

What the Press Said

In regard to the social aspect of life for the two Cotgrave communities, it is interesting to look at what the local Press had to say and Cotgrave Library has a file of press cuttings which throw a little more light on the subject. The following is an attempt to piece together some of these cuttings which relate to the coming of the mine and its aftermath.

Notts Evening Post 1954

Cotgrave is the friendliest of all the local villages. Visitors are sure of a welcome in either of its two pubs.

Guardian Journal 1954

The first sod has been cut, the distinguished visitors have left but Cotgrave is worried! The Rector, A H Wakefield says he would prefer a separate village for the miners, rather than the proposed extension of Cotgrave itself. He fears that the mix of two very different communities will just not work.

Evening News 1963

It was announced that the pits at Radford and Wollaton will both close before 1970 and some five hundred miners will move to Cotgrave.

Guardian Journal 1963

Cotgrave is in a mess. New houses are being built for the miners and, even though these are on the outskirts of the village, there is hustle and bustle everywhere. New water mains are being installed, new electricity supplies and new sewage mains. Disruption is rampant throughout the village.

West Bridgford and Clifton Standard 1965

Work is now under way on the Miners' Welfare building – expected to be finished in 1966. It will have a concert hall for 500 people, a bar (with facility for 3500 gallons of beer!) and sports facilities. There will be two football pitches, a cricket field, two bowling greens and three tennis courts.

Guardian Journal 1966

Upset and unhappiness are probably at their peak! 'Floor lift' in the Deep Soft Seam at the mine has given rise to pessimism in the mining community. The colliery is short of labour and has been obliged to recruit a number of 'undesirables'. 'Problem Families' abound. Last year it was reported that 300/350 teenagers were roaming the streets with nowhere to go. Residents were afraid to go out of their homes! Miners' pay needs to increase – many men were promised better jobs but have now been told they must wait because they are still only trainees. Many miners earn no more than £10 per week. Turnover of families on the new estate is serious. Many houses are standing empty. Roughly 20% of new families are 'giving up'. A number of miners have left the pit and found better jobs elsewhere and, though they are allowed to stay in their homes, they lose the advantage of free coal and can't afford to buy it at local prices.

Social planning has been poor. While houses on the new estate are very attractive, the roads are in an appalling state. There is only one food shop on the estate, a small wooden hut provided by the Co-Op. There are an estimated 500 toddlers in the village but only one shop selling children's clothes. Nottingham is an attractive shopping centre but the bus fare is prohibitive for a great many miners' wives, particularly if they have to take two or more children with them. There is no chemist. Nor are there any cultural facilities. Loneliness is widespread among miners' wives.

The Rector, F W Stepheni, points out that all the more senior officials live outside the village and disappear each evening and at weekends. This applies not only to colliery officials but also to the school head-teachers, the Methodist Minister and the Roman Catholic Priest. The village therefore lacks the positive influence such people might provide.

However, not all the news is bleak. Plans have been approved for a new shopping precinct and the Miners' Welfare is due to be completed toward the end of the year. The Rector has arranged for the provision of a youth centre for 300 over-fourteens and 200 under-fourteens. The £6000 cost was provided by Southwell Diocese. Some small activity groups are under way such as a Jazz Group started by one of the wives. Things can only get better from here onwards!

Guardian Journal 1967

An interesting, though disturbing (!) report: Cotgrave miners have refused (almost unanimously) to work with foreigners (coloured or white). This contrasts with the Gedling Pit, for example, where no less than sixteen nationalities work happily side-by-side.

[What is one to make of this? It suggests a high degree of insecurity among the Cotgrave miners. In spite of the labour shortages referred to in earlier press articles, this suggests that they were in fear of losing their jobs. The contrast with Gedling is significant.]

Guardian Journal 1968

An initial target of 1.25 million tonnes per year has been set for the Cotgrave mine. To put this in context, 5 million tonnes per year is needed at the Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station.

There are presently 250 vacancies at the Cotgrave mine and recruitment campaigns are planned for Durham and Scotland.

Guardian Journal 1969

Many miners' wives had expressed a desire for part-time work in Cotgrave and plans were now in hand to provide an industrial estate (along Hollygate Lane).

Guardian Journal 1972

At a recent election, a number of long-standing Cotgrave village councillors lost their seats to representatives of the mining community. The miners were beginning to show their political strength.

Evening Post 1981

Cotgrave is now a happy, friendly place! [It took 27 years!]