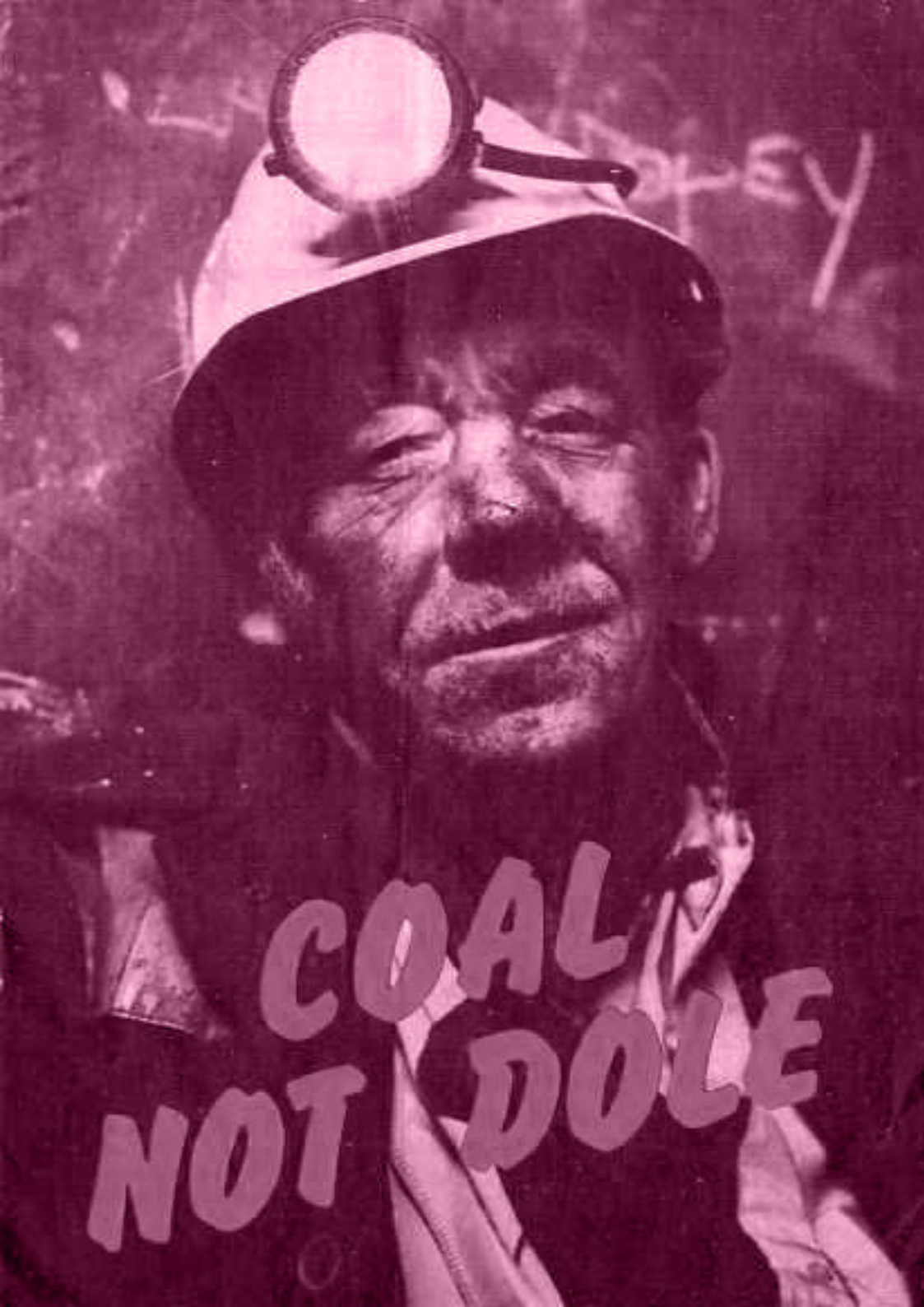


THE 1984/85

MINERS' STRIKE



**NATIONAL
COAL MINING
MUSEUM**



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Front cover: Morning on the picket line at Lea Hall Pit. © John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk **Left:** Image from a leaflet produced by the NUM in support of the miners.

OVERVIEW

OF THE MINERS' STRIKE



Above: The return to work at Wath, March 1985. © Martin Jenkinson

In 1984 coal was a nationalised industry managed by the National Coal Board (NCB). There were 174 state-owned coal mines in Britain. These collieries employed 187,000 miners.

The Government questioned how profitable many mines were. On 1st March 1984, the NCB announced that twenty mines were to close. This would mean the loss of 20,000 jobs. It was estimated that the NCB's plans could result in 100,000 jobs disappearing over the next five years.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and other unions resisted this. On 5 March 1984, coal miners in Great Britain took industrial action against pit closures. Approximately 165,000 miners went on strike.

Collieries were picketed to persuade working miners to join the dispute or to stop the movement of coal. One of the most violent confrontations between police and pickets was at Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire on 18 June 1984.

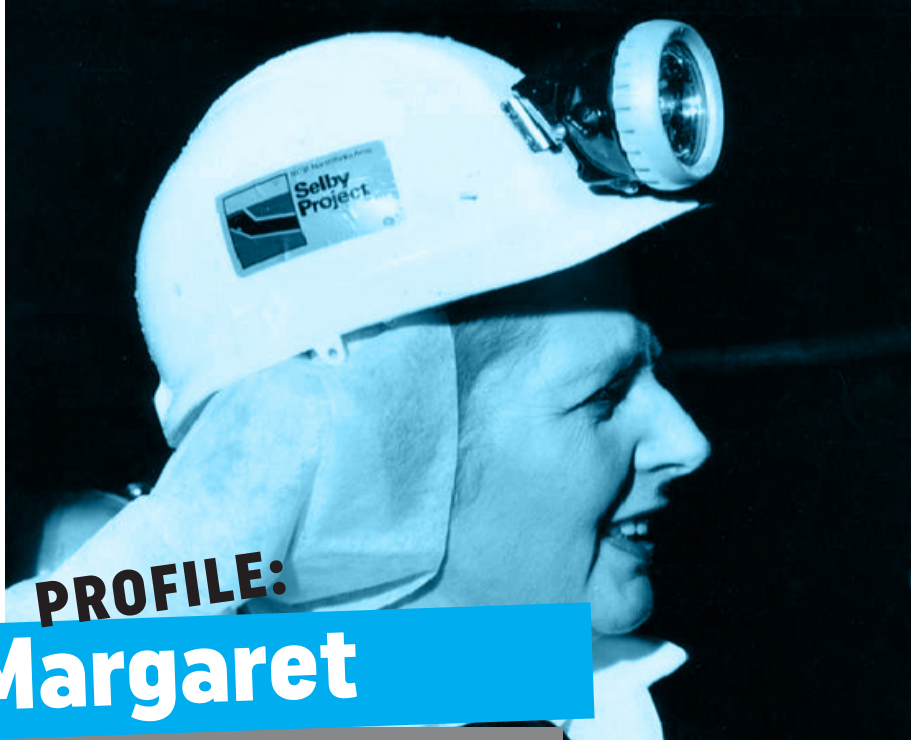
In Nottinghamshire, there was less support for the Strike. Only a quarter of Nottinghamshire miners

came out on strike. For most of the Strike, Nottinghamshire was picketed by flying pickets. Miners' wives and daughters also became involved in strike action; they joined picket lines and formed Women Against Pit Closures support groups to help families facing financial hardship.

On 3 March 1985 NUM delegates voted ninety-eight to ninety-one to call off the Strike. By 17 March 1985, the strike was over and the miners returned to work without a settlement. The NCB closed twenty five pits.

Further Reading

- [BBC overview of the Strike:](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2004/miners_strike/default.stm) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2004/miners_strike/default.stm
- David John Douglass, *Strike, Not the End of the Story; Reflections on the Major Coal Mining Strikes in Britain* (National Coal Mining for England Publications 4, Overton, 2005)
- Triona Holden, *Queen Coal, Women of the Miners' Strike* (History Press Ltd., Gloucester, 2005).



PROFILE: Margaret Thatcher

Above L & R: Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. © Colin Glover also see* [Far right](#): Badge dating from the strike, caricaturing Thatcher.

Margaret Thatcher was born in Election, she became the Grantham in Lincolnshire, England. Conservative MP for Finchley.

Margaret Thatcher was born in Grantham in Lincolnshire, England. She studied chemistry at the University of Oxford. There she became President of the Student Conservative Association. After Oxford, she worked as a research chemist and later retrained as a barrister.

Margaret Thatcher became a member of the Conservative Party in the 1940s. She was an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate in several elections. Then, in the 1959 General

Election, she became the Conservative MP for Finchley. In 1970 the Conservative Party won the General Election. Margaret Thatcher was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Science.

In 1974 the Conservative Party lost power in a General Election. Edward Heath resigned as leader of the party. In 1975 Margaret Thatcher became the first woman leader of the Conservative Party. She became the first female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

When the Conservative Party was voted into power in 1979. She resigned in 1990. In 1992, she became a member of the House of Lords as Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven in the County of Lincolnshire. Thatcher died on 8 April 2013 at the age of 87 after suffering a stroke.

"This is an attempt to substitute the rule of the mob for the rule of the law, and it must not succeed. Mr. Macgregor's aim, and the government's aim, is to produce a good, profitable coalmining industry."
[Margaret Thatcher](#)



Further Reading:

- www.bbc.co.uk/history
- www.margaretthatcher.org
- [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk / COLDthatcher.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/COLDthatcher.htm)
- www.number10.gov.uk/history/andtour/primeministers-in-history/margaretthatcher

PROFILE:

Arthur Scargill

Arthur Scargill was born in Worsbrough Dale, near Barnsley, Yorkshire. His grandfather and father were miners. After leaving school, he too became a miner. His first job was at Woolley Colliery, near Barnsley in 1953. In 1961, he married Anne Scargill, whose father was a union branch official at Woolley Colliery. Arthur Scargill then became the Yorkshire NUM Compensation Agent, for which he was highly regarded. In 1962, he became a member of the Labour Party.

In 1973, he became the leader of the Yorkshire Area of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). He played an active role in the miners' strike that brought down the Conservative Government in March 1974. In 1981, Scargill became President of the NUM. He held strong beliefs about the future of coal mining, and he disagreed with the policies of the Conservative Government. This led to his leadership of the 1984–1985 Miners' Strike. The Strike ended in

defeat for the miners.

During the Strike, Anne Scargill worked with Women Against Pit Closures groups and gave talks at rallies. On 13 October 1992 she set up camps at thirty-one pits threatened with closure. She also led marches and was arrested for chaining herself to the railings at the Department of Trade and Industry. In 1996 Arthur Scargill founded the Socialist Labour Party. He is currently the party's leader and has contested two parliamentary elections. He lost on both occasions. In 2002, he was made Honorary President of the NUM. Anne and Arthur divorced in 2001. Arthur Scargill has now withdrawn from public life.

Further Reading:

- www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone
- Paul Routledge, Scargill: The Unauthorised Biography (HarperCollins, London, 1993).

Top: Arthur Scargill at Mansfield Rally 1984. © Ken Wilkinson

Bottom: Walking in front of the Riot Police. © Guardian News & Media Ltd



PROFILE:**Ian MacGregor**

Ian MacGregor was born in Kinlochleven in the Scottish Highlands. He went to the University of Glasgow, where he studied engineering.

Early in his career, he worked as a junior manager at William Beardmore and Company, an engineering company in Scotland. There he clashed with the trade unions in a strike involving crane drivers. His handling of the matter, which included driving cranes himself for two weeks, brought him to the attention of the company chairman. He was marked out for rapid promotion.

In 1979, the Conservative Government came into power and they began to restructure the nationalised industries such as steel and coal. In 1980 Ian MacGregor was appointed chairman of the nationalised British Steel Corporation. British Steel employed 166,000 staff and produced 14 million tons of steel.

Ian MacGregor closed factories and made redundancies. By 1983, British Steel had become more profitable. His next role, in 1983, was head of the National Coal Board (NCB).

To make the coal industry profitable, he cut jobs and closed pits. This ultimately led to the 1984-85 Miners' Strike, for which no agreement was ever reached. Ian MacGregor retired from the NCB in 1986.

Ian MacGregor died of a heart attack in Taunton, Somerset, in April 1998.

Further Reading:

- www.news.bbc.co.uk
- www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/sir-ian-mcgregor-436282.html

Left: Ian MacGregor *

* Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government License v3.0.

PROFILE:

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY



The Conservative Party is a British political party. Between 1979 and 1990 the Conservatives formed the British government.

During this period, they were led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Their policies at this time included selling publicly owned industries into private ownership. This led to confrontation with the trade unions.



Left: Conservative Party logo from The Strike period.

Right: Miners Coat with NCB logo on the back.

The 1984-85 Miners' Strike took place at the height of this confrontation. In March 1984 the NUM called a strike because the NCB, an organisation supported by the Government, proposed to close twenty out of 174 state-owned mines. This meant 20,000 jobs out of 187,000 would be cut, but also was seen by many as only the start of a much wider programme of closures. Two-thirds of the country's miners downed tools.

In March 1985, the Strike ended without a deal. The cost of the Strike to the economy was estimated to be at least £1.5 billion.

PROFILE:

NATIONAL

COAL BOARD

The National Coal Board (NCB) managed the coal mining industry in Great Britain. The Government set it up in 1946. It took over most mines on Vesting Day, 1st January 1947.

The NCB saw three major national strikes. The 1972 and 1974 strikes were both over pay. Both of these strikes were successful for the National Union of Mineworkers. The strike of 1984-85 ended in victory for the Government.

The mining industry was funded through the Government. In 1983 the Government questioned whether the industry was making a profit. The Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher appointed Ian MacGregor as head of the National Coal Board. Macgregor had worked for the British Steel Corporation and he had increased profits by halving the workforce in the space of two years. In 1984 the NCB announced they were going to close twenty coal

mines, which would result in the loss of 20,000 jobs. As a result, the National Union of Mineworkers called for strike action.

Further Reading:

- www.dmm.org.uk



PROFILE:

NATIONAL UNION OF MINE WORKERS

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was formed in 1945. It was a re-organisation of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). All the regional miners' unions were merged into one national organisation covering all miners working in and around collieries in Great Britain. Separate unions covered officials, management and some trades.

From the 1880s, most miners were in a trade union. The NUM looked after miners' welfare and would fight for workers' rights. They would negotiate to improve working conditions, health and safety, health services, education, wages and

working hours. Union branch members wore badges to show support for their union. They also paid to have banners made which were colourful and showed messages of comradeship and strength. Miners marched behind their banners at protests and demonstrations or on gala days. Mining banners have a huge significance in the community and have always been symbols of solidarity and pride. Many miners returned to work following the 1984-85 Miners' Strike by walking

into the pit yard behind their colliery banner. The NUM was a powerful force because so many men had traditionally been employed in mining; it had a major influence over the British union movement and in British politics. In 1974 the NUM defeated the Conservative Government led by Prime Minister Edward Heath through strike action. The union's influence was severely reduced by the 1984-85 Miners' Strike and by the reduction in the numbers of miners in the industry.

"I did not see the Miners' Strike as a defeat because we stood up for what was right and we fought for our right to work in support of our Union, our families and our communities."

Bruce Wilson (Silverwood Miner)

The NUM is still active in representing miners, their families and their communities. It is still politically active and it recovers compensation for the injuries sustained at work by miners or for ill health due to industrial diseases such as bronchitis and emphysema, industrial deafness and vibration white finger.

Further Reading:

- www.num.org.uk

Left: During the Strike banners were a very important symbol of solidarity and belonging. © NCMME

Middle: Miners' Gala Parade in Wakefield on 16 June 1984. Allerton Silkstone Branch banner carries the slogan 'The Industry that Serves the Community'. © Mrs T.M. Knight

Right: Badges were sold to raise money for the striking miners and their families.



PROFILE: POLICE FORCE



Top: Striker George Brealey carries out his 'inspection' routine wearing a toy police hat, as officer Paul Castle glares back.
© Guardian News & Media Ltd

Middle L: Police on horseback charging pickets at Orgreave.
© Guardian News & Media Ltd

Middle R: Police and pickets clashing at Orgreave Coking Plant.
© Guardian News & Media Ltd

Bottom: Josie Smith, a retired and disabled miner being arrested outside his home in Easington while his wife tries to intervene
© Keith Pattison.

The police were employed to help working miners pass through picket lines and get to work. For example, road blocks were used to stop striking miners reaching picket lines. Officers from all around the country were employed to police picket lines.

Many left their families on a Sunday, boarded a coach with other officers, and returned home the following Friday. Temporary accommodation was set up in places such as town halls and the officers lived out of kitbags and slept on the floor. They would be at the pits before dawn, before the striking miners arrived. Their day usually consisted of periods of waiting, travelling, or talking to the pickets, mixed with short periods of confrontation.

One of the most violent confrontations between the police and pickets took place on 18 June 1984 at Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire. It became known as 'The Battle of Orgreave'. Approximately 6,000 pickets travelled to the plant and the police deployed about 8,000 officers. Short-shield squads (police in riot gear, with batons and short shields) and specially trained snatch squads were used alongside police mounted on horseback and police dogs. This was a new development to police

control in the UK. It represented an offensive rather than defensive approach.

"Whilst all this stuff was raining down on you – bricks and bottles – and then the horses would come charging through and of course no one, and I defy anyone, I did it myself, defy anyone to stand their ground against that sort of thing – and of course it was a starburst everybody ran backwards wherever, wherever they could seek refuge you see but it was an open field there was nowhere to hide.."

(Anonymous Police Officer)

"Shortly after the first push the long shields parted and out rode 14 mounted police straight into the pickets. As they did so police beat their shields with truncheons creating a wall of noise, it was a declaration that we were facing an army which had declared war on us."

Bernard Jackson
(Wath Main picket at Orgreave).

Further Reading:

- www.news.bbc.co.uk
- Richard Clarkson, *Striking Memories* (Red Shed Publications, West Yorkshire)

FLYING PICKETS

Flying pickets became a regular feature at pits where men continued to work. Organised groups of strikers travelled to collieries around the country to persuade working miners to stay away from work.

Often, police from around the

country were brought in to control the situation. Nottinghamshire was a particular target for flying pickets from South Yorkshire because the miners in that area had voted against taking strike action.

"It was a fantastic feeling at the Mansfield demo. There were thousands of miners, their wives and children there, all marching with banners and there was not much trouble. I will always

remember one of the Union men asking us if we wanted to go and stay in Nottingham for five days. We agreed straight away. I had mixed feelings about it, excited but also apprehensive, knowing that we were going to stop in the middle of enemy territory. We drove to Nottinghamshire after the demonstration."

Robert Taylor
(Cortonwood miner)

"As the dispute wore on and we were still picketing and flying all over the

country we began to get 'battle fatigue', going to Silverwood Miners' Welfare in the evenings for our 'orders', hoping things would be OK, and that we would get home safely following our picket duty. After several months of activity I was beginning to want a rest. I was glad when Christmas came but soon developed itchy feet again, missing the excitement of it all – of trying to beat the roadblocks into Nottinghamshire and trying to get to Clipstone Colliery, the 'Fort Knox' of the Notts Coalfield:

to dodge and duck and dive, to weave in and out of the Nottinghamshire countryside, and to see the faces of the police when arriving at Clipstone – it was dedication to duty if you got there."

Bruce Wilson (Silverwood miner)

Further Reading:

- Brian Elliott, *'Yorkshire's Flying Pickets'* (Pen and Sword Books, 2004)
- Richard Clarkson *'Striking Memories'* (Red Shed Publications).

Left: Picketing miner being stopped and questioned at a police road block on the Nottinghamshire border.

© Guardian News & Media Ltd

Right: A Green paper Strike badge.





WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES



Left: Christmas food parcels inside Easington Colliery Welfare Club. © Keith Pattison
Right: Members of the WAPC holding a torchlight vigil at Grimethorpe Colliery. © Martin Jenkinson

Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) is a support group that started in Barnsley. A number of women got together to form a network of support for mining families. This included running community kitchens for the pickets and their families and collecting money for food parcels.

Soon after, WAPC became a national organisation. Their activities included fundraising, producing protest paraphernalia (postcards, badges, t-shirts, leaflets, etc.), participating in demonstrations and speaking at rallies, where they let people know what the Strike was like for the communities. For the first time women actively joined picket

lines and they formed part of flying pickets. In such a traditional community, some men initially resisted the involvement of women, but they came to realise how vital their support was to the continuation of the Strike. It is widely accepted that the Strike would not have continued for as long as it did without the support of the women.

"The first thing of course was to gather money, because none of us had any and we wanted to help in any way we could by taking part in more or less anything that was going on. We wanted to be seen as women who supported the men who were fighting. First and foremost you wanted to support your husband

and family, but then it became so much wider than that."

Madeline Buttergeld (miner's wife).

The Strike drastically changed many lives. Sometimes, the change was positive. This was particularly true for the women. For many, the role they occupied within the community was based around the family, home and children, while the men worked and brought home a wage.

For some women, the Strike provided opportunities for them to use hidden skills and talents. After the Strike, many women continued to expand their education, advance their careers and develop the community organisations they had set up.

Further Reading:

- www.mylearning.org
Coal Queens? Why remember women of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike? A resource created by NCMME, which focuses on the role of women during the Strike
- www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2009/02/27/sheffield_women_against_pit_closures_feature.shtml
- Steven Downs, *'Black Roses'* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992).

ON STRIKE IN 1984 FAMILIES



- A striking miner's family with two children received £11 a week Supplementary Benefit.
- The striker himself received nothing.
- The rate should have been £27 a week, but the Government issued an instruction to deduct £16 per week from the family's benefit as 'assumed strike pay'.

The Strike was marked by a determination not to let the side down. Thousands of individuals pulled together as families and as members of a community. This could be seen in the efforts of the WAPC groups and the setting up of communal kitchens, the efforts to feed families and the socials and day trips.

"We opened the kitchen with the determination that it wouldn't be just for the miners, some of the soup kitchens were just for miners themselves or just for pickets, but it would be for women and the children and for everybody that was on strike."

Madeline Buttergeld (miner's wife)

Left: Young girl eating soup and bread provided by the Askern soup kitchen.

© Guardian News & Media Ltd

10
"But when it got down to it I can remember them collecting at school, food parcels, you know sort of what they do at harvest festival time, you take food parcels for miners and you'd get parents sending letters in saying I can't believe you're asking us to contribute towards this, the parents that completely disagreed with it. And the ones that were having to sort of accept the food parcels obviously they'd got pride and it just showed how desperate things actually were getting that they were having to ask fellow school mates for tins of beans and spam and it was desperate and you could see sort of why people sometimes erupted and it did turn into physical violence and things like that. It was quite frightening really I thought."

Transcript of Child
(miner's child during the Strike)

Miners often had to return to similar working conditions and reduced wages following a strike. They also had debts from their time on strike. This made the return to work difficult.

Further Reading:

- www.mylearning.org
CoalQueens? Why remember women of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike? A resource created by NCMME, which focuses on the role of women during the Strike

WHO WORKED DURING THE STRIKE

The majority of miners from Yorkshire, Scotland and Wales went on strike to fight against pit closures. However, others decided to work.

Many in the Nottinghamshire area did not strike. On 12 March 1984 Arthur Scargill, leader of the NUM, called for strike action by all NUM members across the country. There was no national vote. Nottinghamshire decided not to strike without the approval of a national strike ballot. Some argue that Nottinghamshire did not strike because their pits were the least threatened by the closures and job losses (since they

had large coal reserves and modern equipment). Some miners felt the strike would work against the cause. They thought the pits would deteriorate to a state where they could not be reopened.

The Nottinghamshire coalfield saw much confrontation. Communities were split, friendships ended, families divided. Flying pickets, organised groups of strikers who travelled across the country, surrounded the picket gates and dared working miners to cross the lines. Working miners were brought to the pithead in reinforced buses. Tension was high.

"Striking miners threw stones, chanted, and called working miners 'scabs'. Thousands of them. I actually drove along from Cotgrave one day and I've never seen so many pickets in my life, and I mean thousands and thousands. They were kicking cars and everything, and in the end, we heard there was a load of Yorkshire pickets coming down and we decided to leave the cars at home and go in on the bus, and there were even people at our own pit that had gone on strike. If you were on afternoon shift, if they'd been in the pub as well before, they'd just get rowdier and rowdier, and there was one old guy come through the picket lines at Cotgrave and they literally smashed his

car to bits. His windscreen, the lot, and this bloke was like nearly sixty and he never worked again. The police actually escorted him home, but he never came back to work again."

[Stan Stanton \(Cotgrave miner\)](#)

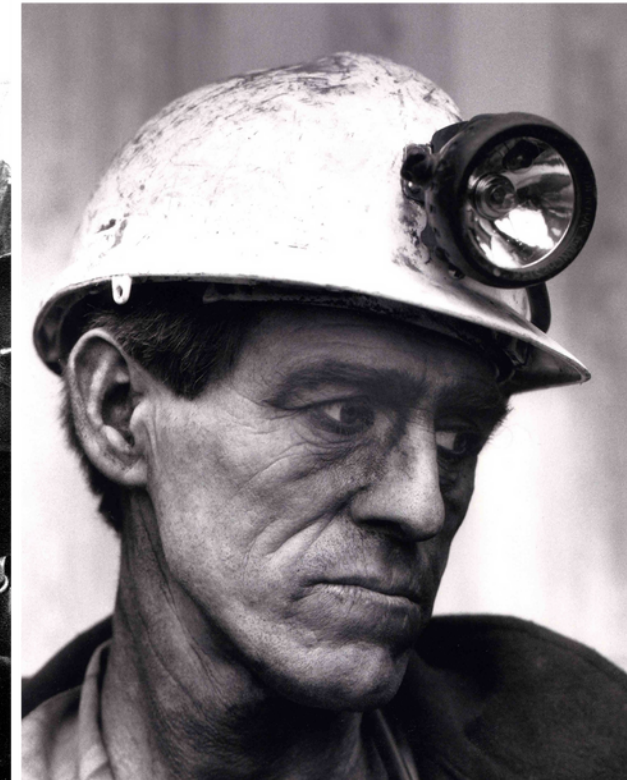
Further reading:

- Angela Franks. [The Nottinghamshire Miners' Tales: A Century of Coal Mining Memories](#) (Reflections of a Bygone Age, 2001)



B left: Man crossing a road in front of a graffiti covered fence. © Martin Jenkinson **B right:** Working miners home after being attacked. © Ken Wilkinson

THE AFTERMATH



The miners returned to work in March 1985. Many marched back to their pits with their banners and bands as a sign of their solidarity through what had been a period of terrible struggle and suffering.

The miners still wanted to show Mrs. Thatcher's government that they may have lost the battle but they had not lost the war. However, despite further marches and speeches, the NCB announced a

plan to close pits. Many miners had run up huge debts in the Strike and the redundancy packages offered a way out. In some areas there was deep animosity between those miners who had stayed out on strike and those who returned to work.

For many mining communities there was long-term economic decline. Unemployment was widespread and businesses within the pit towns or villages

declined as a result. Many areas became run down and dilapidated.

There has been some effort including funds from the government and European Union, to regenerate these areas.

"To me it was the saddest things that ever happened, the result of the '84 Strike"

(Miner, oral history collection, NCMME)

Left: Week 51 of The Strike. A crowded Welfare Hall vote to return to work. © Guardian News & Media Ltd

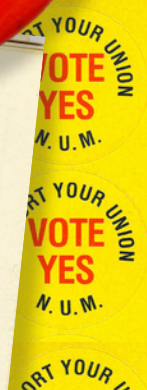
Right: Manton Colliery miner taken during the return to work. © Guardian News & Media Ltd

Below: A young protestor handing out 'Coal Not Dole' stickers at Royal Ascot. © Guardian News & Media Ltd

THE MEDIA

The role of the media during the Strike was controversial. Most of the more popular tabloid newspapers openly supported the government. They tended to portray the miners as thugs, whilst portraying those who continued to work and the police in a more positive and almost heroic light.

Newsletters and leaflets were produced by the NUM and other organisations which supported the miners.



PROTEST SONGS

Music and songs have been used for hundreds of years as a way for people to express their emotions and discontent. Music is a way of raising awareness or gaining support for an issue or social or political injustice.

A song writer may try to move the listener and stir strong feelings such as anger, sadness, shock and optimism. Through music and words they want to inspire a change in people's opinions and to persuade them to support the cause.

Protest songs usually express opinions and attitudes that are an

alternative to the commonly held perspective. They aim to tell the story of an issue from the point of view of the people personally affected, which can be very different from the media representation.

Many social movements in the past have used protest songs including the civil-rights movement, the anti-war movement and the feminist movement. The protest song can be any genre although folk songs and commercial pop songs are now most common.

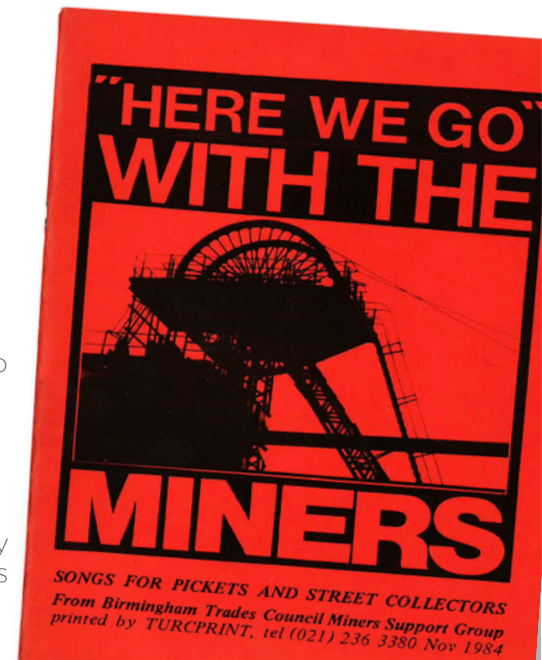
During the 1984/85 Miners' Strike, people wrote new songs and adapted

old ones. Some were written and performed by the people directly involved in the Strike, and others by famous singers who wanted to show their support. Some artists took part in fundraising concerts. Billy Bragg, Chumbawumba, The Clash and Ewan McColl all performed for the miners.

Right: Cover from a Miners Support Group songbook.

B left: Four musicians from the Welsh National Opera playing music in support of striking miners. © Guardian News & Media Ltd

B right: Poster from a benefit concert by The Clash, in support of striking miners and their families.



POETRY

Poetry is a powerful way of expressing emotions. Poetry can take many forms and can be humorous as well as serious.

People who were personally involved in the Strike, especially the miners themselves and their families, found an outlet for their feelings through writing poetry. These poems explain what they felt as individuals their anger and frustrations, their sense of belonging and their perspectives on the struggles they faced. They tell, in their own words, how their own lives and those of their communities were being affected by the Strike, and also of the actions of the police, the establishment and their union.

Their perspective is not filtered, censored or distorted by being reported second hand as it would be through a newspaper or television news. Most of the poetry is raw, written in anger, despair or hopelessness to vent personal feelings not with a view to being published or following grammatical rules. It is the 'truth' as seen by those most closely involved.

Right: Poem by Jean Gittins showing how the position of women changed during the Strike. © Images by Ken Wilkinson



Kim

Jean Gittins

*I can't understand what has happened to Kim
There's been such a terrible change
When I think of how that girl acted before
I can't understand such a change
A lovely hand with the pastry she had
Her sponge cakes were lovely and light
But now it's all muesli and yoghurt and nuts
While she's out at meetings each night
We could have gone on for the rest of our lives
Never knowing just what she was like
And she'd have been trapped in our image of her
If it hadn't been for the strike.*

ORGREAVES 1984 11/

A father and his two sons stood at Orgreaves
What they saw there they couldn't believe
Dogs let loose into the crowd
Horses hoofs rouding so loud

The eldest through a hedge tried to flee
The pain in his head oh what could it be
It was a truncheon wielded by a man in blue
Into his back and stomach his boot went to

The youngest he saw Scargil hit with a shield
This they say was lies over a sleeper he reeled
Placed in an ambulance was a lad who was hurt
The police took him out placing him in the dirt

The father was by horses chased
This sort of fear he had never faced
A young lad beneath a wall crouching down
Up reared the horse down came the hoofs onto his crown

These are just a few of the things they saw
The memories will stay with them forever, more
They only went there to stand for their right
But these scenes will haunt them many a night

Miners Strike - Ian McMillan

It feels like a hundred years ago, or
it could just be last week,
When they stood on a freezing picket
line and history took a turn,
When communities refused to die or
turn the other cheek,
And what did we learn, eh?
What did we learn?

For a year the pit wheels stood
stock still,
And money dwindled, then ran out
But collectivism's hard to kill
And if you stand and listen, you'll
still hear them shout...
But what did we learn, eh?
What did we learn?

It feels like just a week ago, or it
could be a hundred years,
When the police vans charged with
their sirens on through the silent
weeping streets;
And they cooked and marched
and argued through a mist of pain
and fear,
And a shut down pit's a symbol of
depression and defeat,

So what did we learn, eh?
What did we learn?
The past is not just Kings and Queens,
it's those like me and you,
Who clashed with a woman at
Number 10, who had to stand
and fight,
Cos when your way of life's being
smashed to bits, what else can
you do?
As the pickets braziers glow and smoke
in the freezing Yorkshire night;
What did we learn, eh?
What did we learn?
Buy frozen peas where the
braziers burned,
What did we learn?
What should we learn?

This poem was written after the
Strike to commemorate the
events.

Left: Orgreave 1984 by Margaret Wilson's mother

STRIKING TIME LINES

EARLY STRIKES AND LOCK OUTS

1893 - The price of coal falls by 35%, so mine owners seek to reduce the miners' wages by 25%. In many regions, including Yorkshire, miners were locked out. The Government had to become involved and force the two parties to reach an agreement.

1912 - One million miners go on strike. They demand a fixed minimum wage.

1912 - The Minimum Wage Act is introduced.

1914 - The Triple Alliance is formed. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Transport Workers' Federation join forces.

1921 - A national lock-out begins and the Triple Alliance fails. Mine owners propose to cut miners' wages. Three months later families face hardships and miners are forced to accept the wage cut.

1925 - Mine owners propose further wage reductions. Miners approach the Trades Union Congress. The TUC bans the movement of coal.

1926 - The TUC calls the General Strike to defend the miners' wages and working hours. Trains, buses, trams, docks, furnaces, power stations and national newspapers stop work in sympathy with the miners. The TUC call off the General Strike without reaching an agreement for the miners. Most miners continue to strike, even though their families face extreme hardship. Six months later, miners are forced to return to work and to take wage reductions and an increase in hours.

1927 - British Government passes the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, making sympathetic strikes and mass picketing illegal.



Left: Flyer from an unnamed source entitled 'A Strike-breaker is a traitor'

THE POST WAR INDUSTRY

1945 - Miners' Federation of Great Britain becomes the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

1947 - The coal industry is nationalised and the National Coal Board (NCB) is formed

1972 - Miners strike over pay and working conditions.

February: there is a shortage of coal and to save electricity the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, introduces a three day week. This means businesses can only use electricity for three days per week. Many businesses had to close on the days electricity was not available. Miners return to work after a pay increase is agreed..

1973 - November: The NUM calls an overtime ban in a dispute over pay. The Government brings back the three-day week to save electricity supplies.

1974 - January: Miners vote for strike action.

February: Edward Heath calls a General Election on the question 'Who rules Britain?' The Conservative Government loses the election. Harold Wilson, leader of the Labour Party, becomes Prime Minister. Miners return to work after a pay increase is agreed.

1975 - Margaret Thatcher becomes Leader of the Conservative Party.

1979 - The Conservative Party wins the General Election.

1981 - Arthur Scargill becomes President of the NUM.

The Conservative Government plans to close twenty-three coal mines. The NUM threatens strike action and the Government backs down



Right: Lino print by mining artist David Wilders 'Strike 1984-1985' marking the 25th anniversary

THE 1984/5 MINERS' STRIKE

1984

February - NCB announces the closure of twenty coal mines.

1st March - NCB announces Cortonwood Colliery in South Yorkshire will close in five weeks time.

5th March - Miners at Cortonwood Colliery and Bullcliffe Wood Colliery vote for strike action.

12th March - Arthur Scargill calls for a national strike of all NUM members; 165,000 went on strike.

15th March - A flying picket dies while demonstrating outside Ollerton Colliery, Nottinghamshire.

9th April - Nearly one hundred flying pickets are arrested for violence on the picket-lines in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

12th April - Arthur Scargill vetoes a NUM national vote on whether to continue the Strike.

15th June - A picket dies while demonstrating at Ferrybridge Power Station, West Yorkshire.

18th June - Violence occurs between large numbers of pickets and police at Orgreave coking plant near Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

6th September - Clashes between police and pickets at Kellingley Colliery, near Knottingley, West Yorkshire.

21st September - Clashes between police and pickets at Maltby Colliery, South Yorkshire.

28th September - A High Court judge rules that the strike is illegal on the grounds that a vote was never held.

November - A working coal miner in Castleford, West Yorkshire, is assaulted.

30th November - A taxi driver, David Wilkie, is killed taking a working coal miner to work in Merthyr, South Wales. Two picketing miners were found guilty of murder.

1985

3rd March - The Strike officially ends without an agreement. Eleven collieries in Yorkshire close, including Caphouse Colliery, now home to National Coal Mining Museum for England.

Top: Funeral procession of David Jones who was killed while picketing at Ollerton, Nottinghamshire. © Martin Jenkinson

Middle: Policemen walking down Office street, watched by groups of miners. © Keith Pattison

Bottom: Group of miners on the picket line at Easington colliery. © Keith Pattison



AFTER THE STRIKE

1992

13th October - The Government announces that thirty-one deep mines will be closed. Six are to close by the end of the week.

1994

3rd March - The coal industry is privatised at midnight.



Left: Blue paper strike badge
Right: Demolition of the pit headgear at Askern Colliery in 1993.
© Martin Jenkinson



GLOSSARY

Black- leg

Term for a worker who breaks a strike and continues working. The name comes from working miners trying to hide the fact that they had been working could be found out if their trousers were rolled up: they would have black legs. See scab, strike breaker.

Coking plant

Industrial facility that turns coal into coke – a high-grade solid fuel often used in furnaces.

Colliery

A coal mine; a place where coal is extracted from underground.

Embargo

A ban on trading goods.

Flying picket

Striking union member who travels to other areas of the country to encourage workers to join a strike, and in some cases prevents workers from working. See picket.

Free market

A free market is a market that the Government does not manage or support financially.

Industrial action

Industrial action can include strikes, Work- to-rule and overtime bans. Such action are used as bargaining tools in disputes over pay and conditions.

Lock-out

Form of industrial action taken by employers, whereby places of work are locked up to stop employees from gaining access and working. Often used as a bargaining tool to force workers to accept settlements.

Nationalise

The Government act of buying a privately- owned industry for public or national ownership. See privatise.

Overtime

Extra hours worked, in addition to normal hours. Workers who take overtime are usually paid more than their normal rate for the extra hours.

Overtime ban

Form of industrial action where workers will only work to their contracted hours, (i.e. not work any overtime). Refusing to work overtime would slow production.

Picket

A striking union member who is actively demonstrating to encourage other workers to join the strike. See flying picket.

Picketline

Groups of striking union members who are actively demonstrating together and attempting to persuade others to stop working.

Privatise

The Government act of selling a publicly owned industry into private ownership. See nationalise.

Scab

Insulting slang term for a worker who breaks the strike by continuing to work. black-leg, strike breaker.

Secondary picketing

Picketing the premises of an employer's customers and other companies where workers are not in dispute. This is no longer legal in the United Kingdom. See picketing, picket line, flying picket.

Strike

A form of industrial action which is often organised by unions. Workers stop working in order to disrupt services and affect prices. It is often used as a bargaining tool to encourage employers to accept terms which are favourable to the workers. Striking workers do not get paid by their employers, but may get strike pay from their union.

Strike breaker

A worker who is brought in by employers during a period of strike action to continue production and lessen the impact of the strike. See black- leg, scab.

Snatch squad

A police riot tactic which involves several police officers, usually in protective riot gear, moving forwards in formation to break through the front of a crowd with the intention of snatching one or more of the individuals from the crowd.

Sympathy strike

Strike action taken by unions in other trades and industries to show support and primary strike.

Glossary cont.

Thatcherism

Term for the beliefs, ideas and policies developed by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, such as privatising nationalised industries.

Thatcherite

A person who supports or actively engages in Thatcherism A policy or act that shares the principles of Thatcherism.

Three-day week

A government policy where businesses only operate for three days each week. This is often used to reduce the amount of resources such as coal or electricity a company uses in order to minimise the impact of industrial action.

Trades Unions Council

Co-ordinates trade union activity in local counties.

Union

An officially organised group of workers who have joined together to protect their common interests and improve their working conditions. Workers join a union which is associated with their trade or industry. See Trades Union Council

Vesting Day

The day when the coal industry was taken from private ownership and vested in the state; i.e. nationalised.

Work to rule

In this form of industrial action workers do not stop work as they would in a strike; instead they continue to work but slow down operations by strictly observing work rules, job descriptions and job contracts. This often includes overtime bans and a refusal to take on additional tasks or responsibilities.



Right: Picketing miners playing a game of scrabble during their eight hour vigil outside Ratcliffe Power Station near Nottingham.
© Guardian News & Media Ltd

VISIT THE MUSEUM

Caphouse Colliery closed as a working mine in 1985. It opened again as the Yorkshire Mining Museum in 1988 and became the National Coal Mining Museum for England in 1995.

You can find out more about the Strike by visiting our Museum:

- Explore the displays and exhibits around the Museum which tell the story of the Strike and the people who were affected by it.

- Find out what it was like to live in a coal mining community; people who lived in pit towns and villages had a shared way of life
- Take a trip underground with one of our ex-miner to experience first-hand what it was like to be a miner
- Speak to the mining staff at the Museum and find out about their experiences of living through the Strike
- www.ncm.org.uk.



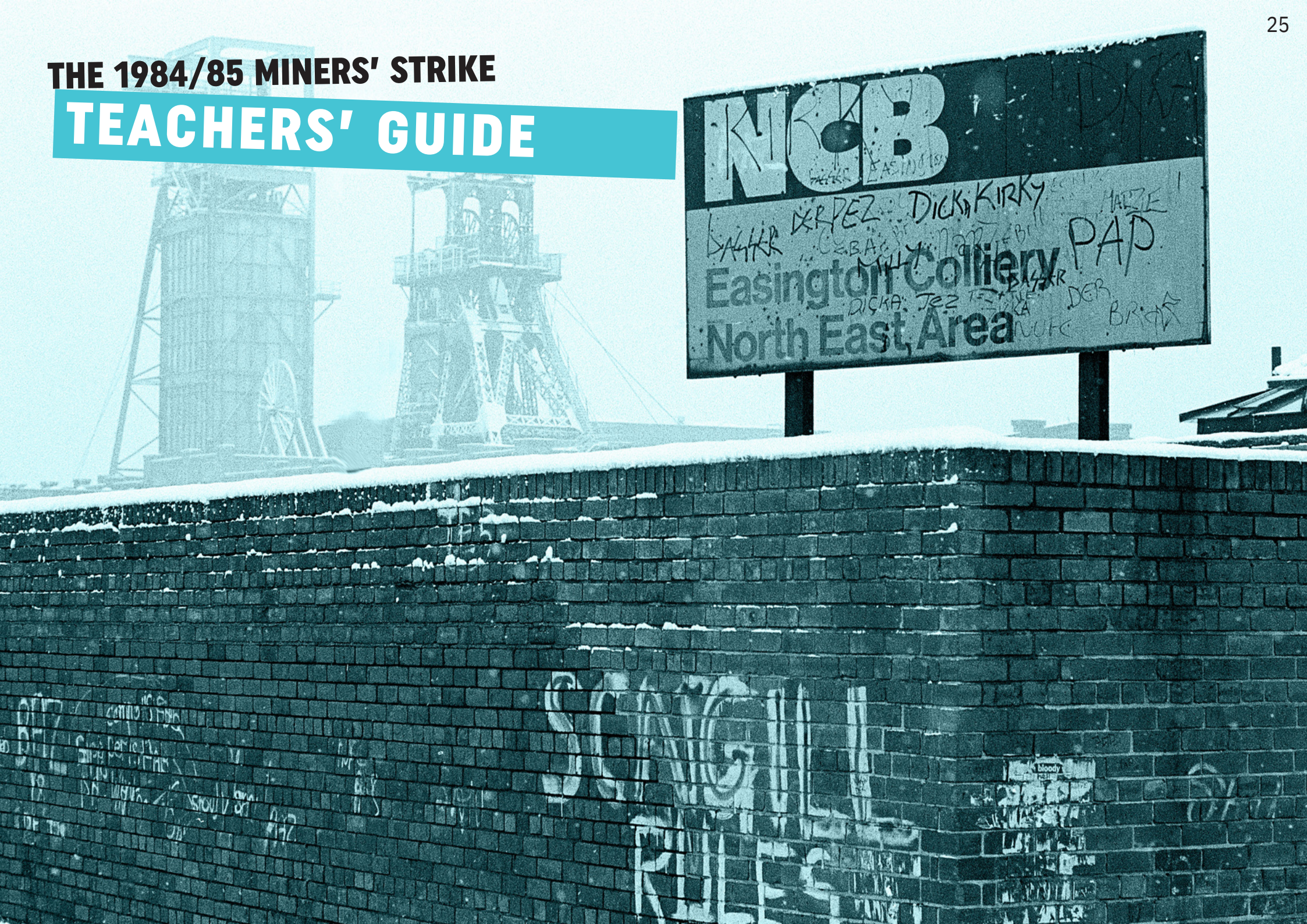
NATIONAL COAL MINING MUSEUM

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THE 1984/85 MINERS' STRIKE TEACHERS' GUIDE



TEACHERS' GUIDE

The 'Miners' Strike' resource pack, 'Using Museum Objects' and 'An Overview' Power Points, can be used in conjunction with each other.

They provide information which can be used to spark curiosity and debate. The suggested activities fit into many different areas of the curriculum.

The resource pack provides a comprehensive overview of the different groups involved in the Strike, timeline of key events and a useful glossary. This could be used for research by staff and students. The text is supported by strong images and objects from the Museum collection.

The 'Using Museum Objects' Power point would be useful for starters or plenaries as well as complementing some of the suggested activities. The images could be used as a way of investigating the site if you came on a visit.

The '1984-5 Miners' Strike An overview' Power point could be used to give an overview of key arguments, events and groups associated with the Strike.

You could also use these with the Striking Images Loans Box which is available from the Museum.

To make an enquiry, book a visit or use the Loans Box, please contact the Museum.

Tel: 01924 848 806
Email: education@ncm.org.uk
www.ncm.org.uk



Front cover: Grafitti covered brick boundary walls that surrounded Easington Colliery.
© Keith Pattison

Above: A member of the Cortonwood Women Against Pit Closures arguing with NUM Branch Official, Jack Waite, who had suggested the strike was not her fight.
© Guardian News & Media Ltd

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Reading images:

Look at one of the images or choose a selection:

- What/who can you see in the image?
- What is happening in the image?
- What is the story?
- Why was this produced?
- Who was it taken for?
- What message is being given?
- What feelings or attitudes are being portrayed?
- What might have happened before or after the image was taken?
- What might the people in the image be saying to each other?
- Can the image be used to tell stories from both sides?
- Can you rely on this image as a piece of historical evidence?

Have a debate:

Was the Government's decision to close the mines fair or unfair?

Have a look at the Commemorative items in the Museum collection (see PowerPoint):

- Discuss what these objects have in common.
- Why does the Museum collect them?
- Students could design badges, plates or T-shirts and write a short explanation for how the words and images they have chosen help gain support for the Strike.

Write about the events from different points of view:

Students could write speeches to show different interpretations of the events e.g. Scargill and McGregor, police and pickets.

Create a leaflet:

Create a leaflet to persuade people to support either the miners or the NCB.

Plan a fundraising event:

Use the Clash poster or photographs of the women and food parcels for inspiration. How has fundraising changed over time?

Collect songs and poems from the Strike:

- What different perspective of the Strike do these provide?
- How could these documents be used as a form of historical evidence?
- Pupils could write their own poem or protest song about an issue they feel strongly about.

Below: Pupils from Foulstone and Dearne High Schools holding up placards with the names of the 125 pits closed between 1985 and 1993. © Martin Jenkinson



BORROW OUR LOANS BOXES



Borrow our loans and explore in-depth the different views and interpretations of the Strike. The box contains:

- Portfolio- Large framed photographs taken by a variety of photo-journalists, many of which are also depicted in the 'Miners' Strike' downloadable resource.
- Books – these contain stories and poems from the miners at the time and some contain recollections.
- Badges/stickers – various types that were produced to raise money, awareness and support.
- Newspapers – these are from both broadsheets and tabloids. They give a flavour of how the Strike was reported at the time.
- Letters – written to a woman in the Women Against Pit Closures support group.
- Trade papers – Coal News from the industry point of view and The Miner from the NUM point of view.
- Postcards – produced to raise support and funds.
- Maps.

NATIONAL COAL MINING MUSEUM

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