be assessed using the UK National Archives Currency Converter (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>), as last consulted February 2012. Modern equivalents to nineteenth century money are from now on shown in italic font.
6. Paul Bartrip, 'How green was my valance? Environmental arsenic poisoning and the Victorian domestic ideal', *English Historical Review* 109, 1994, pp. 891–913; Andrew Meharg, *Venomous Earth. How arsenic caused the world's worst mass poisoning*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 208 pp (Afterwards Meharg, *Venomous Earth*); James Whorton, *The Arsenic Century. How Victorian Britain was poisoned at work, home and play*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 440 pp. The vexed question of whether or not Morris was somehow 'culpable' in his use of arsenical wallpapers is not considered here. Instead, readers are referred to Patrick O'Sullivan, 'William Morris and arsenic – guilty, or not proven?', *William Morris Society Newsletter*, Spring 2011, pp 10–17. Online at http://www.williammorrisociety.org/newsletter_arsenic.shtml; as accessed 29 March 2012.
7. In 1893, 3966 tons (3600 t) were sold for £41372 (*ca* £2.5 million); Roger Burt, Peter Waite & Raymond Burnley, *Devon and Somerset Mines. Metalliferous and associated minerals, 1845–1913*, Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1984, p. 41. (Afterwards Burt)
8. Hence the reason why, in accounts of Morris's holding in the company (e.g. Harvey & Press, *Design*, p. 24), in 1872 his shares increase ten times in number.
9. Clearly the tendency for boards of directors to award themselves fee increases (i.e. bonuses!) on the basis of indifferent performance is not new.
10. No one seems to give the actual figure.
11. According to Thomas Morris, twenty guineas were now allocated to the school and ten to the dispensary; *Mining Journal*, May 1874, p. 594.
12. Booker, p. 158.
13. *Mining Journal*, March 1846, as quoted in Goodridge, p. 233.
14. Anon., 'Devon Great Consols', *Tavistock Gazette*, 2–23 December 1864. (Afterwards Anon. 1864).
15. Booker, p. 159; Goodridge, p. 246. One imperial fathom equals six imperial feet, two imperial yards, or 1.8288 m.
16. R. Le Marchant, 'The Man Engine & Devon Great Consols Mine', *Tamar*, 11, 1989, pp. 7, 10; E.S. Proctor, 'The health of the Cornish tin miner 1840–1914', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 92, 1999, p. 596 (Afterwards Proctor); Anon. 1864.

17. John Henry Murchison, 'The Devonshire Great Consolidated Copper Mines', *Mining Journal*, 26 October 1850, pp. 506–507. (Afterwards Murchison)
18. Murchison, p. 506.
19. Christopher Taylor, 'The story of Devon Great Consols mine, 1844–1901', *Tamar*, 10, 1988, p. 36.
20. Murchison, Anon. 1864. Consequently there was considerable inequality between the shareholders of the mine and those who worked to produce their wealth. During the late 1840s, the average annual dividend per share in Devon Great Consols was *ca* £35 (*ca* £2200), whereas wages for 'tutworkers' were *ca* £38 per annum (*ca* £2000), and for 'tribute' *ca* £50 (*ca* £2700). Thus the annual wage for 'tutwork' for a miner (and his family) paid slightly less than a single share, but 'tribute', in these more prosperous years, *ca* 1.25 times as much. However, the 'pickers' who went on strike against reduced wages in 1850 earned only *ca* £30 per year (*ca* £1500), or 72% of the average annual dividend per share. These last figures also applied only to men – women's wage rates for the same work were 50% of male wages (Murchison, p. 506). In 1856, the annual dividend was £58 per share (*ca* £2500), whereas miners' wages for that year were *ca* £40 (*ca* £2000). For 1865, the equivalent values are £62 per share (*ca* £2140), and 'underground' wages of *ca* £43 per annum (*ca* £1900). Children's wages were extremely low; for the youngest only 4d per day, or just over £5 per annum (*ca* £226), rising to 1s 3d per day, or *ca* £20 per year (*ca* £850). These sums are equivalent to only *ca* 11–40% of the annual dividend per single share at that time (Goodridge 1964 ['tutwork' and tribute are not separated in these data]; Anon. 1864). Later, of course, the mine ceased to pay a dividend, but these data are surely confirmation that during the 'good' years, despite the paternalist attitude of the Board, the rewards for shareholding, and for the hard, physical, dangerous work of mining, were highly disproportionate. Small wonder then that many miners' families in the Southwest were too poor to buy flour or meat, and lived off potatoes and salted pilchards (Proctor, p. 596).
21. Murchison; Booker, p. 166.
22. Woodcock, p. 58. More or less the same reason that the UK government is currently refusing to involve employees in setting managerial salaries and bonuses.
23. Booker, p. 160; Woodcock, p. 60. Perhaps when mentioning his lack of remuneration, Mr Thomas forgot that the previous year, the mine had paid its fourth highest dividend ever (£63488, or *ca* £60 [*ca* £2666] per share), so that he may actually have received *ca* £8640 (£384,000) from that source for that year alone, to say nothing of the total income received during his entire directorship (1844–*ca* 1880).

24. January, March and May. Pay days therefore occurred in February, April and June; Woodcock, p. 62.
25. Arithmetically, they may not have lost money, but work was often arranged so that earnings for a five week month were no greater than those for four weeks. No one seems to mention that miners' families, who also had to wait an extra week for their money four times per year, may not have liked the 'inconvenience and distress' of this system either (Goodridge, p. 248).
26. The returning officer for elections.
27. Woodcock, p. 65.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Burt, p. 42.
30. Harvey & Press, 'City', p. 7.
31. Harvey & Press, 'City', p. 14, p. 10.
32. Harvey & Press, *Design*, p. 24.
33. Dorothy Coles, "My Dearest Emma": William and Emma Morris', *JWMS* XVI, 2004, p. 57. (Afterwards Coles)
34. Harvey & Press, 'City', p. 12.
35. Woodcock, p. 65.
36. Latham, pp. 44–45.
37. Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris, Vol. I, 1848–1880*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Vol. I, 1984, pp. 71, 161, 223, 255. (Afterwards Kelvin) Three subsequent letters suggest that Morris occasionally helped manage his mother's financial interests. Public reports of meetings during Morris's tenure appeared in the *Mining Journal* for 13 and 27 May 1871, 18 May and 30 November 1872, 31 May and 29 November 1873, 30 May and 28 November 1874. His name appeared twice in connection with routine reelection of (other) directors, and on 30 November 1872 he seconded a routine motion that the board's report be printed and distributed to shareholders. In a shareholders' meeting reported in the *Mining Journal*, 30 November, 1872, W. A. Thomas remarked that his colleagues 'always kindly accorded' with any suggestion he might make.
38. Harvey & Press, *Design*, p. 24. It was required *ex officio* that Board members be shareholders.
39. J.W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950, 2 vols in 1, vol. 1. p. 223.
40. Nicholas Salmon with Derek Baker, *The William Morris Chronology*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 263. She left her estate of £16,000 in equal shares to her surviving eight children.
41. Meharg, *Venomous Earth*, p. 135.
42. Harvey & Press, *Design*, Table I, p. 24.
43. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, 31 May 1896, *My Diaries. A personal narrative of*

- events, 1888–1914*, London: Secker, 1922, p. 283.
44. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris. A life for our time*, London, Faber & Faber, 1994, p. 347.
45. Stanley Morris, born 1837, was a gentleman farmer who raised Jersey and Guernsey cattle near Southampton and speculated in other mining ventures. (Harvey & Press, 'City', p. 12) He was the only brother interviewed by J.W. Mackail for *The Life of William Morris* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1899, 2 vols, Afterwards Mackail, *Life*), and later recalled that William 'knew the names of birds' as well as plants and trees, and was familiar with Gerard's *Herbal*. The two boys had fished, boated, skated and shot redwings and fieldfares (Mackail, notebooks WMG 54.4.5, vol. I, 1844, 1847), and that William '[n]ever spoke of any unhappiness of his boyhood'.
46. *Mining Journal*, 29 November 1890; Goodridge, p. 258. As indicated, Mackail interviewed only Emma, Henrietta, and Stanley for his *Life*, and little is otherwise known about Morris's interactions with his brothers and sisters. Dorothy Coles and Janet Grierson have studied his relations with his older sisters Emma Oldham and Isabella Gilmore, and his youngest brother Edgar worked for him at Merton Abbey, but no extant documents tell us anything about his relations with his youngest sister Alice Gill, or his younger brothers Thomas, an officer in the Gordon Highlanders, and Arthur, a colonel in the 60th Royal Rifles (Coles; Janet Grierson, *Isabella Gilmore: Sister to William Morris*, London: SPCK, 1962, 243 pp.). In a letter of 23 November 1877 to Jane Morris, then in Europe, Morris wrote that 'There is a letter for you, Janey dear, from Alice apparently; I will send it on next writing' (Kelvin, vol. I, p. 413) which Kelvin glosses as 'possibly Alice Gill'. On 6 April 1874 (Kelvin, vol. I, p. 221) Morris told Aglaia Coronio that 'Unluckily tomorrow I have to go to my sister's at Weybridge in the afternoon', also a possible reference to Alice.
47. Harvey & Press, 'City', p. 3. It is not widely recognised (but see Harvey & Press, *Design*, p. 40) that before he joined the Board of Devon Great Consols, Morris, along with his uncle Francis, had also been (1856–1864?) a director of Boiling Well, a copper, zinc, lead and silver mine near Gwithian, West Cornwall (Dines, vol. I, p. 35, vol. 2; pp. 147–148; Roger Burt, Peter Waite & Ray Burnley, *Cornish Mines. Metalliferous and associated minerals, 1845–1913*, Exeter: University of Exeter, p. 39), and of the unsuccessful British Mining & Smelting Ltd (1865–1874).
48. Andrew Meharg, 'The arsenic green', *Nature* 423, 2003, p. 688; Meharg, *Venomous Earth*, pp. 137, 144, 147. It is also said that waste from the mine poisoned the River Tamar, and 'nearly killed off' the salmon fishery (Booker, p. 159). By 1864, Devon Great Consols had become the lessee of the Tamar fish-

ery, and had set up lagoons at the outflow from the mine in order to precipitate copper from the effluent. As this process produced almost pure metal, it was very lucrative (see Anon., 1864, Burt, pp. 39–40, Moses Bawden, ‘Mines and Mining in the Tavistock District’, *TDA*, XLVI, 1914, pp. 256–264), and ‘every precaution (was) taken to ensure as little injury to the fish as possible’ (‘Report on Mines’; Bedford Estate, 1868, as quoted by Colin Buck, ‘Devon Great Consols Mine’, *Tamar*, 25, 2003, p. 22). The waste would still have been rich in acidic sulphur compounds, however. Often these were also reclaimed, in order to produce sulphuric acid, but we have no record of this process at Devon Great Consols.

49. Kelvin, Vol. I, p. 229.

50. ‘Art under Plutocracy’, 1884; in May Morris, ed, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, London: Longmans Green & Co, 1910–1915, Vol. XXIII, pp. 189–90. (Afterwards *CW*)

51. ‘Socialism’, 1885 (italics added); Florence S. Boos, ‘“Socialism” and “What we have to look for”’: two unpublished lectures by William Morris’, *JWMS*, XIX No. 1, 2010, pp. 9–51 (p. 34).

52. *Ibid.*

53. John Ruskin, ‘Ad Valorem,’ *Unto this Last*, in John Rosenberg, ed, *The Genius of John Ruskin*, London: George Allen, 1963, p. 262.

54. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 22.

55. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 23.

56. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 24. ‘The Bedford Harvest’ was indeed considerable; ‘few landlords have ever been in a more enviable position’ (Booker, p. 152, p. 155). Successive Dukes, despite belonging to a class which despises ‘trade’, were clearly hard-headed businessmen, or knew how to employ those who were. The original lease for Devon Great Consols was only granted after several other ‘undercapitalised’ proposals were rejected, and the Duke hired Josiah Hitchens as his own agent to search for funds. In 1856, when that lease was renewed ahead of schedule in order to extend the set east of Wheal Emma, and build a railway to Morwellham, the Duke exacted a fine of £20,000 (*ca* £890,000), a sum felt throughout the industry to be ‘a heavy tax’. He also insisted that the new railway carry goods for himself and all his tenants at the uneconomical rate of 1s (*ca* £2.60) per ton, and levied charges at the port of 4d (85p) per ton on copper ore, 3d (65p) on timber, and on coal, and 2d (42p) on iron. Over the next decade, the first of these probably generated £400 (*ca* £17,500) per year, and the third *ca* £30 (*ca* £1300). By 1865 the Duke had received *ca* £210,000 (£10–11 million) in total royalties (Murchison, p. 506; Goodridge, pp. 236, 238; Booker p. 160). He also claimed £2,052 (*ca* £104,000) for damage to his pheasant coverts. The Duke

was also ‘Lord of the Soil’ for other mines in Tavistock area, so his ‘harvest’ may well have been even greater than the data used here imply. Some of this was reinvested in Tavistock, in the shape of Bedford Square and its surrounds, and also to build some 250 cottages in and around the district, partly in order to alleviate a chronic housing shortage caused mainly by growth of the mine. Each of these cost the Duke £22 (*ca* £1000), but were let at 1s 3d to 2s 6d (£2.75–£5) per week, plus 1d per week for a replaceable kitchen stove! Although the Duke supported the miners over reintroduction of the ‘five week month’ – an action of which he ‘strongly disapproved’ – he remained ‘obdurate’ over suspension of his dues, and in the matter of supplying funds to purchase rock drills, with which the Board hoped to speed up the search for tin. From 1870 to 1883, while scarcely any dividend was paid, he continued to receive his royalties. He then agreed to remit them by 50%, and eventually (in 1886) to forgo all dues, provided no dividend was paid. In 1893 a new lease was negotiated at 1/30th of receipts, rising to 1/24th if total dividends exceeded £15,000 (Goodridge, pp. 250–255). From 1881–1886, he received dues of £10,000 (*ca* £500,000), even though no dividend was paid (Booker, footnote, p. 173). Eventually he lost patience with the squabbling directors, and in 1901 made it clear that he would not renew the lease (although he might for another company). But as to his dues, he remained as unrepentant as he had been in 1868, when his principal mining agent wrote that:

‘Had the Duke thought fit to work his own mineral grounds, he would have been the gainer of £982, 842 19s 10d (*sic!*), in addition to the £269, 506 3s received in dues and premiums, making a total of £1,252,349 2s 10d, and doubtless if his grace could take the mines into his own hands ... he could pay all ... losses sustained and still realize a handsome profit; which clearly shows how little cause the mining company generally ... have to complain of the rate of dues’ (Booker, Note 6, p. 249).

57. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 27.

58. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 24.

59. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 23, p. 25.

60. Florence S. Boos, ‘William Morris’s “Commercial War”: a critical edition’, *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 19 (2), 2010, pp. 45–65 (p. 51, italics added). Afterwards Boos, ‘Commercial War’; *JPRS*.

61. Boos, ‘Socialism’, p. 28.

62. *Ibid.*

63. See also Florence S. Boos, ‘William Morris’s “Equality”: a critical edition’, *JPRS*, 20 (1), pp. 51–70 (p. 67). Afterwards Boos, ‘Equality’.

64. John Goodridge, ‘*Tamar View, The Horn of Plenty* and the Devonshire Great

- Consolidated Copper Mining Company', *TDA*, CXL, 2008, p. 238.
65. Boos, 'Equality', pp. 66–67.
66. 'What We Have to Look For', 1895, as in Boos, 'Socialism', p. 38; Boos, 'Commercial War', p. 58.
67. 'Monopoly: or, How Labour is Robbed', *CW*, Volume XXIII, p. 252.
68. Boos, 'Socialism', p. 16.
69. 'The Society of the Future', 1887; in A.L. Morton, ed, *Political Writings of William Morris*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979, pp. 195–96. (Afterwards Morton)
70. 'Misery and the Way Out', 1884; May Morris, *William Morris, Artist Writer Socialist*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936, 2 vols, Vol. II, pp. 156, 158.
71. Sir Lothian Bell to Alfred Powell; W.R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and his work*, London: Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 94.
72. W.O. Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels*, London: Frank Cass, 1976, 'The Manchester Years, 1850–1870,' esp. pp. 210–25.
73. James Redmond, ed, *William Morris, News from Nowhere*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, Chapter X, p. 58. Use of the phrase 'brought to grass' may be a direct link to Morris's experience of the mines of Devon and Cornwall, it being the local expression for the raising of ores to the surface.
74. H.C. Salmon, 'A descriptive account of the Devonshire Great Consolidated Mines', *Mining Journal*, 28 July 1860, pp. 518–520 (p. 518).
75. 'How we live and how we might live', 1884; Morton, p. 140.
76. G.A. Rowe, 'The mines of Tamarside – 4. Devon Great Consols', *Tamar*, 6, 1984, p. 39.
77. Morton, pp. 190–91.