

Talk Outline

Pit Lasses **Women and Girls in Coalmining c1800-1914** by **Denise Bates**

Pit Lasses tells the story of around 6,000 women and girls aged between 5 – 75 years old who were working underground in coal mines in parts of Great Britain in 1842, the year females were banned from this work. Beginning c1800 it analyses why women became involved in mining and the work they carried out, the many factors that led to them being excluded from underground work in 1842, including the myth that they worked topless alongside naked men and how they adapted to a ban which threatened their livelihood.

Sparked by the discovery that my 4x Great Grandmother was one of these women, I carried out new and extensive research in primary sources, trying to discover what her life would have been like. These sources included the reports of the Children's Employment Commission published in May 1842, the 1841 census, Hansard and contemporary newspapers. Using the information given to the Royal Commission by 300+ women and girls who worked in the Lancashire, Yorkshire, Scottish and Welsh coal fields, ***Pit Lasses*** demonstrates that the shocking criticisms of mining women made in 1842 were based on trivial or out-of-context evidence given by witnesses who had a vested interest in denigrating female miners. Far from being feckless, pitiable creatures, female miners were principled, moral women who earned their living and ran a home to a good standard.

I offer talks about some or all of the subject matter covered in ***Pit Lasses***, tailored to the interests of the audience and the time available. By arrangement, I can focus on the national position or link my material specifically to one of the four regions where women worked underground. Alternatively I can develop one or more themes in greater depth.

Components of a talk

- The four regions where women worked underground and why they did so
- The jobs carried out by female miners
- What women actually thought about mining as an occupation
- The work of the Children's Employment Commission
- How mining women managed their homes and families
- Education, health, clothes, morality
- The impact of the Royal Commission Report in 1842
- The Impact of the Mines Act 1842 – 1911

My credentials

- History Graduate (MA)
- Author of *Pit Lasses* (published 2012)
- Author of *Breach of Promise to Marry* (published 2014)
- Author of *Historical Research Using British Newspapers* (published 2016)

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