

that all colliers in Scotland should be free from their servitude. The women, of course, worked in the pits, and continued to do so for many years after their emancipation. The following description of their condition was published in 1834 :

“A group of such females, in working garb, at the pit, formed a most uncouth picture. Their feet encased in heavy tacketed shoes; legs covered with a species of stockings termed ‘huggers’; petticoats of the shortest description and coarsest material, in many of which the original had disappeared under a mass of patchwork, the front part of the garment scarcely covering the knees (the style being considered necessary to prevent the wearer from treading on the front part while bending forward to the load when drawing the large corves or wicker baskets, then in use, for conveying the coal from the working face to the bottom of the shaft); the upper part of the dress consisted of either short gowns, jackets, or old coats of every variety and shape, caps or mutches, for the head, of all dimensions, and equally free from uniformity; the whole of their strange apparel bedaubed with the mud of the mine, from which a peculiar damp smell arose.”

Until quite recent years women worked at the pit brow in Lancashire and also in South Wales, where, by an unwritten social law, as rigorous as any trade union rule, they appeared daily in dirt-begrimed ostrich-feathered hats and costumes of sacking to spend eight or nine hours in the strenuous, dirty but not unhealthy work of shoving tubs or corves of coal as they came up from the pit on to the sorting screens. The appearance of these girls at the pit head was forbidding in the extreme, but the writer has seen the same girls in an evening in the public hall of Tredegar taking their soprano and contralto parts in an oratorio with bright rosy faces, white muslin dresses, and blue and pink silk sashes. Lancashire pit girls strenuously opposed the efforts that were made to prevent them working on the pit bank.

The following list comprises most of the best-known Scottish colliery companies, with the names of their Chairmen and their capitalisation. A few have additional capital secured by Debentures.