

# PICKETS, POLICE AND POLITICS

THE MINERS' STRIKE 1984-1985



Sponsored by  
Welsh Assembly  
Government

A RESOURCE PACK CREATED FOR SECONDARY  
SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
BIG PIT: NATIONAL COAL MUSEUM

# THE MINERS' STRIKE 1984-1985



A resource for secondary schools explaining the background, events and aftermath of the Miners' Strike of 1984-85

**1**

The social and political background to the strike

**2**

The strike

**3**

The aftermath of the strike

**4**

Site visit to Big Pit National Coal Museum

## THE COAL INDUSTRY IN 1984

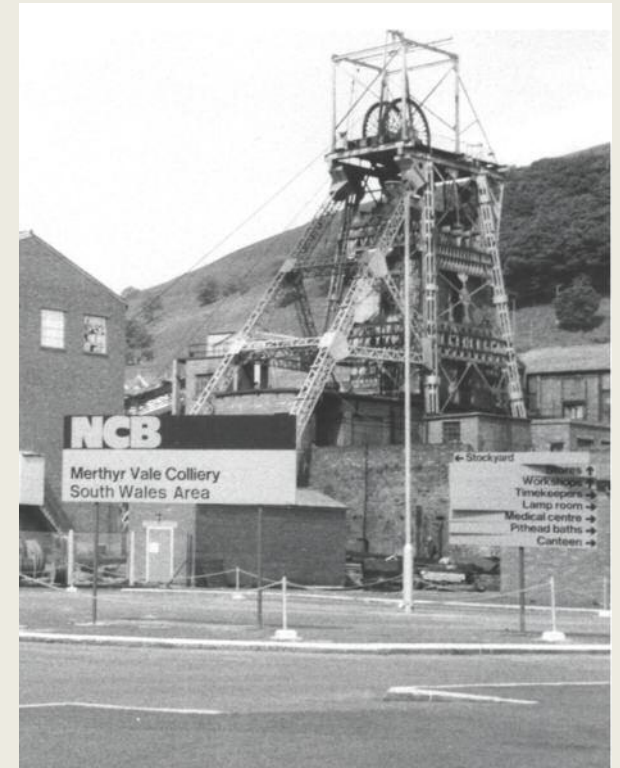
*'There is no way, with poor economics, that you can guarantee a social environment'*

Ian MacGregor, Chairman of the National Coal Board, 1983

The coal industry underwent great changes following nationalisation in 1947. Considerable investment was ploughed into the industry by the government allowing new equipment and mining techniques to be introduced. Until the mid 1950s, levels of employment and production remained steady but, with the decline in the demand for coal and the challenge from Middle East oil, 50 collieries were closed in south Wales between 1957 and 1964.

During the 1970s, the industry was hit by two major strikes. In 1972 Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath caved in when the miners went on strike for more pay. When another miners' strike began in 1974, Mr Heath called a snap general election hoping to rally public support against the miners. But the public vote went against him resulting in victory for the Labour Party.

By the 1980s the British coal industry was one of the safest and most efficient in the world. However, the new Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher wanted to make industry more efficient by slimming down what they regarded as unprofitable industries. Under her leadership, many former state run industries like gas, water and the railways were transferred to private sector ownership i.e. they were privatised. British Telecom was the first service provider to be 'de-nationalised' in 1984, followed by many others in subsequent years. At the





same time she wanted to weaken the power of the trade union movement which she believed had become too powerful. This agenda put the Conservative government on a collision course with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Incidentally, the NCB became British Coal in 1987, in readiness for privatisation which occurred in 1994.

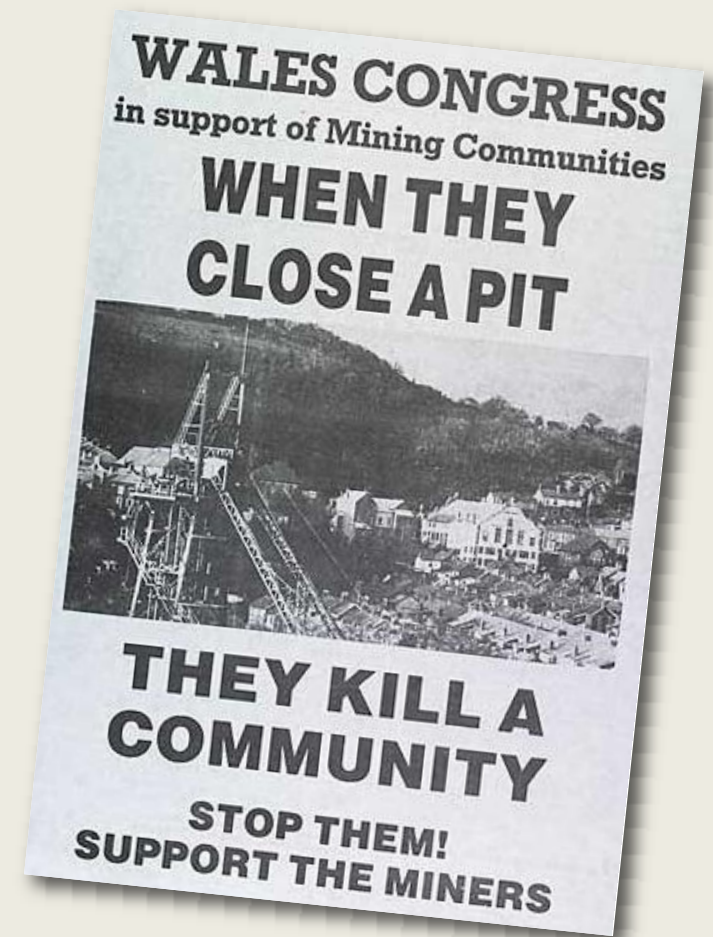
### THE MINING COMMUNITIES

In Wales, until well after the Second World War, the coal mining villages were virtually single industry communities. The coal boom of the later nineteenth century had created communities that were either directly or indirectly dependant on the coal industry. This encouraged an insular outlook but also created a situation where the interests of both the colliery and village were united.

The South Wales Miners' Federation (which became the South Wales Area of the National Union of Mineworkers in 1944 but was still generally referred to as 'The Fed') not only looked after their members, they also helped to develop social and cultural organisations such as working men's institutes, libraries and friendly societies which benefited the whole community. The coal industry's influence in Wales was lessening by this time but there was still a strong sense of community in the coalfield.

In the UK as a whole there were 235,000 men working at 223 pits in 1979. By 1983, this had fallen to 182,000 working in 175 pits. The recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s had also damaged other Welsh industries. Therefore, unemployment in south Wales was already over 13%, much higher than the UK average.

As a result, many miners and their families felt they had no choice but to fight for the right to work and the future of their communities.



## SIX ARGUMENTS **FOR** PIT CLOSURES

- 1** Oil, natural gas and nuclear power were all cheaper than coal for producing electricity.
- 2** The coal industry had not made a profit for over 40 years.
- 3** It was cheaper to import coal from overseas than it was to mine it in Britain.
- 4** It did not make economic sense for the British people to subsidise a loss making industry.
- 5** By closing inefficient coal mines the future of the remaining coal mines could be safeguarded.
- 6** People should not look to the government to protect their jobs and livelihood.

## SIX ARGUMENTS **AGAINST** PIT CLOSURES

- 1** Closing down coal mines will create massive unemployment
- 2** There is usually no other type of industry in coal mining areas – unemployed miners and their children will have little chance of finding new work
- 3** There are vast reserves of coal underground; collieries should be worked no matter what the cost.
- 4** A coal mine is central to the community; if you close the mine you kill the community.
- 5** The closure program is simply the Conservative government's way of getting revenge on the coal miners for defeating the Conservative government in 1974.
- 6** The government should protect and ensure the long term future of the country's important natural resources.

## QUOTES ABOUT CLOSURES

*'Mr. MacGregor's aim, and the Government's aim, is to produce a good, profitable coalmining industry.'*

Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister

*'Mining communities would not survive... There will be an increase in physical and mental illness, suicide, more domestic violence and the break up of families. The valleys of south Wales would be nothing more than an ageing, dying community fit only for tourism and industrial museums.'*

Arthur Scargill, President of the NUM

*'Perform and you have a future, don't, and you have no future, it's as simple as that.'*

Ian MacGregor, Chairman, NCB

*'The miners in south Wales are saying – we are not accepting the dereliction of our mining valleys, we are not allowing our children to go immediately from school into the dole queue – it is time we fought!'*

Emlyn Williams, President, NUM South Wales Area



MARGARET THATCHER



ARTHUR SCARGILL

## POLICE AND PICKETS

*'This is an attempt to substitute the rule of the mob for the rule of law, and it must not succeed'*

Margaret Thatcher

*'Another example of the Police State in 1984!'*

Arthur Scargill

The strike was not a straightforward contest between the government and the NUM. Whole communities could sometimes be divided between miners who wished to work and those who were out on strike. The decision not to hold a ballot on strike action gave a reason for some miners to continue to turn up to work. To prevent this happening NUM 'Flying pickets' would travel to coal mines away from their normal places of work to persuade their colleagues who wished to work not to cross their picket line.

Police would be on duty to make sure those 'working miners' could get to work. The miners' strike has often been seen as a war between the police and pickets in spite of the fact that most picketing was carried out in an orderly and peaceful manner. Although the ritual, good natured pushing and shoving between police and pickets could look very violent indeed when shown on the evening news.



Mike Thompson

*‘Relationships between the police and pickets were quite jovial really, just a bit of pushing and shoving.’*

Dave Savage, Police Support Unit

*‘Picketing at Aberthaw was usually quiet, some lorry drivers would stop to hear our arguments but mostly they just drove past us.’*

George Winorgorski, Cwm Colliery

*‘Some of it was a bit boring ... there were plenty of pickets on hand but no real trouble apart from verbal abuse.’*

Tony Popple, Police Support Unit

However, more violent clashes between police and striking miners did occur.

### **ORGREAVE**

The worst example of this took place at the Orgreave Coking Plant in Yorkshire in June 1984 when striking miners from all over the country tried to stop supplies of coal reaching the plant. Up to 6,000 pickets are thought to have been present faced by up to 8,000 police including 40 – 50 mounted officers and 60 police dogs. Pickets were normally prevented from travelling to picket lines but this time they were escorted to a field just to the north of the coking plant. During the ensuing confrontation, stones were thrown by pickets and police baton charges carried out, both mounted and on foot. Ninety three pickets were arrested.





## TWO VIEWS ON THE VIOLENCE WITNESSED AT ORGREAVE IN JUNE 1984

*‘You could see all these snatch squads going wild with their truncheons at the top of the bank. They were hitting men with no protection. They were just wild and over the top. They were going to smash the strike there and then, whatever it took to do it!’*

**Meirion John, South Celynen Colliery**

*‘The pickets began throwing stones, bricks, wood torn from fences, and our officers were being injured. That was the time for me to order officers to go in with shields to prevent that sort of thing happening.’*

**Tony Clement, Assistant Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police**

Although Wales avoided most of the violence seen in other coalfields, Welsh miners were killed whilst on picket duty and a taxi driver was killed as he took a strike-breaker to work in Merthyr Vale Colliery.



## WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUPS

*'Women were supportive because it was over jobs and communities but, at the end of the day, I just wanted to feed the kids.'*

Glynys Evans, Blaenllechau

As the strike continued, the miners and their families began to face real hardship as the men, who had been amongst the best paid manual workers in the country, had been without income since the beginning. This economic hardship, together with the fear that the Conservative government's policy would lead to the destruction of their communities, forced many women into action. There existed throughout the coalfields of south Wales a tradition of women supporting their men during industrial action, but this time the women went even further.

They raised funds, set up food centres, provided clothing and ran soup kitchens. They addressed public meetings and rallies, organised jumble





sales, and wrote leaflets and pamphlets supporting the strike. Many women stood alongside their men on picket lines and, at Cynheidre Colliery, they even occupied the pit-head baths.

*‘Women were collecting for food parcels, going on rallies, picketing. ‘Women Against Pit Closures’ was formed, it was one of the biggest ever women’s groups.’*

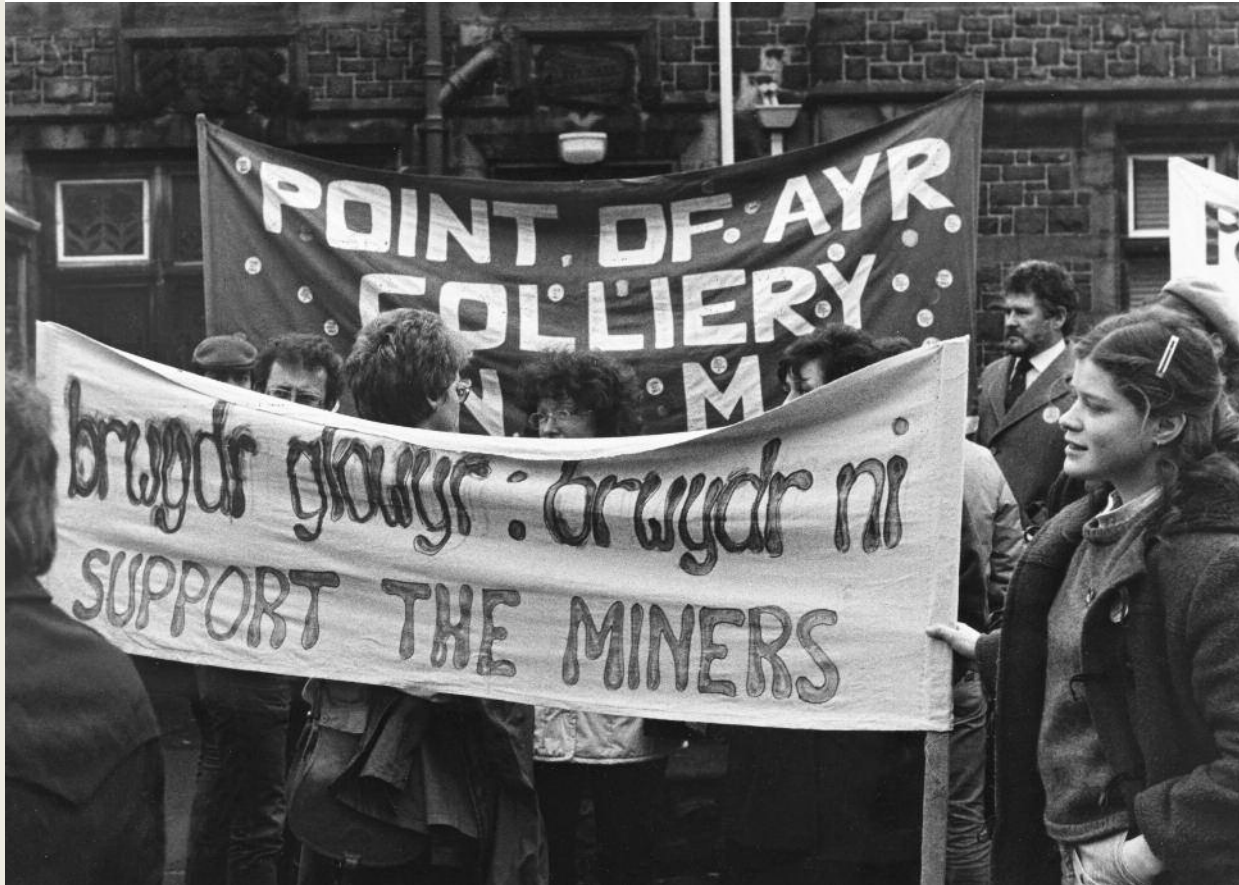
**Ann Jones, Hirwaun**

Some men within the mining communities felt threatened by this display of women’s power. Some NUM lodges initially refused to allow women onto the picket line.

*‘We had to fight our way onto the picket lines at first – and it wasn’t only the police against us! But when the men saw us there they started to accept us.’*

**Ann Jones, Hirwaun**





The strike gave many women more confidence in themselves; some went on to set up their own business or to study at university. In the Dulais Valley the 'DOVE' workshop, a community education and training resource, was set up by members of the local women's support group.



## THE MEDIA

*'We followed a code of conduct that seemed to elude the anti-trade union publications. There were attempts in several newspapers, such as The Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Express, to rubbish the miners' concerns for the future of their industry and their communities.'*

Tony Heath, The Guardian

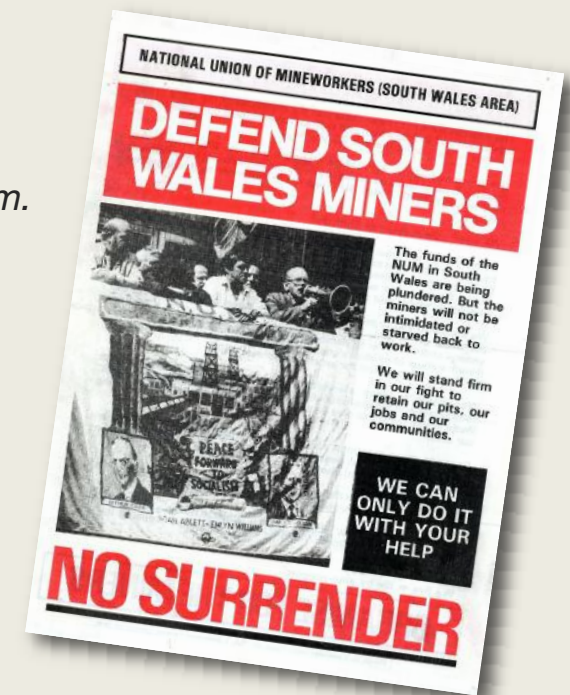
*'We were in a big crowd and it was a bit loud so he (Arthur Scargill) put his hand up to quieten them and The Sun said it was a Nazi salute.'*

Tony Benn, MP

*'As a local boy I had an insight into the coal industry that perhaps a Sun reporter wouldn't have had. The London popular press are the guerrilla fighters of journalism. They come into an area, get their story and get out again.'*

Wayne Novaczyck, South Wales Echo

The role of the media during the strike was extremely controversial. Most of the more popular tabloid newspapers openly supported the government. They tended to portray striking miners as thugs, whilst portraying those who continued to work and the police as heroic figures. To counteract this, the NUM and other left leaning organisations produced their own literature in the form of newsletters, pamphlets and posters.



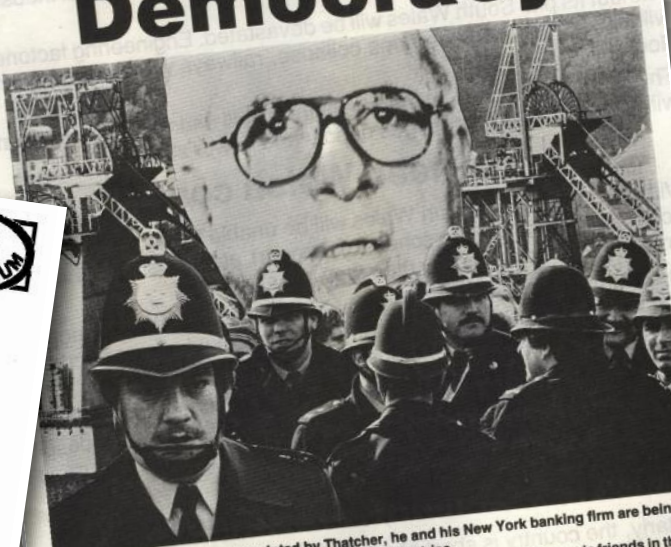
**COAL, THE NATIONS ENERGY FUTURE**

**SAVE IT WITH THE NUM**

**COAL NOT DOLE**

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS (South Wales Area)

**MacGregor's Democracy**



**NO-ONE ELECTED HIM.** Appointed by Thatcher, he and his New York banking firm are being paid £3 million to destroy this country's energy industries. Thatcher has already sold the British National Oil Corporation to MacGregor's friends in the City.

North Sea Gas is about to suffer the same fate. Power Station workers are being laid-off despite the fact that the Government has ordered the Electricity Board to import electricity from French nuclear stations via cross-channel cables.

Britain's coal is the next target. We have hundreds of years of reserves. Yet Thatcher would rather throw this country to the wolves who control the world energy markets.


In the next 12 months, she and MacGregor want to close 20 pits and shed 20,000 jobs. MacGregor told the NUM that over the next 3 years he wants to reduce the number of pits from 174 to 100 and the number of jobs from 180,000 to 100,000.

A further 160,000 jobs will disappear over the same period in industries supplying pits and carrying coal. This will hit engineering, rail and road transport, gas and electricity, not only in mining areas but throughout Britain.

These industries produce the wealth which pays for our public services. Without it, the health and education of our children and the welfare of our sick and aged will be placed in dire peril.

**SAVE YOUR COMMUNITIES  
SUPPORT THE MINERS**

**CAU PWLL**



**LLADD CYMUNIA**

**STOPIWCH NE EFNOWGCH Y GU**

NUM DE CYMRU



**NUM FOOD FUND**

**BACK THE MINERS  
PREVENT STREET CRIME**

## TWO MEDIA VIEWPOINTS ON THE CONFRONTATION AT ORGREAVE COKING PLANT

### The Blue Line Holds Firm

*'They (the police) were bombarded with stone and bricks, ball bearings and nails and even fencing staves'. ... Superintendent Tony Pratt, who has been in charge of the operation at Orgreave for the past four days, added 'When they (the miners) start producing handmade knives, ball bearing, tacks... and throwing them at horses and men, then it is an unacceptable level of violence to this police force ...and we shall have to positively respond'*

Daily Mail, 30th May 1984



### Go in and hit them hard

*'The government has declared a class war. It wants to drive the working class into submission in this area. ... The crime should be laid at their door. Their message to the police was 'Go in and hit them hard'. The use of dogs and horses was terrifying.'*

Labour Weekly, 22nd June 1984







GRAFFITI ON  
PUBLIC TOILETS  
AT ABERCARN

## **‘WORKING MINERS’**

Those who crossed a picket line and worked were labeled as ‘scabs’ or ‘blacklegs’ by the strikers and ‘returnees’ or ‘working miners’ by the NCB and the right wing media. The level of hatred shown towards anyone who broke the strike forced many to leave their homes and move to different areas of the country.

As the strike went on however more divisions began to appear within the miners’ ranks.

*‘The bitterness between the men who returned to work and the rest of the workforce will never be reconciled – marriages were broken and friendships forgotten.’*

Phil Cullen, Cynheidre Colliery



*'My Wife and I, would again like to thank the South Celynen Lodge for helping that communist ba\*\*\*\* A. Scargill to take us into poverty. We don't like M. Thatcher or Ian Macgregor, A. Scargill and Mick McGahey we hate their guts, that so called other president of the miners' that other communist ba\*\*\*rd E. Williams isn't worth a mention. T. Thomas, Dr. K. Howells just two bags of wind full of their own importance, if you lot can't see that this strike is communist run and that the Gwent miner is being led to despair you must be dull wasters. E. Williams should be sacked out of hand without any compensation.'*

Anonymous letter sent to South Celynen Lodge in 1984

In many areas in south Wales the act of crossing a picket line made that worker an outcast in their community. However, in August, Monty Morgan of Betws Colliery became the first man to cross a picket line in south Wales. The violence between pickets and police that followed his decision ensured that his action was short-lived. Other Welsh miners later followed his example especially as the winter drew on. However, only 6% of the NUM South Wales Area had broken the strike by March 1985.

Even though support for the strike was almost total in south Wales, the area was not immune to violence. In November a taxi driver was killed when a concrete block was dropped on his car while driving a working miner to Merthyr Vale Colliery.

**Rhymney Valley Report**  
The Voice of the Rhymney Valley Miners Support Group.  
"Working for and with the Miners"  
No. 10, August 16th, 1984.

## WHAT IS A SCAB?

The so-called "drift back to work", exaggerated by the Mass Media, recently, is nothing but an increase in scabbing by a handful of miners.

But why do we never hear the TV or Press using the word scab? What is meant by the term?

The definition given by the dictionary starts with the medical term, describing an unpleasant crust of dead tissue. This is why it is also a good description of a worker who goes back to work while others are on strike such a person is a scab on the face of the community.

As far as the miners of S. Wales are concerned, there is nothing so low as a man who will stab his fellow workers in the back by strike-breaking. But, as far as the Mass Media and the police are concerned, there is no such thing as a scab. The media ignore the word and the police ban its use on the picket-line, threatening arrest to whoever says it!

The difference is clear. The powers-that-be justify themselves by claiming the right to work is more important. But what do they really mean?

The Tory government, their protectors and propagandists, believe in the right to break strikes! The right to work that they claim is the right to work in the short term, but WHAT ABOUT THE RIGHT OF MINERS TO WORK IN THE LONG TERM? THIS STRIKE IS TO SAVE THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY, AND TO SAVE THE RIGHT TO WORK FOR THE YEARS TO COME!

The Tories are hypocrites to claim to be protectors of freedom while they preside over wide-scale restrictions of our freedom - by

- \* curtailing freedom of movement, through arbitrary, and probably unlawful, road-blocks,
- \* denying freedom of expression, banning the use of the word scab.

But, in the end, it is the scab who endangers our liberty most - by attacking the most basic right any worker has, the right to strike.

It is vital for all Trade Unionists to support the miners, but it should also be the concern of every man, woman and child in our community to understand the threat to our liberty posed by the Tory Government. As Pastor Niemöller pointed out in Nazi Germany, the failure to act to defend our rights will be seen as a sign of weakness.

To modify his words for today, "They came for the miners, but I wasn't a Miner, so I did nothing. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, but I wasn't a Trade Unionist, so I did nothing. Then they came for me, and there was no-one left to help me."

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**★ PRIZE DRAW ★**  
1st PRIZE - PORTABLE TELEVISION  
2nd PRIZE - MINERS LAMP  
3rd PRIZE - FOOD HAMPER

The Draw takes place on Saturday 22nd September 1984.  
TICKETS 10p EACH

FROM OUR TREASURER - FRANK CUTHBERT  
12 Salop Street, Caerphilly, Saturday 22nd September 1984  
Promoter: F. Cuthbert, 12 Salop Street, Caerphilly.  
Registered as the Rhymney Valley Miners' Club under the Lotteries & Amusements Act 1976.  
Printed by Norman Main Printers, 12 Grosvenor Road, Blongrove, Cardiff

## COLLIERY MANAGEMENT

Not all mineworkers were members of the NUM. A manager of a colliery was a member of the British Association of Colliery Management (BACM) and his duty was to keep his mine open irrespective of politics or his own personal feelings. He also had to deal with any NUM member who wished to return to work.

*‘As colliery management we were advised that if any miner came to the colliery and asked to return to work we were not to turn him away.’*

Desmond Caddy, colliery manager





However, although they were mostly drawn from the same communities as the miners under them, colliery managers could hold very independent views.

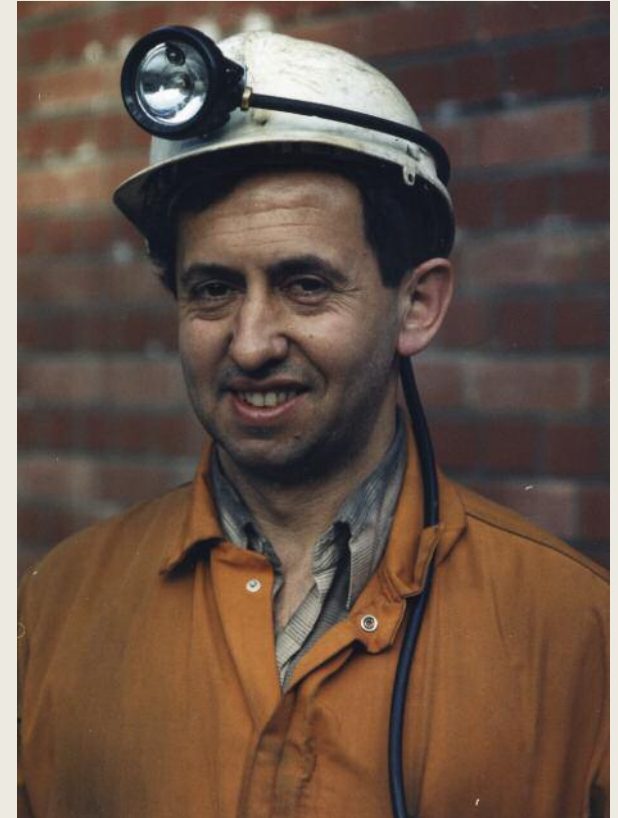
*‘Personally I thought Arthur Scargill’s tactics were totally wrong from day one. He didn’t have the backing of his own labour force to call a strike; he didn’t give them the opportunity to vote. If the 26 pits had all voted to come out I still wouldn’t have agreed with the decision, but at least they would have been unified. The way they actually went about it was unbelievable.’*

**Desmond Caddy, colliery manager**

Junior colliery management were members of NACODS (National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers). These were allowed to undertake safety work during the strike (as were certain NUM members).

*‘We were allowed to do safety work during the strike. This was mainly making sure that the pumps were working so that the pits wouldn’t flood. I never had any trouble going through the picket lines as the NUM boys knew the situation and accepted it.’*

**John Scandrett, Blaenserchan Colliery**



**JOHN SCANDRETT**

## THE MARCH BACK TO WORK

In March 1985 nearly 20,000 south Wales miners returned to work. Despair, poverty and frustration had all increased the pressure to return. On the morning of 5th March, the miners marched back behind their banners and bands. At Maerdy, men arriving at the pit made a show of applauding the women who had been solid in their support.

The strike had been a period of terrible struggle and suffering. The return to work was marked by inspirational speeches about solidarity, fighting spirit and continuing the struggle. The miners were determined to show Mrs. Thatcher's government that they were not defeated - they wanted to send out the message that they may have lost the battle, but they had not lost the war!





## Section Three After the strike

People adopted different opinions about the attitude of the returning miners.

*'I don't know what this was going to prove to anyone, beyond demonstrating that these poor loyal men, who had been led such a song and dance for a whole year by Arthur Scargill were still held in vassal thrall by him. It was a pathetic gesture.'*

Ian MacGregor, Chairman, NCB

*'The men returned to work together, with bands playing, flags flying and with considerable dignity.'*

Philip Weekes, Director, NCB, South Wales Area

## PIT CLOSURES

As soon as the miners returned to work, the NCB continued with its plan to close uneconomic pits.

*'Now we had succeeded, we were going to manage the enterprise. If they thought they were marching back to where they had left off they had a very rude shock coming to them.'*

Ian MacGregor, Chairman, NCB



The NUM had fought for twelve months and been beaten, the NCB could now close down mines without any real interference. Most miners had run up tremendous debts during the strike and saw the redundancy packages on offer as a way out. Others saw no future for the coal industry and accepted that their mine had to close.

In 1984 there were over 20,000 miners in Wales. By the end of that decade there were 3,700. Tower Colliery, the last deep mine in Wales, ceased production in 2008 and there are only a few hundred men working in small 'drift mines'.



## COMMUNITIES AFTER THE STRIKE

There had been deep rifts created by the strike within many communities. On returning to work, many men had refused to work with those branded as 'scabs' during the dispute. There was little forgiveness for these former colleagues.

*'Mr Scargill has said on behalf of the National Coordinating Committee that if they come back they will be embraced and welcomed back into the fold. The South Wales Area is not that way inclined - We shall never forgive them. To us they are scabs .... They will be treated as scabs when the strike is over.'*

**Emlyn Williams, President, NUM, south Wales area**

*'The sheer intensity of hatred against myself personally leaves me in fear of my life. Although my work mates and I appreciated that there would be some animosity, the degree of hostility, which has escalated to MURDEROUS pitch, verifies that they are out for blood ... for me to continue to work under such circumstances would be suicidal'*

**Letter to NCB from a strike breaker after the strike had finished**

Luckily most communities in Wales hadn't suffered the rifts seen in other UK coalfields. Very few Welsh miners (about 6%) had broken the strike and many of those that had were quickly transferred to coalfields such as Nottingham where the strike call had largely been ignored.

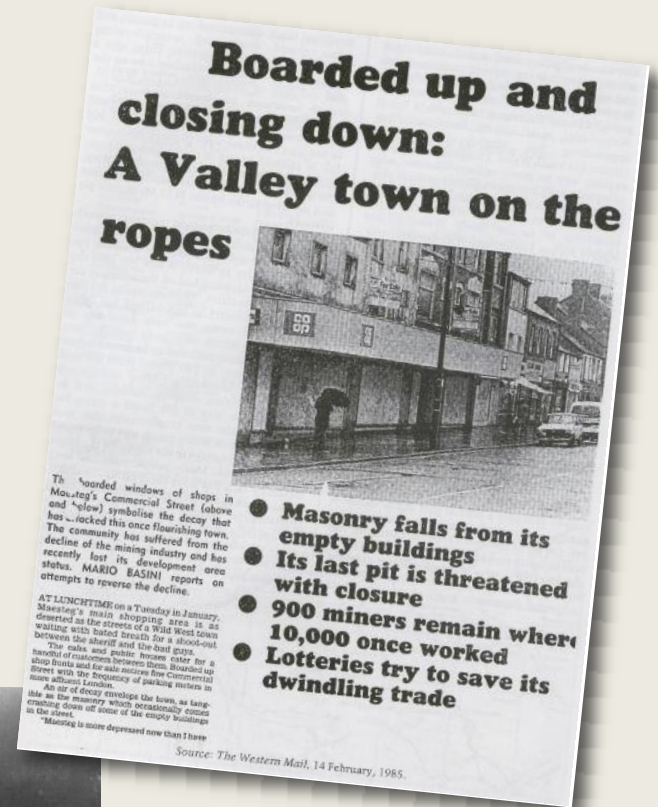




## ECONOMIC DECLINE

A consequence of the closure of the mines was long term economic decline. Unemployment became widespread within the coal communities, which was reflected in the dilapidated state of many areas. Shops and businesses that had relied on the miners had to close. Coal mining communities had often developed in areas with weak transport links. This made it difficult for people to take jobs outside their immediate areas.

The immediate legacy of the end of the coal industry for many former miners in South Wales was either to leave their villages to look for work or to accept part-time, low-paid, unskilled work, or even try and exist on the 'dole'. Even today high levels of unemployment continue to exist, with some communities experiencing third generation unemployment. These areas are being targeted by funding from Government and European sources. The aim is to regenerate these areas and reverse the economic decline.











# 4

## Section Four A visit to Big Pit

### A VISIT TO BIG PIT

Big Pit closed as a working mine in 1980 and was already a museum during the strike. However the site offers great potential for further study of the topic through interactive displays and exhibitions, films as well as the experiences of the staff, most of whom have direct knowledge of the strike.

Talk to the mining staff at Big Pit and find out about their role during the strike.

You could use the following template to gather information from Big Pit staff, or from members of your own family or local community who were involved in the strike.



**Use this template to collect information about how people were involved with the 1984-85 Miners' Strike, how they felt at the time, and the lasting effect of the strike on their community. You can add your own questions at the end.**

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Name

---

Where did you work during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike? What was your job here?

---

Did you agree with the NUM decision to take strike action? Why?

---

Were you active on picket line duty? If so, how did you feel about this?

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How did the strike effect your family – either at the time or afterwards?

---

How did you feel when the decision was taken to go back to work?

---

What happened to your colliery after the strike was over?

---

Where did people in your area go for work after the colliery was closed?

---

What effect have colliery closures had on your community?

**BACM**

British Association of Colliery Management.

**Colliery**

A coal mine.

**Drift mine**

A mine which is entered by a tunnel rather than a vertical shaft.

**Explosives magazine**

Secure building at a colliery where explosives for shotfiring (blasting) coal and stone underground were held.

**Flying Pickets**

Strikers sent to picket places of work other than their own.

**NACODS**

National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers.

**NCB**

National Coal Board.

**NUM**

National Union of Mineworkers.

**Picket line**

Body of men positioned outside a place of work to persuade other workers to support their cause.

**Returnees**

See strike breakers.

**Scabs**

See strike breakers.

**Snatch squad**

A police riot control tactic where several officers, usually in protective riot gear, rush forwards to snatch one or more individuals from a crowd.

**Strike breakers**

The name given to men refusing to strike or who returned to work. Known as 'scabs' by strikers and 'working miners' or 'returnees' by the media and NCB.

**'Stute (Miners' Institute)**

An institute paid for by contributions from miners' wages. A centre for leisure and social events in the community, sometimes known as 'the Welfare'.

**Women's Support Groups (WSG)**

Organised groups of women set up to support strikers in a number of ways.

**Working Miners**

See strike breakers.



## BOOKLIST

WCCPL & NUM *Striking Back* (1985), Salesbury Press

Michael Thomas *The Death of an Industry* (2004), Colben System Pte. Ltd.

John Davies *History of Wales* (1994), Penguin

D. Gareth Evans *A History of Wales 1906-2000* (2000), University of Wales Press

W. Gareth Evans *The Role and Changing Status of Women in the Twentieth Century* (2000), ACCAC

Deirdre Beddoe *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (2000), University of Wales Press

David Egan *Coal Society: A History of the South Wales Mining Valleys 1840-1980* (1987), Gomer

John Gorman *Banner Bright – An Illustrated History of Trade Union Banners* (1986), Scorpion Publishing

## WEBSITES

[www.agor.org.uk/cwm](http://www.agor.org.uk/cwm)

South Wales Coalfield Collection at University of Wales, Swansea.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/uk/2004/miners\\_strike](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2004/miners_strike)

BBC News website looking back at various aspects of the strike

[www.strike84.co.uk](http://www.strike84.co.uk)

Gallery of strike images by Martin Shakeshaft

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor/article/2049/>

Amgueddfa Cymru's online virtual museum

## INTRODUCTION

**Pickets, Police and Politics** aims to provide teachers with a resource that covers one of the pivotal events in the history of the South Wales Coalfield.

Although primarily aimed at learners studying history in secondary schools, the resource will also be valuable for teachers across a range of curriculum areas. Innovative use of the materials contained within the resource will support those subjects which focus upon analysis, empathy, human emotions and creative writing.

**Pickets, Police and Politics** can be used as a self-contained resource offering a portfolio of lessons to support history teaching, and is ideally complemented by a visit to Big Pit: National Coal Museum at Blaenavon. Alternatively, material from the resource could be used to support any study which calls upon learners to consider how people behave and how opinions are formed.

We recommend that **Pickets, Police and Politics** is made widely available across the full range of the curriculum in schools and colleges for practitioners to consider how it might best support study of how people behave and act under difficult conditions.

## USING PICKETS, POLICE AND POLITICS TO SUPPORT KEY STAGE 4 HISTORY

National Curriculum guidance emphasises that:

“The study of history should be taught through a combination of overview, thematic and depth studies”.

Most Key Stage 4 (KS4) courses are underpinned by this rationale. They offer students and teachers freedom to plan their studies from a broad range of alternatives that can support the concepts the National Curriculum is seeking to establish.

The greater emphasis on flexibility for schools allows teachers to address and make best use of local context and meet their learners’ needs, capabilities and aspirations through use of exciting and engaging methods of engaging learners.

GCSE courses are undergoing significant change. Schools and colleges will select from a wide portfolio of examination boards and syllabuses. Many new KS4 courses offer a wide range of choice concerning content. The following headings are drawn from a variety of UK examination board syllabuses. **Pickets, Police and Politics** has the potential to support each of the following either in their entirety or simply to highlight aspects of study relevant to the topic:

- Twentieth Century Study in Depth
- Crime and Punishment
- Wales in the Twentieth Century
- A Local Study
- The Impact of a Decade in the Twentieth Century  
e.g. “the Thatcher Years”

## USING PICKETS, POLICE AND POLITICS TO SUPPORT KEY STAGE 3 HISTORY

National Curriculum guidance for both England and Wales places strong emphasis on the development of research and enquiry skills among students.

**Pickets, Police and Politics** addresses each of the elements of the ACCAC focus statement for KS3 History and is particularly valuable for element 4 which states that Historical Enquiry Pupils should be taught to:

1. use a range of sources including representations, interpretations and, where appropriate, ICT to investigate historical topics
2. ask and answer questions about the past.

Content at KS3 in Wales is broadly outlined in the DCELLs document 'History in the National Curriculum for Wales'. **Pickets, Police and Politics** will be useful to develop the following aspects within the guidance

“Learners aged 7–14 should be given opportunities to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales”.

“how some twentieth century individuals and events have shaped our world today”

“carry out investigations into historical issues on a range of scales, from the local to the international”

**Pickets, Police and Politics** will also be a valuable tool for the development of the following skills highlighted in the same document

### HISTORICAL ENQUIRY

Pupils should be given opportunities to:

- ask and answer significant questions
- independently use a range of historical sources in their historical context, including documents, artefacts, visual sources, buildings and sites, music and oral accounts
- record and evaluate the information acquired, reaching reasoned conclusions

### ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION

Pupils should be given opportunities to:

- begin to organise ideas and arguments to help them to understand the historical issues and developments studied



### USING PICKETS, POLICE AND POLITICS MORE WIDELY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### CITIZENSHIP/PHSE

**Pickets, Police and Politics** ideally captures many of the issues at the centre of the Citizenship agenda for schools. The materials will provide valuable background material for schools exploring the nature of society in times of conflict, the role of the police and the changing nature of work.

The resources can be used as part of a programme study that seeks to reflect upon the role of the individual and how they relate to changing circumstances. Aspects of the material could also be part of a programme that uses key events of recent times from both the local and international context to investigate and discuss conflict and resolution.

#### MEDIA STUDIES

As the Miners' Strike was such a high profile story for the media parts our pack will provide a useful case study for media students.

#### ENGLISH AND DRAMA

The narrative of the Miners' Strike has quickly become part of our modern culture. It already serves as a vivid backdrop to many novels, films and plays. By using **Pickets, Police and Politics** teachers will be able to offer an overview of the context of the strike. This overview and the illustrative material within the document can then be used as source material to inspire both creative writing and, where appropriate, dramatic improvisation or role play.

### USING PICKETS, POLICE AND POLITICS (PP+P) TO SUPPORT THE LEARNING CORE 14 -19 IN WALES AND THE WELSH BAC

The Learning Pathways initiative of the Welsh Assembly seeks to develop new learning opportunities for students and to promote cross curricular activities all of which will help the learner to build a wider range of skills.

Using **Pickets, Police and Politics** as part of the Learning Core will help to address that aspect of the guidance which calls upon schools and colleges to ensure that

“Learners aged 14–19 should have opportunities for active engagement in understanding the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Wales as part of the world as a whole. For 14–19 learners, this is part of their Learning Core entitlement and is a requirement at Key Stage 4”.

All schools and colleges will develop their own programmes for the delivery of new courses and qualifications such as the Welsh Bac and delivery of the Learning Core. **Pickets, Police and Politics** is a valuable general resource available to be used widely in support of such programmes.

**Cover image courtesy of Mike Thompson**

**Further images courtesy of Dorothea Heath, Mike Thompson et al**

Here are some suggested activities to accompany the resource.

## SECTION 1

Look at the arguments FOR and AGAINST pit closures on page 5.

1. What do the quotes actually mean? Do some further research about one or more of the statements looking for evidence to support that point of view.
2. Do some further research on the arguments surrounding pit closures. Are there any more arguments FOR or AGAINST?
3. Debate and discuss the arguments presented. You may find it easier to focus on one or two areas.
4. Look at argument 4 against pit closures. Use your own town or community as a case study to support or disprove this argument. Use the evidence gathered in the activity on page 28 as a starting point.
5. Look at argument 5 against pit closures. Carry out some further research to find out what happened in 1974. Do you think this statement is fair?
6. Rank each of the six arguments FOR pit closures, starting with the one you think is the strongest at the top. Do the same for the six arguments AGAINST. Be prepared to discuss your choice.
7. Look at the statement on the bottom of page 3; *'[in] the 1980s the British coal industry was the safest and most efficient in the world'*. Do some research to find out how far this statement can be said to be true.

## SECTION 2

1. Carry out some research on the confrontation that became known as 'the Battle of Orgreave' in June 1984. What do you think were the reasons for the violence? Do you think more than one side were to blame for this?
2. Look at the views expressed by George Moores the south Yorkshire Police Commissioner In the Labour Weekly extract (Image Bank, No. 4). Why do you think Mr. Moores may have expressed these opinions?
3. Look at the statement on page 10 about the economic hardship that miners and their families faced during the strike. Using the evidence from the photographs in the image bank, quotes, audio interviews, and other published sources, discuss the difficulties miners and their families faced. What networks of support were available to the miners? Do you think this hardship influenced the course of the strike?
4. Look at the posters 'MacGregor's Democracy' and 'Back the Miners' on page 14. How successful do you think these posters are as pro-strike propaganda? Why do you think this?
5. Discuss the article on the front page of the 'Rhymney Valley Report' on page 17. What methods does the author of this article use to try and persuade people to support the miners?

### SECTION 3

1. Read the quote from Ian MacGregor on page 21. Do any of the views expressed in the audio interviews support this opinion? Discuss who is expressing the view and why they may have this opinion.
2. Look at the Abercarn graffiti and quote from Phil Cullen on page 16, and the 2 quotes on page 23. How far do these sources support the views expressed by Gavin Rogers in the audio interview?

### SECTION 4

See recommended activity on page 28. In addition to the data collected on the template, pupils could gather evidence from a range of sources for a class presentation on an aspect of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. They should look at the exhibitions and displays at Big Pit, to support evidence they have already gathered from the pack and image bank. They can also take photographs and other recordings for an audio visual presentation.

**Cover image courtesy of Mike Thompson**

**Further images courtesy of Dorothea Heath, Mike Thompson et al**



## COMMENT AND FEEDBACK

We are continually seeking to improve and develop our services for learners. If you have used **Pickets, Police and Politics** we would welcome your views on how successful it has been with your students. We are also keen to consider where else within schools and colleges use of the pack would be relevant. Your thoughts and suggestions should be sent to the Learning Officer at Big Pit: National Coal Museum 01495 796413 or [bigpit@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:bigpit@museumwales.ac.uk)

