

An excerpt from **IMAGES OF THE PAST: THE MINERS' STRIKE**  
PHOTOS BY MARTIN JENKINSON. WORDS BY MARK METCALF

# COAL NOT DOLE

WRITING WORTH READING SPECIAL



# STANDING BY THEIR MEN

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ON STRIKE

# Standing by their men

An excerpt from the new book, *Images Of The Past: The Miners' Strike*.  
Photographs: **Martin Jenkinson**. Words: **Mark Metcalf**

Anne Scargill, wife of miners' leader Arthur Scargill, speaks at International Women's Day rally Chesterfield. (March 5, 1985)

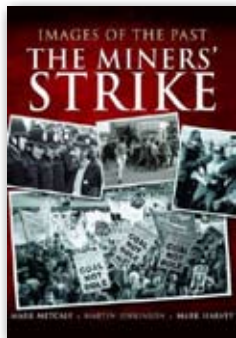


The coal miners' strike of 1984/5 was the longest, most bitterly fought national strike in British history. For a year over 100,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers, their families and supporters, battled to prevent the decimation of the industry on which their communities depended. Margaret Thatcher's government aimed to smash the most militant section of the British working class so she could refashion society in favour of neo-liberal objectives that three decades later have crippled the world economy. At the heart of the conflict was the Yorkshire region, where the union photographer in 1984-85 was the late **Martin Jenkinson**, whose photographs are a unique social document on the dispute that changed the face of Britain



Councillor Margaret Hughes applauds a speaker at a Labour party rally in support of striking miners at Stoke on Trent, (November 30, 1984)

## ON STRIKE



### IMAGES OF THE PAST: THE MINERS' STRIKE

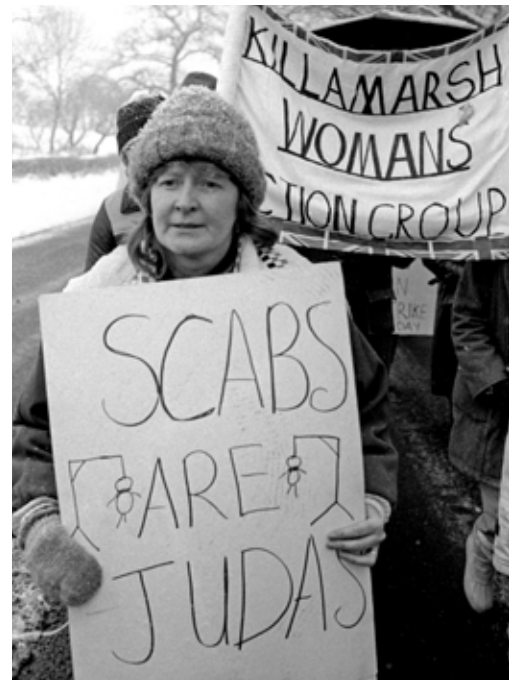
By Mark Harvey,  
Martin Jenkinson,  
Mark Metcalf

Published by Pen &  
Sword – [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/)  
[Images-of-the-Past-The-Miners-Strike/](http://Images-of-the-Past-The-Miners-Strike/)  
p/6436 – £11.24

The independent organising of welfare facilities – including social housing – had always been a big part of mining communities throughout Britain. ‘Societies’ created a community base of support for the sick and needy, generating a collective spirit that had stood the test of time. If the miners in 1984 were to stay out for any length of time then they were going to need everyone in their local communities to get involved.

In the lead-up to the strike there had been discussions in many mining communities about setting up communal kitchens, attached to which would be food-parcel centres. The aim was to prevent people being forced back to work by poverty. Women’s support groups quickly sprang up to turn the ideas into reality.

The women involved, many of whom





This page: First national women's march in support of striking miners, Barnsley. (May 12 1984)

Previous page (Top): Women support striking miners, Chesterfield. ( March 3 1984)

Previous page (Bottom): Women march around the Derbyshire coalfield during the strike.

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## ON STRIKE

Right: Miners' wives and members of women's support groups make up food parcels for striking miners' families during the 1984-85 strike. (April 30, 1984)



Above: Counting teabags at Ellington Miners Support Group, Ashington. (Dec 6, 1984)

had never previously addressed a meeting in their life but who were by no means apolitical, were to find themselves plunged into the most exciting times of their lives as they spoke at many meetings and rallies, raised funds, provided welfare rights advice, took part in picketing and challenged the full force of the State, including the police. Some also took part despite resistance

at home from their partners who were not used to seeing women as equals who took a public role in political affairs.

Without the women's efforts there is no doubt the strike would not have lasted anywhere near as long. Amongst the women involved were a number who were on strike themselves from their jobs working in administrative roles in big NCB regional of-



fices, the pit canteens and cleaning offices. (Sadly there appear to be no reliable figures on the actual numbers of women strikers.)

In east Durham the women in the SEAM campaign swiftly organised kitchens in the Easington area. Very quickly there were established over 50 miners' support groups in the county and this helped ensure that Durham remained totally solid for the first five months of the strike.

Having started out by attempting to use women, and miners' wives in particular, as victims of an irresponsible strike the media were unable to ignore the highly politicised voice of women in mining communities. In the first few days of the strike the papers were full of stories in which women in Nottinghamshire were urging their husbands not to strike. In Barnsley, five women met and wrote to the *Barnsley Chronicle* to coun-

**Above: Sheffield WAPC at Labour party local gov't conference showing 'fists full of fivers'.**

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## ON STRIKE



**Left: Serving food to strikers' families at Barnsley (April 30, 1984)**

ter the suggestion that women weren't in favour of the strike. Seeing the letter it wasn't long before other women were stimulated into getting involved.

Over the next few weeks the group helped with supplementary benefit claims for wives and children of striking miners. Welfare Rights workers provided the wom-

en with advice. In the following months the 50 women in Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures (BWAPC) organised 16 different kitchens, each providing 300 meals. The women also had to find the money to pay for the meals as, by and large, all women's support groups were responsible for finding their own funds.





In Carmarthenshire, Cynhedire WAPC raised £1,000–£1,500 a week to pay for their kitchen whilst in Faudhouse in West Lothian women collected in their village every day. In Kent the Women’s Committee regularly received food from the *Daily Mirror* printers and at Christmas turkeys arrived from Smithfield Market.

At their weekly meeting on 22 April 1984 BWAPC agreed to hold an All Women’s rally on 12 May 1984. Three women – Lorraine Bowler from Barnsley, Annette Hoyroyd of Nottingham (whose birthday it was) and

Maureen Douglass of Doncaster – were invited to speak, along with Jack Taylor and miners’ leader Arthur Scargill. Both men encouraged the women to lead the march and maintained a position, surrounded by children, a couple of rows behind.

Everyone involved hoped for at least 2,000 to turn up on the big day. At least five times as many came from all parts of the country and they were cheered all the way by people lining the street as they marched.

At the rally in Barnsley Civic Hall Lorraine Bowler said: “This fight does not just belong

**Above: Miners’ wives and members of women’s support groups serving food to striking miners’ families during the 1984–85 strike – Cortonwood Miners Welfare. (July 23, 1984)**

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## ON STRIKE



**Above: National women's support group march and rally in London. (August 11, 1984)**

to the men, it belongs to us all. It has been good over the weeks to compare how some men have reacted to women's involvement in the beginning and how they react now. It has been a gradual acceptance for most. The reception we receive from the men on picket lines and demonstrations is tremendous ... Being active, as we are, takes away most of the uncertainty that is involved in a strike ... We cannot allow this Government to decimate our industry and our communities. Is that what we want for our kids?

"In this country, we aren't separated as a class. We are separated as men and women ... I have seen change coming for years and the last few weeks has seen it as its best. If this Government thinks its fight is only with the miners, they are sadly mistaken. They are now fighting men, women and families."

As a result of the day's events links were

forged that established a national women's group – Women against Pit Closures – in all but name. Possibly the first ever national working class women's organisation, this was formally constituted on 22 July 1984 when miners' wives (around 75% of those present) and women supporters representing every British coalfield met at Northern College, Barnsley for their inaugural delegate conference.

This was called to co-ordinate a National Women's Demonstration in London with the purpose of highlighting women's support for the miners in their fight for jobs and against pit closures as well as to inform the public of the effects the pit closure programme would have on mining communities. It was intended to present the DHSS with a bill for £45,000,000, the sum that had been deducted from striking miners' social security entitlements over the first

20 weeks of the strike.

There was also to be a 100,000-signature petition presented to the Queen appealing to her to speak on behalf of the miners' defence of their jobs and communities. 15,000 women from all coalfields descended on the capital on 11 August, proving that the women behind the strike were determined to continue the struggle. **CT**

**THE PHOTOGRAPHER:** Martin Jenkinson (right) became a freelance photographer after being made redundant at a Sheffield factory in 1979. He specialised in industrial and trade union assignments. Martin was the official photographer on the People's March for Jobs in 1981 and was the photographer for the NUM newspaper the *Yorkshire Miner* during the strike against pit closures of 1984-85, the images he recorded being featured in this book. His daughter Justine has been managing his extensive photographic library since his death in June 2012.



who also works as a campaigning freelance journalist, particularly for the Big Issue in the North magazine and the publications of Unite the Union. A factory shop steward in 1984-85, Mark was a member of Save Easington Area Mines, an organiser at Peterlee support kitchen and a regular on picket lines. He is a member of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

**THE WRITER:** Mark Metcalf is a football author

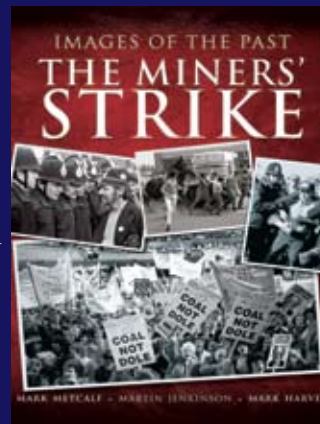
## IMAGES OF THE PAST

# THE MINERS' STRIKE

MARK METCALF • MARTIN JENKINSON • MARK HARVEY



The 1984/5 coalminers' strike was the longest, most bitter industrial dispute in British history. For over a year, hundreds of communities battled to prevent the decimation of an industry on which their livelihoods depended. Detailed, well written and lavishly illustrated, this book is a must-read and especially relevant on the 30th anniversary of the Miners' Strike.



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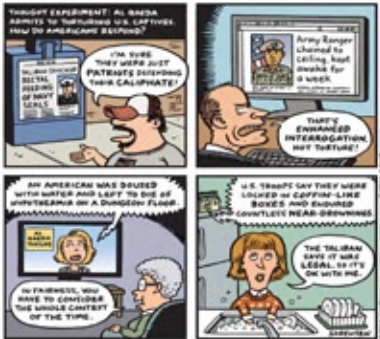
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