

Talk Outline

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

Pit Lasses tells the story of approximately 7,000 women and girls aged between 5-80 years old, who were working underground in coal mines in 1842. This was the year that females were banned from underground work, after a scandalous report indicated that they were being morally corrupted.

Sparked by the discovery that my 4x Great Grandmother was one of these women, I carried out new and extensive research in a number of primary sources, trying to discover what her life would have been like. The Children's Employment Commission of 1841 spoke to 300+ female miners from Scotland, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Wales, as well as receiving statements from mine-owners, clergymen, doctors and teachers. The women's evidence demonstrates that the shocking criticisms of mining women made in 1842, were based on negative statements made by male witnesses, many of who had a vested interest in denigrating female miners. Far from being feckless, pitiable creatures, they were principled, moral women who earned their living and carried out their domestic duties to a good standard.

The talk covers the four regions where women worked underground and why they did so, the jobs carried out by female miners, the Royal Commission investigation and its aftermath, and how displaced mining women adapted to enforced change about how they could earn a living.

My credentials

History Graduate (MA)

Author of *Pit Lasses* (2012), updated version (2023)

Author of *Breach of Promise to Marry* (2014)

Author of *Historical Research Using British Newspapers* (2016)

Contributor to television, radio and magazines