



# The Durham Miner

No 12 July 2013



*The Durham Miner is the newsletter of the Durham Miners' Association, General Secretary, Dave Hopper PO Box 6, The Miners Hall, Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB. Tel: 0191 3843515*

## Defend Our Communities

### Durham Miners' Association Takes Up The Challenge

By  
General Secretary Dave Hopper

**T**he Durham Miners' Association has launched a campaign to unite all interested parties in the defence of our communities.

Our former mining towns and villages are now suffering a sustained attack by the most vicious capitalist government since the hard times of the 1930s.

De-industrialisation of the North East lost the region tens of thousands of jobs. Now, we have Cameron and Clegg to thank for keeping us up at the top of the jobless league.

Being unemployed is bad enough but the disgraceful onslaught on what are, at best, meagre benefits, is driving people into abject poverty. The most callous treatment of all, however, is reserved for the ill, the infirm and the disabled of which this former mining region has so many.

These vulnerable people, who worked all their lives and paid their taxes, are being punished for the collapse of a system propelled by profit and greed.

Even those who fall into none of these categories are not safe. Wages for many of those lucky to have

jobs are so low that in the face of rising prices, particularly of the basic utilities, they find their standard of living being slashed year on year.

The situation is particularly tragic for our young people, large numbers of whom face a future without hope and can only look forward to the doubtful privilege of gaining a place on one of the Coalition's harebrained schemes doing meaningless work for little or no pay.

Enough is enough. Our organisations must lead the fight on behalf of those in our society who are less able to protect their standard of living. We will organise opposition but, equally important, we want to see what we can do to offer practical help in communities.

This is what our movement was created to do and we must carry on that tradition of caring for people because we live in very dangerous times. It is always at a time of crisis that racists and fascists try to take advantage of people's despair, find scapegoats in those of a different colour or religion and talk the language of hatred. They are at work now in our towns and villages. They



*Dave Hopper*

are small in numbers but we must not give them any room to grow.

Only an organisation with a proven and genuine interest in the state of our communities can help solve our people's problems. That is why we have embarked on a series of meetings where we will invite everyone in the community to attend and discuss the problems they are now facing and, we hope, make a difference.

We made a good start in Murton on 2 July and we hope to build on that at Easington on 7 August. I urge you all to come along and support our endeavours so that their system does not break our people and our communities.

# Government Attacks Sick and Disabled

By  
Alan Cummings, DMA Chairman



*Alan Cummings*

In my work as one of the DMA's tribunal representatives, I have witnessed first hand the deplorable attacks by this government on former miners and their families. The Employment Support Regulations that have replaced the old Incapacity Benefit are nothing short of draconian.

Now, having been assessed, a claimant can be placed in one of two categories: the Limited Capability to Work group or the Support Group. Our experience is demonstrating that even if our members have several physical or mental health disabilities, and are awarded sufficient points to pass the threshold, it is almost certain that they will be placed in the Limited Capability to Work Group. This means they must attend up to six work-focused interviews a year where failure to attend, without good reason, will result in benefits being stopped.

Members should be aware that Employment Support Allowance (ESA) is only paid to a claimant for 365 days. After that, it becomes subject to a means test.

Consequently, those of our members who are in receipt of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Reduced Earnings Allowance and Mineworkers' Pension, could lose £120 per week until they reach the age of sixty-five.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which was paid to those deemed incapable of work, is being replaced with the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) but the assessment criteria is now much stricter – a measure clearly designed to reduce the number qualifying and therefore the cost.

The 'bedroom tax' is yet another scandalous piece of legislation, which could force people out of their family home. It is not as if families have the opportunity to move to smaller homes as there is a huge shortage of two-bedroom and one-bedroom accommodation...a situation that can't be rectified when the Government systematically denies local councils the revenue to build affordable rented housing.

The really upsetting thing is that the Labour Party, led by Ed Miliband, has publicly stated that, if it wins the next election, it will not change any of the present government's welfare policies.

That is absolutely scandalous and a betrayal of the principles the Labour Party once stood for: protecting the most vulnerable in society.

Despite these problems, the Durham Miners' Association has represented our members and their families at tribunals, in many cases with success. We will continue with this work and will always be here to give help and advice.

## Dupuytren's Fascia Disease

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council is currently taking evidence to ascertain if the use of vibratory tools causes Dupuytren's Contracture in mineworkers.

Any former mineworker who has been diagnosed with this disease should give their details to our Area Office at:

Durham Miners Association,  
Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB  
Telephone 0191 384 3515

## Durham Miners' Association

### PUBLIC MEETING

#### Easington Miners' Welfare

5.30 pm

Wednesday 7 August

### Crisis in our Communities

How Can the DMA Help?

## Durham Miners' Association Beneficial Membership

If you are a former Durham miner and wish to take advantage of the services we provide for an annual subscription of £20 apply to Area Office

See Page 8 for details of services

# Murton Meeting Spotlights Hardship

A man goes to the doctor's complaining of stomach pains. In the course of the consultation, it transpires that the man has not eaten for five days because his benefit has been stopped and what food he had he gave to his children. The doctor refers him to a local charity for a food parcel.

This is not a tale from the, 'hard times' of the 1920s, or hungry 1930s or a 'third world' country but an East Durham former pit village in 2013.

This was just one example given at the DMA's meeting at Murton by Malcolm Fallow, Chief Executive Officer of the East Durham Trust, a charity set up to address social problems in the former mining communities of East Durham. 'This type of problem is not something which will happen in five years' time, it's happening now,' he emphasised.

## Welfare Champions

Malcolm, himself from an East Durham mining family, went on to explain that one of the Trust's initiatives was the creation of Welfare Champions: respected members of the community trained to help anyone experiencing hardship and difficulties.

These men and women were, he explained, given extensive training in the intricacies of the benefit system, were in regular contact with other agencies, including Citizens Advice, and had made hundreds of interventions since the scheme was set up, making a real impact on peoples lives.

When Dave Hopper, General Secretary of the DMA, opened the discussion he outlined why

his Executive Committee is organising a series of community meetings.

He related many problems the DMA had faced in representing its members at Medical Appeal Tribunals. In the past, there had been a cordial relationship between the tribunal staff, medical experts, adjudicators and the union but now all that had changed to open hostility.

Dave outlined broader problems of growing poverty and debt in the former coalfield. Benefits were not charity but something former miners had paid into all their lives and now, at the point when they needed them most, they were being denied or made difficult to obtain.

He also announced that the DMA was taking steps to set up an advice service in the DMA offices at Redhills – in cooperation with Unite the Union – which would be staffed four days a week and could be accessed by a dedicated telephone line.

## More Meetings Planned

The DMA will be holding meetings like this once a month in different villages and he urged everyone to talk about it in the communities and get more and more people to attend and discuss their problems.

Alan Napier, Deputy Leader of Durham County Council (DCC) and former Mechanics' delegate at Murton Colliery, gave a detailed report of how the benefit cuts were affecting 120,000 people in the DCC area, a third of whom were working



*Dave Hopper (left), addressing Murton meeting, Alan Cummings (centre), Alan Napier (right)*

in low-paid jobs. Each adult male would lose £560 and an estimated £150M would be taken out of the local economy.

Millions had been axed from the Council's budget, having a direct impact on the services it could provide, he said. The DCC had done its utmost to lessen the impact. They had suspended landlords' Council Tax discounts on empty property and discounts for second homes and diverted the revenue this measure generated so that families previously exempt from council tax would continue to get relief.

## Social Fabric of Society

However, he warned, he could not guarantee that they could do the same next year as the government was imposing even more budget cuts. He said that his priority was to maintain the social fabric of our communities, as our forefathers had done, and that he fully supported the DMA's campaign. 'I honestly believe,' he said, 'this work will save lives'.

In a lively discussion, members of the audience gave many examples of problems created by the government's austerity measures. The Coal Industry Welfare Organisation provided a display of the services it offered to the former mining areas and it was generally agreed that the campaign had to continue as an urgent priority.





**HOPE**  
not hate

Providing a positive antidote to hate and intolerance

Proud to support the Durham Miners' Gala

[www.hopenothate.org.uk](http://www.hopenothate.org.uk)

# Communities Under Strain

By  
**Paul Meszaros**

*As part of its ongoing cooperation with the Durham Miners' Association, the anti-fascist organisation Hope not hate has produced an excellent full-colour 12-page supplement marking the Durham Miners' Gala as a "Celebration of Trade Unionism and Community Spirit".*

*This article by Paul Meszaros is taken from that supplement.*

Deindustrialisation is the greatest threat and tragedy that can befall a working class community.

If the reason for a community's existence is torn from it, what remains for people left behind and what does the future hold for subsequent generations? In extreme cases, communities die completely. Areas that have been dependent on one industry are particularly jeopardised. The end of North East shipbuilding, steel in Sheffield and textiles in Bradford, for instance, has left a hole that may never be filled.

Some places are luckier than others in attracting new industries and bigger cities can often prove more resilient. But what happens to those areas which are completely dependent on one industry?

The economic carnage inflicted on our communities is obvious but the damage and wounds go much deeper.

Much of our working class culture and identity is shaped by the industry that involved local people. The decline or wholesale closure of an industry does not just mean economic degradation, it also threatens to rip the guts out of a community's cultural and social being.

Mining villages and the coalfields

generally have suffered particularly as a result of pit closures. Areas and communities which existed almost solely for the provision of coal are left bereft and abandoned when pits go.

It is testament to generations of miners and their families that life has

---

*Never mind Cameron's 'Big Society', we need no lectures from him about building society. We believe in it – they don't.*

---

been able to go on. Decades before Tory millionaires spouted nonsense about the 'Big Society', mining communities had – by their own work, self-sacrifice and solidarity – created the mechanisms to look after people falling on hard times.

Miners' welfare clubs were the living embodiment of this, providing support and help long even before the creation of the welfare state. Tight-knit communities galvanised by common experience and hard, dangerous work created bonds

of solidarity. They also created a legacy that is both enduring

and fragile. These values of solidarity, mutual responsibility and brotherhood were created inadvertently by an industry that has now gone. It is thanks to the powerful organisations that miners built that these values have endured.

In many places, we are at a crossroads as our traditional values come under threat, underlining the importance of the Durham Miners' Gala.

On this great day we celebrate the legacy, the comradeship and the importance of an industry once so vital for the nation. But more importantly, we celebrate our collective values and re-affirm our commitment to them. At Durham, we pledge that however fragile they appear, the values which make up our notions of solidarity will not disappear.

The threats to them are real: we have seen far-right groups do well in mining villages in South Yorkshire. The Nazi British National Party, which – let us never forget – sided with Thatcher during the Great Strike, has gained votes by pretending to hold our values. The English Defence League has latched onto local disputes and tensions, such as in Shotton, County Durham, to try to whip up racism and division.

We must remain vigilant and reject these groups and their hate-filled ideas that are the exact opposite of everything we stand for. Let us also never forget the mass murders perpetrated by Franco's fascists against miners and their families in Spain and by Hitler's Nazis in Lidice, a pit village in Czechoslovakia, whose postwar rebuilding was entirely paid for by Durham, Staffordshire and Cumberland miners.

So, which way forward?

By sticking together we can defend our heritage, not just annually at Durham, but by working in communities with our people, re-affirming the rightness of our values, especially with the younger generations whose world of work is so different from their forebears.

But we will go further. We will not ask, but demand of our politicians that they do better. Our communities cannot be left to stagnate and die; the free market can go to hell if it cannot deliver for us.

We need good quality affordable housing – a basic right. We want proper, well paid jobs – another basic right. We want to know that our children have future, opportunities for meaningful training and education.

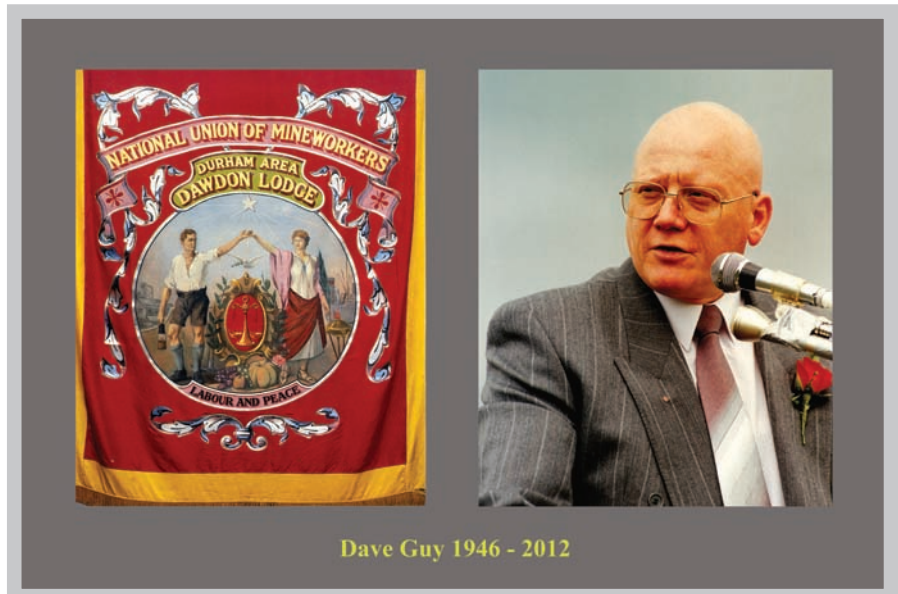
Never mind Cameron's 'Big Society', we need no lectures from him about building society. We believe in it – they don't. But to achieve it we need

investment: real money to be spent in areas that once provided so much but are now struggling through no fault of their own.

By investing in our communities through public works and infrastructure projects, not only will we be making a pledge for future generations, we will be tackling problems of the here and now and undermining the efforts of our fascist enemies to exploit the situation.

**Copies of the Hope Not hate supplement can be obtained from the DMA Area Office or can be downloaded from the Durham Miners' website:**

**[www.durhamminers.org](http://www.durhamminers.org)**



**Dave Guy 1946 - 2012**

*Above: plaque installed 10 May 2013 at Dawdon Welfare in memory of Dave Guy, former president of Durham Miners' Association and the North East Area NUM.*

*Below: members of Durham Miners' Association, Executive Committee at unveiling of memorial plaque. From left: Steve Musgrove, Dave Hopper, Alan Johnson, Lawrence Claughan, Alan Cummings and Barry Chambers*



*DMA General Secretary. Dave Hopper addressing rally, at Kells Ireland, 5 May 2013, in celebration of Jim Connell, who wrote the words of the Red Flag. From left: Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary, Dave Anderson MP for Blaydon, Jack O'Connor, President of SIPTU, Dave Hopper and Joe Chambers.*







# Lidice Shall Live

## How Durham Miners Helped to Rebuild Czechoslovak Pit Village after Nazi Atrocity



*Above: A miners' rally held on 6 September 1942 in Stoke on Trent as part of the Miners' Federation "Lidice shall live" campaign*

Lidice was a small colliery village near Prague whose name is now an eternal symbol of fascist barbarism.

The Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia had tragic consequences for Lidice. In order to suppress growing anti-fascist resistance, Hitler's murderous security police chief Reinhard Heydrich was put in charge of Czechoslovakia in September 1941.

During his short reign of terror, 5,000 anti-fascist fighters – many of them miners and their families – and their helpers were imprisoned or executed to spread terror throughout the country. Hundreds of people from this mining area died on the scaffold or in Nazi concentration camps.

A special operation by Czechoslovak parachutists in which Heydrich was assassinated on 27 May 1942 brought reprisals that shocked the world. Although their investigations, police raids and torture of suspects produced no compromising material, weapons or secret transmitters, the Nazis

wanted revenge for Heydrich's death.

For this, they chose Lidice.

The bloody vengeance against this little pit village and its inhabitants began just after midnight on 10 June 1942. The gruesome events that took place were recorded in

a documentary, filmed by those who actually carried out the mass murder.

Hitler personally ordered:

- the execution of all adult males
- the transportation of all women to a concentration camp
- the gathering and forced eportation to Germany of children deemed suitable for "Germanisation"
- the burning and levelling of the village

First, 189 Lidice men and boys were shot. Next, The women and children were taken to the gymnasium of a local school. Three days later, the children were taken from their mothers and, except for those selected for re-education with German families and babies under one year of age, were poisoned by exhaust gas in specially adapted vehicles in the Nazi death camp at Chelmno in

Poland. The women were sent to the infamous Ravensbrück concentration camp.

Having rid the village of its inhabitants, the Nazis destroyed the village itself, first setting the houses on fire and then razing them to the ground with plastic explosives. The news of the horrific destruction of Lidice spread rapidly around the world, causing shock and anger not least in the Durham coalfield.

### MINERS' TRIBUTE TO LIDICE

—

## £1,000,000 FUND

—

**LONDON, Jan. 5 (Official Wire-  
less).—Mr. Will Lawther, presi-  
dent of the Mine Workers' Fede-  
ration of Great Britain, in a  
broadcast message to German  
mine workers, described a recent  
rally of Durham miners ad-  
dressed by Dr. Benes, President  
of Czecho-Slovakia.**

**"We were able to tell Dr. Benes,"  
he said, "that British miners have  
inaugurated a fund of £1,000,000 to  
rebuild Lidice, that little mining vil-  
lage of Czecho-Slovakia which the  
Nazis destroyed after murdering prac-  
tically every soul in it.**

**"We will not forget those guilty of  
this and similar crimes. It is our  
wish that, on the ruins of Nazi wicked-  
ness, a model miners' village shall be  
built—a village that will be a shrine  
to men and women who, in 1942, died  
for freedom."**





*Miners provide a guard of honour for Dr Benes (right) Czecho-Slovak President-in-exile 6 September 1942, Stoke on Trent*

murdered by the Nazis, 143 Lidice women returned home after the war ended and, after a two-year search, just 17 children were restored to their mothers.

In 1947, the foundation stone of a new Lidice was laid 300 metres away from the original site and in May 1948 work began on building the first houses. A modern village of 150 houses gradually arose with the enormous help of volunteers from all over the Czechoslovak Republic as well as from abroad and with the solidarity of, among others, the Durham miners.

The massacre at Lidice was just one example of the horror that engulfed Europe when in a severe economic crisis nationalism, antisemitism and racism were allowed to flourish.

Lest we Forget.



*Above and below: Dead bodies after the massacre at Lidice*

British miners reacted quickly and with massive solidarity. In the Staffordshire coalfield, miners and the Labour MP and famed miners' doctor, Barnett Stross, launched the "Lidice Shall Live Campaign" and Miners' Federation leader Will Lawther, from Chopwell in County

Durham, inaugurated a £1 million fund (equal to £39 million today) from UK miners for the rebuilding of Lidice.

The Nazis' intention to wipe the village off the face of the earth did not succeed. Several villages throughout the world took over the name of Lidice in memory of that village and many women born at that time and given the name of Lidice still bear it today.

340 Lidice citizens were



***Graeme Atkinson, the author of this article, is the son of a Durham miner who told him of the levy miners paid each week to the Lidice Shall Live campaign***





# The 129th Durham Miners' Gala

Saturday July 13 2013



## Durham Miners' Beneficial Membership

Membership of the DMA will entitle you to the following benefits of membership:

### Legal Support

Through the Association's solicitors, Thompsons, the Association can offer expert support on the following issues:

Legal advice and representation where deemed appropriate in any litigation concerning an injury or disease incurred or contracted whilst working as a miner in the Durham coalfield.

Legal advice and representation where deemed appropriate for you and the members of your family if you suffer injury in a road accident, whether as a driver, passenger, cyclist or pedestrian.

Legal advice and representation where deemed appropriate in any other litigation concerning an injury or disease incurred or contracted outside the workplace.

Free initial legal advice on any matter.

A free will for you and your partner.

Low cost conveyancing.

### Representation

Through our network of branch representatives and full time officials we can provide expert and experienced support and assistance with:

Mineworkers Pension Scheme entitlements.

Social Security entitlements including representation before Social Security and Medical Appeal Tribunals.

Advice and representation on any issues relating to concessionary fuel and cash in lieu

### Durham Miners' Association

Tel: 0191 384 3515

Fax: 0191 386 6824

Email: [admin@durhamminers.co.uk](mailto:admin@durhamminers.co.uk)



Left: Dave Hopper, in his capacity as Chairman of the CISWO Trustees, hands a cheque, to Mrs Celia Monaghan, Chair of the Management Committee of the Horden CISWO Club on the occasion of the club's 10th anniversary.

Over 60 members of the club meet every week and plan outings and other social events.