

BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM

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Adventures Through Time is an exciting new series of animations and podcasts, working in collaboration with Fun Kids Radio UK. Below is the transcript of the first podcast episode.

Podcast – Episode 1: Mary McArthur & The Chain Maker’s Strike

Voice over/intro jingle: The Black Country Living Museum Podcast, Powerful Women of the Black Country

Host: Hello and welcome to the Black Country Living Museum Podcast, the show where we dive into the history of the Black Country, discover the stories from the past and have some fun along the way!

Question: Who was Mary McArthur and what was the Chain Makers Strike?

Host : Today we’re going to talk about Mary McArthur. Mary was a very important woman to the Black country. Back in the early 1900’s she was responsible for lots of union and strike action, including the famous chain makers strike of 1910. A union is when a load of workers get together and demand something from the person who employs them. The idea is that if all the workers say they want something then they are more likely to get it than if just one of them asks. If all the workers are working together then they can also threaten to strike, which is when they all agree to not come to work until they get what they want.

As we’ve just said, if one person decided not to come into work one day because they were protesting, they would probably be fired. But firing the entire workforce would put them out of business! That’s why unions work so well. Back in the early 1900’s lots of workers had to work in horrible and dangerous conditions for very little money! It was really unfair. Mary MacArthur noticed this and decided to do something about it, she set up the unions and Organised strike action to get these workers better pay and working conditions. One of the most famous strikes was the one she Organised for the Lady Chain-makers (people who made chains).

Discussion Topic: Mary and the strike

Host: And here to help us learn all about Mary and the strike I've got Clare, one of the museum researchers and Sheila Living History Programmer with me today.

Question: Mary came from wealth, why did she help the chain makers and how did she come across them?

Because she was well off she had a good education. Her father sent her to Germany to continue her education. Whilst working for a newspaper she attended a Union meeting and realised that the lady chainmakers should join the union.

Question: Was this significant for a woman to do at this point in history? Why?

There were other women also campaigning at this time and she had there friends who were doing the same thing. Although it was not commonplace it did happen, Mary's wealth and standing allowed her to do this.

Question: How did the Chain makers strike play out and what did she do next?

Mary supported the strikers by raising enough to money to help them survive during the strike. Mary was very cleaver, she used media, newspaper etc to promote their cause, she was a bit like a influencer we see today on social media.

They were out of work between 10-13 weeks. It was successful and there was so much money left in the strike fund- £1500-£2000 (over 1 million pounds in todays money. This money was used to build the workers institute.

After this she got more involved in politics and did much to help women.

Discussion Topic: Black Country health and safety

Host: This is Black Country Health and Safety, where we have a look at some of the silliest injuries and mishaps from back in the black country's heyday. Our first example is a record of an incident that took place at the Lime Kilns. These were basically a big oven built into the side of a hill that would be used for making quicklime. They would reach very high temperatures and the whole process of making quicklime led to a lot of accidents by itself. Our story today could probably have been avoided though!

27 June 1877

'A man, whose name is unknown, was working at some lime kiln and just before the dinner hour he placed his dinner near the kiln to warm (bearing in mind a lime kiln is usually around 1000 degrees! In doing this he overbalanced himself and

fell into the kiln. The body could not be recovered until half an hour, and it was then nothing but a cinder.'

This is an example of someone not being careful, but it shows a something of a common theme for workers during this time in that there were no safety procedures to put in place to stop him from falling in.

Question: Why was this?

It came down to money, business owners did not want to pay for safety equipment for their employees if they were not being forced to

Discussion Topic: Adventure's Through Time Episode

Host: Right, now we're going to have a listen to an episode of "Adventures through Time", our series all about 2 kids that visit the museum and get transported back in time to see the events they're learning about happen right in front of them!

[Play episode]

Listener questions

Host: Now it's time for the part of the show where we answer some of your questions. If you have a question for us then you can email us at blackcountrykids@bclm.com

Question: How was the W.I and other buildings moved to the museum?

- Translocation – A building is pulled down brick by brick and then put back together at the museum. Bricks are numbered so we know what order they go in.
- Replication – If a building we want no longer exists we will do a lot of research and try to remake it the way it would have been.
- Recreation – The building still exists but we copy it because we can't move the building for some reason.

Outro [1 minute]

Host: Thanks for listening, if you want to find out more about The Black Country Museum then just head to our website at BCLM dot co dot uk.