

Work

The *Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers* began with a focus on working-class and Socialist writing and publishing. With this focus, many of the network's publications centred on themes of work, including the description of vocations such as mining, baking, dock work, embroidery, and more. Other times, people would write about the work they did at home or across countries as they immigrated. These descriptions of work and the labour involved were written by the workers themselves to emphasise the knowledge and skills needed to perform the work.



“The old streets of Saltaire Village” by Paul Stevenson is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

As the FWWCP Collection was being organised and sorted, one of the main conversations occurred around how work, labour, and vocations would be represented. Within the FWWCP, for instance, work was often impacted by the regions in which people lived.

In Yorkshire, the text could be about coal mining, while in places like London, there could be writing about working at the docklands. Work is central to the FWWCP and is represented by many members as they express what working-class labour means to them.



A Life Behind Bars

Marjory Batchelor, 1999

FWWCPC/07 SE 03

Marjory Batchelor tells the story of her life, from growing up in Brighton to her work as a barmaid. She details her childhood, including chores and hobbies, from cleaning and cooking, to marbles and hopscotch. She writes about the hardship during each of the World Wars and how they impacted her marriage. After starting to work as a waitress, she took over as a barmaid and was able to interact with others in the working class.

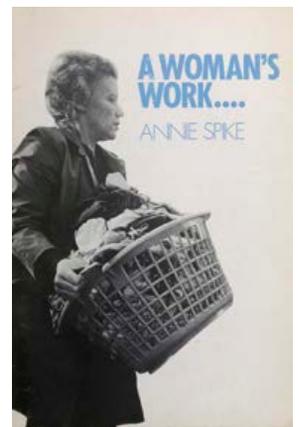
Keywords: autobiography | pubs | working-class | World War I | World War II

A Woman's Work

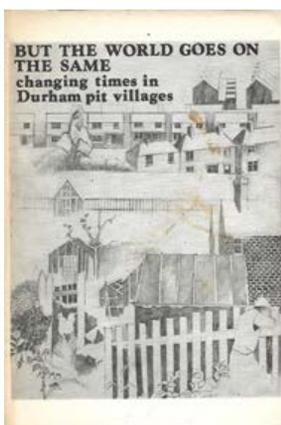
Annie Spike, 1978

FWWCPC/08 L 03

Annie Spike chronicles her life through her relationship to work in this short memoir. She describes her time working both in Ireland and Hackney, London, as a factory girl, while also detailing her relationship with labour unions, office jobs, and her work as a cleaning lady. She also writes about her time spent as a mother and a wife. The story was originally written for a book about people who live and work in Hackney, *Working Lives Volume Two*, where thirteen people describe the multiple work they perform.



Keywords: autobiography | class | gender | factory life | family | London | politics | women's writing | working-class



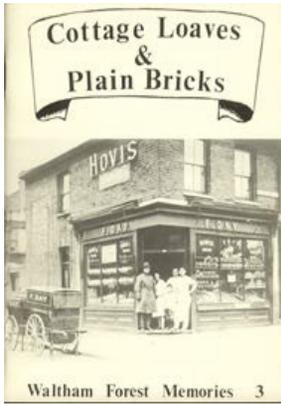
But the World Goes on the Same: Changing Times in Durham Pit Villages

Multiple authors, 1979

FWWCPC/02 NE 02

Multiple people from all backgrounds share their stories and show how big companies changed their lives. The selections explore how families, work ethics, and privileges were in the past compared to the 1970s. The authors understand that their sense of humour stemmed from shared hardships from the physical labour and the multiple strikes. The collection shows the duties expected of men and women during the early to mid 1900s.

Keywords: family | mining | socialism | working-class



Cottage Loaves & Plain Bricks: Memories of bread and baking in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop, 1986

FWWCPC/08 L 14

This is the third publication by Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop, which includes recollections of baking in Waltham Forest from 1913-1950. Oral histories recount the transition from family owned bakehouses to commercial bakeries. Topics discussed include baking methods, working conditions, business operations, and adapting to gas ovens and other machinery. Wartime shortages and their effects on industry are also explored. Vintage advertisements, maps, and photographs are included.

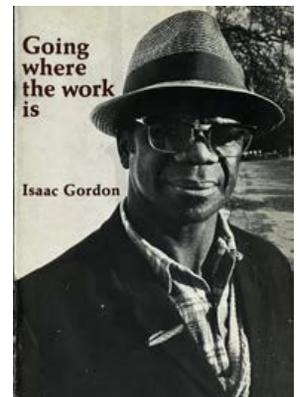
Keywords: baking | domestic life | industry | war | work | World War I | World War II

Going Where the Work Is

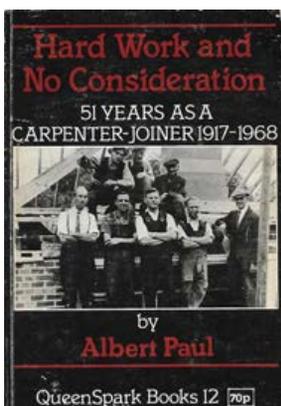
Isaac Gordon, 1979

FWWCPC/08 L 03

Isaac Gordon tells the story of his life. He discusses his struggles with school and farm work in Jamaica, America, and England. He describes the differences between each country, including the church atmosphere, the environment, and the work opportunities. He focused on working throughout most of his life but eventually learned the importance of reading and writing. Once he started learning to read and write, he never stopped.



Keywords: literacy | memoir | migration | work | working-class



Hard Work and No Consideration: 51 Years as a Carpenter-Joiner 1917-1968

Albert Paul, 1981

FWWCPC/07 SE 02

Albert Paul recalls his time as a carpenter-joiner, a career spanning over half of a century. He describes how, at age 14, his superiors taught him lessons about safety in the workplace in a strict manner. Paul then recounts how he met his wife, the life they made, and the dangers he encountered through his work, especially during the time of war. He acknowledges how having the right skills at the right time helped him survive.

Keywords: carpentry | war | working-class



Paper Talk

Sally Flood, no date

FWWCP/08 L 02

In this book of poetry, Sally Flood describes her life at her home in East London. She writes about sleepless nights with family, as well as drawn out days working as an embroidery machinist. Her poetry simultaneously draws attention to the beauty and hardships as a working-class woman.

Keywords: class | community | family | gender | migration | poetry | poverty | work | working-class | women's writing

Pullman Craftsmen

Three Former Pullman Craftsmen, 1992

FWWCP/07 SE 02

Three men formerly employed by Pullman Car Company recount their experiences between the late 1940s and early 1960s. They tackle topics including strikes, women workers, workplace accidents, and entertaining themselves in the workplace. It is written in the form of a conversation with images of work documents and photographs of the workers inserted throughout.

Keywords: Brighton | craftsmen | memoir | work | working-class



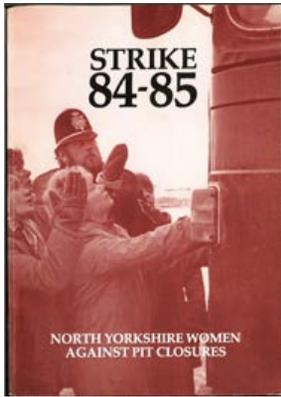
Shipyard Muddling

Ripyard Cuddling, 1997

FWWCP/02 NE 02

This collection of poems illustrates the everyday tasks performed by a welder in a shipyard as a means to bridge the gap between working-class people and the view of language as a privilege of the academic elite. It also contains encouragement for workers dreaming of a better life. The inclusion of hand-drawn illustrations enhances the message.

Keywords: class | language | poetry | shipyard | welding | work | working-class



Strike 84 - 85 North Yorkshire Women Against Pit Closures

Multiple authors, 1985

FWWCPC/03 Y 07

Women of Yorkshire share their memoirs and poetry from the Miners' Strike of 1984. Chapters included focus on soup kitchens and rations, fundraising, family life, protesting, and national conferences for women against pit closures. The stories shared expose the level of hardship experienced with reduced wages. This book details the complexity of daily life, family, protesting, politics, and police brutality during the strike period.

Keywords: food | miners | politics | protest | strike | women | work | working-class | Yorkshire

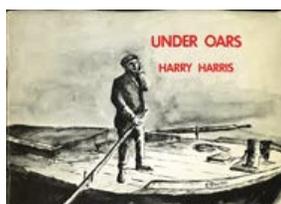
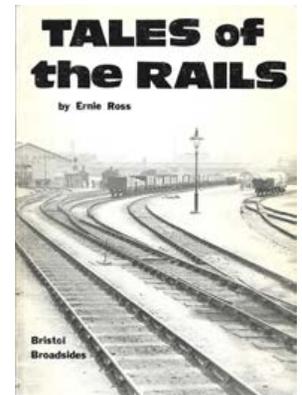
Tales of the Rails

Ernie Ross, 1982

FWWCPC/06 SW 02

Railway worker Ernie Ross shares his stories of his career. He includes bits of humour while also discussing serious issues, such as the problems faced during war times as well as how constant changes in the railway system affect the safety of the passengers. He acknowledges that the changes in the railways may erase memories of the past.

Keywords: memoir | railway | war | work | working-class



Under Oars

Harry Harris, 1978

FWWCPC/08 L 12

Harry Harris recounts his life as a dockworker, beginning with his childhood and continuing through his career as a waterman and, later, a lighterman on the River Thames. He started his apprenticeship at age thirteen, despite the dangers of his ideal jobs. Harris fondly remembers finding employment in the difficult times while highlighting the importance of dock workers.

Keywords: class | dock workers | memoir | work | working-class



Ways of Learning

Florence Agbah, 1987

FWWCPC/03 Y 11

Florence Agbah reflects on how she learned English. After migrating to Britain, she began working at a YMCA. Even though she did not speak English, she learned through listening to her coworkers talk. Later, she went on to work at a cafeteria. Many of the people there made fun of her for not speaking English, but she viewed every interaction as a learning moment.

Keywords: language | migration | work | working-class

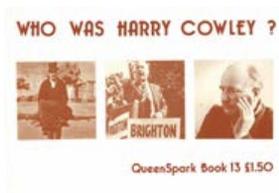
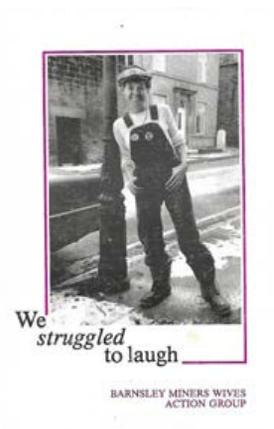
We Struggled to Laugh

Barnsley Miners Wives Action Group, 1987

FWWCPC/03 Y 13

Several women share their stories of the Miners' Strike of 1984. This collection includes poetry, prose, photographs, and an interview with one of the wives. The topics include organising soup kitchens, picket lines, how the strike impacted children, and how the miners and women overcame troubling times. There are short bits of humorous memories as well as photographs included.

Keywords: class | community | feminism | poetry | working-class



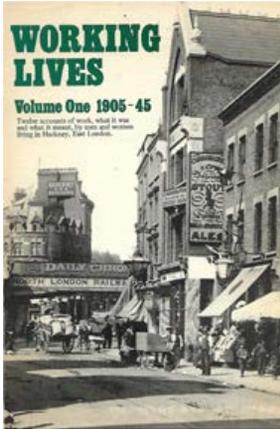
Who Was Harry Cowley

Multiple authors, 1984

FWWCPC/07 SE 04

This is a collaboratively written history remembering Harry Cowley, affectionately called "The Guv'nor." Cowley was a chimney sweep who fought for the homeless and unemployed. While many questions are still left about Cowley's life, those who knew Cowley piece together--through testimonials, photographs, newspaper articles, letters--examples of his constant fight for the betterment of his community.

Keywords: class | homelessness | unemployment | work | working-class



Working Lives Volume One: 1905-45

Multiple authors, no date

FWWCPC/08 L 03

This collection includes stories from twelve different professions from the early 1900s through World War II. The workers range from child labourers to soldiers, demolition workers to craftsmen. It shows the lives of men, women, and children making a living as members of the working class. The stories intend to showcase the dangers encountered by the working class and how much skill is required for the so-called unskilled.

Keywords: class | Hackney | work | working-class | World War I | World War II

Working Lives Volume Two: Hackney 1945-77

Multiple authors, 1985

FWWCPC/08 L 03

Following the stories of the first volume, citizens of Hackney recount the work done by men and women in the forty years since World War II. These tales once again concentrate on the dangers faced by the working class while emphasising their successes and importance to society. The contributions of these workers are a constant, creating a sense of community among the members.

Keywords: class | Hackney | work | working-class

