

A year in the literary lives of a community of striking mine workers

A YEAR OF OUR LIVES



AFTER the 1984/85 strike the Hatfield community put together *A Year of Our Lives: A colliery community in the great coal strike of 1984/85*, a book of stories, poems and pictures, to tell what happened

to them during the strike.

It was printed by Hooligan Press in 1986 (ISBN 1 869802 02 2) and is well worth a read if you can get hold of a copy.

I picked it up from a second-hand bookshop in Clumber Park of all places, not exactly-known as a seething hotbed of socialism and revolution.

The following poems are taken directly or adapted from the book, with the original authors credited.

They are over 35 years old, but show the lives of ordinary people and what happened to them; still so relevant today.

Ballad of Adrian

(I.K. Biggs, Hatfield Colliery)

Adie was a miner
On strike at Hatfield Main
Trying to stop blackleg miners
Crossing Picket lines again

Now Adie tried to talk to those scabs
And found it was too late
The Snatch Squad moved in
to drag him down the road
And through the gates

Now at the Court
The verdict was "Guilty"
and Adie was left in thought
What about the boot marks
and that gash on his head?
"Self-inflicted wounds"
the police inspector said

We're fighting for the future
For our kids, and their kids too
NO PIT CLOSURES!
NO JOB LOSSES!
While there's coal for us to go through
And now the strike is over
Have all the Adies been forgot?

For all my friends and me
I hope for heaven's sake not

Remember! 1984 to 1985
They do as well
So I say to you all
Support sacked miners
Don't let them go through hell

Oh Grieve, For Bloody Orgreave

(From the I.K. Biggs original)

Remember those lads in 1984
Who marched with men from Corton-wood
And with their loyal wives
They joined the Durham Miners and others
Who were fighting for their lives
They met the lads from Rhondda
Upon that Orgreave Field
To face horses, dogs and truncheons
And the bloody riot shields

Maggie's Dream

(From the I.K. Biggs original)

If all the Miners
Were on the dole
We'd have to pay
For imported coal

Could you imagine Thatcher
And her sodding team
Going down a mine shaft
To work on a seam

Now here is Arthur
A decent man
Doing his best for us
As best he can

So recall all union members
To forge a sound team
So we defeat bloody Thatcher
And her Coal Plan dream

TALES FROM THE STRIKE / KEVIN HORNE

The copper got a surprise when he asked strikers to open car boot

ONE early morning in September we decided to see what was in the farmer's field as we were travelling to picket the power station at West Burton.

We stopped just under a railway bridge, and looked in the nearest field. There were carrots in the field so we got out and ran into the field and grabbed an armful each and dropped them in the boot of the car. Then we were on our way again.

About two miles down the road we saw a rabbit in the road (roadkill). One of the lads got out and inspected it. Seeing as it was OK, this also went in the boot. And off we went again.

A few miles down the road we came to a roundabout with a police roadblock. The police stopped us and asked where we were going, so the driver (Paul) told them that we were going to Skegness for the day.

The copper obviously didn't believe us, asked what we had in the boot, then ordered us to open it.

When the boot was opened, the copper asked, "What's this?" pointing to the rabbit. "It's just 'roadkill'," said Paul. "It was in the road and we thought it would make a meal for someone."

"What's all this lot?" asked the copper, pointing to the carrots. "Oh," said Paul, "it must have been sick."

You may have guessed that we didn't get through that day, but we had a good laugh.

Rose's Cafe, Retford

WHILE picketing West Burton power station, we used to call at a transport cafe at Retford owned by Rose Hurley. She was a lovely woman, maybe in her early 60s. We called her Auntie Rose.

She helped us out no end, like letting us out of the boot of the car when we arrived and giving us our breakfast.

She told us that mining was in her blood and that as a girl in the north east, she had been a coal sorter on the screens and, although it was hard work, she enjoyed the feeling of community and would support the miners to the end.

When the strike ended, I kept in touch with Rose and gave her a framed print that my mate from university had painted. She was over the moon with it and kept it on her wall in pride of place.

We kept in touch with Christmas cards telling each other what was happening with our lives. I told her about my pit closing and getting transferred, then about me going into 'Learning Disabilities'. This went on for nearly 30 years.

About six years ago I got a card from her daughter to say that if I wanted to see Rose that I needed to come soon as her mother wasn't well. So while I was at work in Doncaster I decided to go and find her bungalow. When I found it I knocked on the door and her daughter answered. Imagine my surprise when I realised that I knew her daughter and

had met her many times through work, as she also worked in Learning Disabilities in Doncaster.

Rose was so glad to meet again and so was I. She told me that she had lent the picture out for a mining exhibition and never got it back. She was very upset, so I replaced it with one that I had given to my local pub that had later closed down.

A few weeks later Rose's daughter rang to tell me that her mum had passed away and invited me to the funeral.

I turned up at the funeral along with about 100 others.

During the service, the preacher told of the flying pickets and how she gave us our breakfast. Then, when the police came in, she would charge them double, so she never lost a penny.

I was so proud that I cheered in the chapel. The family made such a fuss over me and wanted to give the picture back to me. I told them it was theirs to keep, and they promised to hang it in the cafe while ever it was open.