

## **Large Print guide Booklet One**

On The Line: 100 years of strikes & solidarity

**Sections:** Access station, Introduction and Crossing the line

**Text size:** 18pt



This guide contains:

- Large print of the wall texts and labels within this exhibition section.
- Short descriptions of the objects and images within this exhibition section.

Magnifiers and colour overlays are also available.

Please ask a staff member if you need any further assistance.



## **Booklet One: Access station, Introduction and Crossing the line**

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This guide follows the order of the displays within these sections of the exhibition.

When you have finished using this guide, please return it or give it to a member of staff. Thank you.

Please share with us any feedback on this resource. You can email [access@phm.org.uk](mailto:access@phm.org.uk) or share your feedback with a member of staff.

## **Section: Access station**

This access station contains large print text and braille transcriptions. You will also find magnifying glasses, colour overlays, ear defenders, and sensory bags. You can access BSL interpreted and audio narrated versions of interpretation via QR codes at the start of each section or case. Although there are a range of accessible formats available, we understand everyone's access needs are different. If you want to discuss your access needs, please speak to a member of the museum team.

## **Introduction – On The Line: 100 years of strikes & solidarity**

This exhibition explores the last 100 years of turbulent industrial relations, a landscape shaped by the 1926 General Strike, and the disputes that followed.

At one minute to midnight on 3 May 1926, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called for a national strike. For nine days Britain came to a standstill. Almost two million workers withdrew their labour in support of miners who had been locked out of work after refusing to accept lower pay and longer hours.

The TUC ended the strike on 12 May without an agreement. As a result, the miners continued striking for another seven months, before poverty and starvation eventually forced their surrender and return to work. This bitter defeat would stay with people for generations, but the lessons learnt would lay the groundwork for future strikes.

This exhibition looks at key disputes from the last century, the conflicts and issues underpinning them, and their impact on communities, while highlighting the importance of solidarity and the power of collective action in driving change.

## **Section: Crossing the line**

### **Union and Victory banner, 1889**

This banner was made for the Great London Dock Strike of 1889, a historic victory for the trade union movement that won improved pay and conditions for the struggling dock workers. It went on to be used at every major dispute that followed. The banner's simple message and proud history became a symbol of what unions can achieve through collective action.

#### **[Object description]**

A weathered banner measuring approximately 3 metres wide and 1.6 metres high, with a faded cream background and dark green borders. Large, gold lettering reading 'UNION AND VICTORY' fills the background.

### **[Section Introduction] – Crossing the line**

'The strike is the weapon of the oppressed.' –  
Eugene V Debs

The decision to strike is never taken lightly. It is often a last resort and sometimes the only voice workers have to affect change.

So, what drives people to strike?

At the heart of many disputes is the battle for a living wage. In times of economic hardship, cuts to jobs, pay, and working hours can be catastrophic for individuals and communities.

The late 1960s and 1970s saw a rise in industrial action over discrimination in the workplace, with demands for gender equality and the growing grievances of Black and Asian workers. Motivated by profit, employers had exploited recent waves of immigration for cheap labour. Racist bullying, harassment, and long working hours were common, with many in hospitality for example working up to 70 hours a week.

The ways and places where people work may have changed, but similar issues remain today. Inequality, dangerous working conditions, low wages, and unfair contracts have not gone away.

### **Miners in Scotland collecting food and clothes photograph, 1926**

Following the First World War the coal industry fell into economic decline. To remain profitable, mine owners imposed lower pay and increased working hours. 'Not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay' was the miners' defiant

## Crossing the line

response. It resulted in over a million miners being locked out of work and was the trigger point for the 1926 General Strike.

[Object description]

A sepia photograph of a crowd, including children, gathered around a raised platform from which people are distributing packages.

## **Wanted a Living Wage poster, 1972**

In 1972 the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) went on strike after pay negotiations broke down. This turbulent dispute led to power shortages and the government declaring a state of emergency. In the 1970s most of Britain's electricity was produced by burning coal. In a show of solidarity, railway and power station workers refused to handle coal during the strike.

[Object description]

Black and white illustration of a miner's head wearing a hard hat. Bold red text above reads 'WANTED', and below, 'A Living Wage'.

**Mrs Margaret Dobb, the wife of a Nottinghamshire miner, campaigns for a better wage at a National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) protest in London photograph, 1972**

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of a bustling crowd at a protest. In the foreground, a large placard is being carried by a smiling woman. The placard shows a miner in a hard hat, with text 'WANTED A Living Wage'.

**Miners marching through central London photograph, 1972**

[Object Description]

Black and white photograph of a dense crowd, many holding protest posters reading 'A MINER CARRIES', walking down a street.

**A Miner Carries poster, 1972**

This poster is from the 1972 Miners' Strike. It was the first official national coal strike since 1926. Miners' pay had fallen well below other industrial jobs. The strike began on 9 January and lasted seven weeks, when an improved pay deal was agreed. Posters like this rallied a large amount of public sympathy.

## Crossing the line

[Object description]

Black and white illustration of a man wearing a bowler hat and smoking a cigar, riding on the back of a coalminer. The miner has a pickaxe. Text reads 'A MINER CARRIES A Lamp, Helmet, Snaptin, Self-Rescuer. HE'LL CARRY NO MORE'.

## **Women Work Night and Day for Low Pay and No Say poster, around 1970**

1970 saw the passing of the Equal Pay Act, which established the principle of equal pay for men and women doing the same or similar work. The Act was triggered by the Ford sewing machinists' strike of 1968, where women were paid 15% less than men in similar roles. This poster illustrates the unfair working conditions women still faced after the introduction of the Act.

[Object description]

Centre right of the poster is bold green text, 'WOMEN WORK night and day for low pay and no say', with red text 'NO WAY!'. In the bottom left is a black and white illustration of a woman at a sewing machine. In small red text at the bottom is 'a Communist Party poster'.

## **Women from Ford Dagenham strike photograph, 1984**

**By Carlos Guarita**

The female sewing machinists strike at Ford Dagenham in 1968 was seen as a turning point in gender equality. Although the strike resulted in improved pay, the skilled nature of their work was not recognised. This photograph shows the further strike action that took place in the winter of 1984 to 1985 which finally led to jobs being re-graded as skilled work.

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of four women holding a banner. It reads 'FORDS GRADING GRIEVANCE 1968 16 YRS IS TOO LONG TO WAIT'.

## **Glasgow Women's Strike photographs, 2018**

The Glasgow Women's Strike was a pivotal moment in the struggle for equal pay and gender equality in the workplace. More than 8,000 women from the GMB and UNISON trade unions took part in a 48 hour dispute, from 23 to 24 October 2018. The strike effectively brought Glasgow to a standstill.

Images courtesy of GMB Union

## Crossing the line

[Object description]

Three colour photographs. First is a child wearing a t-shirt reading 'EQUAL PAY'. The child is holding a placard which has a woman's face on it, with the words 'FIGHT THE POWER' underneath. Second photograph is a group of women holding placards outside a school. Third is a dense crowd marching down Ingram Street in Glasgow city centre holding orange placards.

## **Glasgow Women's Strike placards, 2018**

Following a pay and job evaluation at Glasgow City Council in 2006, it became clear female dominated roles were being paid up to £4,000 a year less than male colleagues. What followed was the largest ever equal pay dispute in the UK, lasting 12 years. The strike and campaign resulted in a victory for the unions and their members, who were primarily employed as cleaners, caterers, carers, and support workers.

On loan from GMB Union

[Object description]

'GLASGOW WOMEN'S STRIKE' printed at the top of the placard. Beneath this reads 'I CARE FOR YOUR PARENTS, I CLEAN YOUR SCHOOL, I FEED YOUR KIDS'. Beneath this, in large white text in a pink box 'WOMEN MAKE GLASGOW'.

A placard with three men in suits printed on a black background. At the bottom of the placard, text reads 'Decade of Delay'.

**Jayaben Desai demonstrating outside  
the Grunwick Film Processing  
Laboratories photograph,  
17 October 1977**

In August 1976, Jayaben Desai and a group of other migrant workers walked out of the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in Brent, London, in support of a sacked colleague. Managers oversaw a controlling and oppressive environment in which workers were low paid, forced to work overtime without notice, and had to ask permission to use the toilet. Jayaben led the two year strike that followed.

[Object Description]

Black and white photograph of Jayaben Desai with her fist raised. She appears to be mid-sentence. Jayaben is wearing a white armband partially showing the text 'APEX PICKET'.

Crossing the line

## **Black Workers & Trade Unions poster, 1980s**

The 1970s saw a wave of strikes highlighting racial discrimination in the workplace. Many migrant workers were paid proportionally lower than other workers and faced less favourable working conditions.

This poster advertises an event put on by the Asian Action Group and includes Grunwick Strike leader Jayaben Desai as a speaker. It shows the growth of self-organisation and networks of community support.

[Object description]

Yellow and black print of a crowd of South-Asian workers, mainly women. Above them an illustrated red banner with the text 'BLACK WORKERS & TRADE UNIONS'. Resting under their arms are four placards, with text detailing a meeting. All text is written in English, Bengali and Urdu.

## **Garners Strike Cttee Mass Rally and Picket poster, 1978**

Garners was a chain of steakhouse restaurants in London. Workers went on strike on 26 January 1978, after the management refused to recognise their membership of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). The

strike was important in highlighting the poor wages and conditions faced by migrant workers in the catering industry.

[Object description]

Hand drawn text, printed in red and brown on yellow paper. Advertising a rally and march to Trafalgar Square on Saturday 7 October. Text includes '8 MONTHS ON STRIKE NO MORE WAITING!' and speakers from Grunwick and Sandersons Strike committees.

## **Garners Steakhouse strike photograph, 1978**

**By Jak Kilby**

This photograph shows pickets outside a branch of Garners Steakhouse. Picketing of the restaurant chain began when 80 strikers were sacked following a dispute over union recognition. Despite the huge impact the picketing had on the restaurant's trade, and support from the wider labour movement, the strike ended unsuccessfully in June 1979.

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of a picket line outside 'Garner Steak house'. Several people are holding 'OFFICIAL STRIKE' signs, while a smartly dressed waiter stands in the doorway.

Crossing the line

## **Hotel + Catering Workers Know Your Rights poster, around 1977**

**By John Phillips**

This poster, from the International Workers' Branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), promotes new workers' rights and union membership. During the 1970s numerous industrial disputes exposed exploitative work practices in the hospitality industry. These particularly affected low paid migrant workers who had not previously been protected by trade union support.

[Object description]

Central image of a worker pouring the text 'PAY, TIPS, MEALS, HOLIDAYS, LIVING-IN, OVERTIME', from a cooking pot. Along the top, text urges 'Hotel + Catering Workers KNOW YOUR RIGHTS', and along the bottom, 'JOIN THE UNION!'. Printed in orange, white, and blue.

**[Guidance]**

As you move to next object, please be aware that there is a shin height white plinth that extends approximately 50 centimetres from the wall. The plinth is 70 centimetres wide.

## **Liverpool Dockers t-shirt, 1996**

The 1995 to 1998 Liverpool dockers' dispute began when hundreds of workers were sacked

for refusing to cross a picket line in solidarity with colleagues. Issues began when Mersey Docks introduced new, harsher contracts. These t-shirts were sold to raise funds and awareness. Liverpool FC footballer Robbie Fowler was fined £900 for revealing one during a European game. The dispute ended in January 1998 when the dockers accepted a settlement.

[Object description]

A red round neck t-shirt with central white text reading 'DOCKERS'. The letters 'CK' are larger than the others, to mimic the Calvin Klein logo. Above it reads '500 Liverpool' and below, 'Sacked since September 1995'.

### **Defend Rail Protect... Jobs Pay Pensions RMT placard, 2022**

Between 2022 and 2024, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) began a sustained national campaign of industrial action to defend pay, jobs, and safety against government cost cutting. RMT managed to build public sympathy despite significant disruption. The dispute lasted for two years and resulted in victory for the unions.

On loan from RMT

[Object Description]

Green and white placard reading 'DEFEND  
Rail protect... JOBS PAY

Crossing the line

PENSIONS'. Borders round each of the latter three words are in a stylised train design.

**Photographs of National Union of Rail,  
Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)  
pickets, protests and leafletting at  
stations across Manchester and  
North West England, 2020s**

Images courtesy of RMT

[Object descriptions]

Two colour photographs of pickets showing protestors holding 'DEFEND RAIL' banners and placards. In one photograph the crowd are outside of a café, the other outside a train station.

**The end**

This is the end of the Large Print guide - Booklet One for the On The Line exhibition. Please return the guide or give it to a member of staff. Thank you.

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