

## Chapter 35: Other News and Events

Although these years were dominated by the war, there were other items of news, particularly locally. In July 1940, grandad noted that a man had strangled his wife in the “Summit rows” and, on October the same year, Elsie Smith “gassed herself” and her son Pat who was just five.<sup>1</sup>

Although life in Kirkby continued to be dominated by mining, grandad made very little direct reference to it over this period. In November 1945, grandad noted that Mr Kemp had been taken ill at Summit pit and had been taken to Mansfield Hospital<sup>2</sup> but he died at 4.30 pm.<sup>3</sup> Grandad noted that there was a local miners’ strike in September 1943 with the Newstead miners coming out on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the Summit and Bentinck miners on the 16<sup>th</sup>. However, by the 17<sup>th</sup> the strike was over. I was surprised that there had been a strike in wartime but apparently it was not uncommon.

### Miners’ strikes during the second world war

There was a highly publicised strike in [Betteshanger](#), Kent in 1942. The dispute arose out of quotas expected and a switch to a narrower coalface. Under wartime regulations, strikes were illegal unless the matter had been referred to the Ministry of Labour and National Service so three union officials were imprisoned and more than 1,000 men fined. The strike held and the government negotiated. The minimum wage was restored, those who were imprisoned were pardoned and fines were “remitted” with only nine miners having paid their fines.

However, the idea that this was the only wartime strike in the coal industry during the war seems untrue. Not only was there the strike grandad documented but there were reported to be more than 500 stoppages in [South Wales](#) alone in local, and often, unofficial disputes over pay and conditions. In 1944, more than 180,000 miners went on strike over demands for a minimum wage. Also, that year, more than 26,000 [apprentices](#) came out on strike in favour of nationalising the mines and against the “Bevin Ballot Scheme”. Indeed, some reports document that mining (along with engineering) was one of the sectors most affected by strikes during the war.



A [general election](#) was held in July 1945 so two and a half months after VE Day and a few weeks before the end of the war. Grandad noted that, when the elections results were declared, Labour had won by a large majority. Nationally, the Labour party won a landslide victory gaining 239 seats and winning 393 seats overall. It allowed Clement Atlee to form a majority Labour government for the first time ever. The election saw the demise of the National Liberal party with it merging with the Conservatives in 1947. In the [Broxtowe](#) constituency, Seymour Cocks was re-elected with a huge majority of 24,201 over the Conservative candidate Gerald Stanley Moore Bowman and with almost three quarters (72%) of the vote.

1945 Labour election poster

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, given these details I have not been able to find confirmation of these deaths on FreeBMD

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 50.

<sup>3</sup> This was John Kemp, Kath Evans’ father. According to the 1939 Register, he worked as a “datler” which I think refers to dataller – a man paid on a daily basis. .