

Brenda Nixon

Date: 13.8.18

Interview by Garry Lyons for Last Seam play

Minutes	
	Track One
	My husband worked at Hatfield Main, which is a pit in Stainforth. I had Matthew on 28 th Feb 1984, 6 days before the strike. And I had a 2 and a half year old too.
1.00	I did the soup kitchens throughout the whole strike. I used to take Matthew in a pram and leave him to sleep.
2.00	Husband was on strike, he was a chock fitter. He'd been there about 8 years, almost straight from school. But he was working in a fireplace showroom when we got married and he went back to the pit for better money.
	Dave, my ex-husband was out picketing every day.
3.45	After the strike everyone was a bit deflated. A lot of the women who had been involved went to University or started working.
	My ex-husband applied for the union job and got elected as Branch Secretary. From 1985 to 1992 they'd already closed over a hundred pits. Done very quietly.
	Oct 1992 Heseltine announced 32 closures.
6.00	The kids were older and I had a lot more time to myself (so I got involved). Worked closely with Aggie Curry, she was the delegate for the Doncaster women so I became the vice delegate.
7.30	There were marches, demonstrations, occupying pits. At the 10 most threatened pits. We were speaking all over the country. We would meet up once a week at the Women Against Pit Closures office at NUM in Sheffield. One woman was even speaking in
8.15	America. It was intense for the 12 months. The kids barely saw me.
9.00	It was a last stand as the men couldn't fight, they would have been sacked. But they were brilliant, supporting us. Didn't have time to think, we just did it.
11.00	Occupying the pits was the most memorable. We would sneak in, in darkness and chain ourselves to radiators. All for publicity.
	Occupations happened about 3 times in different pits. But not at Hatfield, I was banned from the premises.
	We did Armthorpe, Houghton Main and one other.
12.30	There were 3 or 4 of us and at Markham Main 5 or 6 of us, including Anne Scargill. They never kicked us out, they just left us to it.

1.30	Then we would arrange a time and come out. There would be loads of people there, bands and marching and we would do speeches. Public speaking terrified me, I still won't do it to this day. But I had to do it. We were getting bombarded all the time with people wanting speakers. There were only about 12 of us delegates who could do it. After 2 or 3 months I was just rattling it off. I learnt that I was a lot stronger than I thought I was. 'After that all ended, there was no way I could go back to being the little woman again'. That changed me dramatically, I was divorced within 3 years.
4.00	Track Two It was a complete 'what do I do now?' And politically I'd changed. My ex-husband Dave was in the Labour Party. I was completely disillusioned with them, because of a lack of support during the strike and during the 1992 campaign. We were arguing all the time about it.
7.00	Blair got in and dropped Clause 4 so that was me done. I ripped up my card. I've never been a member of a party since.
9.30	I got involved – I went to speak at the Halkevi Centre in London, run by Estella Schmidt. I went on a delegation to Turkey and ended up going 5 times. We got arrested every time and taken to military bases. The last time I was told if I went again I'd be killed. They would escort us back to the airport. We were trying to get publicity for what was happening with the Kurds. We went into Iraq but it was quite scary. Once I went to ring my husband at the airport and they shot right near my feet (the Turkish military). We were checking things out, we went to Batman Province to speak to trade unionists and workers, we were fact finding. When we got home the Press would be waiting for us.
13.00	
15.30	They would search your hotel room and confiscate everything. It was really terrifying. The men were off fighting with the PKK and the women were very vulnerable. We went to a UN HCR camp. The PKK took us up to their camp in the mountains. It was like a village. Talked to the female guerrillas. Very eye-opening. I fired an AK47. I ended up flat on my back!
2.30	

6.00	We've got oppression in our country – corrupt leaders. I think we're heading towards a new World Order. We've got homeless people, food banks, starving people, they don't give a damn. Impossible to live on the benefits. Went to Kurdistan in the two years after 1993. It was my time to do something I wanted to do, my kids weren't dependent on me then. It was emotionally draining.
9.00	Track Three After the divorce I went to Sheffield University to do a Media Journalism course, after an Access to Education course at Barnsley College. But after we split I had to stop going. I loved it but it wasn't practical. I went to work in a chicken factory as quality control manager, Thorne Poultry. I work in admin at a radio station now. My kids both went to Uni. Son is now 34.
12.00	
14.00	I got involved in politics again – the Socialist Party. I'd do a bit of research and join the discussion, I quite liked that. But I haven't been to an SP meeting for quite a while now. Most of what I do is centred around Sheena now – but it's not on a daily basis. I don't see what all the fuss is about Jeremy Corbyn because he can't do a damn. He'll be controlled the same as anybody else. He can't even control his own party.
2.30	In 1984 I was very naïve, and I wasn't politically motivated at all. I followed the path of going into the Labour Party but it wasn't going to make a blind bit of difference. My ex-husband wanted me to become an MP, we clashed about that as well.
5.30	I worry about the future for my two grandsons. My son and daughter I'm very close to. I speak to Matthew 2 or 3 times a week, my daughter was here yesterday. It gives me pride. They've done well.
6.30	They had a new banner made at Hatfield Main for the 30th anniversary of the Miners' Strike and the kids and I are on it. They're really chuffed about that. They're open thinkers, they question a lot. If we had won the strike it would have been a completely different story.
10.00	
13.00	Track Four I've been senior admin at the radio station 4 or 5 years. I quite enjoy it. It's a good atmosphere.

1.30	How have I changed? I've learned a hell of a lot really. Friends from school and growing up have dropped off. All the friends I have now are political friends or comrades. But I wouldn't change a thing. I'd do it all again in a heartbeat. I'm always learning and researching stuff. There's always two sides to it. Once you start to get knowledge you can't go back. It's just the path that I've been given. But it's a good life. I had to move out of Thorne because it was dire. I got mugged 3 times. I didn't feel safe anymore. This is a very middle class area. I don't think there'll be one political one among them, around here. I think most will be Labour voters. Where Sheena lives is really rough, in Stainforth. Drugs are a big thing. I stood as the first candidate for the Socialist Labour Party in Hemsworth. With Arthur Scargill as my manager. I never got on with Anne Scargill, she accused me of having an affair with Arthur, which was totally untrue. I used to like Arthur Scargill's politics. He wanted me to be the first candidate. Hemsworth was an old pit village so it was tactical. But I lost to Jon Trickett, Labour. There was never a chance I was going to win it, but we didn't lose our deposit. I quit SLP after about a year and a half. We knocked on doors but didn't get any animosity. You'd not have got me anywhere near Parliament, we were never in it to win it. Track Five We went to Havana for a week doing political tours and Varadero for a week, chilling out. It was about 1994, 95. We couldn't get to meet Castro. There was a coachload of us, some NUM reps, some Nacods, Women Against Pit Closures. I was sponsored by NUM at Markham Main. It was very rundown there but very beautiful.
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