



Frank Arrowsmith
Yorkshire Main

Frank Arrowsmith is a courageous and determined man who has devoted his life to the mining industry. Working as an official at Yorkshire Main Colliery, he became a strong figure of his community. Frank is full of amusing and interesting stories about his experience of the turmoil that was the miners' strike and how this affected his life and those surrounding him.

Frank left school at the age of fifteen without any qualifications after a terrible experience of education. A few short weeks later, he found himself working alongside his extended family on the pit site. This was no surprise to Frank, as it was a family tradition. An expectation. 'Like a grown-up world at only fifteen' he stated. When Frank first started working he was incredibly nervous due to the fact that he knew nobody there except his family, and he could get badly injured. Frank said 'It was the shortest interview of my life.'

Having secured the job, he began the induction period. First he had to pass a medical examination. Once he was considered well enough, he was shadowed by a supervisor for twenty days, until he was competent and confident enough to go down the mines by himself. 'I'll always remember that day, because he frightened me, he did.' Frank explained. 'I knew I needed to work hard and not let my family down. It was a great job, a great opportunity.'

Frank's father worked as a miner and his mother and wife were both integral to the mining community. Frank was actively involved in the strike, organising protests all over Doncaster. He also traveled all around the country to picket for other communities. To take part in the picket lines, you had to be a strong member with a determined heart, as it was tough to participate in. Frank was even involved in the Battle of Orgreave, which he refused to label as a battle. 'I didn't see Orgreave as a battle, because a battle is when there are two sides fighting each other, but it was just the police fighting us.'

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During the strike, the miners were so desperate for supplies, some of them actually sneaked over to the pit tops and stole sizeable lumps of coal for their heating. 'After all', he added, 'we're the ones that dug it all up in the first place.' The miners also had their own little saying: 'A miner's most important duties; keep your family warm, keep your family fed.' The tone of Frank's voice, as he recalled this, showed how dedicated he was to his family. So much so, that he was willing to do anything to keep himself and his family safe, warm and fed.

In 1985, the strike ended and the miners reluctantly returned back to work. Margaret Thatcher had won. However, Frank didn't go back to work, he stayed at home, still bitter and angry from the outcome of the strike.



AT THE COALFACE THE PEOPLE

Many ex-miners celebrated the death of Thatcher. Frank and his family were some of those people. 'Did I celebrate Margaret Thatcher's death? Ooh... Yes! Yes I did.' Arrowsmith and his friends and family were so pleased at Thatcher's death, they threw a party. 'I would look at Thatcher as someone who cost me my job and ruined my life.' Frank believed that Margaret Thatcher demolished his community.

We also consulted Frank on our guiding question: What does the community of Doncaster owe to the miners? Frank answered 'I think the the community owes a lot to the miners, because we have done so much toward Doncaster, as well as other places. Our work could have changed the world.' He was boasting now, recalling the work he'd done in his time.

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Frank worked down the mine for 45 years and later went on to become a Trade Union official; helping to organise local mini-strikes supported by the public. He retired at the age of 60 after a long career devoted to the mining industry. Frank has remained a strong and influential member of his community and has been an amazing inspiration. At present, He has stuck to his responsibility of leading people by taking on the challenge of being the Deputy Mayor of Edlington.

Frank has helped us understand what it was like to be a miner, especially during the strike. Finally, we would like to show appreciation Frank for his honesty, his courage and for taking the time to talk us about his life. We will never forget the Miners' Strike of 1984; it was a significant part of UK's history. Let us learn from those that have lived before us and be thankful for all they have done.

Emilly-Mae Poland and Thomas Morrell

XP School