

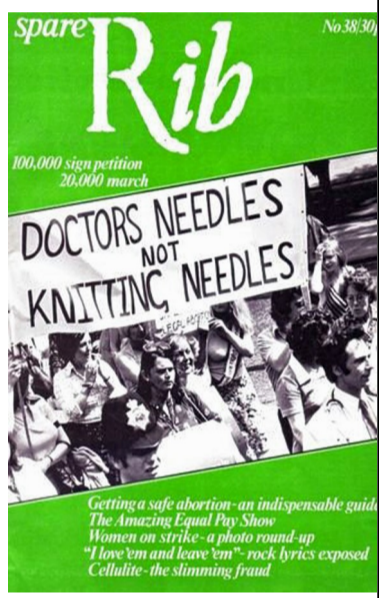
POLITICS – GETTING INVOLVED



Silent anti-Vietnam War protest in Grosvenor Square 1960s

HALIFAX, HEBDEN BRIDGE, TODMORDEN area any groups? Or anyone wanting to form one? Contact Elaine, Calder Valley 3943

August 75 'Spare Rib' magazine Edition No 38 (Small ad)



Escape to Hebden Bridge. Many of us had been burned out by the manic political activity of the late 60s and early 70s: demos about apartheid, strikes, Ireland, Vietnam, industrial relations and much more. The emergent environmental movements gave us some respite. We had been organising in our communities - claimants' union, squatting, women's movement, alternative newspapers, health, childcare. We wanted a different world but many of us ran out of steam and escaped to Hebden Bridge.

Skills gained in other protests arrived in HB and were applied to local issues - housing, asbestosis, women's health and environmental issues.

Women's groups. Coming of age in the 60's we wanted to challenge everything - that included what it meant to be a woman. Some of us had already been to Women's meetings and the first Women's Conference in February 1970 - Elaine Connell put an advert in Spare Rib and this began the local Women's Group, meeting at first in one another's houses. A Gathering took place in the Basement of the Birchcliffe Centre and loads of small women's groups grew from that day.



Keeping alive the protests against anti-abortion, apartheid, nuclear weapons and the National Front.

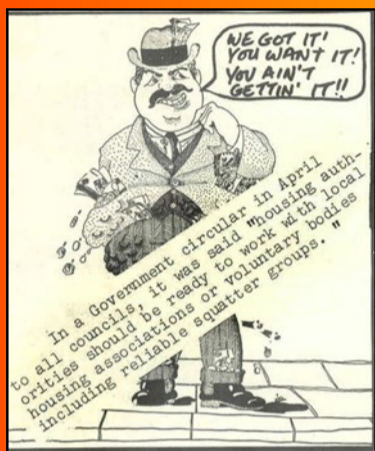
Women in the early 70's still needed a man to sign for or be guarantor for hire purchase, renting a TV, getting a mortgage, opening a bank account.

Things changed slowly on the national scale but their impact was massive.

Abortion, Act 1967; Sexual Offences Act 1967 - legalised homosexuality for men over 21; Equal Pay Act 1970; The Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Contraception available to single women 1974 from Family Planning Clinics.

Getting involved.

Community Press provided information about landlord's responsibilities and protection for tenants. Self-help groups like Gingerbread brought together single parents for mutual support: both locals and offcumdens were involved.



Action was also about local issues like childcare.

In the 1970's the infant schools all provided 5 days a week, free full time nursery provision for all children once they were 3 years old. The weekly Playgroup in the basement of Youth House, good fun, but not providing a break from babies.

The Crèche started as informal collective childcare - we gathered in people's houses to start with, taking turns to be the adults in charge, men were equally involved as women. We had use of an under-dwelling on Eiffel St at one stage, and then of a room in the Education Offices in Pitt Street - happy hours were spent by the river at Salem, camping and going to Festivals.



Co-operative Activity at the old Bull Inn. The Bull became an important resource space for communal activity. It housed workshops for potters, artists and jewellers and hosted band practices, political meetings and women's groups. At the time, the Bull was being renovated and folk remember climbing over bags of sand and cement. The women's groups focused specifically on health and tackled critical issues relating to family planning which was completely absent in the valley at the start of the 70s.

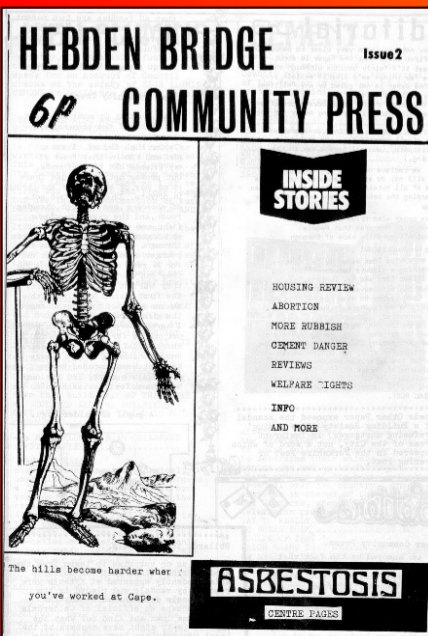


Anti nuclear march: early 1980s



Acre Mill at Old Town, run by Cape Asbestos. The Asbestosis Action Group was formed in 1974. Councillor Stanley Leach was chairperson, John Pickering was legal advisor, Renata Taylor-Byrne was secretary. Renata had recently moved into the area.

They pressed for a public enquiry about the hazards of local tips; set up advice and support for those seeking compensation, and campaigned for over a decade during which time committee members like Arthur Montgomery and Brian Schnake succumbed to the disease. Who else could people turn to in the mid-70s?



Founded early 70s to inform and promote ideas.

Adding to the news circulated by the Hebden Bridge Times

In the changing rooms of Rosie's class I heard of the early meeting of a possible Women's Movement Group As a lonely feminist who had only met like minds at conferences and courses in Bradford or Leeds this was music to my ears and I attended the second ? 27th April 1978, open meeting in Suzanne's house in Palace House Rd. Meetings were dynamic and led to a flurry of activity.

The impact was great on all of us, our relationships and the community. It was followed by the Women's Studies course at Adult Education Centre, Pitt St (that we campaigned for) the Women's Exhibition we displayed in the (then) empty building on a corner of Pitt St; the weekend Women's Conference we held at the Bichcliffe Centre; full coaches going down to Circle the Base at Greenham Common and the many Women's Groups that formed.

A monthly Open Women's Group Meeting and a Calder Valley Women's Newsletter was instituted to try to keep up with the many groups and activities. Many existing friendships were formed here almost forty years ago.