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National Women Against Pit Closures: gender, trade unionism and community activism

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Abstract: This article will offer the first historical assessment of the National Women Against Pit Closures movement. It shows that it was not a spontaneous formation but the result of work by a network of committed, long-time activists with strong connections to the left, including the Communist Party and the Women's Liberation Movement. It will show how key questions caused divisions within the national organisation as it grew. In particular, activists were divided over whether the movement should aim solely to support the strike, or whether it should have broader aims relating to women's lives, gender and feminism. Related to this, the movement divided over relationships with Arthur Scargill and the National Union of Mineworkers, and the question of which women should be allowed to be members. Finally, the article examines how these questions grew more pressing after the end of the strike, and how and why the national movement had largely disappeared three years after the strike.

Keywords: women, activism, social movements, mining, trade unionism

Introduction*

The miners' strike began on 6 March 1984, provoked by the NCB's (National Coal Board) announcement of the imminent closure of pits whose coal reserves were not exhausted (though before 6 March, many pits were already undertaking unofficial action). Quickly, many pits struck in solidarity with those facing closure; Yorkshire and Scotland area National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) were soon all out, and on 12 March NUM President Arthur Scargill called for action in all coalfields in solidarity with those areas already on strike.[i] From just a few days into the strike, support groups sprang up in coalfield areas. These were generally made up predominantly or only of women.[ii] Their main activities were the organisation of communal feeding, food parcels and vouchers and money for food and other essentials. They received very little money from the NUM (some received small start-up donations), and raised their own funds through events, street collections, and asking for donations. Some also picketed (though not all: some did not want to, and some men refused to let their wives go on picket lines).[iii] Women marched to show their support for the strike, and some travelled in Britain and abroad, to give speeches to publicise the struggle and raise money. There was a huge effort to document their activities by those involved at the time and shortly after the strike: this was one of the striking things about the movement. Poetry, writing, oral accounts and images went into books and pamphlets recording the women's activism.[iv] Over the course of the year, a National

WAPC movement (NWAPC) developed to link local groups and regional networks together, and to act as a central point for donations. Local group's fundraising capacities varied,[v] and NWAPC could distribute large donations such as the Miners' Families Christmas Appeal, launched on 24 November 1984 by Hilary Wainwright, Paul Foot and other London supporters, which raised £400,000.[vi]

Though there is important work on the support movement outside the coalfields,[vii] and though WAPC won much publicity during the strike (and afterwards), historians have done little work yet to understand the national movement, its organisation, personnel, ideology, and relationships with the NUM and with individual women's support groups around the country.[viii] In this article, we seek to give a more comprehensive account of the National WAPC movement (there is more work to be done on the variety of local groups); the focus is, therefore, largely on the women around the Barnsley women's support groups that formed, and the relatively small number of women who were at the forefront of this national organisation. We suggest that the image of the NWAPC organisation as a group of politically naïve miners' wives was carefully constructed for political reasons; that the level of involvement of Arthur Scargill has been underplayed; and that the organisation was split by contradictions that reflected the different visions of socialism that the old and new left were competing over in the 1980s. A fundamental contradiction in the movement was over its purpose: was it simply to support the strike or a vehicle for a broader, transformative socialist-feminist politics?

The women's support movement attracted much popular comment at the time. In journalistic accounts, the movement was often depicted as unprecedented, spontaneous, huge in scale and transformative for gender roles. The classic example is Jean Stead's 1986 account: Stead argued that the women's movement represented an authentic working-class feminism, and wrote that 'the miners' wives' response … was spontaneous, and quickly grew in strength to such a degree that the miners would have found it hard to give up their strike even if they had wanted to'.[ix] Martin Adeney and John Lloyd's journalistic study of the strike, also published in 1986, painted a similar picture: they argued that the movement had made more women 'politically aware' (though they also pointed out the small numbers of women involved in regular activism).[x] Few accounts in the mid-1980s paid much, if any, attention to the details of the formation of the National WAPC movement. Later studies and journalistic accounts have tended to broadly reproduce this narrative.[xi] Beckett and Hencke's 2009 book, for example, says simply that Anne Scargill was the 'inspiration' for the whole WAPC movement.[xii] Jim Phillips' study of the miners' strike in Scotland introduces some useful correctives into the narrative regarding women's role, in particular showing that many women activists were already political, and that women's activities varied a good deal.[xiii] He also emphasises that gender roles had been at least *partly* 'reconstructed' in Scotland by 1984, particularly because of the demise of the pit village and increasing work for women.[xiv] But given his focus is Scotland, he has little to say about the development of NWAPC. Ben Curtis's account of South Wales miners touches on the women's support movement but focuses mainly on describing the women's activities, and suggesting

that many felt that their activism had been transformative for their sense of self. Many of these accounts also stress the fact that in many areas, the women had to struggle to be recognised as useful and independent by the NUM.[xv] Much of the debate about WAPC, at the time and in later accounts, has centred on whether the movement should be seen as constituting an authentic working-class feminist uprising.[xvi] This question is important but not the focus of this article. Instead, we want to give an account of the development of the national movement which places it in relation to trade unionism, the NUM, socialist/left politics and ideas about community – as well as feminism.

Origins and ideological motivations

Despite the common perception, it is not true to suggest that the women's support movement was without precedent. The earliest women's groups to form generally built on or reactivated groups of women who had worked together as activists previously. For example, in Kent, some women had been active in the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes, when they were called Aylesham Ladies Action Group, and now reconvened to think about how to support the new strike.[xvii] In Nottinghamshire, activist Rita Abbott said that 'the work of 1984/5 was a follow-on of what we did' in 1972 and 1974.[xviii] In Chesterfield, a group of women who had known each other through the NUM's longrunning Easter weekend course for students on day release courses, and who campaigned for Tony Benn in the by-election earlier that year formed Chesterfield Women's Action Group about a week *before* the strike.[xix] In Easington, the longstanding group Save Easington Area Mines (SEAM) stepped up its efforts.[xx] The formation of a national support movement stemmed in large part from the efforts of one of these local groups, Barnsley Woman Against Pit Closures; it was the result of canny campaigning and organising by a group of highly political women, many of whom were committed socialists, communists and/or feminists. This group, however, was not a 'typical' support group (though given the variety and diversity of local support groups, it is hard to say precisely what such a 'typical' group would look like). It is therefore necessary to understand the formation, personnel and ideologies of the Barnsley WAPC group in order to understand the national movement.

Socialist-feminist women around the NUM had been thinking explicitly about the position of women in mining communities for several years in the lead up to the strike. This thinking was partly informed by the fact that the NUM as a whole wanted to be ready for the big strike that most thought was likely to occur. So, in August 1983, Nell Myers, a journalist on the NUM paper *The Miner*, and Arthur Scargill's personal assistant, wrote a memo on 'Family and Community Involvement in the fight to save and expand the coal industry'. This explicitly addressed the issue of women, noting that in recent years the NUM had had to face the difficult fact that there was 'diminishing of "traditional support" for the Union from the mineworker's most immediate source of physical and emotional nourishment: the family'. In the campaign that led up to the strike ballot in 1982 (Arthur Scargill argued forcefully

for a strike but lost), miners' wives in some areas, like Nottinghamshire, had 'captured media space … with their own campaign against the NUM'.[xxi]

Another key figure who had been thinking about the possible role of women in any strike was Jean McCrindle. McCrindle was a lecturer at the adult education institution Northern College in Barnsley, which had close links to trade unions including the NUM, and an activist who had been nationally known on the left scene since the 1950s – she had been engaged to Raphael Samuel, and campaigned politically on behalf of E.P. Thompson and Lawrence Daly, among others. She had been involved in organising political education for working-class women for many years, first as a WEA tutor, organising miners' wives near St Andrews at the start of her career, right through to her work at Northern College.[xxii] In March 1983, McCrindle explicitly addressed issues about women in any forthcoming strike in a letter to Arthur Scargill (whom she knew well through Northern College):

> I should like to take up the question of women in mining communities who may have an effect on their husband's decisions not to risk strike action. We do not honestly know if this is the case, perhaps we can find out if we did a proper survey. There have been a few of the men, particularly who have been in contact with Northern College who think that the women do have to be included in the Union's overall publicity material since they cannot be relied on automatically to support their husband's decisions […] I know you may think this is insignificant but maybe it does have some bearing on the problems the Union now face.[xxiii]

McCrindle and others did survey women in some villages in the north Derbyshire coalfield in January 1984. The sample was too small to elicit statistically significant results, but the survey seemed to point to a population of women who were not particularly politically engaged and if anything hostile to the NUM. In her diary McCrindle wrote that many displayed 'outright anger' towards Arthur Scargill.[xxiv] It was by no means certain that a major movement of women would spring up in support of a miners' strike.

Given the longstanding interest of women like McCrindle in the role women might play in any strike, it is not surprising that many were keen to encourage the development of a support movement. The Barnsley WAPC group was formed a few days into the strike. Some of the women involved saw news reports on 10 March of women demonstrating against Arthur Scargill and against the strike in the Durham coalfield. They wrote a letter to the local newspaper, the *Barnsley Chronicle*, emphasising that if women did not come out in support of the strike, the jobs that their husbands and sons – and indeed, their whole community – depended on would be under threat.[xxv] At this point they had not yet settled on the name WAPC but they started to get publicity for their cause. Many were galvanized in their activism by a TV debate between wives in favour of and against the strike, shown on 14 March;[xxvi] indeed, anger at the coverage that Nottinghamshire women opposed to the strike were getting was a common impetus for activism.[xxvii] The fact that Margaret Thatcher repeatedly referenced the support of some high-profile wives for ending the strike was likely to further strengthen the

resolve of those involved.[xxviii] Following on from the letter to the *Barnsley Chronicle*, a group of women met privately and then, on 18 March, held their first public meeting. Over 100 people attended, and the attendees were encouraged to set up local groups in individual villages; the Barnsley group became both a support group for local Barnsley families, as well as a central hub to receive and distribute donations for groups in the area. At one point, 16 groups from the region were sending delegates to the Barnsley group's meetings. A rotating secretary and chair were elected, and Jean McCrindle was elected treasurer.[xxix]

The Barnsley NUM assumed that the group would be a relatively 'traditional wifely' activist group.[xxx] But the Barnsley group settled in the end on WAPC, aware of the feminist connotations of 'Women Against'. As Jean Miller, a member of the group, explained:

> It took us three or four meetings to decide what to call the group. We did not see ourselves as a miners' wives or women's support group. We wanted any woman who was supporting the dispute, who was in favour of what the NUM was fighting for, to be involved, so we called it 'Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures.[xxxi]

Other groups in different localities, though, chose a whole variety of names, many including terms like 'Wives' or 'Ladies', which had more conservative, connotations.[xxxii] Right from the start, then, some in Barnsley WAPC had a distinctly feminist take on their activism, and refused to fall obediently into line with the local NUM leadership's expectations.

McCrindle was a particularly important member of the Barnsley group. Through her contacts with the metropolitan WLM, she won the women's movement much support from feminists. She organised reciprocal trips between Barnsley women and London women; it was through her, for example, that well-known feminists such as Sally Alexander, Sheila Rowbotham and Lynne Segal got involved in supporting the strike, and made trips up to South Yorkshire.[xxxiii] Like McCrindle, many of the women involved in the nascent Barnsley WAPC group had connections to Northern College. Many were highly politicised, and several were members of the Communist Party (CP), including Lorraine Bowler (a student at Northern College), Jean Miller and Joan Davidson (a receptionist at Northern College).[xxxiv] Other prominent members of the national movement, including Betty Heathfield, wife of Peter Heathfield, general secretary of the NUM, and prominent in north Derbyshire WAPC, were also CP members.[xxxv] Anne Scargill, wife of Arthur, was also involved from early on in Barnsley WAPC. Many of these women may indeed have been in some senses 'ordinary miners' wives', but they were also emphatically not the political innocents which they would deliberately portray themselves as.

Development of the movement

In the first weeks of the strike, women in all the coalfields started to set up local groups, and various women began to think about local and regional links. Women involved in early groups travelled to nearby areas to encourage the formation of new groups and share information; in the first weeks of the

strike, for example, Betty Heathfield visited NUM strike centres in Derbyshire with Margaret Vallins and helped to set up women's groups.[xxxvi] Women got in touch with people they knew elsewhere in the country to share information and ideas. Newsletters were set up to boost morale and share ideas, like *Here we go!*, the bulletin of the Nottinghamshire women's support groups.[xxxvii]

Many accounts emphasize the companionship and solidarity of women, but there were also, perhaps inevitably, tensions. Sometimes these were over personality clashes; one women resigned from the Action Group in Brampton due to arguments between members.[xxxviii] Sometimes tensions arose from fractious communities; a member of Askern Women's Support Group noted in a 1986 interview that 'it's supposed to have fetched communities closer together, but no I don't think it has'; many women in the village wanted their husbands to return to work, and many couldn't believe that the women in the support group were doing all the work and not 'getting something out of it'.[xxxix] And sometimes tensions arose from fundamental disagreements between group members over whether the women's support movement was about winning the strike or had bigger goals. Interviewed in 2014, Kath Mackey of Sheffield WAPC noted a clear divide between the mining women and the 'political' women in the group over this question. Mackey suggested that political women at first were keen to take mining women to demonstrations on other issues, and that the political women were trying to push the mining women into supporting a broader political agenda that they were not ready for.[xl] In the case described by Mackey, and indeed more generally, cultural differences between working-class and middle-class could be a source of real tension. These often played out around issues of food, dress and sexuality and could cause misunderstanding and miscommunications between coalfield women and feminists from outside support groups.[xli] Any national organisation would have to link together local groups often divided on several axes.

From the ad-hoc and informal structures that had started to link together support groups at a regional level it began to seem logical to many that a national organisation should be put in place.[xlii] Some women argued for a national demonstration, to prove that the women of the coalfields in the main supported the strike. Women in the Barnsley group, due to their close proximity to NUM headquarters in Sheffield, their personal links to key NUM personnel and their potentially useful links to left activists and feminist activists across the country, were in an ideal position to put these ideas into action. The links of the Barnsley group, and many of the women at the top of NWAPC, to the NUM would become a source of problems, however.[xliii] Right from the start of the women's support movement, there were tensions between some groups and the NUM. Some NUM officials were supportive, and some accounts mention easily securing help from local NUM branches.[xliv] In other areas, however, the NUM could be hostile to women taking independent action in support of the strike. In 1972 and 1974, in some cases, the NUM had gone so far as trying to break up the meetings of women's support groups.[xlv] In 1984 there was hostility again. In South Wales disputes arose between area officials (who controlled a lot of funding), and some of the women's support groups. As

Sian James later recalled, some women made an overt show of devotion to Arthur Scargill in order to subvert these officials' authority:

> I suppose they didn't hate us … but they didn't like us supporting Scargill, there was sort of like Scargill worship! We called ourselves "Scargill's angels" and we thought this was hysterical because we knew this was getting up everyone's noses, it was sort of like a pun on Charlies' Angels. We played it up something rotten![xlvi]

In Nottinghamshire, since the majority were not on strike, relations with the NUM were particularly strained and women often had to lobby or even stage sit-ins in order to gain the use of local village halls or miners' welfare halls.[xlvii] As the support movement developed from an array of local and regional groups and networks into a formal, national organisation this would be a continuing source of problems.

This was particularly the case because the NUM was profoundly divided itself, and different parts of the women's movement were more or less identified with different tendencies and factions within the NUM. One longstanding issue within the NUM was that of centralised control. From its origins as the Miners' Federation of Great Britain the union had a long tradition of the autonomy of areas, and Scargill was seen to have gone against this, for example, by moving the NUM headquarters to his power base in Sheffield. This made some Area NUM leaders unhappy. There was also the longstanding division between left and right, with some Areas, like Nottingham, less militant. During the 1984-5 strike, two specific questions divided the NUM: whether a national strike ballot should be held (Scargill was against this), and whether Scargill's preferred strategy, a quasi-military and syndicalist one of mass and flying pickets, was the right way to pursue the strike.

These divisions within the NUM overlapped with divisions arising from the presence of the far left within the NUM. The CP was highly significant here. It was, in the mid-1980s, already deeply immersed in the battle which would eventually tear it apart, between traditionalists, grouped around the newspaper the *Morning Star*, and the Eurocommunists, with their influential magazine *Marxism Today*. The former wanted a traditional, class war-based politics, and supported a mass picketing approach to the strike. The latter wanted to revise Communist policy and called for a 'popular front' approach uniting women, blacks, and other oppressed groups alongside the working class, in the strike.[xlviii] The CP leadership, and particularly Mick McGahey, lifelong CP member and president of the Scottish Area, kept the CP broadly united behind the Scargillite approach for the first two months.[xlix] But Eurocommunists within the NUM were trying to isolate and topple Scargill from just a few months into the strike.[l] The CP was well-represented in certain NUM areas, particularly Kent, Scotland, and South Wales, where it had a long 'symbiosis' and remained important even in the 1980s, promoting the Eurocommunist 'popular front' strategy.[li] In addition, the SWP, Militant, and the WRP, all tiny parties, played a role in organising in support of a Scargillite, class-war approach to the strike.[lii] The presence of many factions and groupings within the NUM would be significant for

WAPC as Scargill increasingly perceived them as an organisation that would shore up his own power based within the increasingly factionalised NUM: Scargill's Angels indeed.Barnsley WAPC was instrumental in setting up the well-known Barnsley Rally held on 12 May 1984. Over 10,000-12,000 women from support groups across the country arrived – success not imagined in the wildest dreams of the organisers. The only men allowed to march were NUM leaders Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey. Girl drum majorettes led the procession of women and men helped to steward. The march finished with a rally in Barnsley Town Hall. There was rapturous applause for Arthur Scargill, but the star turn by many was considered to be Lorraine Bowler's speech:

> This fight does not just belong to the men, but 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 is a strike … we cannot allow this government to decimate our industry and our communities …
>
> At the beginning of this strike, women from Barnsley group wanted to go picketing (crowd roars 'yeah'). We were told that it were a bad enough job organising the men! (laughter). All I can say is, we dunt need any organising (inaudible amongst cheers). I still want to say that we have got great support now from the men, support that has gradually grown over t' weeks. Receptions we receive on picket lines and demonstrations is absolutely fantastic. I'm sure that for most o' women here today, it's the same in their homes as it has been in mine over the past few weeks … I mean there are arguments in my house now as to who's going to go on a picket line and a demonstration, and who's going to babysit! (laughter) …
>
> We aren't in this country just separated as a class. We are separated, separated as men and as women. We as women have not often been encouraged to be actively involved in trade unions and organisation. It's always been an area that's seemed to belong to men. We're seen to be the domesticated element to the family … I have seen change coming for years and the last weeks has seen it as its best. If this government think its fight is only with the miners, they are sadly mistaken. They are now fighting men, women and families.[liii]

Bowler suggested that the women had faced some opposition from the men, but that this was being overcome, and that the strike thus represented a shift in relations between the sexes, such that they would be less 'separated as men and women' in future. Striking in Bowler's speech was the foregrounding of her own ordinariness with talk of her own domestic life; she gave no hint of her (in reality extensive) political experience, or membership of the CP. Indeed, the connections of the Barnsley group and WAPC more broadly with the CP were consistently and deliberately obscured in the movement's media strategy. In a draft of an article recalling the strike, written for *Feminist Review* in 1986 by Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham, McCrindle crossed out all the sections making reference to the connections of the women in the group to the CP.[liv] Betty Cook, a prominent

member of WAPC, described herself as 'a lowly housewife and mother' before the strike, and there was a widely-circulated story about Cook being unwilling to speak in public and having to be called up on stage. In fact, Cook was a longstanding Labour Party activist and had participated in many other campaigns before the strike.[lv] Of course, it made strategic sense in a media environment that was very hostile to the CP, and in a Cold War context, to downplay these connections. It made for a better story to have political naifs coming to consciousness overnight, and the image of the strike as empowering working-class women was particularly likely to appeal to metropolitan feminists who might dislike the NUM as a patriarchal institution.[lvi]

The extent to which many of these women sought to legitimise their political activities through a rhetorical strategy of 'ordinariness' (constructed as non-political), is striking. The 'authentic' working-class woman was supposed to be non-political, in contrast to male strikers and supporters. The 'working class', a category often implicitly gendered as male, for example, by some trade unions, had room for political activism.[lvii] But for working-class *women* to gain legitimacy, they had to disavow an explicitly political identity. As Carol Stephenson and Jean Spence have argued, working-class women were often required to perform a model of domestic femininity in order to demonstrate proof of their authentic working-class identities.[lviii] They felt they benefitted from emphasising they were housewives and mothers, and highlighting their roles preparing food and care-giving in order to show they were deserving of aid. This was despite the fact that work outside the home had become increasingly common for married, particularly working-class, women since the 1950s.[lix] These dual incomes were what much of postwar consumerism and 'affluence' were built on.[lx] This was true even in many mining areas.[lxi]

Contemporary accounts emphasise the joyfulness and exuberance of the packed town hall:

> full of women shouting and singing – the men looked amazed at the sheer volume of power and feeling generated. It was great – a very moving experience…this was a turning point for women's support groups. For many women who had already been involved in the women's movement it was especially emotive and electric…For the first time the leadership of the NUM publicly welcome women on the picket line and recognised that women had a role to play…[lxii]

Jean McCrindle remembered in her diary that, '[t]he actual rally was indescribably exciting – electric, unconventional, joyful, exuberant – chanting, witty, ebullient.'[lxiii] These contemporaneous accounts suggest how powerful emotions could be in social protest. They worked as an important affective mechanism to bind the women groups together.[lxiv]

The success of the rally was a catalyst for the formation of a national movement. It proved there was both breadth and depth in the women's support movement, and gave Arthur Scargill a new view of the potential enthusiasm and positive publicity women could bring to the strike. In the aftermath of the rally two important things occurred that hastened the formation of a national movement. First,

Betty Heathfield set up a meeting between women's groups in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. She argued that a national co-ordinating committee and register of groups would be useful during the strike, and suggested that

> even when [the strike] was over, it would be a pity if all these contacts and activities were to disappear. The women's groups had released an enormous amount of creative energy in mining communities which could be sustained beyond the present crisis in our lives.[lxv]

Second, the leadership of the NUM became increasingly convinced that the women's movement could be an important weapon in the strike. This perception was further bolstered by Anne Scargill's arrest on the picket lines two days later at Silverhill in Nottinghamshire (Anne did not have a role in the NUM but was increasingly involved in the Barnsley WAPC group). Rather than being eviscerated in the press as so many male miners (and of course, her husband) were, instead she was feted for her pluck, down-to-earth manner, and – less politically correctly – her good looks. The *Daily Mirror* recorded that:

> with her blonde-streaked brown hair, her well-tailored trousers, her neat black sweater with its shining white shirt peeping over the collar, she hardly looked like an arch-criminal. Mrs Scargill, in fact, is a nice-looking woman. The sort you'd notice – and Arthur is lucky to have a gutsy wife like this.[lxvi]

The 'ordinariness' and respectability of women like Anne Scargill meant they garnered very different coverage to that of the NUM. Even papers less sympathetic to the strike than the *Mirror* provided positive coverage. For this reason, Arthur Scargill, alongside women from the support movement, now moved to set up an official umbrella national support movement – National Women Against Pit Closures – which would have a delegate structure closely tied to NUM structures. In a meeting on 25 June 1984, Betty Heathfield, Anne Scargill, Debbie Allen and Jean McCrindle met to discuss the plans for a new office for NWAPC at the NUM headquarters in Sheffield, and, according to McCrindle, discussed drafts of memos that Arthur Scargill had written:

> The development of Women's Support Groups during the course of the miners' dispute has been a phenomena (sic) probably without parallel in an industrial dispute.
>
> It has added a new dimension in the fight against pit closures. It has extended the appeal of the miners' cause and involved many other sections as a direct consequence of the activities of the Women's Support Groups …
>
> All of this shows the strength of the Groups but at the same time ironically emphasises its weaknesses. The most essential weakness is that fact that they are established on an ad hoc basis and have apparently no area or national co-ordination.
>
> If the Groups are to have a real and lasting impact, then it requires some formalised structure and this needs to be done immediately.[lxvii]

Arthur Scargill was, in fact, deeply involved in the running of NWAPC on a day-to-day level. He was present at meetings; he came up with ideas and strategies for the organisation; he knew several of the women extremely well on a personal basis (not least, of course, his wife). The purpose of having offices at the NUM in Sheffield was precisely so Arthur Scargill could be close to and monitor the organisation, with women only allowed in to the office if one of three 'trusted' women were also present.[lxviii] This is not to say that the women at the top of the organisation were the puppets of Arthur Scargill. They were as committed to winning the strike as him, and saw WAPC as a key means to do so. It does, however, complicate narratives of WAPC as a grassroots organisation of working-class women. The extent of his involvement with at least the national command of WAPC has barely been noted, and has only been made really clear by the opening of Jean McCrindle's archive in the LSE, and through her unpublished PhD. Unsurprisingly, this link to the NUM leadership was deeply controversial – for many in the NUM and many women in the support movement – given the desire of many women's groups to remain autonomous, and what a controversial figure Arthur Scargill was. The controversy he provoked was often bound up with the divisions in the NUM, outlined above, over strategy in the strike and the influence of far-left groups within the NUM.

As anti-Scargill sentiment grew in the late summer of 1984, and as criticisms of the way that the strike was being prosecuted by the NUM leadership proliferated, these divisions began to run ever deeper.[lxix] At this point, the question of how much power and influence certain Eurocommunist women would have within WAPC became highly controversial. As part of the move towards a national movement, an inaugural conference for WAPC was organised in July 1984 at Northern College by what McCrindle calls 'an inner circle' of women, constituted of herself, NUM press secretary Nell Myers, Betty Heathfield, Anne Scargill, Kathy Slater, Debbie Allen, and SERTUC (Southern & Eastern Region of the TUC) members Kate Bennett and Shelley Adams. Supposedly called to organise a national rally for WAPC in London in August, in reality the rally had already been largely organised by the time that the conference was held. According to McCrindle, whilst the conference social was occurring on the Saturday night, a few of the 'inner circle', in consultation with Peter Heathfield and Arthur Scargill, met to strategize. Scargill and Heathfield wanted to keep an eye on WAPC and in particular to ensure hard left anti-Scargillites in the Eurocommunist CP faction would be excluded from positions of influence within NWAPC.[lxx] Controversy arose the next day when it was suggested that all the women on the committee of NWAPC should be miners' wives. This was contested by some, particularly some CP members. Nevertheless, the motion passed, and it was, furthermore, agreed that Betty Heathfield and Anne Scargill should be on the newly-formed committee but without voting rights. Jean Miller and Kath Mackey, both in the CP and critical of Arthur Scargill, were both kept out by the new rule. Yet non-miners' wives were appointed quietly to the committee behind the scenes, without consultation: Jean McCrindle (treasurer of Barnsley WAPC and of NWAPC) and Kathy Slater (as national organiser).[lxxi] As McCrindle remembered, Arthur Scargill was determined to

have her as treasurer, both because of her extensive connection across the nationwide left, and because of their extremely close personal relationship, which allowed him privileged access to the life of the organisation.[lxxii] At this conference, a rule was also set out that 75% of delegates to National conferences must be related to miners; this would become another source of tension.[lxxiii] Decision-making structures within NWAPC were always slightly opaque, in part a result of the pressured situation in which it developed, in part a result of Arthur Scargill's behind-the-scenes influence. The lack of transparency was an inherent problem.

The rally held in London on 11 August further heightened the profile of NWAPC. Attended by about 15,000 people, it attracted groups from across the country and of course a wide section of the metropolitan left, given the location. McCrindle described it as being more 'traditional' and 'less spectacular' than the Barnsley rally, with many trade union style banners and far-left groups selling newspapers. Marchers donned 'black scarves, and arm bands and wore black flowers in memory of Davy Jones and Joe Green who had died on picket lines' and averted their eyes as they passed 10 Downing Street.[lxxiv] Women from the support movement in Kent recalled the rally and the work of NWAPC positively, suggesting that the national movement encouraged women to join in and brought them together.[lxxv]

It being the slow summer season, the march attracted widespread attention in the press. A petition to the queen was handed in: a brainchild of Arthur Scargill, this document highlighted the plight of the families and women in mining communities (and in fact had been doctored by him after he was unhappy with McCrindle's more overtly political version). The petition text highlighted the 'ordinariness' of the women in the movement:

> We, women of mining communities throughout Britain, are appealing to you directly … We are proud of the determination and courage of our men. We support them wholeheartedly. We have, over recent years, seen the horrors of mass unemployment cripple other industries; we have witnessed the slow death of communities dependent on them, and the tragedies that fall on families and individuals.[lxxvi]

The petition was, consciously or not, playing into a populist strategy, and was likely to irritate various left-wing women in WAPC, some of whom had republican and/or anti-establishment beliefs. Kitty Callan, wife of the then Durham Miners' Association General Secretary, circulated the petition around the Durham area groups. One woman in Co Durham, Florence Anderson, told researcher Meg Allen in 1999,

> Now what we didn't like Meg, one day in the kitchen Mrs Callan she's sent this letter out. One of the lads came through from the NUM with it … we had to sign a bloody petition to go to the Queen! The Queen! Well I got the petition and I tore it up and I said you can take that back to Durham because the Eppleton women are not signing no petition to no Queen, this is the establishment and we're not begging to no establishment. I tore it up and sent it back.[lxxvii]

The petition echoed much of the women's movement and strike propaganda in that it framed the

strike and support movement as being in defence of *community*. Designed to win support from a wide constituency, this language could be problematic for those with feminist politics, as Jean Spence and Carol Stephenson have argued.[lxxviii] Feminists in the movement saw this language as celebrating a reified version of mining communities where traditional gender roles reigned supreme. Many women in the support movement – probably the majority – did see the strike as a battle to retain their way of life. It should be emphasised that a view of mining families and communities in the 1980s as conforming to the deeply conservative stereotype set up in the 1956 sociological classic *Coal is our Life* (in which women stayed in the home and men reigned supreme) was wildly outdated.[lxxix] Nevertheless, some traditional and patriarchal values and traditions lived on, as charted in various studies of Yorkshire mining communities in the mid-1980s.[lxxx] Where some wanted the strike to be about defending traditional ways of life, though, others wanted the women's support movement to be about transforming and challenging those gender roles (this latter group were more often post-1968 feminist activists, often from outside the coalfields).

The dictatorial fashion in which the petition was sent to groups to be signed, without discussion, was controversial throughout the women's support movement.[lxxxi] Pat McIntyre described in her thesis on miners' support groups in Co. Durham the tensions that Callan sparked by circulating the petition. Many women refused to sign it, seeing it as patronizing and refusing to acknowledge the leadership of the national committee.[lxxxii] Here the dislike of Arthur Scargill seemed to stem less from a Eurocommunist disagreement with strategy and more from a dislike of the cult of personality around the NUM leader. It also stemmed from a dislike of being dictated to by South Yorkshire women. These women's influence was always disproportionate, even allowing for the fact that the Yorkshire area was the most populous of the coalfields. It was where the national movement began, and where its leading figureheads were based. These tensions were naturally exacerbated by the centralisation of the group's headquarters in Sheffield. Women in Co. Durham felt that the women's movement should have more autonomy and be driven by its grassroots members. Monica Shaw found that many grassroots members of the women's support movement found NWAPC to be a remote organization that struggled to effectively communicate with its members. One woman remembered:

> …it tends to be more in Yorkshire where it is. Betty Heathfield worked tremendously, but it's all centered around where it is. You don't hear anything, unless Jill (the delegate) reported back, but even when she comes back from there, there's nothing like substantial comes out of it. Everybody should get copies of the minutes and reports to see what's gone on.[lxxxiii]

Indeed one of the support groups Shaw examined never even bothered to join NWAPC.

NWAPC's next major event was a conference in Chesterfield (home town of the Heathfields) in November 1984. Attended by 39 delegates (36 of whom were miners' wives, in line with the 75% rule) plus 6 women who had been appointed *ex-officio* members of the committee (McCrindle, Slater,

Anne Scargill, Betty Heathfield and SERTUC members Shelley Adams and Kate Bennett), this was the first official delegate conference of NWAPC after July's inaugural conference, and was an attempt to thrash out the direction of the movement after the strike.[lxxxiv] McCrindle notes that there wasn't even any mention of the strike made in the documents and correspondence preceding the conference.[lxxxv] At the conference, the relationship with the NUM was a source, again, of controversy. Women who had strong links with NUM men generally supported close links. The Nottinghamshire women, led by Gwen McLeod, pointed out that this would be extremely difficult within a context where the majority of the union members were anti-strike. The idea also did not find favour with other groups who had had difficult relationships with the NUM, and wanted a more autonomous organisation.[lxxxvi] Women in the Midlands Women Against Pit Closures group resented the way the delegate structure for this conference mirrored that of the NUM, arguing 'that the NUM structure could not simply be superimposed on their movement'.[lxxxvii] Ella Egan and Ida Hackett, both in the CP and wanting a popular front strategy, argued for the need to 'develop good links with the peace movement and progressive women's organisation'.[lxxxviii] Once more, contradictions over the precise nature of NWAPC as a group emerged. What was it for – winning the strike for men in the here and now, or empowering coalfield women in a much larger sense, both now and in the future? And if it was solely to help win the strike, what was the best strategy to achieve that?

These contradictions came to a head with the split in the Barnsley group between the Anne Scargill/Betty Heathfield/Betty Cook faction (involving McCrindle) and the Jean Miller/Lorraine Bowler group. The former became Barnsley Miners Wives Action Group in November, though it was confusingly deemed to be the 'original group'. Barnsley WAPC, despite retaining the original name, was deemed the breakaway group. The key issue was the participation of non-miners' wives. The 75% rule had led to Jean Miller and Lorraine Bowler from the Barnsley group being deselected as delegates as neither was a miner's wife. Both were in the CP however, and both were seen as hostile to Arthur Scargill and associated with Eurocommunist ideas. Their deselection was thus, in reality, part of a much larger conflict over the power of Arthur Scargill and his leadership team; Scargill was seen by many as an autocratic leader and very closely associated with the mass picketing approach to the strike. The perception had developed that Anne Scargill (and her close friend Betty Cook) were simply doing the bidding of the NUM. As Jean Miller wrote in an edited collection put together by CP member Vicky Seddon after the strike:

> Many of the women were far from satisfied with the welcome we received from the NUM, feeling that we had been offered supportive words from public platforms, but no real consideration or say. The NUM, in fact, saw us as another weapon and used us as required … Some women had close connections with NUM officials and structures through their husbands and would act as mouthpieces for them, expressing the "Do this, do that" line of the NUM.[lxxxix]

Both Barnsley groups were keen to keep news of this split away from the media, knowing that it would be a gift to the anti-strike media, particularly given the role of both Anne and Arthur Scargill in the split. Yet, it signalled very real tensions, both political and personal, in the women's movement. The movement was beset by contradictions – a grassroots movement that was mostly 'led' by the wives of top NUM officials and an unelected group of prominent trade unionists and leftists; a movement that was ostensibly about broadening support for the strike but which often sought, at the top, to freeze out Eurocommunists as much as possible; and, most profoundly, a movement that was supposed to be an autonomous group of women, but that was in fact heavily monitored and influenced by the men at the top of the NUM.

Aftermath

After the strike ended on 3 March 1985, many women's groups attempted to keep going, but the majority probably folded immediately or almost immediately. In most groups there seems to have been little or no thought that they might do otherwise,[xc] suggesting that the majority of groups saw their role as, quite simply, to support the strike. Maureen Coates, secretary of Spotborough and Brodsworth Mining Families Support Group, said she felt relieved when the strike was finally over, and the minute book that Coates kept as secretary of the group ends abruptly with the end of the strike. On 20 February the group was planning a bus for the women's day of action proposed for 9 March; their next meeting was scheduled for 6 March but apparently never took place.[xci] Many families had run up significant debts while on strike and all had endured hardship; many wanted to 'return to normal'; to start dealing with some of these problems.[xcii] Two weeks after the end of the strike, at a meeting of Barnsley and Doncaster women's groups, it was reported that some groups were still giving out food parcels, vouchers, or clothes, where they had funds still available, but all food kitchens had closed. This was significant: the communal feeding centres were at the heart of most groups' activism, and provided a place where the women came together daily. Without them the networks of women quickly disintegrated.[xciii] Some women moved on from working in their support groups to participate in other campaigns, such as setting up women's centres or unemployed centres, or raising money for local causes. But the fact that most support groups ceased to operate with the end of the strike meant that the NWAPC organisation, and those local and regional groups which did want to keep going, were bound to have a difficult time.

Where groups did keep going after the strike, their goals were usually to continue to support the NUM and tackle the immediate issues caused by the end of the strike, most centrally, the reinstatement of and financial support for sacked miners. Fundraising for this cause took many forms.[xciv] Some groups also held conferences. On 22 June, the first conference of the South Wales women's support groups was held at Aberdare. It attracted over 100 women, and hosted speeches on the increasing disregard of custom and practice agreements in pits, the EEC's proposals for the future of coal, the possible

benefits of low sulphur coal, and the dangers of privatisation – all immediate and long-term issues around the coal industry. The resolutions also focused on fighting pit closures and the devastating 'social consequences to the mining communities', as well as the reinstatement of sacked miners. The conference 'reaffirmed support for the NWAPC to maintain a united front to build our National organisation into a stronger force to combat the unabated attacks on the miners and all sections of the working class'.[xcv] There was some sense of a broader purpose for WAPC here, but most of the focus was on the immediate struggles facing the NUM and mining communities.

Sheffield WAPC (SWAPC) also held a conference after the strike, on 13 April. One member, Iris Preston, recorded the debates at the planning meeting on 3 April in her diary:

> It was suggested we open a women's advice centre, and one member wished to include men. The group didn't like that suggestion. Can just imagine a fellow sat opposite me saying 'And my wife doesn't understand me, you know she batters me'.
>
> I believe that the men do have problems but I do not believe this group is the one to table them and unless we alter our structures drastically I believe we should continue to support the pit villages and the women and the sacked miners.[xcvi]

Preston's main concern was that the women should keep their 'autonomy', and control their own funds, rather than passing them all straight to the NUM's Solidarity Fund. This, Preston thought, was vital for retaining SWAPC's links with the villages it supported. Preston thought the group should agitate for a four day working week, better conditions for the miners, and crèches for children: a sort of conservative utopian vision. In the event, the SWAPC conference had a mixture of foci: a 'Violence Against Women' stand, a women's health centre cancer screening and a feminist bookstall, alongside workshops on 'The Way Forward' and 'The Campaign for Coal'.[xcvii] There were some elements of broader socialist and feminist politics, but still a focus for much of the event on the NUM and mining industry's issues.

Some groups had broader campaigning goals. Gwent Fund Support Group, for example, which had operated a baby clinic as well as feeding 5,500 miners' families during strike, now started campaigning to build a Community Project Centre with a day centre, training workshops, a crèche, and community centre, in Llanhilieth.[xcviii] A report by the Dearne Valley project (an adult education initiative jointly run by Northern College and the WEA) shows some of the problems that local groups faced when attempting such projects. The East Thurnscoe Miners' Support group set up an afternoon centre for young unemployed people after the strike, but this folded in just a few weeks. Their 'morale was exceptionally low', after the failure of the strike and of the centre and most members wanted to abandon the group.[xcix] Interestingly, the project organiser found that,

> Talking to them, I realised that they did not even value their own role in the strike – they said they had not made clever speeches or been on television like some groups. But, when I discussed with them what they had done they came to see it was a great deal, far more than any of them had ever done

> before: collected money in London, been picketing to support their men and of course kept the soup kitchen going.[c]

The image of strong, heroic, dynamic women keeping the strike going could be a powerful 'folk memory' and source of inspiration.[ci] It could also, ironically, be daunting to some women who felt their own work during the strike did not live up to the heroic ideal.

The varied desires and experiences of local and regional groups formed the backdrop to the NWAPC organisation after the end of the strike. The national movement's leaders were determined to keep it going. After the strike, NWAPC began a newsletter, *Coalfield Woman*, to knit together activist groups around the country. In its pages, we can trace the key issues which divided the movement after March 1985. These in many ways mirrored the issues which local groups had, both during the strike and after. First, there was the question of whether the movement should focus on supporting the NUM, or aim for a broader transformative politics. Second, there was the perennial question: how autonomous should WAPC be of the NUM? After the strike, this issue came to focus attention on the question of whether the NUM would (or should) allow WAPC to affiliate to the union. Finally, a third issue remained: who should be allowed to join WAPC? Here the 75% rule first introduced in summer 1984 remained a source of tension.

It was proposed after the strike that a rule change be made to the NUM constitution to allow women's support groups to affiliate as 'associate members' (with no right to vote at conferences, giving them a symbolic position and access to educational events). On 4 July 1985 WAPC groups from Yorkshire, Derbyshire and the midlands lobbied the NUM conference in favour of the rule change, holding placards reading: 'Don't cut off the hands that fed you'.[cii] They lost the battle. Many NUM officials at area and local level did not want women in their movement. Also implicated in the decision were the perennial internal struggles within the NUM about Arthur Scargill's controversial leadership, as WAPC was seen as a pro-Scargill force. The NUM leadership in some areas, particularly South Wales, had come to increasingly disagree with Scargill's leadership and what they saw as his attempts to centralise power. The South Wales Area NUM had, in fact, been pursuing their own strategies for ending the strike between January and March 1985, and continued to oppose key parts of Scargill's strategy after the strike.[ciii] Some moderates in the NUM also feared the women's movement would be a vehicle for far-left groups like the CP, Socialist Workers' Party and Workers' Revolutionary Party to infiltrate the NUM; and, indeed, these groups were attempting to use it as such.[civ] After the strike, the non-CP far left was a key support base for Arthur Scargill: Militant and the SWP formed the Broad Left Organising Committee after the strike to get him re-elected as president in 1988.[cv] The Scottish Area NUM gave Scottish Women's Support Groups associate membership at local level.[cvi] But disappointment that the women's efforts had not been rewarded with associate membership at national level was one cause of tensions and pessimism at WAPC's conference on 17 August 1985 in Sheffield City Hall.[cvii] If WAPC was controversial in the NUM, the NUM was controversial within

WAPC. Some felt Arthur Scargill was trying to control WAPC, and indeed, several *ex-officio* members had strong links to Arthur Scargill (Betty Heathfield, Anne Scargill, and Jean McCcrindle).[cviii] Arthur Scargill was also closely involved with planning for the future of the movement; he suggested WAPC's structures should mirror the NUM's national delegate structure and that the name should be changed to 'NUM – Women's Action Group', though McCrindle rejected this latter suggestion as too 'Scargillite'.[cix]

Over 100 women attended the Sheffield conference in August 1985. The 75% rule was still supposed to be in place, and was still a point of contention. One Derbyshire group argued that it should be not simply 'women related to NUM members' but 'women closely related to NUM members'.[cx] By contrast, the CP, which wanted to 'introduce a feminist perspective' and use WAPC to pursue further their Eurocommunist strategy, disagreed with the rule.[cxi] Divisions over who should be allowed into WAPC thus overlapped with debates over the future of the movement. The morning's debates were so difficult that at a lunchtime committee meeting, many women were 'crying' and wanted to 'pack up and go home' (though in the end, they agreed to continue).[cxii] Partly this was due to poor planning.[cxiii] But there was also a lack of clear 'direction' now the strike was over. Some felt there had been a lack of consultation of local groups by the national committee.[cxiv] And *Coalfield Woman* reported the presence of 'the number of women from outside political groups, who were often experienced speakers, and could dominate the discussion'. One delegate was quoted as saying, 'It looks as though some Women's Support Groups have been hijacked by these outside groups, who want to direct WAPC into their own political channels'.[cxv] One of Monica Shaw's interviewees in Co. Durham shortly after the strike complained that the national movement were '[j]ust making a structure of themselves'.[cxvi] Some of those involved in WAPC wanted to turn it into a vehicle for a much broader progressive politics – feminist, socialist, far left, or some combination of those things. And just as it had during the strike, this provoked much controversy.[cxvii]

The movement was strongest for the longest in South Yorkshire, perhaps unsurprisingly.[cxviii] WAPC groups were at the forefront of the campaign in 1987 against the closure of Woolley and Redbrook Collieries.[cxix] The last issue of *Coalfield Woman* in January 1988 also noted that North Yorks WAPC had been involved in fundraising for the Castleford Women's Centre, which they had set up with the local council after the strike. Royston women had held a Halloween Disco and Christmas Social to raise money for sacked miners. There were also reports of activities from outside Yorkshire, though. Lancashire women had also held fundraising socials for sacked miners, played host to a delegation of supporters from Germany who had given money during the strike, and issued a leaflet against the threatened closure of Sutton Manor Colliery. Kent WAPC had organised the fourth Kent Miners' Gala along with the NUM and Parish Council. In September 1987 Derbyshire Women's Action Group assisted in picketing Chesterfield Polytechnic in protest against its lack of crèche facilities, and in November sent a speaker to a CND rally. South Wales women held an open meeting in October 1987

in Maesteg, the proposed site of the controversial Margam colliery and produced a leaflet explaining the dangers of taking redundancy. North Staffs women had been touring a show entitled 'Unfinished Business'. Durham women were campaigning against opencast mining and its effect on the environment, plus performing a Comedy Revue. Scottish women and men had put on a major fundraiser to raise money for sacked miners.[cxx]

In 1987 associate membership was added to the NUM rulebook, but by this time few women's groups were left and it seems few, if any, women applied for associate membership.[cxxi] On 17 October 1987 an Extended Conference of NWAPC was held in Sheffield, attracting around 100 women. The name and future direction of the group were discussed again. The meeting decided the name should be retained, and the movement should remain 'coalfield based'. The main issues at this point were a lack of communication between groups – it was suggested more national conferences should be held to keep links alive – and money, NWAPC's most pressing need.[cxxii] Though there were fundraising efforts, they were not enough to keep *Coalfield Woman*, the most important tool for networking the movement together, going. After its last issue in January 1988, the dwindling movement fragmented even further.

A WAPC group occupied collieries in South Yorkshire as late as 1993 when they were threatened with closure; Ann Scargill and Betty Cook were part of the action and when they occupied Markham Main (in Armthorpe), the council provided them with chemical toilets and gas (much needed as it was January).[cxxiii] Lancashire WAPC was dormant from 1987, but also saw new activism in the early 1990s: the movement revived in 1992 to lead protests against a new round of pit closures.[cxxiv] But WAPC as a large, national organisation had faded within three years of the end of the strike.

Conclusions

National Women Against Pit Closures was not an organisation that appeared spontaneously, but one that grew out of careful political planning and execution by women who were far from politically inexperienced (though this conclusion does not hold for all of the huge variety of local groups that formed during the strike). NWAPC was in many ways an organisation of contradictions. Whilst it did have a genuine popular base in mining villages across Britain, it was largely controlled by an unelected cadre of prominent leftists at the top of the organisation, and was very influenced by Arthur Scargill; indeed, the role of Scargill in the organisation surely limits the extent to which historians and feminist activists should see NWAPC as a feminist organisation. Similarly, the difficulty in sustaining activism after the strike points to the limits of the narrative of politicisation of coalfield women. For many women, the support movement had a clear, single aim: supporting the strike. This made it difficult to sustain the movement after the end of the strike, despite the fact that some activists were committed almost from the start to making the women's support movement a vehicle for a broader transformative politics. Two purposes coexisted within WAPC, and this reflected broader tensions

across and between 'old' and 'new' left in the mid-1980s about what a socialist society would look like. This does not limit what were the impressive achievements of the organisation, particularly the local groups: they fed several hundred thousand people during a year-long strike in the face of huge hardship and opposition. Nevertheless, it is time to move beyond the celebratory or recuperative histories of WAPC that have been offered thus far, and to think more seriously about what NWAPC can tell us about working class women's activism, the miners' strike and the dilemmas facing the left, at what still appears to be a crucial juncture in modern British history more than thirty years after the event.

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[i] On the history of the strike, see: Beynon, *Digging Deeper*; Winterton and Winterton, *Coal, Crisis and Conflict*; Curtis, *The South Wales Miners*; Milne, *The Enemy Within*; Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland*; Richards, *Miners on Strike*.

[ii] Cowie, in Scotland, was a very rare example of an area where communal feeding and fundraising was organised entirely by men; see McGrail and Patterson, *'For as long as it takes!',* 10-11, 34-5.

[iii] See Beaton, *Shifting Horizons*, 80 ff. for an account of how two women decided to go picketing despite the opposition of their husbands.

[iv] Some of the key contemporary accounts of the women's support movement and its activities are: Loach, 'We'll be here right to the end'; Newton, *We are Women, We are Strong*; Miller, *You Can't Kill the Spirit*; Seddon, *The Cutting Edge*; Witham, *Hearts and Minds*; Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures, *We are women, we are strong*; Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures, *Women Against Pit Closures.* And see Spence and Stephenson, 'Pies and essays'; Palfrey, 'Writing and the miners' strike'.

[v] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 131-2.

[vi] Poster from Miners Families Appeal, 'Don't Desert Them Now', WAIN/1/4, Papers of Hilary Wainwright, People's History Archive, Manchester.

[vii] Kelliher, 'Solidarity and Sexuality'; Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*, 164 ff.; Beale, 'Shoulder to Shoulder'.

[viii] The key historical accounts are unpublished PhDs: McCrindle, 'National Women Against Pit Closures', Allen, 'Carrying on the strike'; Shaw, 'Women in Protest and Beyond'; McIntyre, 'The Response to the 1984-5 Miners' Strike'.

[ix] Stead, *Never the Same Again*. For further examples, see, eg. Loach, 'We'll be here right to the end', 172 (an expanded version of an article first published in *Spare Rib*, 147, Oct. 1984); Maggie Brown, *Guardian*, 28 May 84.

[x] Adeney and Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike,* 223-4.

[xi] Eg. Richards, *Miners on Strike*, 150ff.

[xii] Beckett and Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line*, 85.

[xiii] Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland*, 111-2.

[xiv] Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland*, 131-2.

[xv] Curtis, *The South Wales Miners*, VI, 'The Strike, 1984-5', 'Support Groups and Fundraising' (ebook.)

[xvi] Loach, 'We'll be here right to the end'; Maggie Brown, *Guardian*, 28 May 84; Stead, *Never the Same Again*; and see articles in *Spare Rib* during the strike. For a dissenting view see Gibbon, 'Analysing the British miners' strike'.

[xvii] Authors' interview with Kay Sutcliffe, Margaret Davis, and Janice Bartolo, 5 March 2016, Aylesham. See also Rowbotham, *The Past Is before Us*, 282-4.

[xviii] Witham, *Hearts and minds*, 9.

[xix] *In defence of the NUM*, 14-19; and see *Ey Up Mi' Duck*.

[xx] Allen, 'Carrying on the Strike', 71 ff.

[xxi] Nell Myers, 'Notes for Hilary Cave, and all members of the campaign committee: Family and community involvement in the fight to save and expand the coal industry', 2 Aug. 1983, 7JMC/A/22/01, Papers of Jean McCrindle, Women's Library, LSE, London.
[xxii] Authors' interview with Jean McCrindle, 29 Sept. 2015, London.
[xxiii] Jean McCrindle, letter to Arthur Scargill, 21 March 1983, 7/JMC/A/22/07.
[xxiv] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 74.
[xxv] Ibid., 78 ff.
[xxvi] Ibid., 81.
[xxvii] Eg also in Hatfield Main Miners' Wives Action Group: see Holmes, 'Miners wives organise'.
[xxviii] Margaret Thatcher, Interview for Woman's Own, 16 Oct. 1984, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105577. See also Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, 365.
[xxix] See Allen, 'Carrying on the Strike'.
[xxx] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 83-5.
[xxxi] Jean Miller qu. in Seddon, *The Cutting Edge,* 228.
[xxxii] A sense of the diversity of names is given by the survey of support groups carried out by the Labour Research Department later on in the strike; women's groups which responded were: Ackworth Kitchen; Barnsley WAPC; BWAPC Kitchens; Cynheidre Women's Support Group; Chorley & Coppull Miners' Wives Support Committee (a sub-committee of a wider support group); Fauldhouse Miners' Support Group; Frickley Ladies Action Group (FLAG); Monkbretton WAPC (part of Barnsley WAPC); Shafton Women's Support Group (part of Barnsley WAPC), South Wales Women's Support Groups (coordinating various bodies in South Wales, with combined membership of over 1,000); a women's miners' support group in Norfolk; Thornhill Women's Miners' Support Group, South London Women's Miners' Support Group and Tynemouth Labour Party Women's Council. See Labour Research Department, *Solidarity with the miners*.
[xxxiii] Betty Cook interview, Sisterhood and After, https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood, C1420/60, British Library, London.
[xxxiv] See McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures' for more information on the extensive connections of the Barnsley group with the CP.
[xxxv] Adeney and Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike,* 223.
[xxxvi] See *In defence of the NUM*.
[xxxvii] See issues of *Here We Go!* in , FWC/9/3/13, Fred Westacott Papers, Nottingham University Archive.
[xxxviii] Keating, *Counting the Cost*, 17-20.
[xxxix] Dianne Hogg, interviewed by Christine Gregory for BBC Radio Sheffield, 14 Jan. 1986, 689/V/9/1 CD ROM 26, Christine Gregory Papers, Sheffield Archive.
[xl] Kath Mackey, interview by Daisy Payling, 2014.
[xli] This is a significant factor to understand in assessing the role of feminism for women during the miners' strike. This is a very important topic, and one that we are currently writing about elsewhere.
[xlii] Mackey, 'Women Against Pit Closures', 59.
[xliii] This is noted in Mackey, 'Women Against Pit Closures' 61, and Miller, 'Barnsley', 237.
[xliv] Eg. Keating, *Counting the Cost*.
[xlv] 'Housing crisis - women's offensive', supplement, 'Women in struggle', in 5ERC/2/3, the Papers of the Essex Road Women's Centre, LSE Women's Library.
[xlvi] Sian James, Neath, 1999, qu. in Allen, 'Carrying on the Strike', 174-5.
[xlvii] *Notts Women Strike Back*, 2, in WAIN/1/12, Papers of Hilary Wainwright, People's Museum and Archive, Manchester.
[xlviii] Ackers, 'Gramsci at the Miners' Strike'.
[xlix] Curtis
[l] Beckett and Hencke, 78.
[li] Curtis, *The South Wales Miners* (ebook). Welsh mining historian and later Labour MP, Hywel Francis set out the Eurocommunist case in 'Mining the Popular Front'.
[lii] Beckett and Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line,* 79, 63, Curtis, *The South Wales Miners* (ebook).
[liii] Lorraine Bowler's speech exists in several different written and oral forms. The top two paragraphs here are taken from a recording in G85/V/1/1 CD ROM 22 Track 1, Christine Gregory Papers, Sheffield Archive. The final paragraph is taken from Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures, *Women Against Pit Closures,* 19-26.
[liv] Draft of Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham, 'More than just a memory', 7/JMC/B 04.
[lv] Allen, 'Carrying on the Strike', 48-51. See also Cook interview, Sisterhood and After; Holden, *Queen Coal*, 69, for a typical view of Cook as a 'downtrodden housewife with little education or ambition' before the strike.
[lvi] Hence this view came across in the many articles in *Spare Rib* on the strike, eg. Maureen Douglass, *Spare Rib*, Oct. 1984.
[lvii] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 63.
[lviii] Stephenson and Spence, 'Pies and essays'.

[lix] Halsey and Webb, *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends*, 291-8; Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker'.
[lx] Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker'.
[lxi] Williamson, 'I'm Going to Get a Job at the Factory'; Spence and Stephenson, 'Side by Side with Our Men?'
[lxii] Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures, *We Are Women*, 24. .
[lxiii] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 96.
[lxiv] See Jasper, Goodwin and Polletta, *Passionate Politics* for more, particularly Collins, 'Social movements and the focus of emotional attention', 27-44.
[lxv] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 106-7 (she takes it from her notes in McCrindle/WAPC archive dated 21 May 1984).
[lxvi] *The Daily Mirror*, 17 May 84, 1, qu. in McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 201.
[lxvii] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 115.
[lxviii] See Miller, 'Barnsley', for a critical account.
[lxix] Ibid; McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 133-134
[lxx] Ibid., 119-123.
[lxxi] Ibid., 121.
[lxxii] Ibid., 116-117.
[lxxiii] Ibid., 120-123.
[lxxiv] Newton, *We are women we are strong*, 87-8.
[lxxv] Authors' interview with Kay Sutcliffe, Margaret Davis, and Janice Bartolo, 5 March 2016, Aylesham.
[lxxvi] McIntyre, 'The Response to the 1984-5 Miners' Strike', 238-239.
[lxxvii] Allen, *Carrying on the Strike*, 96-7; Kitty Callan was not involved in the women's group.
[lxxviii] Spence and Stephenson, 'Side by Side with Our Men'.
[lxxix] See McIntyre, 'The Response to the 1984-5 Miners' Strike', chapter 5 on community.
[lxxx] Eg. Campbell, *Road to Wigan Pier Revisited;* Parker, *Red Hill.*
[lxxxi] Shaw, 'Women in Protest and Beyond'.
[lxxxii] MacIntyre, 'The Response to the 1984/5 Miners' Strike', 106-108.
[lxxxiii] Shaw, 'Women in Protest and Beyond', 188-189.
[lxxxiv] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 150.
[lxxxv] Ibid.
[lxxxvi] Ibid., 152-153.
[lxxxvii] Mackney. *Birmingham and the Miners' Strike*, 79.
[lxxxviii] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 153.
[lxxxix] Miller, 'Barnsley', 238
[xc] This is one conclusion of Allen and Measham, 'In defence of home and hearth?'
[xci] Authors' interview with Maureen Coates, 11 Sept. 2014, Doncaster; Minute book, Maureen Coates papers, in the possession of the authors.
[xcii] Allen, 'Carrying on the strike', 23.
[xciii] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 194-5.
[xciv] The activities of various groups are detailed in: *Coalfield Woman*, 2, Oct. 1985, 7JMC/C. The Bentley Women's Action Group in Doncaster even funded the first issue of the *Rank and File Miner* in June 1985, which campaigned for sacked miners: *Rank and File Miner,* 1, June 1985, WAIN 1/11.
[xcv] *Coalfield Woman,* 1, July 1985, 7JMC/C.
[xcvi] Iris Preston strike journal, 290-1, SxMOA 99/58/1, The Keep, Brighton.
[xcvii] Iris Preston strike journal, 306, 293, 305, SxMOA 99/58/1.
[xcviii] *Coalfield Woman*, 2, Oct. 1985, 7JMC/C.
[xcix] 'The Dearne Valley Project', first six monthly report: 1 April-30 Sept. 1985, Organiser's report, 733/v1/3, Sheffield Archives.
[c] Ibid.
[ci] 'The Dearne Valley Project', first six monthly report: 1 April-30 Sept. 1985, Appendix 3 'Socio-economic change in South Yorkshire and Derbyshire', John Field, Northern College, 24 May 1985, 733/v1/3.
[cii] *Coalfield Woman*, 1, July 1985, 7JMC/C.
[ciii] Curtis, *The South Wales Miners* (ebook); Taylor, *The NUM and British Politics,* 247.
[civ] See below for more on the CP. The SWP was attempting to do something similar; see, eg., 'Statement by Socialist Workers Party on Lesbians Against Pit Closures' LGSM/2/3, Papers of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, People's History Archive, Manchester. And *Socialist Action* issued a special pamphlet for the Aug. 1985 WAPC conference: 'Women Against Pit Closures: Making the Links', WAIN/1/3.
[cv] Curtis, *The South Wales Miners* (ebook).
[cvi] *Coalfield Woman*, 2, Oct. 1985, 7JMC/C.

[cvii] Pete Carter, 'Women Against Pit Closures Meeting, Friday 20 Sept 1985', for Women's Advisory Committee, 23 Sept. 1985, CP/CENT/WOM/5/2, Communist Party papers, People's Museum, Manchester.
[cviii] Ibid.
[cix] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 196; the name that was selected was 'Women Against Pit Closures (In Association with the NUM)': Photocopy of 'Draft Proposals for a Women's Organisation Associated with the NUM', CP/CENT/WOM/5/2.
[cx] Amendments to draft proposals, Women's' Conference August 1985, WAIN/1/3.
[cxi] Photocopy of 'Draft Proposals for a Women's Organisation Associated with the NUM', CP/CENT/WOM/5/2.
[cxii] Carter, 'Women Against Pit Closures Meeting, Friday 20 Sept 1985', CP/CENT/WOM/5/2
[cxiii] Ibid.
[cxiv] Ibid.
[cxv] *Coalfield Woman*, 2, October 1985, 7JMC/C.
[cxvi] Shaw, 'Women in Protest and Beyond', 190.
[cxvii] *In defence of the NUM*, 16.
[cxviii] Shaw, 'Women in Protest and Beyond'.
[cxix] *Coalfield Woman*, 6, Jan 1988, 7JMC/C.
[cxx] Ibid.
[cxxi] McCrindle, 'The National Organisation of Women Against Pit Closures', 214 ff.
[cxxii] *Coalfield Woman*, 6, Jan 1988, 7JMC/C.
[cxxiii] Nixon, 'Our anger has never diminished'.
[cxxiv] Beckwith, 'Lancashire Women against Pit Closures'.

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