

MINE was written in 1982 when Michael Clark and Len Young were both teaching at Heaton School. The mining tragedy is commemorated in a plaque on the wall of the flats built beside the Spinney in Heaton. Michael carried out detailed research before writing the lyrics and Len tried to capture the complex range of moods and emotions by using a wide variety of musical styles. **MINE** is a cross between a musical and an opera in that there is no spoken dialogue: the musical is another kind of commemoration.

A summary of musical numbers

ACT 1

1. *And Can It Be & Coal*

April 1815. The end of a Methodist house meeting. Mr Parker, Jack Parker and their friends leave Mrs Parker on their way to the pit. The miners work in dangerous conditions in the pit.

2. *John is it You? & Explosion*

Johnny Parker returns home from sea unexpectedly. While he and his mother are talking, the miners hit a pocket of fire damp (blazing stythe) and Mr Parker is killed.

3. *I Grieve for a Man*

Mrs Parker grieves for the death of her husband.

4. *Boiling Water*

The scene shifts to Heaton Hall, home of Sir Matthew White Ridley, owner of Heaton Pit (and lots more besides). The maids are preparing for the arrival of the lessees, the other shareholders in Heaton Pit.

5. *Gentlemen, Gentlemen & Buddle's Song*

Ridley greets the lessees and John Buddle, viewer (manager) at Heaton Pit and destined to be a great man (but not quite yet). In his song Buddle outlines the problem. To get more coal they must bore into the wastes (abandoned workings likely to be flooded). The lessees agree to spend the money at the risk of the miners' lives.

6. *Matthew Ridley & Keep Stepping Neatly*

Sunday afternoon. The miners and their families are relaxing. First they mimic Ridley's rise to wealth and then (in *Keep Stepping*) welcome Johnny back.

7. *Rule Book Sailor*

Asked what has happened to his shipmate Billy, Johnny describes his death and how, returning to England, he sees that slavery still exists at home among workers in pits and mills. He advocates banding together, a criminal offence, at this time punishable by transportation.

8. *Childrens' Song & Eyes then Hands*

This serious mood is interrupted by the arrival of the children who play an old North East game - if a boy's fingers will meet around a girl's wrist she is likely to marry him. They look around for a partner for Johnny and choose Anna. In their duet, Anna and Johnny discover their own new emotions.

ACT 2

9. *Get in Line & Anna's Song*

Saturday night of the next week. The miners are being paid by the Clerks while shop assistants wait to sell, to cheat, and otherwise corrupt the miners. The mine women look on, powerless. Anna arrives to collect her father's wages and fends off the attention of a number of miners with some success, but mistakes Johnny's genuine interest at the same time.

10. *Rule Book Sailor reprise & Another Petition & Fight*

Johnny, angered by the degradation which the miners suffer, repeats his view of society, provoking the clerks and shop assistants to threaten first the law and then violence. The miners seem intimidated but Anna reacts followed by Johnny and others. They are beaten and thrown out.

11. *Where do I go from here >*

Johnny, battered by the clerks and rejected by Anna, slowly pulls himself together, commenting ruefully on his feelings.

12. *Borers' Song & Disaster*

May 5th 1815. Two borers are edging their way into the old workings, testing for water. Suddenly the wastes are holed, the water rushes in and 75 men and boys are trapped.

13. *Kenton Rescue Attempt*

This song describes the desperate attempts to reach Heaton via the old workings at Kenton Pit.

14. *Keep Stepping Neatly reprise & Black Boughs*

Anna remembers the Sunday afternoon singing. Johnny finally finds the right words and time to approach her.

15. *The Engines are turning*

Late May 1815. Most of the mine workers are reconciled to the tragedy and simply want to wait patiently. Only Mrs Parker, Anna and Johnny are trying to persuade them still of the need to join together to try to change their working conditions. They have little success.

16. *Historical View*

June 1815 to January 1816. We view the passage of these months as it affects the Ridley family - Waterloo, the illness of George III, the excitement of local events: very little for the miners.

17. *You Live, You Breathe & The Pit's Started Draining*

January 1816. Johnny, Mrs Parker and Anna now appeal, not to the memory of the dead, but to the needs of the living and this produces a reaction within the community, strengthened by their sorrow as they recover the bodies of the dead.

18. *Procession & Seize the Light*

The funeral procession becomes something more than a memorial and the Musical ends with their determined resolution that things will change.

"To change the world you must agree to share the pain,
And if we lose the victory - why man, we'll start again."