



Sedgley's Diamond 60

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1984

Policing the 1984 Miners' Strike

by David Melhuish

As a 40-year-old recently-promoted inspector in the West Midlands Police, I experienced the Miners' Strike three times between June and October 1984. The National Coal Board wanted to close uneconomic pits while the National Union of Mineworkers wanted to safeguard members' jobs. A bitter year-long dispute took place in which the police were involved in dealing with striking pickets.

The first two occasions on which I was involved were generally uneventful. On the third we were billeted at RAF Leeming near Catterick, North Yorkshire. We then had to travel to the South Yorkshire coalfields to our standby position. There was a mad dash around unknown country lanes to another colliery where there were reports of trouble - but then no action.

A game of cricket was soon in progress on the colliery access road - we had to do something to pass the time. The strikers applauded a few decent strikes of the ball and even returned it to us when it reached the boundary.

Suddenly you could feel the tension rising, the number of miners increased, and the bantering chants rose in volume. White-collar staff together with some non-striking miners had arrived to carry out safety inspections at the pit. The striking miners tried to close the road to prevent their access.

We were required to force them back onto the other side again to open the roadway for the visitors, which we successfully achieved. It was a rowdy, shouting, tussling, push-and-shove match, but generally good-humoured.

For me the Miners' Strike meant long hours, lots of travelling and little, if any action, ending up with quite a healthy bank balance (for a change) for the overtime I worked, considering police pay always lagged behind that of the general public!



A picket confronts the police.



Mounted police charge the picket lines at British Steel's Orgreave coking plant.



Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers during the strike.