



Kelliher, D. (2014) Solidarity and sexuality: lesbians and gays support the miners 1984-5. *History Workshop Journal*, 77(1), pp. 240-262.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/155165/>

Deposited on: 15 January 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow\_  
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

# Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners 1984–5

*by Diarmaid Kelliher*

*diarmaidkelliher@gmail.com*

In March 1984 British coalminers began a national strike against pit closures that would last for twelve months, with networks of support organizations established throughout the country. Often at the heart of these networks were traditional elements of the labour movement – trades councils, trade unions and Labour Party branches, for example, were all highly active. At least two elements, however, appeared more novel. The first was Women Against Pit Closures – a national network of women’s organizations, based primarily in mining areas and often composed of women from mining families – which has subsequently been the focus of much work.<sup>i</sup> In addition, the miners’ strike was an important moment in which radical activists from diverse backgrounds coalesced behind an ‘old-fashioned’ industrial dispute. Doreen Massey and Hilary Wainright commented at the time that ‘in many cities ethnic minorities, gay and lesbian communities, women’s groups and “alternative” networks of many kinds form an important element’. These groups made a notable contribution to a miners’ support network ‘with as broad a social and geographical base as any post-war radical political movement’.<sup>ii</sup>

Far from the mining heartlands, London provides a compelling example of the growth of this social movement alongside the industrial struggle. This article focuses on one support group in the capital, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), which has received little historical analysis.<sup>iii</sup> The organization was formed after two gay men, Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson, collected donations for the miners at the 1984 Lesbian and Gay Pride march.<sup>iv</sup> The organization maintained weekly meetings for the next year, raised money for the miners and was involved in demonstrations, visits and conferences. On the following year’s Pride demonstration, under the banners of LGSM and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) Blaenant lodge, a group of lesbians and gay men marched with approximately eighty miners and supporters from South Wales

mining communities.<sup>v</sup> This was seen as the fitting culmination of a movement whose central argument was that if lesbians and gay men offered solidarity with the miners and their communities, this support would be reciprocated.

The book-ending of LGSM by two Pride demonstrations points to its heritage in the gay liberation movement. Matt Cook has placed the organization in the lineage of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), a radical gay group of the early 1970s.<sup>vi</sup> The 1970s provides an important point of comparison for LGSM – in relation to GLF and also in terms of the previous national miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974. The central question addressed in this article is how LGSM was able to develop stronger links with the labour movement than the GLF. This piece will consider how LGSM sought to promote lesbian and gay concerns within the labour movement and the left, and simultaneously attempted to convince lesbian and gay people of the importance of this alliance. It will do this by looking at the practical ways in which the group expressed their solidarity with mining communities, and then how the concepts of oppression, class and community were used to explain this solidarity. Finally, it will consider the legacy of the organization and what it can contribute to an understanding of the broader historical moment. I will argue that a history of LGSM provides important insights into the weakening of the hegemonic position of 'class' as a concern for the left in the 1980s.

### THE PRACTICE OF SOLIDARITY

The miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, though spectacular, had been relatively brief. When mining communities and the NUM realized after a few months that the 1984 strike was to be a protracted one, fundraising became a central concern.<sup>vii</sup> This developed a heightened urgency when union funds started to be seized by the courts – starting with South Wales NUM in August 1984. Hywel Francis, a leading support-group activist in the Dulais area in South Wales, argued that 'following the sequestration, fundraising and food parcels, rather than picketing, became the dominant feature of the strike'.<sup>viii</sup> Activists from Dulais built a diverse network of supporters in London and twinned with LGSM.<sup>ix</sup> LGSM collected approximately twenty thousand pounds through street collections, raffles, jumble sales and events such as the 'Pits and Perverts' gig, which raised over five thousand pounds on its own, and estimated that they paid a quarter of Dulais' bills during the dispute.<sup>x</sup>

There is a wider context to understanding the possibility of this alliance. The contrast between financial solidarity in 1984–5 and industrial solidarity in the early 1970s – most spectacularly when thousands of engineering and car-workers joined the miners’ picket of the Saltley coke depot in 1972 – is striking.<sup>xi</sup> In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Raphael Samuel pointed out, the result of rising union membership, shop-steward power and successful industrial action ‘was to privilege the industrial at the expense of the political, and to encourage workers in the belief that, in the pursuit of material or trade union advantage, they could go it alone’.<sup>xii</sup> In contrast, it was the relative weakness of the labour movement – which could no longer ‘go it alone’ – that helped shape the 1984–5 miners’ strike in such a way that groups like LGSM could exist. By 1984 the labour movement was in retreat, with union membership in decline for the first time in half a century, and an aggressively anti-union Conservative government having won a second general election.<sup>xiii</sup> Unemployment had risen to twelve per cent from around two to four per cent in the early 1970s.<sup>xiv</sup> The steel industry was one victim, with clear results for the miners. In response to NUM President Arthur Scargill’s demand for a shutdown of steel production to support the miners’ strike, Bill Sirs remembered remarking, ‘I was not prepared to allow my industry to be sacrificed on someone else’s altar’. Sirs, the General Secretary of the main steelworkers’ union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, wrote that ‘while our sympathies were with the miners and their case, how could we agree to the threatened shut-down of our industry? Steel had experienced many difficult years. All our works were fighting for survival’.<sup>xv</sup> Francis commented that for South Wales miners ‘old-fashioned trade union solidarity has, at best, been reduced to seventy five turkeys from Llanwern steelworkers’.<sup>xvi</sup>

The 1970s style of trade unionism was also threatened in law by the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts. The sequestration of National Graphical Association (NGA) funds during the 1983–4 Messenger Group dispute presaged the use of the tactic on a greater scale against the NUM, and was a powerful disincentive to sympathy strikes. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) would not support a national NGA strike for fear that supporting ‘illegal’ industrial action would incur a threat to its own funds. John Gennard has argued that ‘the law had been used to substantially curtail the degree to which unions could lawfully ask other NGA members and other trade unions to take sympathetic action’.<sup>xvii</sup>

With NUM bank accounts frozen during the 1984–5 strike, it was not possible to donate directly to the union. This reinforced the popular practice of ‘twinning’ between support groups and particular mining communities or pits.<sup>xviii</sup> Lucy Robinson has interpreted LGSM’s twinning with the Dulais support group as a rejection of the NUM: ‘By setting up one community group in support of another LGSM hoped it could avoid bureaucratic restrictions and the possibility of co-option’.<sup>xix</sup> While some may have felt this way, LGSM’s Rosie Leach pointed out after sequestration that ‘you can’t send money now directly to the NUM, even if you wanted to ... In a sense that argument has been by-passed ...’. Mark Ashton was explicit on this issue however: ‘What we actually said when we started was that we would support the National Union of Mineworkers, the elected leadership of the NUM itself ... They’re leading the struggle and we’re supporting them ...’.<sup>xx</sup> No simple distinction should be drawn between the Dulais support group and the union – the *Valleys Star* newspaper produced by Neath, Dulais and Swansea Valleys Miners Support Group during the strike declared the NUM ‘our shield against all attacks. Stand by it! Defend it!’<sup>xxi</sup> Particularly during a strike in which the union itself was threatened, financially and from a breakaway union, it is unlikely that support hostile to the NUM would have been welcome.

Nevertheless, the personal contact made possible by twinning was important for LGSM. The London magazine *City Limits* described LGSM members visiting Dulais: ‘Welcomed into the miners’ homes for the weekend, whole families apparently started discussing gay rights and human sexuality over the tea-table’.<sup>xxii</sup> The discussions in Dulais started before LGSM members arrived, and one member of a support group admitted that they were expecting ‘a bunch of weirdos’. Another Dulais woman commented that ‘it’s had to take the strike for us to get more friendly’ with lesbians and gay men.<sup>xxiii</sup> Apprehension could be mutual; one correspondent to *Capital Gay* (a free weekly newspaper based in London) claimed that the mining communities ‘encapsulate all the sexist, patriarchal and anti-gay views which threaten us ...’.<sup>xxiv</sup> The experiences reported by LGSM visitors challenged such views: ‘to imagine that we would have been welcomed, really, so warmly. I mean, all the myths and all the barriers of prejudice were just broken down when we went down to the valley’.<sup>xxv</sup>

LGSM travelled to Dulais with funds raised primarily at lesbian and gay venues and events. This engaged lesbian and gay people in the arguments around the strike, and

made it clear to mining communities that the money they received was not just collected by lesbians and gay men, but also donated by them.<sup>xxvi</sup> Jackson claimed that the collections ‘got quite a lot of support. I mean, mainly from pubs like The Bell, which is a pub that is mainly used by young people and unemployed people, quite poorly paid young people ...’.<sup>xxvii</sup> Customers of The Bell had contributed approximately £1500 to LGSM by the end of 1984, twice as much as was collected from any other venue.<sup>xxviii</sup> The next two largest sums came from Gay’s the Word bookshop and the Fallen Angel bar, both of which hosted LGSM meetings; the bookshop also accepted donations for LGSM.<sup>xxix</sup> Both venues were a focus for lesbian and gay activists, and ‘Defend Gay’s the Word’ was a major campaign in London at the time, following book seizures and prosecutions for ‘indecentcy’.<sup>xxx</sup> Their prominence in the group’s activities highlights LGSM’s efforts to link themselves to that milieu. A review of the Fallen Angel commented that ‘half the Gay Movement seemed to be there – people from the Gay Youth Movement, the Police Monitoring Group, NALGAY’, and that groups like Icebreakers and LGSM were encouraged to use the venue.<sup>xxxi</sup> The management of the Fallen Angel had themselves organized a benefit for the miners; one visitor complained about ‘Dig Deep for the Miners’ badges being worn by staff: ‘I was so bemused by NUM decorations last evening, I ran to the car to put on my SDP badge!’<sup>xxxii</sup>

So while an LGSM activist could claim that the group ‘brought socialism on to the agenda of sexual politics in the London lesbian and gay community’, it is clear that they were partly reliant on existing radical lesbian and gay spaces.<sup>xxxiii</sup> A history of LGSM helps to create a picture of these spaces; through Nigel Young, for instance, we can see the way in which gay politics maintained a presence in the Brixton Housing Co-Operative, which had subsumed a number of gay squats in the early 1980s.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Young wrote in the Co-Operative’s newsletter about LGSM’s visit to Wales: ‘They welcome us with open arms...we talk to each other about our lives...and sleep together...in struggle against a common enemy’.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Furthermore, despite its novel aspects, LGSM arose directly from lesbian and gay activism in the labour movement. It was a Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) meeting with a striking miner after the 1984 Lesbian and Gay Pride march in London that gave the direct impetus to start a solidarity group. Ashton

remembered the miner ‘thinking about things and talking about things that we’d never actually expected a miner to think or talk about’.

Previously I had this semi-antagonistic attitude towards the organized labour movement, trade unions, macho het bully boys, and it just opens your eyes to the attitudes that they had, and that the strike up to that stage had kindled in people.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Ashton’s earlier sentiments were shared by some in the Gay Liberation Front in the 1970s. One activist wrote in the GLF paper *Come Together* that they attended a 1971 TUC march against the Industrial Relations Bill not just to oppose the bill ‘but also because many, in fact most, of the people on the demo were real male chauvinists and therefore our enemy’.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Despite this, Ashton himself was an openly gay activist in the traditional left, having joined the Young Communist League two years earlier, in 1982.<sup>xxxviii</sup> He also remembered the first LGSM meeting consisting entirely of Labour and Communist Party members.<sup>xxxix</sup>

This points to a shift from the time of the GLF, which, David Fernbach commented, ‘the left wouldn’t touch ... with a bargepole, except for the Angry Brigade’.<sup>xl</sup> With Thatcher declaring for Victorian values and opposing the extension of rights for homosexuals (which she, among other prominent Tories, had supported in the 1970s), Jeffrey Weeks predicted in 1980 that ‘the only way the gains of the 1970s can be held is by advancing in the 1980s on a wider radical front’.<sup>xli</sup> Various developments had made this seem plausible. Peter Purton has argued that through the 1970s in particular the labour movement started to recognize that it must stand for more than better terms, conditions and wages. In 1975 the Labour Gay Group met formally for the first time, and later in the decade lesbian and gay self-organization in trade unions was pioneered within the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO).<sup>xlii</sup> Sections of the Labour Party, notably those aligned around Tony Benn, were integrating lesbian and gay rights into their politics.<sup>xliii</sup> The 1981 election of Ken Livingstone’s Labour administration at the Greater London Council (GLC) was an important moment in the emergence of a number of Labour-run local authorities with progressive policies on lesbian and gay rights, which according to David Rayside ‘allowed for the characterization of Labour as the “gay party”’.<sup>xliv</sup> LGSM’s Mike Jackson expressed this

sense in more ambiguous terms: ‘Nobody could say that lesbian and gay liberation is a cause celebre of the British left any more than the Tories but it was, is and will be the left that advances our cause with the occasional whelps from the parish of the lone gay Tory MP’.<sup>xlv</sup>

However, while the early impetus came from established left activists, LGSM members frequently highlighted the diversity of the group once it had grown: ‘We had communists and anarchists, feminists and trotskysts, liberals and labourites, machos and minis’; and ‘just ordinary, working-class people who have seen the tragedy of the pit closures programme’.<sup>xlvi</sup> This diversity of political backgrounds could create tensions but more importantly in ‘two areas the group found it impossible to overcome its majority: the fact of its whiteness and maleness’.<sup>xlvii</sup> Minutes and attendance lists suggest that in meetings of up to fifty people there were never more than a few women.<sup>xlviii</sup> One woman believed that this was ‘partly because there was a core of men who were all actively involved in party politics and were all trying to push their party line and make that the line of the group. And that intimidated and bored a lot of women who weren’t involved in politics in that way’.<sup>xlix</sup> Another blamed oppression, intimidation and a refusal to take up women and black issues for the group’s composition.<sup>1</sup> As a result, a separate Lesbians Against Pit Closures (LAPC) organization was formed. Stephanie Chambers commented that ‘the realities of the divisions between lesbians and gay men were reflected in LGSM. It is as important for us to break down these barriers within our community as it is to challenge sexism in society as a whole’.<sup>li</sup> While recognizing the existence of sexism, women in the trotskyst Socialist Workers Party (SWP) argued that ‘not only is the LAPC divisive, but the women instead of tackling sexism when it occurs have effectively cut themselves off from those arguments’.<sup>lii</sup>

If the external situation had changed considerably, some of the internal issues were clearly the same for LGSM as they had been for GLF, from which a group of women also left. Janet Dixon described being outnumbered in GLF meetings and facing a ‘thinly-disguised misogyny’, while the SWP women were echoing Sue Winters who a decade earlier had argued that ‘you don’t fight sexism by walking away from it’.<sup>liii</sup> In both cases, the draw of gender allegiance was clearly a factor. Key to the GLF split was the growing role for lesbians within the Women’s Movement.<sup>liv</sup> Similarly, one LAPC



activist saw the group as part of ‘the nationwide network of women that were working in the strike’.<sup>lv</sup> Jill Humphreys has argued that the 1970s saw a mass exodus of lesbians from ‘(lesbian and) gay politics, and their return to the Women’s Movement’, but that in the 1980s there were redoubled efforts to create a ‘lesbian and gay’ politics, aided by the advent of HIV/AIDS and the ‘anti-gay crusades’ of the government.<sup>lvi</sup> The experience of LAPC and LGSM suggests that this rapprochement was still only in development by 1985.

There is, unfortunately, no voice comparable to LAPC’s to explain the whiteness of LGSM, which perhaps suggests a wider absence of non-white people in the lesbian and gay activist population from which LGSM arose. Matt Cook’s work on London in the same period suggests that black men could perceive the gay scene as very white, and indeed racist.<sup>lvii</sup> Interviews by Peter Keogh, Laurie Henderson and Catherine Dodd with gay Black Caribbean men in the 2000s point to the near impossibility for them of disavowing ‘the immigrant culture of parents and family (which provided some vital sense of his social and cultural situation) in order to embrace a gay identity’.<sup>lviii</sup> It is possible, therefore, that just as the women’s movement offered an alternative for lesbians, a black lesbian or gay man who wished to express their identity while supporting the miners might have chosen Black Delegation to the Miners to do this, rather than LGSM.

#### THE IDEOLOGY OF SOLIDARITY

In some respects LGSM was clearly the child of the GLF; yet, as Robert Kincaid wrote, the group ‘is unique because the miners’ struggle is unique’.<sup>lix</sup> LGSM built stronger relationships with the trade-union movement partly because the nature of the strike allowed it, coupled with the growing integration of lesbian and gay rights into the trade-union movement and the left in general since the GLF. However, it was also important that – in contrast to some sections of GLF – LGSM sought to highlight the common interests of the miners and of lesbian and gay people. David Featherstone has argued that ‘solidarity has often been understood as likeness. This approach obscures the importance of solidarities in constructing relations between places, activists, diverse social groups’. This can be ‘about the active creation of new ways of relating’.<sup>lx</sup> LGSM’s attempt to create a new way of relating partly relied on an appeal to likeness.

While the solidarity of many other groups was based on the common interest of the working-class, LGSM had to take a different approach. By providing an understanding of oppression that highlighted the commonality of experience between mining and lesbian and gay communities, they sought to undermine divisions between class and sexuality-based politics.

Mistreatment by the police was frequently pointed to as a shared experience. In the mid 1980s lesbians and gay men faced entrapment by ‘pretty policemen’ and police raids on their pubs and clubs – in one case, twelve men were arrested inside the Vauxhall Tavern for being drunk.<sup>lxi</sup> The Bell, a focus for LGSM fundraising, had itself been raided, allegedly by seventy police officers.<sup>lxii</sup> An LGSM member described how ‘a lot of mining communities have found out what police harassment is for the first time perhaps, ... which gay people have known about for years’.<sup>lxiii</sup> Andy Beckett has argued that ‘the lower-status groups’ of the early 1970s knew that the British police of the period ‘were hardly social workers in uniform’; yet ‘on picket lines [if not in police stations] members of powerful trade unions were often protected by the invisible shield of their social standing and connection’.<sup>lxiv</sup> Striking miners had certainly faced violence before, but the policing of the 1984–5 strike was more reminiscent of prewar disputes than of the 1970s, and marked the miners out as a ‘lower-status group’. Scargill commented that ‘police tactics in this dispute have revealed clearly to us what black and Asian communities throughout Britain mean by “police harassment”’.<sup>lxv</sup> Furthermore, policing of the 1984–5 strike extended beyond the picket lines into communities – one commentator at the time described pit villages ‘occupied by large numbers of police’ who imposed ‘virtual curfews ... with anyone on the streets liable to harassment and arrest’.<sup>lxvi</sup> LGSM’s Kate Thomas wrote that ‘the cordoning off of [pit] villages created the ghetto restrictions familiar to lesbians and gays’.<sup>lxvii</sup>

Another focus was media representation. Robert Kincaid reported being told by a member of the Dulais support group that the working class had not understood the problems of lesbians and gay men,

because they have been satisfied with what they have read in the *Sun*. But what we must capitalise on now is that mining families know the *Sun* lies, they know that the TV is a lie machine, they have experienced how it has been used against them as a

propaganda agent of the government. So maybe it has lied about everything else in the past.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

These connections could also build support among lesbians and gay men. Rosie Leach claimed that media and police attacks on the miners ‘made many people see a link because this has always happened to homosexuals’.<sup>lxxix</sup>

To emphasize these parallels the issue of class exploitation was downplayed. The miners and their communities had been transformed by the strike into an oppressed section of society; as Kincaid wrote, ‘twenty-two thousand South Wales mining families now find themselves in a minority group position, and outcasts of the State’.<sup>lxxx</sup> Some from Dulais argued similarly: ‘We’ve suffered in the last year with the police and, you know, at different things, what [lesbians and gay men have] been suffering all their lives ...’.<sup>lxxxi</sup> Sian James, a member of the Dulais support group, described feeling that ‘we were next in line after lesbians and gays, black men, black women ... it’s a horrifying position to be in. You cannot sympathise with an oppressed group until you’ve actually been a member of one’.<sup>lxxxii</sup> If the miners were not an oppressed group before the strike, therefore, it made sense that they could not have sympathized with the problems of lesbians and gay men.

‘Community’ was a more useful concept in this context than ‘class’, and not just for the sake of expediency. The mining industry had created a notoriously strong bond between occupation and community, but by the 1980s this was threatened by ‘massive closure programmes [which] have often ruptured the umbilical cord between the pit and the community’.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> South Wales had not been the worst hit in this respect but employment in the coalfields had nevertheless fallen from 108,000 in 1948 to 20,347 in 1984, contributing to total unemployment in the area of almost twenty-five per cent. Francis has described the ‘South Wales valleys in the mid 1980s’ as ‘ageing and declining: characterized by new mining museums and new old people’s homes, as well as pit, school and hospital closures’. For Francis, the struggle over the Deep Duffryn Colliery in 1978–9 was a watershed: ‘For the first time, saving a pit was explicitly linked to the fate of its dependent community, presaging the arguments which would come to play such a significant part in the events of 1984–5’.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

At the same time, there was a sense that certain spaces and organizations that had been established to form the basis of a lesbian and gay community in London were threatened. The raid on Gay's the Word in April 1984, a month after the start of the miners' strike, was a prominent example of what Jeffrey Weeks called a 'distinct closing of social space'.<sup>lxxv</sup> A *City Limits* article in June 1985 expressed this feeling: 'with the "pretty police" intruding into gay pubs and clubs which gay men have always seen as their "safe-houses"; with the clampdown on lesbian and gay literature entering the country and the effect of media sensationalism over AIDS compounding the problems of the disease itself, the urban gay lifestyle has become much less of a haven than previously ...'.<sup>lxxvi</sup> In the capital local authorities prominent in supporting lesbian and gay organizations were attacked, with their sexual politics primary evidence for the existence of a 'loony left'. During the miners' strike there was a struggle over the threatened abolition of the GLC (which had helped fund the new London Lesbian and Gay Centre) and a 'Gays and Lesbians Against Abolition' group was set up, but the battle for the GLC was lost by 1986.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

LGSM therefore saw common ground in a strike that 'is not even about pay and conditions, but rather about jobs and communities, about a way of life ...'.<sup>lxxviii</sup> However, it was the allegedly 'sexist, patriarchal and anti-gay' nature of the mining communities that some used to attack LGSM.<sup>lxxix</sup> This missed the fact that LGSM aimed to change mining communities in the act of helping to save them. Kincaid wrote:

we took a positive image of lesbians and gay men into a mining community, hopefully lessening the isolation felt by lesbians and gays living there. In the past, life in such a close-knit, closed community must have been so repressive ...  
Thankfully the society they are now living in, after thirty-five weeks on strike, is much more tolerant.<sup>lxxx</sup>

However, LGSM's attempt to relate to the 'mining community' meant it could itself project a somewhat homogeneous picture. A gay miner who approached the group for financial help was turned down on the basis that he was not part of a 'formal NUM group'.<sup>lxxx</sup> Rosie Leach explained that they decided to 'give some money to the soup kitchen that is organized in the village where he lives, because then we've done it

openly as lesbians and gays, and that means that the people in that village are going to realize that we do support what they're doing, so they're less likely to be hostile towards him as a gay person'.<sup>lxxxii</sup> The focus throughout LGSM literature on support for 'miners and their families' also left single miners, often the most isolated and financially precarious during the strike, in an ambiguous position.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> While LGSM could not have hoped to form an alliance with mining communities if they pursued the GLF's analysis of the 'patriarchal family' as the basis of gay oppression, focusing on 'miners and their families' nevertheless risked repeating the same exclusions that they hoped to ultimately undermine.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

This fitted tendencies on the left for simplified and idealized notions of 'mining communities'. Jean Spence and Carol Stephenson have pointed out that despite the significant weakening of the link between mine and mining village by 1984, 'the frequent references to "mining village", usually in association with female action, in the discourse of the strike suggested the continuing vibrancy of historically discrete, spatially isolated and bounded places in the imagination of the Left'.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Furthermore, the narrative of the transformative influence of LGSM relied to some extent on a picture of 'mining communities' as socially conservative. While there was undoubtedly much truth in this, a complete picture would necessarily be more complex – it would, for example, look to accounts of the 1972 miners' strike that were already discussing challenges to the miners' conservatism not unlike those of 1984–5.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

While the focus on community matched the general trend noted by Raphael Samuel that the strike became 'more about community than class', no straightforward division should be made.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> For some within LGSM concerns of class and community were intimately related: one member wrote in early 1985 that while there had been 'increased opportunities and choices for gays ... for most working class people taking advantage of them has meant losing contact with their class and community'.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Significantly, Jackson argued that this often meant leaving working-class communities and moving to 'this little ghetto' in London.<sup>lxxxix</sup> He elsewhere complained that in London the 'places [gay] people go are predominately middle class. It's only by meeting other working class gay people that I started to think "how dare these middle class people dominate my life-style"'.<sup>xc</sup> Mining communities were not the only ones that could impose norms. Steve Valocchi has written about 'the class-inflected nature of gay identity' in the

United States, where one man had ‘a gay identity ... communicated to him by middle class people, in middle class settings, and through organizations concerned with middle class issues’.<sup>xcii</sup> By taking up a distinctly working-class issue as a lesbian and gay group, LGSM could help challenge the middle-class nature of the lesbian and gay scene in London as Jackson perceived it.

An opinion piece written by LGSM for *City Limits* claimed that: ‘Our support for the strike arises not purely from the fact that we are gay, but because we are members of the same class’.<sup>xciii</sup> For some leading members of LGSM class division within the ‘gay community’ was essential for understanding differing opinions on the miners’ strike and the Thatcher government in general. Hugh David’s *On Queer Street* (1997) celebrated the first Thatcher term as a great time to be gay and claimed that ‘1983 looked set to be the apogee, the golden year. Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives won a second term in office that year with promises of more, and more the same. The party just kept running’.<sup>xciii</sup> If AIDS put an end to the party, this did not mean that Conservative-supporting lesbians and gays would throw themselves behind the NUM. Peter Campbell, of the Conservative Group for Homosexual Equality (CGHE), criticized those who linked the miners’ cause with gay rights as ‘likely to damage the gay cause. The two causes are distinct’.<sup>xciv</sup> Yet the CGHE donated twenty-five pounds to the anti-strike miners’ organization, a gesture mocked in *City Limits*: 1984 was the ‘year in which Lesbians and Gay Men Support the Miners gave thousands of pounds to striking miners (who wore our badges) and the Conservative gay group gave £25 to working miners (who didn’t)’.<sup>xcv</sup>

In his speech to an LGSM conference, Jackson argued that some lesbians and gay men ‘are quite happy with Thatcherism, these are the lesbian and gays who benefit from Tory rule. They have the economic power to carve out a lifestyle which protects them from the harassment, persecution and fear that many lesbians and gay men encounter daily’.<sup>xcvi</sup> Ashton made a similar point in an interview and argued for the need ‘to organise with my own kind of people. That’s not necessarily lesbians and gay men – that’s working class people’.<sup>xcvii</sup> Robinson has argued that the positive examples of Women Against Pit Closures and LGSM meant that ‘at least gender and sexuality had fed into a cross-class comradery even if the strike had ultimately failed’.<sup>xcviii</sup> Although

this contains some truth, it misses the fact that for some the point of LGSM was to overcome divisions *within* the working class.

LGSM appealed to the low-paid and unemployed at The Bell rather than, as Ashton put it, ‘defending a privileged minority of middle class gay men. I don’t have much in common with the clones who go to Heaven [a gay night club] on £10,000 a year’.<sup>xcix</sup> Yet LGSM more broadly was appealing to elements of London’s lesbian and gay population – those involved in organizations like Gay Switchboard where Jackson and Ashton met, those for whom Gay’s The Word was important, activists at The Fallen Angel, those threatened by ‘pretty police’ – who could not simply be defined as working-class lesbians and gays. Any attempt, therefore, to translate the ‘lesbian and gay community’ straightforwardly into the terms of class politics would be flawed. Yet, combined with the focus on the community and lifestyle aspects of the miners’ strike – which brought it closer to something like identity politics – the emphasis on working-class lesbians and gay men surely helped develop a sense of mutual solidarity based on shared experiences of oppression. LGSM therefore tells us something about the possibilities, however uncertain and potentially contradictory, of building such alliances in the mid 1980s.

### LEGACIES / HISTORIES

Within a month of forming, LGSM was planning ‘a newsletter-type history’ of the group.<sup>c</sup> This self-awareness partly reflected a belief in the importance of the organization, described by Kincaid as a ‘landmark in lesbian and gay political history’, but also fitted into wider processes in the 1980s.<sup>ci</sup> It was in 1982 that the Hall-Carpenter Memorial Archives were established, for example – this would expand into a large resource of material documenting lesbian and gay life. An early oral history project undertaken by the archives recorded a number of life stories, including Mark Ashton’s.<sup>cii</sup> There was also an increasing appreciation of migrant histories, signalled by the first Black History Month in 1987, a development Tony Kushner has placed in the dual context of ‘history from below’ and anti-Thatcherism.<sup>ciii</sup> LGSM clearly illustrates the wider explanatory power of this dual context, and adds to the broader picture of individuals and groups attempting to keep alternative histories alive at a time in which Thatcher’s government was attempting to stifle minority voices.

LGSM also produced a video which contributed to extensive grassroots film making during the strike. Katy Shaw has described the context for the Miners Campaign Tapes, a collection of independently produced documentaries made in support of the miners:

In the 1970s, avant-garde film and video workshops began to spring up, focused on, and often integrated into, working class communities up and down the country, they formed a network of democratic, de-centralised co-operative film and video facilities.<sup>civ</sup>

The LGSM video, which a leaflet from the West London Media Work Shop noted was ‘made in conjunction with the Miners Defence Video Project’, was shown together with films about black and women’s support for the miners.<sup>cv</sup>

This documentary was subsequently part of an exhibition produced by the group, which was central to LGSM’s attempt to shape their legacy. They hoped that this exhibition, which also included press cuttings and photographs, would be shown in public libraries, labour movement meetings and miners’ welfare halls. The aim, Jackson explained, was ‘to inform people of the links that were made, the common problems of media distortion, police harassment and state oppression of both the mining communities and lesbians and gays’.<sup>cvi</sup> Initial attempts to raise funds for the exhibition were not especially successful and showed the hostility they could face. Sheffield City Council leader David Blunkett believed ‘it would be inappropriate for us to provide funding for the kind of exhibition which you indicate, as it is not directly related to the support of these issues [miners and their families’ welfare] but rather to illustrate solidarity by another organization related to a particular cause’.<sup>cvii</sup> This attitude may have extended beyond Sheffield Labour, but words of support for the fundraising were given when sought by the NUM nationally and by the Dulais support group.<sup>cviii</sup> The organizations that booked the exhibition give a sense of the range of interest in LGSM: they included the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle upon Tyne, the Brixton Art Gallery, Westminster NALGO, Derbyshire Council Labour Group and Bristol University Students Union.<sup>cix</sup>

In 1991 the exhibition and other material relating to LGSM was donated to the National Museum of Labour History, now the People’s History Museum in



Manchester.<sup>cx</sup> That a prominent labour-history archive – rather than a lesbian and gay one such as Hall-Carpenter – holds the organization’s material has helped LGSM’s effort to reinforce the connections between lesbians and gay men, and the labour movement. One example of the resulting influence was seen at a 2011 conference in Manchester ‘celebrating LGBT trades union history’, co-sponsored by the People’s History Museum, the lecturers’ union UCU and Manchester Trades Council. A leaflet advertising the conference featured a photo of LGSM members with their banner at Pride 1985; the second day of the conference included a member of LGSM speaking.<sup>cx</sup>

London LGSM has therefore maintained a presence in the intersecting histories of LGBT people and labour, while the approximately eleven other lesbian and gay miners’ support groups, who left little record, have fallen into relative anonymity.<sup>cxii</sup> As well as being a result of the active creation of an historical archive, the stronger documentary record of the London group undoubtedly derives in part from the fact that it was the first and the largest, and seems to have made the greatest impact. Colin Morrison’s description of the Lothian equivalent, for example, contrasts strongly with the London experience:

We would be going out every week with money to the Miners’ Welfare and we would be giving Christmas cards to all the kids with a tenner inside. The mums were opening the cards with the kids saying, ‘oh, this is from the Lesbians and Gay Support the Miners Group’. Upfront in one way but at the same time there wasn’t any real discussion about it and when the strike was over, that was it’.<sup>cxiii</sup>

Compared to this, the strong relationships built up between London LGSM and people from Dulais, which were to last beyond the strike, seem more remarkable – but an appreciation of why these experiences diverged would be useful in further understanding the creation of such alliances. This is true not only of the relationship with mining communities, but also with lesbian and gay people. The Manchester LGSM’s benefit at the Hacienda (popular night club and music venue), which raised three thousand pounds, suggests strong parallels with London LGSM’s ‘Pits and Perverts’ fundraiser; yet the impetus for the Hacienda event seems to have been the poor response to the group collecting around gay clubs and pubs.<sup>cxiv</sup>

London LGSM was clearly the inspiration for some of the other lesbian and gay miners' support groups. Its influence in encouraging similar organizations after the strike, however, was limited. Lesbians and Gays Support the Printers during the 1986 Wapping dispute was the most obvious successor, and many of their activities were similar, but there were significant barriers to imitating the LGSM model.<sup>cxv</sup> This was partly because LGSM fitted the particular, and in many ways unique, event of the miners' strike, but also because LGSM provided a way of relating to large-scale strikes and the prevalence of this form of action was to decline precipitously. Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that LGSM helped lesbian and gay people look more towards the labour movement as potential allies. The 1985 Pride march was the first that straight supporters were invited to attend. LGSM's role in this was highlighted when LGSM and their supporters from the mining communities were asked to head the march.<sup>cxvi</sup> The presence of miners and their families from Dulais was frequently a feature of reports of Pride. Stephen Gee wrote an article in *Capital Gay* about the inspiration of a speaker from South Wales: 'She said she'd learned a lot from contact with lesbians and gays, that we can't do without the miners any more than they can do without us and if any child of hers says it's gay she will understand'.<sup>cxvii</sup>

LGSM clearly had an impact on at least one mining community in South Wales: in Dulais in 1988 there was a meeting held on Clause 28, the notoriously homophobic addition to the 1988 Local Government Act.<sup>cxviii</sup> Thatcher's government focused increasingly on issues of sexuality after defeating the miners, which suggests that LGSM was correct in arguing that if the strike failed lesbian and gay people would be more vulnerable: 'If this strike isn't won, we as Lesbians and Gays have a lot to lose when the Tories and their henchmen come for us'.<sup>cxix</sup> Cook has argued that 'in a period of recession and unemployment, gay and lesbian threats to the family and morality were convenient diversions and were strategically deployed to justify the dissolution of the Greater London Council and other city-wide authorities in 1986'.<sup>cxx</sup> Clause 28, prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities, was an extension of this: an attack on both lesbians and gay men, and left-wing Labour local authorities. This connection partly explains labour movement involvement in the campaign against Clause 28, but LGSM also played a role. Kath Jones of the South Wales Women's Support Group wrote to Mike Jackson in 1988:

The Women's Support Groups of South Wales have not forgotten the solidarity, and the moral and financial support that the Lesbian and Gay Communities gave to our families during the Miners' Strike of 1984/85 ... We will do all we can in our area to publicise and campaign against the implications of the Bill especially Clause 28.<sup>cxxi</sup>

The NUM backed the campaign against Clause 28, calling 'upon all decent people to resist this further erosion of basic human rights ...'<sup>cxxii</sup> Yet, while this reciprocal solidarity was important, a 1991 TUC survey suggests that the NUM still operated on the assumption that lesbian and gay people were a group *outside* of the union. Asked for information on policy, publications, groups, negotiations, actions and events relating to lesbians and gay men, the NUM responded only on 'policy': 'While the union does not have a conference policy it does support motions making a commitment to gay and lesbian rights in TUC and Labour Party Conferences'.<sup>cxxiii</sup> Robinson has argued that LGSM's impact was limited because 'there no longer was a mining community to come to the defence of lesbians and gays when they were attacked'.<sup>cxxiv</sup> By the time of the campaign against Clause 28, four of the five pits operating in Dulais in 1984 had shut.<sup>cxxv</sup> The NUM itself was inevitably weakened by defeat. It cannot be known what would have happened if the miners had won, but a victorious NUM would surely have been a more powerful ally for lesbians and gay men.

LGSM's impact looks stronger when considered more broadly. Tony Benn explained in 1985:

I've mentioned Lesbians and Gays in every meeting for the last six months. That the support the Gays and Lesbians have given the miners led the miners to support the Gays and Lesbians ... At the conference [Labour party conference, 1984] the NUM not only spoke about the mining industry and also on reselection, but they also spoke on women's sections, Black sections and support of the Gays and Lesbians. Now that really is a very significant gain, that a union by the nature of its work has been all male ... came out for the Gays and Lesbians.<sup>cxxvi</sup>

The point was not simply the support offered by the NUM to lesbians and gay men, but the fact that this support could be raised in labour and left meetings across the country, where the positions of the NUM mattered. The passing for the first time of lesbian and gay rights resolutions at the Labour and TUC conferences in 1985 showed that there was a place in the labour movement for lesbians and gay men. The experience of LGSM was used to support both motions.<sup>cxxvii</sup> Proposing the Labour conference resolution, Sarah Roelofs said: ‘The miners’ strike showed what we need in practice and a sister from a South Wales mining community said to us this week – “We are your friends now, and you are our friends and you have changed our world.”’<sup>cxxviii</sup>

LGSM was building on the legacy of the GLF, which had been central in establishing a space for lesbian and gay people on the left where their identity was not subsumed. LGSM carried forward this tradition: ‘The importance of LGSM is simply that we support the miners *openly* as lesbians and gay men’.<sup>cxxix</sup> At the same time, LGSM was clear that it was attempting to integrate that voice into a broader movement. The growing acceptance of lesbian and gay issues in the labour movement would play a role in the passing of progressive legislation by the next Labour government on the age of consent, civil partnerships, and the repeal of Clause 28.<sup>cxxx</sup> If LGSM can hardly be said to be directly responsible for this, it nevertheless suggests the importance of small-scale histories for a fuller understanding of such developments.

LGSM provides an example of the way in which one dispute can become a proxy for a number of struggles. The title of the Harlan County miners’ strike song ‘Which side are you on?’ became a slogan of the 1984–5 strike, including for LGSM.<sup>cxxxi</sup> It was not simply polarizing, however, it provided a focal point for a wide range of disputes with the Thatcher government, which was the basis for the argument that the miners’ strike was crucial for lesbians and gay men. Scargill commented on a key event during the 1972 strike, when Birmingham engineers joined the miners to shut the Saltley coke depot, that ‘the picket line didn’t close Saltley, what happened was the working class closed Saltley’.<sup>cxxxii</sup> In 1974, the miners’ strike brought down the Heath government and Labour returned to power. 1984–5, conversely, was not just a significant defeat for the miners, but for the labour movement and the left more widely.

Yet LGSM has served as something worth salvaging from the dispute. LGSM features in LGBT histories produced by a range of organizations on the left.<sup>cxxxiii</sup> A

pamphlet published by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 2006 noted grass-roots support for the miners ‘including hundreds of lesbians and gay men working through lesbian and gay support groups’, and that ‘the already deepening union backing for lesbian and gay equality was powerfully reinforced by the experience of the miners’ strike’.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> The journalist Gary Younge recalled how as a teenager the failure of the strike left ‘wounds [that] went deep and cured slowly’. The small positive was that as ‘a lesson in how socialism might work it was edifying ... I still recall the conversations of Nottingham miners as they adjusted their worldviews – or at least their language – to the arrival of lesbian and gay, black and feminist support groups’.<sup>cxxxv</sup> Mark Steel went further, arguing that the miners’ defeat did not mean ‘that we’d be better off if it had never taken place. Apart from anything else, it did so much to bring together disparate groups in British society ... And the whole strike was justified when a miners’ brass band was chosen to lead the 1985 Gay Pride march’.<sup>cxxxvi</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm lamented the historiographical moment in the 1970s since when ‘the big, transformative questions have generally been forgotten by historians’ and there has been an increase ‘in what you might call fanzine history, which groups write in order to feel better about themselves’. His example of this was an article in a labour history journal ‘on blacks in Wales in the eighteenth century. Whatever the importance of this to blacks in Wales, it is not in itself a particularly central subject’.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> It would be easy to see the study of a small group of gay men, and an even smaller group of lesbian women, who supported a group of South Wales miners in a similar way. Yet so much is refracted through Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners that it provides an example of the way in which the micro can illuminate the macro. LGSM contributes to a geography of a radical urban gay community in 1980s London; it points to a fundamental turning point in the history of the British left in which class defeat was allied to an increasing openness to identity politics; and it suggests that in suitable circumstance, the solidarity of small groups of politically active people can have a significant impact.

**Diarmaid Kelliher**

---

<sup>i</sup> NOTES AND REFERENCES

Thanks to Joe Kelliher, Antoinette Geoghegan, Kim Bonnar and Adam Lambert for commenting on versions of this essay; and in particular to Matt Cook who supervised the MA dissertation on which it is based. Thanks also to the staff at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre/People's History Museum, to Colin Clews and especially to Mike Jackson.

See for example Jean Spence and Carol Stephenson, "'Side by Side With Our Men?'" Women's Activism, Community, and Gender in the 1984–1985 British Miners' Strike', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 75: 1, March 2009; Monica Shaw and Mave Mundy, 'Complexities of Class and Gender Relations: Recollections of Women Active in the 1984–5 miners' strike', *Capital and Class* 87, autumn 2005.

<sup>ii</sup> Doreen Massey and Hilary Wainright, 'Beyond the Coalfields: the Work of the Miners' Support Groups', in *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners Strike*, ed. Huw Beynon, London, 1985, pp. 149–51.

<sup>iii</sup> But see Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-war Britain: How the Personal Got Political*, Manchester, 2007, pp. 164–168.

<sup>iv</sup> Hall Carpenter Archives (HCA) Gay Men's Oral History Group, *Walking After Midnight: Gay Men's Life Stories*, London, 1989, pp. 211–2.

<sup>v</sup> *Capital Gay*, 5 July 1985, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>vi</sup> Matt Cook, 'From Gay Reform to Gaydar, 1967–2006', in *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Matt Cook, Oxford, 2007, p. 186.

<sup>vii</sup> Hywel Francis, *History on our Side: Wales and the 1984–85 Miners' Strike*, Ferryside, 2009, pp. 32–3.

<sup>viii</sup> Francis, *History on our Side*, pp. 37, 40.

<sup>ix</sup> John Rose, 'Sister, Brother and Twin', *New Statesman*, undated cutting (c. December 1984), Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC)/LGSM/4/2.

<sup>x</sup> Steve Browning, Colin Richardson, Nigel Young and Stephanie Chambers, *Pits and Perverts: Lesbians and Gay Men Support the Miners 1984–1985*, London, undated (c. 1985), p. 3, LHASC/LGSM/2/4; Brian Flynn, Larry Goldsmith and Bob Sutcliffe,

---

‘We Danced in the Miners’ Hall: an Interview with “Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners”’, *Radical America* 19: 2–3, March–June 1985, p. 40.

<sup>xi</sup> Arthur Scargill reportedly told a meeting of Birmingham shop stewards in 1972: ‘We don’t want your pound notes’: Ralph Darlington and Dave Lyddon, *Glorious Summer: Class Struggle in Britain 1972*, London, 2001, pp. 56–62.

<sup>xii</sup> Raphael Samuel, ‘Class Politics: the Lost World of British Communism, Part Three’, *New Left Review* 1/165, September–October 1987, p. 87.

<sup>xiii</sup> Craig Barratt, *Trade Union Membership 2008*, London, 2009, p. 11.

<sup>xiv</sup> Christopher Pissarides, *Unemployment in Britain: a European Success Story*, London, 2003, p. 4.

<sup>xv</sup> Bill Sirs, *Hard Labour*, London, 1985, pp. 9, 28.

<sup>xvi</sup> Hywel Francis, ‘Mining the Popular Front’, *Marxism Today*, February 1985, p. 12.

<sup>xvii</sup> John Gennard, *A History of the National Graphical Association*, London, 1990, pp. 486–92.

<sup>xviii</sup> On the extent of twinning, see Labour Research Department, *Solidarity with the Miners: Actions and Lessons from the Labour Research Department’s Survey of over 300 Miners’ Solidarity Groups*, London, 1985, p. 29. Nearly half of the groups surveyed had twinning arrangements.

<sup>xix</sup> Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*, p. 166.

<sup>xx</sup> Flynn and others, ‘We Danced in the Miners’ Hall’, pp. 43–4.

<sup>xxi</sup> *Valleys Star*, 23 Jan. 1985, p. 1, LHASC/LGSM/3/4.

<sup>xxii</sup> ‘Out in the city’, *City Limits*, undated cutting (c. November 1984), LHASC/LGSM/4/1.

<sup>xxiii</sup> HCA, *Walking After Midnight*, pp. 216–7; LGSM (produced by Jeff Cole), why LGSM? ‘All Out! Dancing in Dulais’, London, video, 1986, available from <http://www.coolcave.co.uk/blog/video/all-out-dancing-in-dulais-1986.html> (accessed 9 Dec. 2012).

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Capital Gay*, 7 Dec. 1984, p. 2.

<sup>xxv</sup> LGSM, ‘Dancing in Dulais’.

<sup>xxvi</sup> LGSM, ‘Total amounts collected at lesbian and gay men’s pubs, clubs etc. during July and December 1984’, 1985, LHASC/LGSM/2/4.

- 
- <sup>xxvii</sup> LGSM, ‘Dancing in Dulais’.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> LGSM, ‘Total amounts collected’.
- <sup>xxix</sup> LGSM minutes, 22 July 1984, LHASC/LGSM/1/1; LGSM, ‘Food Collections’, 1984, LHASC/LGSM/5/1.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, 2nd edn, London, 1990, p. 238.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> *Capital Gay*, 9 Nov. 1984, p. 17.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> LGSM minutes, 14 Oct. 1984, LHASC/LGSM/1/1; *Capital Gay*, 16 Nov. 1984, p. 2.
- 2.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> LGSM, ‘Dancing in Dulais’.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Matt Cook, ‘“Gay Times”: Identity, Locality, Memory, and the Brixton Squats in 1970s London’, *Twentieth Century British History* 24: 1, March 2013, p. 85.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Nigel Young, ‘An Appreciation: Chris Dobney, Rent Registrations and The Miners’, *Brixton Housing Co-Op Newsletter*, December 1984, p. 9, LHASC/LGSM/3/3.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Flynn and others, ‘We Danced in the Miners’ Hall’, p. 40.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> *Come Together: the Years of Gay Liberation 1970–73*, ed. Aubrey Walter, London, 1980, p. 70.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> HCA, *Walking after Midnight*, p. 207.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Mark Ashton, *Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners! A Short History of Lesbian and Gay Involvement in the Miners Strike 1984–5*, undated (c. 1985), p. 2, LHASC/LGSM/3/3.
- <sup>xl</sup> Lisa Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles: an Oral History of the Gay Liberation Front 1970–73*, London, 1995, p. 80.
- <sup>xli</sup> Martin Durham, ‘The Thatcher Government and the Politics of the Family’, in *The Political Legacy of Margaret Thatcher*, ed. Stanislao Pugliese, London, 2003, p. 238; Stephen Jeffrey-Poulter, *Peers, Queers, and Commons: the Struggle for Gay Law Reform from 1950 to the Present*, London, 1991, pp. 158–65.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Peter Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem: Labour and Lesbian and Gay Rights from Edward Carpenter to Today*, London, 2006, p. 33–4; Jill Humphrey, ‘Cracks in the Feminist Mirror? Research and Reflections on Lesbians and Gay Men Working Together’, *Feminist Review* 66, autumn 2000, p. 98.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Jeffrey-Poulter, *Peers, Queers, and Commons*, p. 162.



---

<sup>xliv</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 239; David Rayside, *On the Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics*, Ithaca NY, 1998, p. 23.

<sup>xlv</sup> Mike Jackson, letter to unnamed recipient (possibly *Capital Gay*), c. June 1985, LHAC/LGSM/3/2.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Browning and others, *Pits and Perverts*, p. 2; Flynn and others, 'We Danced in the Miners' Hall', p. 41.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Browning and others, *Pits and Perverts*, p. 2.

<sup>xlviii</sup> LGSM attendance lists, 1984–1985, LHASC/LGSM/1/3.

<sup>xlix</sup> LGSM, 'Dancing in Dulais'.

<sup>1</sup> LGSM, 'Discussion of involvement black [sic] and lesbian people in Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners', LHASC/LGSM/1/2.

<sup>ii</sup> Browning and others, *Pits and Perverts*, p. 4.

<sup>iii</sup> 'Statement by Socialist Workers Party on Lesbians Against Pit Closures', 1984, LHASC/LGSM/2/4.

<sup>iiii</sup> Janet Dixon, 'Separatism: a Look Back at Anger', in *Radical Records: Thirty Years of Lesbian and Gay History, 1957–1987*, ed. Bob Cant and Susan Hemmings, 2nd edn, Abingdon, 2010, p. 74; Power, *No Bath*, p. 239.

<sup>liv</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 200.

<sup>lv</sup> LGSM, 'Dancing in Dulais'.

<sup>lvi</sup> Humphreys, 'Cracks in the Feminist Mirror?', p. 106.

<sup>lvii</sup> Cook, 'From Gay Reform to Gaydar', p. 187.

<sup>lviii</sup> Peter Keogh, Laurie Henderson and Catherine Dodds, *Ethnic Minority Gay Men: Redefining Community, Restoring Identity*, London, 2004, p. 23.

<sup>lix</sup> Robert Kincaid, 'Collections and Connections: Getting our Message Across', *Square Peg* 7, 1984, p. 12.

<sup>lx</sup> David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*, London and New York, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>lxi</sup> Cook, 'From Gay Reform to Gaydar', p. 206.

<sup>lxii</sup> Gethin Roberts, 'Pits & Perverts', *Chartist* 103, February–April 1985, LHASC/LGSM/4/3.

<sup>lxiii</sup> LGSM, 'Dancing in Dulais'.

- 
- <sup>lxiv</sup> Andy Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies*, London, 2009, pp. 77–8.
- <sup>lxv</sup> Paul Gordon, “‘If they Come in the Morning...’: the Police, the Miners and Black People”, in *Policing the Miners’ Strike*, ed. Bob Fine and Robert Millar, London, 1985, p. 161.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> Gordon, “‘If they Come in the Morning...’”, p. 165.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> Kate Thomas, ‘Fighting for gay liberation’, *Socialist Worker*, undated cutting (c. 1985), LHASC/LGSM/4/3.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> Kincaid, ‘Collections and Connections’, p. 13.
- <sup>lxix</sup> Andy Matheson, ‘Translation of an interview with “Il Manifesto”’, 1984, LHASC/LGSM/3/2.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Kincaid, ‘Collections and Connections’, p. 13.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> LGSM, ‘Dancing in Dulais’.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> LGSM, ‘Dancing in Dulais’.
- <sup>lxxiii</sup> David Howell, “‘Where’s Ramsay MacKinnock?’: Labour Leadership and the Miners’, in *Digging Deeper*, ed. Beynon, p. 181.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> Hywel Francis, ‘The Law, Oral Tradition and the Mining Community’, *Journal of Law and Society* 12: 3, winter 1985, p. 268; Francis, *History on our Side*, pp. 16–19.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 238.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> ‘Pounds, Pride & Politics’, *City Limits*, 21–7 June 1985, p. 9.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 239; *Capital Gay*, 2 March 1984, p. 5.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> *Out: Irish Youth Magazine*, February–March 1985, p. 7, LHASC/LGSM/4/2.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> *Capital Gay*, 7 Dec. 1984, p. 2.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> Kincaid, ‘Collections and Connections’, p. 12.
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> LGSM minutes, 16 Dec. 1984 and 6 Jan. 1985, LHASC/LGSM/1/2.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> Flynn and others, ‘We Danced in the Miners’ Hall’, p. 41.
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> It features in much of what they produced. See for example: ‘LGSM: The Struggle Continues’, LHASC/LGSM/3/1.
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> GLF Manifesto Group, *Gay Liberation Front Manifesto*, London, 1971, p. 7.
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> Spence and Stephenson, “‘Side by side with our men?’”, p. 74.
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> Kent miner Malcolm Pitt wrote of 1972: ‘Student solidarity often put the miners into a totally unknown environment, and home-loving conservatives found

---

themselves in the completely unconventional atmosphere of a student commune’.

Malcolm Pitt, *The World on Our Backs: the Kent Miners and the 1972 Miners’ Strike*, London, 1979, p. 177.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Raphael Samuel, ‘Friends and Outsiders’, *New Statesman*, 11 Jan. 1985, p. 15.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Roberts, ‘Pits & Perverts’.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Flynn and others, ‘We Danced in the Miners’ Hall’, p. 45.

<sup>xc</sup> Clive Bradley, ‘Out of the Ghetto’, *Socialist Organiser* 199, 4 Oct. 1984, p. 4.

<sup>xci</sup> Steve Valocchi, ‘The Class-Inflected Nature of Gay Identity’, *Social Problems* 46: 2, May 1999, p. 207.

<sup>xcii</sup> LGSM, ‘Opinion – City Limits’, undated draft (c. November 1984),

LHASC/LGSM/3/2.

<sup>xciii</sup> Hugh David, *On Queer Street: a Social History of British Homosexuality, 1895–1995*, London, 1997, p. 255.

<sup>xciv</sup> Peter Campbell, letter to Anna Durrell; Paul Canning; Peter Ashman; Mike Foxwell; Hugh Robertson; John McKay; Birmingham Lesbian/Gay Community Centre, 17 Nov. 1984, LHASC/LGSM/2/3.

<sup>xcv</sup> *Capital Gay*, 14 Dec. 1984, p. 10; *City Limits*, 4–10 Jan. 1985,

LHASC/LGSM/4/1.

<sup>xcvi</sup> Mike Jackson, ‘Transcript of speech at LGSM conference 30th March ’85 at LL&GC, EC1’, LHASC/LGSM/3/2.

<sup>xcvii</sup> Bradley, ‘Out of the Ghetto’, p. 4.

<sup>xcviii</sup> Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*, p. 166.

<sup>xcix</sup> Browning and others, *Pits and Perverts*, p. 2.

<sup>c</sup> LGSM minutes, 12 Aug. 1984, LHASC/LGSM/1/1.

<sup>ci</sup> Kincaid, ‘Collections and Connections’, p. 12.

<sup>cii</sup> Sue Donnelly, ‘Coming Out in the Archives: the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics’, *History Workshop Journal* 66, autumn 2008, pp. 180–1; HCA, *Walking after Midnight*, pp. 205–23.

<sup>ciii</sup> Tony Kushner, ‘Great Britons: Immigration, History and Memory’, in *Histories and Memories: Migrants and their History in Britain*, ed. Kathy Burrell and Panikos Panayi, London, 2006, p. 22.

- 
- civ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984–5 UK Miners' Strike*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012, p. 165.
- cv West London Media Workshop, 'Invitation to preview of *Supporting the Miners and Scotland after the Strike*', LHASC/LGSM/3/5.
- cvi Mike Jackson, letter to Hywel Francis, 2 Nov. 1985, LHASC/LGSM/2/5.
- cvi David Blunkett, letter to Mike Jackson, 12 July 1985, LHASC/LGSM/2/5.
- cvi Peter Heathfield, letter to Mike Jackson, 26 Nov. 1985; Hywel Francis, letter to Mike Jackson, 15 Nov. 1985, LHASC/LGSM/2/5.
- cix LGSM exhibition bookings, 1986, LHASC/LGSM/2/4.
- cx Archives Hub, 'Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners', undated, available from <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb394-394lgsm> (accessed 9 Dec. 2012).
- cx Manchester Trades Union Council, 'Everybody Out! A conference celebrating LGBT trades union history', available from <http://lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/calendar/Documents2011/LGBT%20leaflet.pdf> (accessed 9 Dec. 2012).
- cxii Some responded to a survey conducted by the Labour Research Department at the time: Labour Research Department, *Solidarity with the Miners*, pp. 29–30.
- cxiii *Footsteps and Witnesses: Lesbian and Gay Lifestories from Scotland*, ed. Bob Cant, 2nd edn, Edinburgh, 2008, p. 95.
- cxiv 'Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners at the Hacienda', Manchester, MCTV 1 VHS, 1985, available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nW5rq6nAams> (accessed 9 Dec. 2012).
- cxv *Lesbian and Gay Socialist*, summer 1986, p. 15.
- cxvi *Capital Gay*, 5 July 1985, p. 9; Browning and others, *Pits and Perverts*, p. 3.
- cxvii Stephen Gee, 'With love – to one who wasn't there', *Capital Gay*, 12 July 1985, p. 16.
- cxviii Mike Jackson, press release, 14 March 1988, LHASC/LGSM/2/3.
- cxix LGSM, 'Which side are you on?', LHASC/LGSM/3/1.
- cxx Cook, 'From Gay Reform to Gaydar', p. 204.
- cxxi Kath Jones, letter to Mike Jackson, 24 Feb. 1988, LHASC/LGSM/2/3.
- cxvii Peter Heathfield, letter to Rebecca Flemming, 19 April 1988, LHASC/LGSM/2/3.

- 
- <sup>cxxiii</sup> Trades Union Congress, *Unions Working for Lesbian and Gay Members*, London, 1991, p. 13.
- <sup>cxxiv</sup> Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*, p. 179.
- <sup>cxxv</sup> Mike Jackson, press release, 14 March 1988.
- <sup>cxxvi</sup> Sarah Roelofs and Paul Canning, ‘In conversation with Tony Benn MP’, *Lesbian and Gay Socialist*, spring 1985, p. 6.
- <sup>cxxvii</sup> Trades Union Congress, *Congress Report 1985*, London, 1985, p. 635.
- <sup>cxxviii</sup> *London Labour Briefing* 54, November 1985, p. 11. Mike Jackson has suggested to me in personal correspondence recently that NUM support was crucial in these votes being won – while lesbian and gay rights motions had been raised in previous years without success, Jackson’s understanding is that once the miners’ union announced they would be voting in favour of lesbian and gay rights, the other ‘blue collar’ unions followed. Mike Jackson, email to author, 4 Sept. 2013.
- <sup>cxxix</sup> Mike Jackson, letter to Mark Ovendon, 25 Oct. 1984, LHAS/LGSM/2/1.
- <sup>cxxx</sup> Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, pp. 55–62.
- <sup>cxxxii</sup> LGSM, ‘Which side are you on?’, LHAS/LGSM/3/1.
- <sup>cxxxiii</sup> Arthur Scargill, ‘The New Unionism’, *New Left Review* 1/92, July–August 1975, p. 17.
- <sup>cxxxiiii</sup> On the far left see for example, from the SWP’s publishing house: Hannah Dee, *The Red in the Rainbow: Sexuality, Socialism and LGBT Liberation*, London, 2010, p. 115–17.
- <sup>cxxxv</sup> Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, p. 48.
- <sup>cxxxvi</sup> Gary Younge, ‘How the miners’ strike taught me to believe in impossible things’, *Guardian*, 16 March 2009, p. 29.
- <sup>cxxxvii</sup> Mark Steel, ‘So this is the long-term survival of British coal’, *Independent*, 18 July 2002, p. 16. Mark Steel is a little inaccurate here – according to Mike Jackson (email to author, 4 Sept. 2013) the brass band referred to was actually the ‘Big Red Band’, a London-based socialist band which LGSM invited to join them on the march.
- <sup>cxxxviii</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Interview: World Distempers’, *New Left Review*, 2/61, January–February 2010, pp. 148–9.