work during the mornings even though all he did had to be accomplished sitting on a stool or 'squat' (a compositor's support). By 1919 a wicker bath chair stood at the bottom of the stairs at 37 Castle Street and most afternoons my father would be helped into it and I would push him over to the Sea front where, with an old pair of binoculars I still possess, he would intently inspect all that was going on around him. We had to be back in Castle Street by half past five so that I might have assistance from Charlie Southey, who had by then returned from the war, in getting my father indoors and stowing away the bath-chair. Working hours were from 7.30 until 6 o'clock so my return soon after five gave ample time.

I became accepted as the natural successor to my father and he devoted a good deal of time and care to very subtly teaching me what I would need to know of business and money matters. As far as these two things are concerned both my father and I were, and I still am, quite unsophisticated. My father's main tenet was 'keep the books accurately and don't 'fiddle' the tax returns'. He held that a man's word was his bond and that the timely settlement of debts incurred in the usual way of business had the highest priority. 'Good name was more important than a full belly', was what I was brought up to believe.

I have some photographs of my parents, taken in the garden of No. 37 when my father was just able to get about again and the pitiful clothes my mother is wearing make a stark commentary on the sore straits in which the war and my father's illness had placed us. Both my parents were strong on principles but they were very kind and my sister and I in no way felt deprived: quite the contrary, in fact. Weekly we looked forward to reading *'The Children's Newspaper'* the demise of which was, I feel, the biggest loss the children of this country ever sustained.

The Dream of Richard Tilden Smith or Tilmanstone - what might have been

By Derek Leach

There is nothing left of Tilmanstone Colliery today, but during its short working life it produced 20 million tons of coal. There were three pit shafts: number 1 was 1590 feet deep, number 2 was 3168 and number 3 was 3139 feet. All were sealed during 1987. Things were different in 1925 when Richard Tilden Smith envisaged a pyramid of businesses based upon Tilmanstone Colliery, making S E Kent one of the richest industrial areas in the country.

Richard Tilden Smith was born in New South Wales in 1865. His father had emigrated, but had died when Richard was 16. The family owned a pub, but had discovered gold which Richard used to good effect. He soon owned 5 million acres with 75,000 cattle and at 21 he was responsible for developing Australia's first coal field. A bank crisis in 1893 made him poor and he came to England, but he still owned property in a gold field which restored his fortune. In England he started restoring failing businesses and refused a baronetcy for his efforts! By 1908 he was a director of Burma Mines and had a controlling interest in Chinese lead, silver, zinc and copper mines. In 1914 he acquired the Swansea Vale Works and built a large modern zinc smelting plant at Avonmouth. Ironically, this plant produced mustard gas for war purposes and Richard's only son, Jack, died from

Tilmanstone Colliery in the 1980s

German mustard gas. In the City he built the impressive office block of Adelaide House, which still stands on the riverside at the end of London Bridge, and lived in its penthouse. He introduced the diesel engine to Britain and had various interests all over the world.

Richard had plans for the Kent Coalfield as early as 1907 and made his first bid for Tilmanstone in 1915, just two years after it produced its first coal, but was thwarted by the then owner, Arthur Burr who, despite dubious methods, did so much to develop the coalfield. In 1925, six years after Burr's death, 1200 men were about to lose their jobs at Tilmanstone. Richard was appointed manager by the receiver and then became the colliery owner. It was in a poor state, bedevilled with water problems, inadequate pumping systems, dangerous shafts and miners notorious for their militancy. Using all his vast experience of finance, business and mining, he set about not only transforming Tilmanstone Colliery, but building a complex of industries around Dover using the energy produced by the pit. From the outset he knew that the colliery could only survive if ancillary local businesses were created.

First, he tackled the water problem. For every ton of coal mined, 17 tons of water had to be pumped to the surface. He installed the largest pump in the country, called Lady Gray, which is still buried in the pit. New coal washing equipment was installed and a coal briquette plant built to produce poor quality coal - dirty, but easy to burn and cheap at Is 6d a cwt.

The high cost of transporting coal by rail even to Dover docks was a big drawback. To solve this problem Richard planned an overhead transport system comprising a continuous wire supported by 177 pylons stretching seven and a half miles across country from Tilmanstone to the Eastern Arm in Dover Harbour. Coal would be carried in a succession of buckets attached to this aerial ropeway. On arrival at the Eastern Arm, having passed through a tunnel a quarter of a mile long in the White Cliffs, buckets would empty their coal into a 5,000 ton bunker to await loading on to ships. This would cost only 1 s 9d per ton compared with 5 s 9d by rail. Despite stiff opposition from the railway companies, parliamentary approval was obtained and the ropeway opened in 1930. It was not used during the Second World War and then fell into disrepair and was dismantled in the 1950s.

By 1929 Richard had acquired controlling interests in various Kent gas companies and he planned a gas plant at Tilmanstone, producing 1,000 million cubic feet of gas a year with coke as a by-product transported to Dover by aerial ropeway. Other by-products would have been pitch, benzol,

Aerial ropeway emerges through the cliffs on the Eastern Arm

dyes, creosote and artificial manure! There was more! The existence of rich deposits of iron ore in East Kent was well known, such as the 115 million tons 600 feet below the Shakespeare Colliery - now Samphire Hoe. Richard planned a steel works, once again using his aerial ropeway to Dover docks. Even a brick works featured in his master plan to use the waste from the mining activities. Perhaps the most exciting project was a local power station, using Tilmanstone coal, not only to supply the local area but also to attract other businesses to the area. This was before any national grid. He offered to supply London and other towns as well at one farthing a unit. His death intervened and Battersea Power Station was built to supply London.

The manufacture of cement locally was a top priority. It made sense to Richard with plenty of local coal, chalk and clay combined with the proximity of Dover docks for both home and export trade. Twenty-four acres of land at Langdon Hole close to the harbour were leased for the proposed site. He envisaged the largest plant in the world producing one million tons a year, but had not foreseen the extent of local opposition, apathy and red tape. These had not been overcome when he died in 1929. His dream died with him, depriving Dover of many jobs.

What sort of man was this business tycoon? He took over Tilmanstone during a period of major strikes, including the General Strike of 1926, but was concerned for the welfare of strikers' families and, through a third party, paid out £ 100 a week to families of men on strike at his own pit! He gave his men the option of co-operating with management to keep the pit open or he would close it. They co-operated. Wages at Tilmanstone were amongst the highest in the country and were never cut despite continuing losses of up to £1,000 a week. The revolutionary practice of making workers part of management was introduced and a joint management committee was formed, but he rejected a profit sharing scheme because the men would also have to bear the losses! Reports of better conditions in Communist Russia were countered by sending a deputation of miners to Russia, with all expenses paid by Tilden Smith, to see whether these 'better conditions' could be introduced to the pit. He even offered

Eastern Arm with its aerial ropeway and coal staithe

free passage to Russia for miners and their families, but there were no takers! One of the deputation commented, 'If men at Tilmanstone had to work under such conditions, there would be hell to pay!' Concern for his men extended to building 100 new homes at Elvington available at low rent which they would own after several years. Pithead baths were installed.

Richard owned Elvington Court. Its large barn was converted into a miners' leisure centre that could seat 750 people which was used for dances, staging shows, plays and boxing tournaments. As Tilmanstone expanded, miners came from all over the country. Elvington Court was turned into a hostel for single miners at 25 shillings a week for full board including packed lunches for work. He had a pig farm behind Elvington Court, supplying the local butcher but also providing cheap pork to his miners.

By late 1929 the men of Tilmanstone had something to be proud of They were treated with respect by management, who received respect in return. A future of security and prosperity seemed assured.

On 18 December 1929 Richard Tilden Smith was lunching in the House of Commons, lobbying the government to amalgamate compulsorily all collieries under a single Coal Board. He was laughing when he suddenly collapsed and died. His premature death at 64 robbed East Kent of an industrial future as well as a great businessman and humanitarian. All his ambitious plans were made. Many projects had started, but nobody was prepared to continue with such complex and expensive ventures. Squabbles and mistrust returned to Tilmanstone and the family estate eventually sold its interest in the colliery in 1937.

What of Richard, the family man? He married and had four daughters and one son, but met a lovely White Russian immigrant after the Russian Revolution. He banished his wife to a luxury apartment and installed his mistress in his Mayfair home. Whilst he entertained lavishly and was generous to others, he was always being careful with his own personal spending - always buying second-hand cars! The Salvation Army and Barnardos benefited from his generosity and, of course, his fortune helped to support the Tilmanstone losses.

In 1929 there were still reckoned to be possibly 1,000 million tons of coal at Tilmanstone and Snowdon - enough to last 300 years at 10,000 tons per day. I wonder whether another Richard Tilden Smith will be brave enough to try to exploit it one day?

Reception of President Wilson at Dover

by Martyn Webster

The first State Visit to the United Kingdom by a President of the United States of America took place in 2004 in the person of the 43rd Incumbent of that office George W. Bush. This of course was by no means the first actual visit of an American President. The very first presidential visit took place in 1918 in the aftermath of the First World War at the time of the Peace Conference in Paris. As on so many occasions before, it was the town and port of Dover who received this important visitor the 28th President, and on whose soil his foot was first set.

The "Dover Express" of the day reported the detail of this great occasion and the following is an edited extract:
On Boxing Day Thursday December 26th, 1918, the President of the United States of America, Mr. Woodrow Wilson, accompanied by Mrs. Wilson and a large staff, landed at Dover .It was the first time that a ruler of the United States had ever landed in Great Britain and to make the