

**Miners' strike of 1984: Your memories**

**It is 20 years since the beginning of the miners' strike, one of the most bitter industrial disputes in British history.**

It started when National Coal Board chairman Ian McGregor announced plans to cut production, the equivalent of 20 pits or 20,000 jobs. Miners walked out and were soon joined by colleagues around the country. However, large stockpiles of coal and the National Union of Mineworkers' decision not to ballot its members meant the strike was not as successful and it ended exactly one year later.

**Your memories of the miners' strike of 1984-85.**

**The following comments reflect the balance of opinion we have received so far:**

I was 10 and living in Buxton, Derbyshire - my Mum and Dad were active in the Labour Party and my Dad had been a miner at Hatfield Colliery (nice to see another Hatfield miner on here Peter!). The Buxton Labour Party supported the Pilsley miners. We collected money every Saturday on the market place to send to the families and had miners' families living with us, to give them a break.

I remember the Christmas party we held in a disco in Buxton, so that the children could have presents and the Mums and Dads some time away. When I think of those proud men and women, it brings a tear to my eye. I am also immensely proud of the commitment my Mum and Dad made to the miners cause. My Dad died 13 years ago, but some of the best memories I have of him were formed during this time. My family were presented with a certificate from Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill in recognition of all their hard work. It doesn't seem much but my Mum and Dad were so proud to receive it. The strike changed the face of Britain forever.
***Sharon Rowe, London, England***

My husband was a serving police officer during the strike, his job was made even more difficult because both his and my fathers and grandfathers, had been miners.Loyalties were certianly divided, he had a job to do, just like the miners had theirs to do..only they ended up with no jobs to do after all. It's so sad,it still hurts after all these years. A lot of the real trouble between the police and miners were caused by other policemen from areas who knew nothing about mining, they stirred up many ill-feelings which, I think, still exist today
***Annette, Lincolnshire***

I was 14, and could see that it was about Scargill and the way he wanted to beat the then government into submission. He failed and the world is a better place for it. Thatcher saw that this country needed to be kick started, and she is to me the best leader this country has had since Churchill. As for this country losing its greatest asset, maybe we should look at the fact that the greenhouse effect has at least been slowed slightly by burning less fossil fuels. We don't hear the leftie greens arguing that fact. No they just wanted to bring down the government - it was never about the mines or the coal, just power/control/defeating the Iron Lady! All failed.
***Jim Wilson, Scotland***

David of Edinburgh got it right when he said Scargill's 'sole purpose was to bring down the government.' I remember the chill I felt when I heard him say on Radio 4 that he was out to smash the capitalist system. This gem was broadcast a few years before the 1884 strike and he tried several times to bring the miners out. Each time, they rejected the call at the ballot, but in 1984, there was no ballot. In my view, the miners were bitterly betrayed by Scargill, who manipulated them into his class struggle, but Thatcher's destruction of the coal industry was a viscous act of revenge.
***Tony Fox, Gateshead. UK***

In 1984 I was 11 years old. My dad came home one day from work and said to my mam 'Well that's it love we're on strike'. I was scared I didn't know why but things were going to change and I could feel it. My dad stayed out for the year until the very end. We ate Corned Beef and Cheesy Peas until it came out of our ears. Our pit, Point of Ayr, had only 120 or so out on strike at the start of the strike, and only 98 at the end. We were a minority at our pit. This meant we had to shout even louder to be heard when we tried to tell people of our struggle.

All my dad ever wanted to do was to provide a home and food on the table for his family. Is that so bad? Ok, things weren't done right with regards to the ballot but my dad was on strike because all he wanted was to work. My mam wrote Poems, she died almost ten years ago. She read her poems out in Fleet Street and the L.S.E. my mam and dad grew as a result of that strike. So did I. I don't need to watch documentaries I lived it I've got the t-shirt, and no account given in a documentary or apparent unbiased news report could ever reflect the times we lived through.
***Kerry Adele Evans, North Wales Point of Ayr Colliery***

I was a Met police officer at the time and, despite the ideological mythology, the police were far better behaved than most of the strikers. Defeat for the miners was inevitable. It was fascinating to observe the blind refusal to accept change. Even if successful, a victory for the miners would have been short-lived.
***Brian, Liverpool, UK***

I was 14, watching it all on the news. It summed up - and still sums up to me - everything that's wrong with the human spirit. I could never understand why striking miners who somehow believed they had a right to a job, and put their families through hell, were hailed as heroes. If the mines were so great, why weren't there mass worker buyouts?
***Nat, London, UK***

I was a very young Fleet Street worker at the time and was very happy to give about 5 pounds of my 65 quid a week to the miners. My father's branch of the Readers and Revisers at the Sunday Times raised a small fortune for a pit in Wales. We stood side by side with them as they did with us the year after when that Australian/American so and so moved his newspapers into Wapping. From Scotland to Durham, across Wales and down to Kent, I've never met a braver bunch than the NUM. I remember the night they marched down the Highway into Wapping with their banners raised high and got a stand ovation from the printers along the way. Of course the Met police felt obliged to attack us all after. Sad days indeed.
***Ciaran, North Vancouver, Canada***

At the time of the strikes I was a young 22 year old running a once a week gay disco in London - over the course of the strike we collected around £3,000 and sent it to various mining communities - to some outsiders it seemed odd that gay young men were collecting money for miners and their families but we shared one thing in common - a deep hatred of Margaret Thatcher and her Government and her opposition to the miners and section 28. To this day I could never vote Conservative despite owning my own company now. As for Heseltine - his punishment will come sooner or later!
***Jeff Duncan, Salisbury, UK***

I was a graduate student in Cambridge during the strike. I supported the miners. When I became a don in Oxford I was told that when Thatcher visited All Souls College during the strike a Labour-voting don showed her around. When they came to a portrait of the 1930s Marxer it was first fellow of the College, GDH. Cole, he told Thatcher it was the famous left winger GDH Dole, hoping she would correct him by saying "Cole [coal] not Dole" as he wanted her to hear her say that just once - she didn't!
***Ewen Green, Oxford, England***

I remember the pickets coming into my local pub collecting for the strike fund. I didn't have much sympathy, having voted for Thatcher, but gave them a fiver which was to me a large amount. If I had known the outcome at the time I would have given them £50. They never forgot the strike but can they imagine the guilt that people like me, and I wasn't alone, still have to live with.
***Midd, Halifax***

Two of my uncles were on strike while my father and one other uncle worked. Since the strike my father had spoken to his father no more than half a dozen times all just before his death three years ago. I truly believe that if the Nottinghamshire mines had not been picketed before they had the chance to vote democratically I would have had a chance to have known my grandfather and my cousins. They are strangers to me to this day.
***Tom, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire***

I was very young at the time of the miners strike. Gagull was one of the first words I ever said - I had obviously picked it up from the many television new reports at the time.
***Saeed, London***

I saw this first hand living in Barnsley at the time. Many of my close friends suffered terribly and the town has never recovered. This was a high price to pay for what was a personal war between Arthur Scargill and Maggie. The country was the loser in the end.
***John Murray, formerly of Barnsley***

This country was heading for disaster with the unions calling the shots. It was a showdown that had to happen. Even if you did not like any of Margaret Thatcher's policies, you would not be living in the country you live in today if the unions won. It was unfortunate that so many miners lost there jobs, but life is not fair.
***Daniel Tilly, Worcester***

My grandmother lived in Barnsley at the time of the strike. Once a week, she'd get her hair done in the same salon as Scargill's wife. Mrs S would be dropped off and picked up by an NUM car each time. Meanwhile, miners were reduced to begging for handouts. Scargill was more interested in making a name for himself than making a future for the coal industry and the people who relied on it for their livelihoods. Where is he now anyway? One thing's for sure, he'll be pretty comfortably off.
***Emma, Gourock, Scotland***

I was 13 when all this happened. I remember that all the news on TV was extremely biased against the miners and so were my mother's political views. My Middle school shared fields with the NUM headquarters and for me; this enabled me to see on the one hand the metered TV outlook contrasted with the desperation of people whose livelihood was being exported to Eastern Europe. It was the catalyst that allowed me the freedom to understand media portrayal from reality. Maybe they could do a reality show on people losing everything they and their families have ever worked for...? Entertaining. I think not.
***Roberto, Edinburgh, UK***

What a year it was, and even now its still with us. Yes, bitterness, hatred for Thatcher, the friendship, hardship together, what a long lovely summer though. No matter what some say, it was about the closures, it was about jobs, and because the miners lost, the country has lost one of its most valuable assets, coal.
***Brian (Proud Garw Valley striker 84/85), Swansea, UK***

I remember bringing food parcels to the local seamen's union office to donate to the miners. To this day I despise Thatcher - she called them the enemy within. All they wanted to do was work. She destroyed lives.
***Dave, Holyhead***

I was involved in the miners strike as a Police Officer. It was all about Arthur Scargill trying to bring down the government, nothing to do with pits and miners. If there had been a ballot there would never have been a strike.
***Lester Stenner, Weston Super Mare, UK***

I was 13 and watched this every night when I came home from school. couldn't understand how the miners couldn't understand the sense in shutting down their loss-making mines, why they wouldn't get off their backsides and retrain, and why they let themselves be led by a man who was socialist to them, but capitalist privately going home to his massive mansion whilst they starved.
***Paul, Bristol, UK***

I was 14 at the time. Seeing underpaid policeman fighting with underpaid miners left me totally and utterly bewildered. I just didn't get it. 20 years on and I still don't get it.
***Tom Anderton, Basildon***

Scargill made it obvious from the start when he stood for election that his sole purpose was to bring down the government. He did not care about the miners or their families.
***David, Edinburgh***

Former mining communities and regions such as South Derbyshire still bear the scars of Maggie Thatcher's actions in crushing the coal industry and dumping its miners on the scrap heap. Little provision was given for new jobs and training for the former miners in South Derbyshire, an area hit by further unemployment in the early 90's, when John Major decided to close the remaining Coal Burning Power Stations of the Trent Valley.
***Andrew Mogg, South Derbys, England***

I still consider myself a coal miner's daughter even though my father's pit was closed in 1992. I was 14 years old during the 1984 strike - old enough to remember the devastation caused, the anger, the heartache and the severe hardship. Most of the miners were hard working proud men who were simply fighting for their jobs and their future to provide for their families. Misguided at times by Arthur Scargill, but what a powerful passionate speaker!

I spent many a year feeling angry at Margaret Thatcher and blamed her for the hardships so many families faced. Today we live in a different world and I would not like to imagine what it would be like if the Tories had not won. My father still carries the scars of working the mines with the loss of feeling in his hands, his body riddled with arthritis and his loss of hearing. I am very proud of my father and the way my family survived the miner's strike of 1984.
***Michelle, Rhymney Valley, Wales***

I was 18 at the time and shudder at the thought of all that bitterness. It was one of the reasons that I wanted out of the UK. Why did it have to be like that - where was dialogue and understanding? The industry was coming to its end and you can't keep something going just to occupy people. They would lose their self respect in that way too. Over the years since then we've seen lots of people lose their jobs, or rather their jobs have become obsolete. We all have to live with it.
***Cathy, Switzerland***

I was a serving officer in GMP throughout the strike and I came from a working class family whose father was a union member. I was embarrassed at the attitudes of some colleagues especially the Met who were neither interested in what was going on or cared. You can rest assured that whatever side you were on, those of us from workers homes did understand and there was genuine sympathy. It was a case that the miners were lions led by donkeys and used as pawns in a political game. I am a Tory but that does not mean that I didn't care.
***Russ Foster, Manchester, England***

I was 13 when the illegal miners strike started and the eldest of six children. My Dad worked through the strike because a national ballot was never taken. He didn't want us to starve and because he knew the pits would close anyway and decided to earn money before he was thrown on the miners' scrap heap. He lost friends he'd had for thirty years through this and life for him, and us, was a nightmare.

I remember turning the telly on one night after school and seeing some bloke trying to knock my Dad off his bike with a metal bar on the news. I was very proud to see him grab the bar and smack the bloke across the chest with it. If you didn't live through it you can never imagine what it was like, kids at school were almost segregated because of it and communities were torn apart.
***Jenni, Hucknall, Notts***

I was 15. For Thatcher it was a political war, just as the Falklands was 2 years earlier, fighting for a win in the next general election. For the miners (of which my family went back 5 generations) it was a way to save their jobs and communities, which have now long gone
***Sean Japp, Scotland***

That was the most intense political year of my life! I was a supply teacher most of the time and spent a lot of time on the picket lines at Betteshanger, Snowdon and Tilmanstone collieries. I spent a great deal of time trying to get local Labour parties involved (often to no avail!!) and trying to galvanize the local branch of my Union to provide help, money and solidarity. My greatest memories of the strike were Jack Collins (a LION of a man) leaving his sick-bed to confront returning scabs in his pit; a pensioner giving me his last £10 to the striking miners collection at Herne Bay market; the great rally at Trafalgar Square addressed by the unswerving Arthur Scargill.
***David Green, Herne Bay, Kent***

I think Mrs Thatcher was right to bring down Trotsyites like Scargill who used his members as pawns and his office as a soapbox for his discredited extreme left wing policies. The miners, sadly, came off the worse for it, but it was they who voted Scargill into office and it was Scargill's bully-boy tactics and the weakness of the 1974-79 Labour Government who happily caved in to the NUM's unrealistic pay demands which made the NCB even more unprofitable and pit closures inevitable. Margaret Thatcher cannot be blamed for being determined to do what she was elected to do- to govern and not to be bullied by the likes of Scargill!
***William, Stoke-on-Trent***

I was fifteen when the strike began, the town where I live was built on coal hence the name. The pit however was due to close the following year due to exhaustion of coal, one of the few undisputed closures. The local miners didn't go on strike. It was obvious to me and my friends that the strike had no chance of success due to high coal stocks, the time of year and the NUM's tactics, they walked straight into Mrs T trap
***Mark Redfern, Coalville Leicestershire***

The miners were quite literally lions led by donkeys. The Tories were determined to 'sort out ' the unions and the leaders of the miners walked into the trap that was set. Shortly before the start of the strike I passed by Didcot Power station. It had gigantic piles of coal, bigger than I had ever seen before, and this at the end of the winter season. Whatever the result for the miners, the result for the people of the UK was to enable a break from the past and a chance to move forwards.
***Barry P, Havant England***

I have many memories of that dark and difficult time but there are 2 that really stick out in my mind. My shock at seeing, for the first time, a huge convoy of "armoured" lorries laden with coal, with front and rear police escorts, thundering down the M4 near Port Talbot. And second, a huge line of police...all well protected...banging their shields with their heavy, wooden, batons in front of a line of half-starved miners. Seeing the way they were goading the miners to fight them made me sick. I lost all faith in the police that day and my views haven't changed 20 years on.

The miners' cause was right & just but they were, in my view, lions led by a donkey. Scargill should have sought a ballot and, if he had done so, he would have won...and what idiot would call the miners out on strike when stockpiles of coal were so high and just as spring was about to turn into summer? The real villain in all this, however, was Maggie Thatcher. She provoked the battle and used the full apparatus of the state to crush the miners and their communities.
***Mike , Barry Island, Vale of Glamorgan***

I was 15, my father was a miner at the Morlais Colliery near Llanelli. With the grand sum of $22 from social services there was no money for coal to heat the house. I remember my Dad and I going down to an abandoned Quarry to dig for coal so we could have heat. Then waiting till after dark to bring it home. No matter that we lost the strike I was and will always be proud to be a South Wales coal miners daughter.
***DW, Nebraska USA***

I was a young Apprentice Mechanic during the strike at Taff Merhyr Colliery, and lived in Aberfan where the Merhtyr Vale colliery was situated. The whole essence of the strike was to protect jobs, Mrs Thatcher and Mr MacGregor denied they wanted to decimate the mines.... You can judge for yourselves who was telling the truth. The nation may have disliked Aurhtur Scargill and the NUM, but one thing is for sure, we were not the liars.
***Chris Lee, Aberfan Wales***

I was 8 at the time and living on the Fife coalfield. I can remember a family friend who was a skilled electrician who had recently lost his job in a shipyard and was working as a supermarket security guard. I can remember him breaking down in tears and discussing with my parents the plight of the miners who would try and shop-lift food from his store just to feed themselves. There was a locked skip at the back of the supermarket full of food past its best before date which the miners would try and break into at night.

Unbeknown to the supermarket bosses, when their security guard discovered the damage to the skip, he made sure that it was never locked again and each night it was completely emptied of anything edible. I didn't understand the political detail at the time but it planted such a deep hatred for the Tories that ever though I am now a middle class professional living in the south of England, I will never, never, vote for the Conservatives.
***Tim, Bath/ London***

I was about 16 and lived in South Derbyshirewhere the miners carried on working, except for the days when the Scottish flying pickets arrived, then everyone stayed at home! All the mines are gone now, people miss the money, but not the work.
***Ian, UK***

I was 15 years old during the strike of 1984 and lived two miles away from Cortonwood Colliery where the strike began. I remember the picketing and violence. 1984 created and strengthened some communities, but also split and destroyed others. I feel proud of my parents bringing up three children during this difficult time. I remember digging for coal in the slag heaps with my father so that we could heat the house in the winter, the food and clothes parcels and "free" handouts of school dinners and uniforms. He built a sledge for us for Xmas out of salvaged wood and it survives to this day!
***Shaun, Rotherham, UK***

I lived in Nottingham until 98. During the strike I was one of Thatcher's economic casualties and I played in a band. I put on a day's entertainment on the Forest in Nottingham. We had about 5000 miners and supporters turn up. The cops behaved themselves - which they hadn't been doing very often, mainly because the "out of towners" who were drafted in just didn't have the local nouse. Our drummer was a face worker and his pit eventually closed - he sells kitchens now.

It was a bad time for everyone but it was necessary because unrestrained unionism is just as bad as unrestrained corporations. The miners dug their own graves and the whole thing had been set up years before - Thatcher had them digging coal like it was going out of fashion and then when the miners struck they had nothing to bargain with. Scargill caused the downfall of the union and paved the way for the rest of the union "bashing". He set back the trade union movement by many years.
***Phil Bower, Sydney Australia***

People forget just how close we came to winning that Strike. The Electricity Board had only planned for a six month strike, and by October 1984 there was a serious risk of power cuts. If troops had been used to move the coal, the power workers would have gone on strike immediately, the lights would have gone out and the fate of the government hung by a thread.
***Andrew Northall, Kettering, Northamptonshire***

I was 16 years old and a Labour Party member in a Nottinghamshire constituency. Above all, I remember the shambles of Scargill's tactics that accelerated the tragedy that turned out to be the creation of the UDM. The Labour movement had no choice but to stand firm behind the NUM's members even though it was clear to everyone except Scargill that he couldn't defeat Thatcher that way.
***Robert Crosby, Nottingham, UK***

I was doing my degree at Kingston Poly at the time. I wore my Coal not Dole sticker with pride, we gave food that would be sent to striking miners, and also held collections. I cannot imagine how awful it was for the striking miners and their families. A very sad part of history, and I hope that Thatcher still feels guilty about the hardship she caused!!
***Mike Stone, Reading, Berkshire***

I was a police officer throughout the Strike and I felt then, and still do feel, great sympathy for the miners However, their one enormous handicap was Arthur Scargill.If the miners had possessed a leader capable of speaking with reason and common sense, rather than indulging in stupid ranting, they would probably have kept the hearts and minds of the British people and won!
***Robin Saltonstall, Beverley. England***

A German colleague recently told me that his father, a coal miner in the Ruhrgebiet had often said it would have been cheaper for the German government to pay him to stay at home rather than work in the coal mines. The idea that Germany's coal (or Poland's or Australia's) was cheaper than Britain's was just another Thatcher falsehood.
***John, Munich, Germany***

My grandad and my father worked for the Coal Board. My father was affected by the 84-85 strike. Even though I now live in California, and last year I took American citizenship, I will always be proud that I come from a British mining family. Margaret Thatcher and the Tories should know that, although they tried their best, they did not defeat the working class spirit in us all. God bless the miners!
***Keith March, Citrus Heights, CA, USA***

A friend of mine relates the following: He had went in a mini bus to picket at an Ayrshire coalmine. On the way there, the minibus got hit by a stone from the road that shattered the windscreen Result: The media showed pictures of the shattered screen as an attack by pickets on a bus! Makes you think about the camera never lying and just who was setting the agenda in those days.
***Bruce, Ayr, Scotland***

As a fire fighter at the time, I remember the fire station being available to help the pickets in providing toilet facilities, refreshments as well as moral support for the miners. It was so sad to meet Police officers at incidents gloating over the miners' plight and bragging about the extra over time payments they were receiving. How the striking miners and their families coped I never know. Right or wrong ,they really fought with their families and communities long term interests.
***Gary Williams, Swansea***

I graduated in 1979 and approved of the Thatcher government for the first year or so. By 1984 my sympathies were completely reversed, and whatever the faults of the NUM I'm convinced the state was umpteen times worse. It isn't any better nowadays.
***Phil, UK***

I seem to recall the miners dispute wasn't just about the closure of the pits! As a 20 year old living in south Durham, the miners strike was very visible, but to me it was a battle to determine who ran the country, the trade unions or the government. The hard left wanted to use it as a means to defeat Thatcher and capitalism, but she had seen them coming and was able to defeat them. Shortly after this the Labour Party started to move to reform itself.
***Phil King, Market Harborough***

It's amazing how many of the contributors are about my age. I am too young to have many memories of the strike (I was 4 years old). However it has helped form my views. My Dad was of Tory persuasions, my Mother staunchly Labour. Whatever the wrongs the strikers did (the death of the Welsh taxi driver foremost, that was shameful), the over riding principle was right, and I despise the Tories for the way they have crushed all the life from trade and workers' unions; unions are now ridden over roughshod as a matter of course, never consulted, and given no respect whatsoever as the Government, and local councils, know they can get away with anything against workers' unions. What a reflection on all our countrymen who repeatedly voted Tory knowing what Thatcher had done to the miners and their dependants.
***Dan, Felixstowe***

I was working in the print in Fleet Street at the time and was an active Trade Unionist. We had collections each week among the members, raising thousands to support the miners. It was the most political strike of the century and the result was decisive: once the miners had gone done whoever was left, like us printers, were easy pickings. I admired and respected the miners, and still do, but I'm not sure I'd be on the same side now.
***Martin Smith, London, England***

At the time of the miners' strike I was living in the heartland of the UDM and working for Tarmac. We would drive to work in the darkness through police road blocks, where we would have our accent checked to see if we were local. We would also run the gauntlet of thugs in vans who would try to stop and beat up anyone around early in the morning in case they were UDM members. Several times our quarry was picketed even though we had nothing to do with coal whatsoever. Cars were vandalised and visitors assaulted, male or female. I still feel that the police did a commendable job protecting ordinary people from the NUM and their bully boys.
***Joe Pendlebury, Hayling Island, England***

I've lived in London now for eight years but I come from Newcastle, and all of my family were miners in Northumberland. In fact one cousin still is. I remember very bitter demonstrations every Saturday in Newcastle while there were so many people shopping. The atmosphere was really awful. Whatever the political issues may have been, it's sure many thousands of people suffered as a result of a conflict of intolerance. I still regret what happened and feel that negotiation was the only solution. It should be so in future disputes.
***Carl Wade, London***

Vividly remember being nearly eaten out of house and home by flying pickets from Doncaster, who stopped with us in our small terrace house in Sneinton, Nottingham. Also remember the unsolicited gifts of food and money that arrived on the doorstep, along with the police intimidation!
***Ian, Nottingham***

I was 19-20 at the time living in short-life housing in SE London. The miners' strike galvanised my left wing political leanings. I remember going to fund-raising events in London and marching in support of the miners. There was a great feeling that we could build a better, more egalitarian world.
***Kate Bacon, Hove, UK***

As a seven year old at the time and a miner's son, the miners strike shaped the man I would become. My politics, beliefs and values were all formed during this year. The one thing which struck me was the sense of community amongst the pit towns. The families clothed and fed each other. I can't remember any time since when people have cared so much about each others welfare.
***Mark, Chesterfield***

I bought a motorbike advertised in MCN located in South Yorks. The seller was a striking miner whose house was stripped of all possessions (and his wife had left him) except for two motorbikes. The one he was keeping was an "Easy Rider" style Triumph in the middle of his living room. The moment he fired it up transformed my impression of the striking miners. Here was a man who had lost everything yet kept his dignity. Needless to say I bought the other bike for the asking price!
***Simon Royle, Leicester in 84***

I was working for British Coal at that time. Our pit Wath Colliery, part of the Manvers Complex was on strike for 13 months without a penny piece coming into the house. I had two toddlers and it was really hard to survive. I did have some savings at that time and they all went after about 9 months of not working and no pay. The wife went out to work for the last three months of the strike while I stayed at home and looked after our two toddlers. After it was all over about one and a half years later, the pit closed and we were made redundant. I didn't work for 6 months as there wasn't anything so I decided to move to Blackpool and got a job in a hotel. Poor pay. However I managed to work my way up and I am now a middle manager in charge of all administration and finance. The job I enjoy, however it doesn't pay that well compared to when I worked for British Coal. It's a living - just!
***Jim McGuckin, Blackpool, England***

I was living in London and my first baby was a year old. I remember thinking how agonising it must be for the wives of the striking miners, trying to feed their children with no money coming in. Every Friday evening a miner would be at our local tube station collecting money and it was heartening to be able to contribute, and see so many others doing the same.
***Sheila, Devon, UK***

I became politically conscious during the 84 strike and was a schoolboy of 13 in deepest Tory Dorset. I wore 'coal not sole' stickers to school and took part in so many debates and discussions. Now I work for a trade union and have stood for Parliament for the Labour Party in local and general elections. I will always be proud of the stand that the brave strikers took during those dark days and their struggle for the livelihood and the future of a whole industry.
***Mark Wareham, Salisbury, UK***

I remember being about 5 or 6 years old. Originating from the North with very political parents, I was introduced to things like strikes at a very early age. I don't remember a great deal about it, other than standing with my parents on the picket line wearing a duffel coat and a 'Coal not Dole' sticker. As hazy as the memory is, I see it as a huge part of my life and my history.
***Corrina, Cheltenham***

The invention of the 'comb over' hairstyle - keenly modelled by Arthur Scargill. "The Scargill" is still very popular with balding men even 20 years later.
***James, Dorset, UK***

At the time of the miners' strike I was living in Newark, Notts but used to travel daily to Sheffield to work. Although, I was nothing to do with the strike or mining in general the amount of intimidation I suffered from the police on my daily commute up the A1 was absolutely unbelievable. A number of Met officers who were billeted in Newark at the time had to sent back to London because of the trouble they were causing around the town when off duty. I know this for a fact as my neighbour was a Sergeant at Newark police station.
***Andy, Salisbury, UK***

It is important to realise what was happening in 1984. This was not about pit closures - this was used by a small coterie of highly politicised trade union activists, with Scargill at the forefront, as an excuse for nothing less than an attempt to subvert the will of the democratically-elected government of the day, and ultimately to give organised labour a veto over the democratic process. That Thatcher and the Conservatives faced down this challenge, constitutes the greatest service done to the British people by any government in peacetime.
***Mark, London, UK***

My school was located next door to the NUM headquarters in Mansfield so my memories are of trying to dodge the stones and bricks that were being thrown during the protests at the creation of UDM. We were regularly kept inside during lunch and break times and sent home early for our own safety. It was quite puzzling as a child to see so many people with so much hatred for each other and I've never forgotten what it was like to live through it.
***Sarah, London***

Being 5 years of age at the time I didn't really understand the politics of the vivid events taking place all around me. My father, an electrician working in the Lancashire seams refused to cross the picket lines for what seemed like a very long time indeed (the full duration of the strike it transpired). Yet I remember trips organised by the unions to Blackpool to keep the morale up and endless rallies and speeches I was forced to endure in hot smoky rooms. Most poignantly, I remember my sister and I during the summer holidays, traipsing along to the local primary school every day clutching pink cards that entitled us to a free hot meal for the children of miners. The sense of community spirit, and resolute determination in the soup kitchens still raises the hairs on my arms.
***Mike Sharkey, Wigan, England***

I was 15 when the strike started and I can remember the hardship that the miners' families went through that year, even though my family didn't work in the industry then. I started work at the local benefits office the following year and had to deal with striking miners. It was a difficult thing to tell grown, proud men that they could not receive any state help - especially since I know many of them and their families
***Shaun Lawrence, Wombwell, UK***

I was a member of N.U.P.E. and at the start of my trade union activity. I remember giving to collection buckets every week so that that the miners could have some food. I also remember seeing Thatcher on the television gloating over what was happening to families in pit villages. I can honestly say I do not regret giving any of my wages to the miners or voting at a N.U,P,E. conference for my union to make donations to the N.U.M. What is a disgrace is the fact that there are miners who have never worked since that strike because they are on some black list.
***Mike Ellis, Verwood, England***

I was a paper boy in a mining village at the time of the strike. I got up at 6 every morning and still saw nothing. Watching the evening news it was hard to believe what was going on in my own village. We now have constant reminders in every mining village, The two halves of the pit wheel placed at either end of the village, never to be reconciled, much like the community...
***Fraser Irving, Sheffield, UK***

I came from a mining family and I was aged nine about the time of the strike. I remember having to move in with my grandparents and our family home being sold. My mother became the only bread winner of the family. The period mainly sticks in my mind because that was the first time I ever saw my father cry. The reason being he felt such a failure in not being able to provide for his family because of his loyalty to the cause.
***Dean, Burton on Trent, UK***

I was a student nurse in Sheffield in 1984 and I recall miners from the nearby collieries collecting funds outside the hospital. I had come from a middle class very conservative background (both big c and little c) and was very naive. As the months went by I became increasingly shocked at what was happening to these dignified people and their communities and the brutal tactics of Thatcher and her government. As a result I have not supported the Tories since and cannot envisage ever doing so.
***Anon, UK***

My grandfather was a miner for 30 years in South Wales and died of coal lung in 1972. He made sure that his two sons, the eldest of whom is my father, did not follow him down the pits. My father moved to London and became a journalist, but I still remember the sheer anguish, pain and anger that he felt over the miners' strike. I was 16 when the strike finally ended and I will always remember the bitterness in my father's eyes when he heard the news as well as the sheer disgust at Scargill's rotten tactics. My father was genuinely torn between moral support for the miners whom he'd grown up with and outrage at Scargill's refusal to call a national ballot.
***Marc Jones, London***

I was 16 at the time, living close to the pit village at Keresley Colliery, Warwickshire. I went out collecting with buckets in the local towns, and was staggered by the support we received - pensioners putting in tenners, people turning out their pockets. The women in the village did so much, they were incredible. They set up soup kitchens, held parties for the children, and the whole community pulled together like never before or since. Bitter memories perhaps, but also a great deal of pride. The colliery eventually closed.
***Samantha Jones, Cardiff, UK***

I was a young boy during the strike. My stepfather stayed on strike for the whole period. My best friend's dad, who lived opposite, couldn't afford to and had to go to work. This resulted in an awful enmity between the 2 which lasted for about 10 years before they finally made up. This in turn affected myself and my best friend. So my memories of the period are all bad. It just bought about suffering on both sides of the fence. Either through self-enforced poverty or violent abuse from workmates of 20 years or more.
***Ben, England***

As a young child some of my earliest memories are of my Dad, who was a policeman, packing his bags and spending long periods of time away from home during the strike. I can still remember the bright white toy lorry he brought home with him one weekend. It must have been hard on my mother but as I understand now, the overtime was a lifesaver for a newly married couple bringing up 2 young children.
***Phill Jones,***

Back in 84 my dad was a miner at Hatfield Main nr Stainforth and lived in Moorends. I was in the army stationed in Aldershot. I knew times were hard for my parents and travelled north to Moorends with my car packed with food for them. I remember being quite shocked when my old school chum Brian accused the Army of dressing up in police uniforms and helping the police on the picket lines, which was totally untrue.
***Martin Rushton, Southampton, Hampshire***

I had been a miner at Hatfield colliery since 1979. Now it was March 1984 and I had to go home and tell my wife Michele that we were on strike. Michele was 12 weeks pregnant but I said, "never mind love, we'll be back before the baby's born". Little did I know at the time that our daughter would be 6 months old before we returned to work!
***Peter Felters, Doncaster, England***

I was in the Herts police at the time of the miners' strike and I retired in 1995. I can still remember every day that I spent during the year on the picket lines. We mixed very well with working miners, or scabs as they were known. We were given tours underground and until you have walked a mile in their shoes, you cannot begin to understand the reasons they went on strike.
***Michael Hunter, Kissimmee, Florida USA***

I remember the strike as if it were yesterday, and the good times and bad times. We had the stigma of having people at our pit - you know the ones who were backed by moneymen and the Conservative government to defeat the NUM. But I also remember the good times, the comradeship of the members of Manton NUM, the standing together and the support from farmers around the area, who gave veg and fruit for the food parcels. The people of London who supported us in the collection of food and clothes. The Liverpool police who handed out rations to the pickets, because they did not agree with being there.
***John Scott, Worksop, Notts***

I remember big strong fit men of our village knocking doors asking for tins of beans. It still brings a tear to my eye remembering how the proud heroes of our village were reduced to begging. I remember how I had free school dinners all the way through the school holidays and thinking that things weren't that bad after all.
***Steffan Macmillan, London***

I was a serving police officer in the 'Elite' P.S.U. number 1. (Police Support Unit.) We were all local South Yorkshire policemen who lived amongst the mining community. It was terrible. Some officers and their families had to be rehoused because of the violence. I lived and worked near to Cortonwood colliery. I was fortunate and I continued to visit my local pub and drink with striking miners. They knew that I was only doing my job and they bore no animosity. I occasionally return to England and see my old mining friends and we have a pint or two together but after twenty years the bitterness is still in their hearts. I believe it will remain until the last miner is dead. Along with my colleagues, we did all that was asked of us but we really didn't agree with it.
***Paul, Japan***

During the miners' strike I worked in many coal mining towns as a building foreman for Kwik Save. Whilst working in Byker, Newcastle, I came across a man scavenging for scrap in one of our disposal bins. He looked worried, he explained he was a striking miner and asked if it was alright if he could take any scrap. I took him inside the site and said he could take a 4 foot high pile of scrapped electrical wire. He returned with a friend and they loaded up their cars with the scrap and drove away. An hour later both returned escorted by a very tall gentleman who introduced himself as a police officer. The police officer asked if I had given the miners' permission to take the scrap. I said I had, I then had to get my building manager on the phone to inform the police officer that I had the authority to dispose of the scrap. Next day the miners came back to thank me, it was the first time is eight months they were able to have a night out with their wives.
***Gwynfryn Williams, Perth, Australia***

Living in Seaham at the time, every family was affected one way or another. The Knack, Vane Tempest, Dawdon and Murton all gone in such a short space of time. I remember the police, making duff balls to keep the fire burning, the night the pub got petrol bombed in Murton, families barely surviving and having to take handouts from the community hall, but if one thing can be said, there may be no pits left in East Durham thanks to Thatcher and her cheap coal imports but those people who I knew, who were affected directly by the strike have all risen above from what at the time was a nightmare and getting through such times makes you a stonger individual and that's something Ma Thatcher CANNOT take from anyone.
***Kelly Nicola Baker, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates***

I remember as a child running around the playground and seeing the police riot vans going from Barnsley into Goldthorpe. My southern friends are shocked when I tell them about my uncle, who still to this day won't talk to his best friend from school who became a 'scab', he only went back to work 2 weeks before the end of the strike!
***Richard, Brighton, England***

I was working in London at the time of the miners' strike. Once a fortnight I would go the NUM office and pick up copies of "The Miner", the NUM's newspaper, for distribution from the stall of our miners' support group. The stall, collected several thousands of pounds, food and good wishes, for the miners. This was a magnificent achievement since it was in a "true blue" Conservative town. The strike ended in defeat, but not a strategic one for the NUM. The main lesson for me was that ordinary people, when they get together, can organise and manage their own lives.
***Stuart Whatley, Oslo, Norway***

During the miners' strike we were active members of the Labour party in Southampton. We had groups of miners come to picket at the refinery in Fawley. We lodged several during the duration and collected food and cash to send back to the families. After the strike we were invited to the town in South Wales for the weekend and a coach full went. We had a great weekend with them. They opened their arms, houses and miners' club to us. The saddest thing however was the number of houses empty and up for sale as there was not any work for them locally.
***Elaine, Canada, ex pat***

As a police officer I was there at Orgreave, Hatfield Main and the Notts mines. We were working long hours and a majority of us received a lot of wages in overtime and expenses. Some officers brought cars, holidays and even paid off mortgages with their boosted wages but it was hard and sometimes frightening. Anybody who was there and says they were not scared is not telling the truth.
***Alan Porter, Deland, Florida***

I am a serving police officer who worked in Nottinghamshire throughout the strike of 1984. I also had a grandfather and uncle killed in pit falls years before so I knew what mining was all about. I have numerous memories of that time both good and bad. Even now the community where I live and work feels the consequences of those terrible days. I hope and pray that the country never sees the like of them again.
***Hedley Pickering, Mansfield***

I was in pits during time of strike. I work as a nurse now. I am a published poet with a new book out soon. I have also created a DVD Rom Disk of poems, images, songs, stories all relating to my time in the pits and a series of sonnets relating directly to the strike.
***Rab Wilson, Sanquhar, Dumfriesshire, Scotland***