



Language

This sub-section covers a number of significant strikes by women in Britain. The best known is the 1968 strike at Ford Dagenham by women machinists demanding equal pay with men doing jobs of equivalent skill, which helped to achieve the Labour government's Equal Pay Act of 1970. The Grunwick strike by Asian immigrant women in 1976-77 against very low pay and enforced overtime was (although ultimately unsuccessful) a landmark in mobilizing white male workers in support of immigrants and gaining widespread support, for examples from MPs. There were other strikes by women in very badly paid work, such as cleaners. In addition, wives and mothers of miners engaged in the major 1984 strike became actively involved on the picket lines and in providing practical support, and in the process gained a new sense of empowerment.

Alexander, Sally, [The Nightcleaners](#) [1], In Allen, Sandra ; Sanders, Lee ; Wallis, Jan , [Conditions of Illusion: Papers from the Women's Movement](#) [2] Leeds, Feminist Books, , 1974, pp. 309-325

See also: 'Striking Progress' a list of strikes involving women 1973-74, pp. 332-48.

Anitha, Sundari ; Pearson, Ruth, [Striking Women: Struggles and Strategies of South Asian Women Workers from Grunwick to Gate Gourmet](#) [3], London, Lawrence and Wishart, 2018, pp. 226

The authors focus on two important strikes in the UK in two different socio-economic contexts: whereas the two year Grunwick strike for union recognition had national support and was backed by secondary picketing, the Gate Gourmet confrontation in 2008 lacked union support (secondary picketing was now illegal). But the authors see both strikes as challenging stereotypes about Asian women, and draw on in-depth interviews with strikers to show the influence of migration (from East Africa or the Punjab), initial high expectations and anger at their low pay and poor working conditions. The book also makes comparisons with trade union struggles in today's gig economy.

Bohanna, John, [Finally Making the Grade](#) [4], Red Pepper, issue Dec/Jan, 2011, pp. 54-55

Recalls that the 1968 Ford Dagenham strike for equal pay, although it achieved a substantial pay rise and eventual parity with men on the same grade, did not recognise the skilled nature of the sewing-machinists work by upgrading them. Provides brief account of later 1984 strike by women machinists demanding upgrading, which led to an independent inquiry, which recognised their claim. A film *Making the Grade* by the Open Eye Film, Video and Animation Workshop documents this second struggle.

Dromey, Jack, [Grunwick: The Workers' Story](#) [5], London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1978, pp. 207

The author was secretary of Brent Trades Council in London when the non-unionised women strikers at the mail-order plant contacted him for help in 1976, and became a member of the strike committee. He also wrote an obituary of the inspirational leader of the strike, Jayaben Desia, when she died 23 December 2010 ([Guardian, 29 Dec 2010](#) [6], p.30). (For a celebration of Desia's role and life see also Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, '[Remembering an unsung heroine of our modern history](#)' [7], *Independent*, 3 Jan 2011, p.5.)

Friedman, Henry ; Meredeen, Sander, [The Dynamics of Industrial Conflict: Lessons from Ford](#) [8], London, Croom Helm, 1980, pp. 386

This is an account and analysis of the 1968 Ford Dagenham women sewing machinists' strike by two men on opposing sides (trade union convener of plant and Ford negotiating team) involved in the dispute. A lively semi-



fictionalized account of the dispute from the women's viewpoint is the 2010 film '[Made in Dagenham](#) [9]'.

Miller, Jill, [You Can't Kill the Spirit: Women in a Welsh Mining Village](#) [10], London, Women's Press, 1987, pp. 177

Rogaly, Joe, [Grunwick](#) [11], Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977, pp. 199

Account by journalist who gave prominent coverage to the women's struggle during the strike.

Stead, Jean, [Never the Same Again: Women and the Miners' Strike](#) [12], London, Women's Press, 1987, pp. 177

See also:

Audrey Gillan, [I was always told I was thick. The strike taught me I wasn't](#) [13]The Guardian, Audrey Gillan talking to 1984 activist Betty Cook looking back after 20 years.

Loretta Loach, [We'll be Here Right to the End...and After: Women in the Miners' Strike](#) [14]In Beynon, [Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners' Strike](#) [15] (A.1.a.ii. [British Miners' Strike, 1984-85](#) [16]), chapter 9.

University of Leeds, [Striking Women: Resources](#) [17], for list of articles and books relating to Grunwick.

Source URL (retrieved on 19/04/2024 - 04:06):<https://civilresistance.info/section/f-feminist-movements-and-protests/f1-second-wave-feminism-pressure-and-protests-west/f1b>

Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1974/nightcleaners> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1974/conditions-illusion-papers-womens-movement> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/striking-women-struggles-and-strategies-south-asian-women-workers-grunwick-gate> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/finally-making-grade> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1978/grunwick-workers-story> [6] <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/dec/28/jayaben-desai-obituary> [7] <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/yasmin-alibhai-brown/yasmin-alibhai-brown-remembering-an-unsung-heroine-of-our-modern-history-2174684.html> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1980/dynamics-industrial-conflict-lessons-ford> [9] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1371155/> [10] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1987/you-cant-kill-spirit-women-welsh-mining-village> [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1977/grunwick> [12] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1987/never-same-again-women-and-miners-strike> [13] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2004/i-was-always-told-i-was-thick-strike-taught-me-i-wasnt> [14] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1985/well-be-here-right-endand-after-women-miners-strike> [15] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1985/digging-deeper-issues-miners-strike> [16] <https://civilresistance.info/section/campaigns-social-and-economic-justice/a1-campaigns-workers/a1a-selected-strikes/a1aii> [17] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2010/striking-women-resources>