

The day 300 students joined national strike

New exhibition about 1911 walkout by pupils

BY LAURA BOWYER

HUNDREDS of frustrated schoolchildren across Leeds downed their pencils and took to the streets as part of a national strike.

Nearly a century later a Leeds gallery has taken a trip down memory lane to remember the Schools Strike of 1911.

The nationwide strike began in Wales when a group of 30 boys marched out of the classroom in protest against the caning of one of their fellow students on September 5, 1911.

Within days the strike had spread across the country as students of all ages took to the streets to voice their grievances.

Among them were around 300 boys from Leeds who marched out of their school halls to join in the strike on September 12 and 13 that year.

Now a selection of memorabilia - including hand-written letters, journals, teaching registers and posters - have

gone on display at Leeds University to remember the strike.

Guest curator Sarah Prescott said: "Student strikes and children's protests are not new phenomena.

"This exhibition explores a fascinating, but previously neglected incident in Leeds' local history, bringing exciting material from the University's Special Collections to a new audience."

Schools Out! Leeds and the 1911 Schools Strike also features materials from the Alf Mattison collection charting the development of British socialism.

Youngsters from schools across Leeds were also invited to design pictures and

posters for the exhibition at the Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, in the campus' Parkinson Building, until October 1.

Dr Zsuzsanna Reed Papp added: "Although thousands of children were involved, they still only represented a tiny proportion of the school-age population at the time.

"Their significance, however, does not relate to numbers, but the fact that young people, albeit a minority, felt empowered enough to speak out on issues that concerned them." Go to www.leeds.ac.uk/gallery/events.

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