

## **Annie Bassett's Diary, June 1888**

**Annie Bassett** My name is Annie Bassett. I am a gentlewoman and diarist. It is June and the year is 1888.

### Tuesday

This evening I went to hear a speaker at a meeting and she spoke of the conditions that many thousands of women and children have to bear in the Bryant and May match making factory. This tale that she tells is so shocking that I must go and find out for myself as soon as possible.

### Wednesday

It is now late in the evening as I'm writing this entry – and what a day I've had ! I've been angry and tearful but now that I've cried my tears I must take action.

I have discovered that the women and girls work fourteen hours a day for a wage of less than five shillings a week.

However, they do not always receive their full wage because of a system of fines, ranging from thruppence to one shilling, imposed by the Bryant & May management.

Offences include talking, dropping matches or going to the toilet without permission.

But far, far worse than this, the health of the women and girls is being severely affected by the phosphorous that they use to make the matches. This causes yellowing of the skin and hair loss and phossy jaw, a form of bone disease.

### Thursday

Today I have written an article to the newspaper and entitled it 'White Slavery, in London'. I did not mince my words and have also asked everyone to boycott Bryant and May matches. Hopefully this will bring them to their senses.

### July 1888

So much has been happening, there has been a strike of the workers and they are setting up their own union. The campaign will continue until the white phosphorus is no longer used and once this has been achieved there will still be much to do to improve the conditions under which thousands of poor people both live and work. It really is shocking but much is being done and must continue to be done.