



Women's Banner Group community banner on display at its first Big Meeting, July 2018.

Banner Group supports women's work in mining communities

Lynn Gibson tells how the group was established and explains its mission to support and celebrate women in their roles within trade unions, politics and communities in the former Durham coalfield

IN 2017, Laura Daly (the founder of the Women's Banner Group), in a conversation with Stephen Guy, discussed why there wasn't any official female representation at the Durham Miners' Gala. Although women have always attended the gala, they attended to support their husbands, fathers and brothers.

The response to the commem-

oration of 100 years since suffrage gave Laura the idea to hold a meeting for like-minded women to attend to discuss female representation and celebration within the Gala and beyond.

I knew Laura from our Labour Party activism. I come from a long line of coal miners; my father, grandfathers and great grandfathers and beyond all worked down the pit and I

can trace my mining heritage back to the tin mines in Cornwall and the Yorkshire coal mines – my great grandfathers all coming to the Durham coalfield in the 1800s.

I am incredibly proud of my

mining heritage, the part my ancestors played in the industrial revolution and the creation of trade unions.

Because of this I have found it an honour to be involved in the Redhills Appeal at the Durham Miners' Association. As well as this I have taken an active role within Education4Action, a voluntary group at the Durham Miners' Association whose purpose is to educate children and adults in the vitally important history of our mining heritage.

Also, as a life-long attendee of the Durham Miners' Gala I was intrigued to learn more about Laura's idea and so attended the first Women's Banner Group meeting in November 2017.

At the first meeting it was agreed that the mission of the group was to support and celebrate women in their roles within trade unions, politics and communities and to engage, educate, empower and recognise the contribution of women locally, nationally and internationally.

Our first project was to design and produce a community patch-

work banner, drawing strength from the women who ran free cafés throughout the miners' strikes and their unwillingness to let communities fall apart.

Our banner, which was designed and produced by more than 50 women from the County Durham Coalfield area, marched in its first Durham Miners' Gala in 2018.

It also had the honour of being blessed at Durham Cathedral following the procession. We are also the first all women banner group to be affiliated to the Durham Miners' Association as an official banner group.

2019 sees the 150th year of the Durham Miners' Association. This year we have many more projects planned including the creation of a Women's Banner Group silk banner, the publication of a book of inspirational women and the installation of blue plaques commemorating historically important women in the Durham coalfield.

Lynn Gibson is the Women's Banner Group Secretary



WBG Secretary Lynn Gibson with her two sons before marching.



WBG Founder Laura Daly (centre) proudly with the banner at the County Hotel, Durham.