



Sefydliad Ymchwil Cymdeithasol
ac Economaidd a Data Cymru
Wales Institute of Social and
Economic Research and Data

The past in the Present
Reflections on coalmining and the miners' strike 1984- 85
Cardiff University Bute Building
2 March 2024

The conference will take place at the time of the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the strike in March 1984. It follows on from similar events organised in Cardiff in 2004 and 2014. It includes visual and personal accounts of the strike itself, together with historical and sociological reflections on the significance of the event for trade union organisation and community life. These will be combined with contemporary discussions and recent research into the changes that have taken place in coalfield economies as reflected in class structure and culture.

The Speakers

Kjell-Ake Andersson

Award winning Swedish photographer, film director and, screen writer. His 1992 film *Night of the Orangutan* was nominated for best film, best director and best screenplay in the 28th Guldbagge Awards. His photographic study of Bargoed in 1972 is recognised one of the best representations of mining in that period. His film *Breaking Point* made in Oakdale in February 1985 captures the feelings; the hopes and fears at that time as people struggled to survive.

Helen Blakely

Research Associate at WISERD since 2015 as a qualitative sociologist with an interest in developing ethnographic and biographical methods. She has worked on projects relating to the inheritance of mining, in memory and the memorialising of tragedy. Helen Blakely and Kate Moles, "Everyday practices of memory: Authenticity, value and the gift" *Sociological Review* 67:3 (2019) 621–634.

Ben Curtis

Author of *The South Wales Miners: 1964-85*. Research fellow University of Wolverhampton on the British Academy funded project On Behalf of the People: Work, Community and Class in the British Coal Industry 1947-1994.

Rhys Davies

Labour economist and a Cardiff Co-Director of WISERD. He has developed innovative mapping of trade union membership across the UK, particularly in relation to the old coalfields. See (with H. Beynon, H. Blakely and A. Bryson) [The persistence of union membership within the coalfields of Britain](#). *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 59(4), pp. 1131-1152. ([10.1111/bjir.12588](#)) and (with A. Bryson) [Family, place and the intergenerational transmission of union membership](#). *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 57(3), pp. 624-650. ([10.1111/bjir.12435](#)).

Dai Donovan

Dai is a former miner who was working in a coal washery at the time of the miners' strike in 1984/5. He was a member of the Neath, Dulais and Swansea Valley Miners Support Group and played a leading role in establishing support groups across the UK. Perhaps most recognised of these was Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, LGSM, the story of which is told in the feature film "Pride". In the film Dai is played by Paddy Considine. After the strike, Dai went to university and later became a full-time officer for BECTU the broadcast union. Dai is a strong believer in the principle of 'Allyship' or, as Dai calls it . . . Solidarity!

David Edgerton

After teaching the economics of science and technology and the history of science and technology at the [University of Manchester](#), he became the founding director of the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine at Imperial College, London, and Hans Rausing Professor. He has written many books including: *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* and *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History*.

Daniel Evans

Based in WISERD writes about Welsh politics, social class and Marxist theory. He hosts his own Desolation Radio podcast. His recent book *A Nation of Shopkeepers: The Unstoppable rise of the Petty Bourgeoisie* has been the centre of debate over the changes taking place in the British working class.

Richard Gater

Based in WISERD writes about questions of masculinity especially in relation to marginalised working class men in the deindustrialised valleys of south Wales. See for example his: "Amalgamated Masculinities: The masculine identity of contemporary marginalised working class men". *Sociology* 2022.

Keith Gildart

Ex coal miner, professor of labour and social history university of Wolverhampton. British Academy project On Behalf of the People: Work, Community and Class in the British Coal Industry 1947-1994. editor of *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, author of *North Wales Miners: A fragile Unity 1945-1996* and *Images of England Through Popular Music*.

Joanna Gilmore

Senior lecturer in Law at the University of York, born in County Durham during the 1984-5 miners' strike. She was co-founder of the [Northern Police Monitoring Project](#), and in 2021, initiated an [open letter](#), signed by over 1,000 law academics, opposing proposals to restrict protest under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, . She was supported by British Academy/Leverhulme for her project *Lawyers at the Coal Face: Legal Solidarity and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike*".

John (Lord) Hendy K.C.,

Barrister, Honorary professor, faculty of law UCL Chair Institute of Employment Rights. He represented the NUM in the civil litigation arising out of the 1984-85 Miners' strike. In 1992 he represented mining unions at the High Court against attempts to close 31 collieries. In 2011 *The Lawyer* described him as the "barrister champion of the trade union movement".

Jane Holgate

Professor of Employment Relations, University of Leeds. Written widely on changes in workplaces, the position of migrant workers, and the role of trade unions in a changing context. Her recent book *Arise: Power, Strategy and Union Resurgence*, offers an authoritative account of current questions of power in employment settings. Hosts the podcast *Unions in a Hostile Environment*.

Ian Isaac

Formerly a miner and secretary of the St John's lodge at Maesteg. He was centrally involved in activities around the miners' strike and in efforts to prevent the closure of the mine in 1985. His 1978 account of *The Decline of Mining in Maesteg* was developed and updated in his autobiography *When we Were Miners* which offered a first-hand account to those times.

Nick Jones

Former BBC industrial and senior political correspondent with over fifty years' experience in print and broadcasting journalism. See www.nicholasjones.org.uk. He is the author of several books about British politics and industrial relations, most recently *The Lost Tribe: Whatever Happened to Fleet Street's Industrial Correspondents* and has written extensively on issues relating to the miners' strike.

Sian Moore

Professor and Director of the Centre for Research on Work and Employment (CREW) at the University of Greenwich. She is co-Editor in Chief of *Work in the Global Economy* and author of several books including *New Trade Union activists – class consciousness or social identity?* Her research focusses upon gender and class and has an on-going concern for the history of women in the labour movement.

Christine Powell

Christine is a retired physics teacher, and the proud wife of a striking miner in 1984-5 when she was active in, and treasurer of, the Neath and District Miners' Support Group; a post that she still holds. She remains a Trustee of Onllwyn Welfare Hall and has a long-term involvement in many community organisations including Seven Sisters Community Council where she was chair.

Geoff Shears

A solicitor who worked for many years with Thompson's finally as the firm's Chief Executive. He was based in Newcastle during the 1984-5 strike and was centrally involved in providing legal support to miners and later to the Durham NUM. Long term advisor to many trade unions he has been a key member of the Institute of Employment Rights.

Polly Smythe

Labour movement correspondent for Novara Media, funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. She has written widely on contemporary labour issues including struggles for unionisation at Amazon, and opposition to the government's anti-strike legislation quoting RMT general secretary as saying "meek compliance would lead to oblivion" [Mick Lynch Asks Unions to Step Up to Defy Anti-Strike Legislation | Novara Media](#).

Kat Simpson

Senior Lecturer, in Education, Huddersfield University author of *Social Haunting: Education and the Working Class. A Critical Marxist Ethnography in a former mining village* and co-editor with Robin Simmons of the recently published collection of essays on *Education, work, and Social Change in Britain's former Coalfields: The Ghost of Coal*.

Shelia Rowbotham

A leading socialist feminist historian who was centrally involved in establishing of the History Workshop. With the idea of telling “history from below”. In the early seventies she made an impact with the publication of ‘Woman's consciousness, man's world’. Her analysis of the place of women in capitalist societies and in socialist thinking was developed further in ‘Hidden From History’ and in her political collaboration with Lynn Segal and Hilary Wainwright in *Beyond the Fragments*. She was Professor of Gender and Labour History at the University of Manchester until 2008.

Shavanah Taj

General Secretary of Wales TUC since 2020, previously Welsh Secretary for the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS). Prior to joining PCS as a full-time officer in 2002, Shavanah worked in retail, call centres and the third sector. From 2018 to 2019, she served as the President of the Wales TUC.

Phil Taylor

Phil Taylor teaches work and employment at the University of Strathclyde. He is co-author (with Sian Moore) of *Cabin Crew Conflict: The British Airways Dispute 2009-11* (Pluto, 2019) and *Fighting Fire: 100 years of the Fire Brigades Union* (New Internationalist, 2018). His research over three decades on industrial relations, workers’ health and safety, globalisation, trade union organising, and the labour process has all had the purpose of strengthening union organisation and worker self-activity.

Natalie Thomlinson

Associate professor of History at University of Reading. Author of “I was never very clever but I always survived!” educational experiences of women in Britain’s coalfield communities 1944-1990 In: Simmons, R. and Simpson, K., (eds.) *Education, Work and Social Change in Britain’s Former Coalfield Communities*; with Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, “Vernacular discourses of gender equality in the post-war British working class”, *Past and Present*, 254(1) pp277-313 and the newly published *Women in the miners’ strike 1984-85*. OUP 2023.

Valerie Walkerdine

Distinguished research professor at Cardiff University with long experience of developing psycho-social approaches to the study of gender and class. Her book (with Luis Jimenez) *Gender, Work and Community After De-Industrialisation*, was published in 2012. Her most recent work has focused on affect and the global labour market with particular concern for the impact of deindustrialisation upon working class community after Brexit.

Granville Williams

Journalist based in Yorkshire for over fifty years. Editor of “*It’s the Media, Stupid!*” *The Media, the 2019 Election and the Aftermath* (2020) and edits Media North which campaigns for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. He has edited several collections on the miners’ strike and the aftermath including *Shafted* and *Settling Scores: The Media the Police and the Miners’ strike*.

Victoria Winkler

Director of the Bevan Foundation since 2002. She has developed the charity into the most influential and high profile think tank in Wales today. She is responsible for the Foundation’s strategic direction, and she has special expertise in relation to poverty, inequality, and economic development.

