

IN MEMORIAM

Comrade Bridget Bell



FOR PEACE AND SOCIALISM
Morning★Star

Arthur Scargill to deliver eulogy at funeral of mining legend Bridget Bell

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Friday 23rd August 2019

TRIBUTES will be paid to a campaigner who staged a heroic five-day women's occupation of Staffordshire colliery to oppose the Tories' final butchery of the coalmining industry in 1993.

Bridget Bell, whose funeral takes place tomorrow at Barnsley crematorium, died on August 8 aged 64.

Her eulogy will be delivered by Arthur Scargill, who was president of the National Union of Mineworkers during the strike against pit closures of 1984-5, and who described her as "an inspiration."

Winchester-born Ms Bell was living in the Midlands by the time of the strike against closures.

Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign secretary Kate Flannery said: "Bridget was a key activist in the North Staffordshire Miners' Wives Action Group during the '84-5 miners' strike.

"She was a great comrade and friend of the miners, the National Union of Mineworkers and Justice for Mineworkers.

“She championed and played a leading role in Women Against Pit Closures and was one of our main activists in the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

“Bridget played a massive role in organising one of our biggest events — the Orgreave Mass Picnic and Festival in 2014 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Orgreave and the miners’ strike, and in organising our Orgreave Justice Conference in 2016.

“Bridget’s tenacity, socialist principles, passion and enthusiasm for life will be sadly missed.”

She added: “We have lost a tireless campaigner, a comrade, a sister and a true friend.

“We honour Bridget’s legacy by continuing to mobilise and fight for truth and justice.”

Mr Scargill told the Morning Star: “Bridget was an inspiration. She took part in the fiveday occupation of the tower at Trentham pit in Stoke in 1993.

“She came to live in Barnsley 15 years ago and played a tremendous role in the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, and on behalf of many people who were homeless, dispossessed and others.

“Today I shall be speaking for all those miners, miners’ wives, women against pit closures and support groups around the world in paying tribute to her. She was a fighter to the end.”

Rose Hunter, a close comrade of Ms Bell, told the Morning Star: “She got a job at Barnsley College and got involved in the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign and set up the picnic and festival.

“She was also a singer. We raised money for Justice for Mineworkers by going to conferences, singing our own songs.

“We raised money for sacked miners — that was a massive part of our work.”

Ms Bell leaves a daughter, Stevie.

Donations in her memory can be made to Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign (www.sheffieldpsc.org.uk) and/or Barnsley Hospice, Church Street, Barnsley (www.barnsleyhospice.org).

LALKAR

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Comrade Bridget Bell, a dedicated fighter for the working class lost her struggle against cancer on 8 August 2019 in her adopted home of Barnsley.

Bridget came to prominence in the 1984/5 miners' strike as a leading member of North Staffordshire Miners' Wives Action Group and later served as the secretary of the national strike support organisation;- Women against pit closures (WAPC).

Talking in later years about the strike and the women's role in it she said *"We all came together and formed a united front, and that was what was so wonderful about it. We know that when there is a serious attempt to destroy our class we can all unite. I can't think of anything more inspiring than that."* In 1987 she joined the newly formed Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and won huge respect when after the attack on the twin towers in 2001 she refused to equate the violence of the oppressed with that of the oppressors, a position that angered many of those inside the SLP still tied to SocialDemocratic thinking.

She resigned from that party in protest at the expulsion of a group of communists whom she then joined when they formed the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) in 2004. It was during that year, with the closure of Selby Colliery, that Bridget in a public meeting displayed her understanding of imperialism and the support given to it by Social-Democracy when she said; *"We think it's a scandal that seven years into a Labour administration we're still facing pit closures"*.

Bridget's heart was always with the mining communities even after the pits were destroyed and unfortunately she let all other forms of struggle lapse to concentrate on the work of bringing to public awareness the plight of victimised miners who were sacked during the strike and the struggle to get justice for those injured and imprisoned by the police who rioted at Orgreave with batons, shields, cavalry and armoured vans alongside a troop of media liars and newsroom con-artists.

Bridget always knew which side she was on in any struggle because she always looked at the basic question of which class was the beneficiary of any given position and action within that struggle. She could put aside the illusions of bourgeois democracy and see that in a class society an action by the poor in retaliation could not be viewed in the same way as the actions of the rich against us.

Farewell comrade Bridget, we are stronger for having known you.



11th August 2019

The OTJC are extremely sad to learn the devastating news that Bridget Bell has died.

Bridget was a key activist in the North Staffs Miners Wives Action Group during the 84/5 Miners Strike. She was a great comrade and friend of the Miners, the National Union of Mineworkers and Justice for Mineworkers. She championed and played a leading role in Women Against Pit Closures and was one of our main activists in the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign. Bridget played a massive role in organising one of our biggest events – the Orgreave Mass Picnic and Festival in 2014 to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Orgreave and the Miners Strike, and in organising our Orgreave Justice Conference in 2016.

Bridget's tenacity, socialist principles, passion and enthusiasm for life will be sadly missed. We have lost a tireless campaigner, a comrade, a sister and a true friend. We honour Bridget's legacy by continuing to mobilise and fight for truth and justice.

Rest in Power Bridget.