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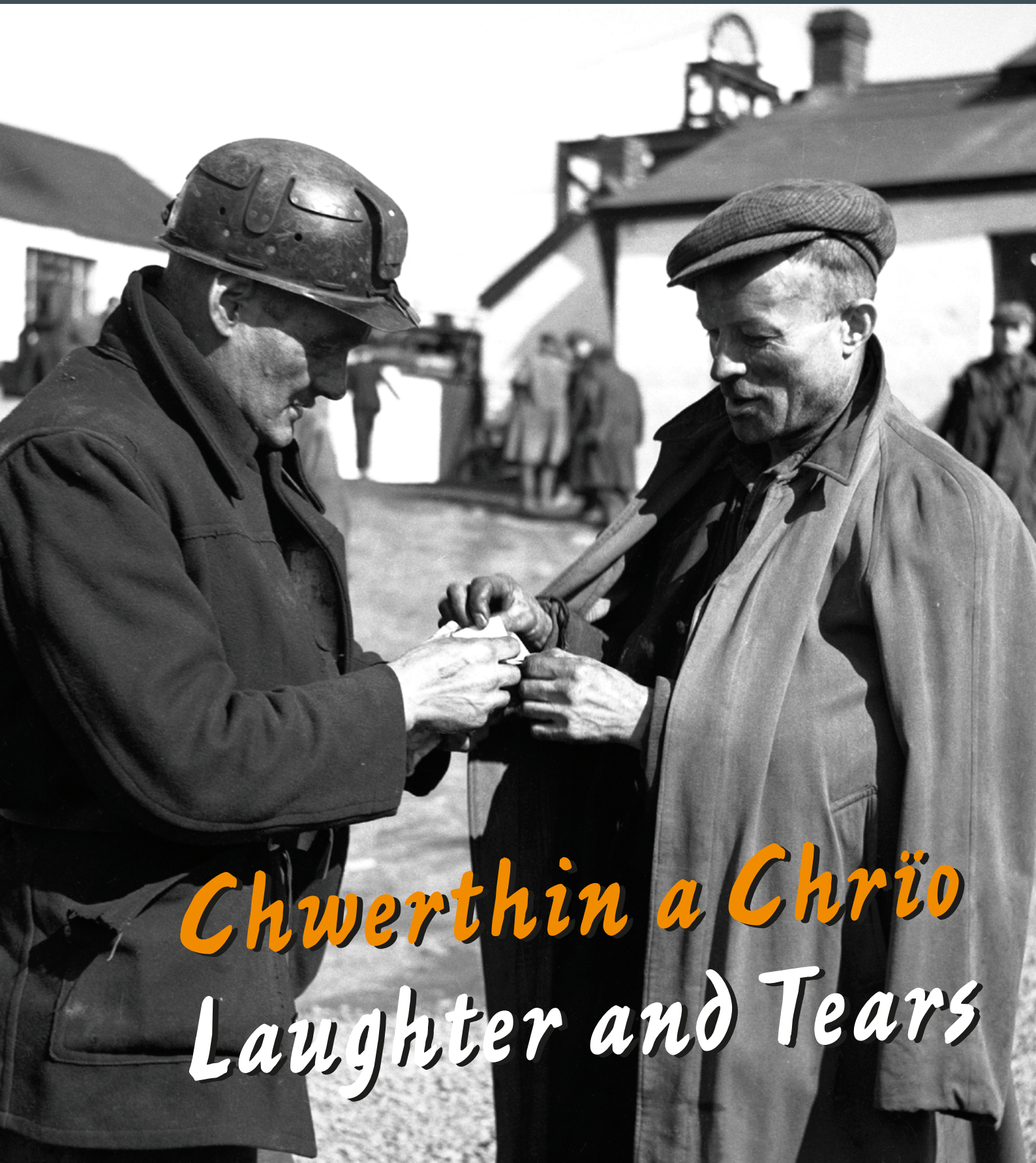


Chwerthin a Chrïo
Laughter and Tears

Y llon a'r lleddf

Daeth Daniel Edwards ('Dan Coedwr'), fy hen, hen dad-cu, i Gwm Rhondda yn y 1860au i weithio fel contractiwr coed gyda chwmni Ocean Coal. Roedd yn cyflenwi coed i lofa'r Parc, a'i wraig yn cadw siop groser/crydd leol. Ar y pryd, roedd y Rhondda'n ferw gwyllt gyda'r holl byllau ar waith. Roedd Treorci dan ei sang gyda phobl oedd wedi heidio i'r ardal, a phawb fel petai'n dod o rywle arall! Soniodd fy nhad-cu am yr holl ffeiriau a arferai gael eu cynnal ar dir agored ger tafarn y Cardiff Arms yn Nhreorci. Roedd yno bebyll bocsio, gyda stondinau taflu a *'thruppenny touch women'* yr holl ffordd o Gaerdydd. Byddai fy nhad-cu'n siarad am y Red Cow yn Nhreorci hefyd lle byddai'r glowyr yn cael cwpwl o beints cyn dechrau ymladd, ac fel y byddai ef a'i ffrindiau'n codi'r ceiniogau fyddai'n cwympo o bocedi'r bocswyr – arferai wneud cryn dipyn o arian.

Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed a mynd i weithio mewn ffowndri leol ond ym 1949, pan oeddwn i'n 17 oed, fe es i Ganolfan Hyfforddi Lofaol Wattstown i ddechrau gyrfa fel glöwr. Ar fy niwrnod cyntaf yn y pwll doeddwn i ddim yn gwybod ble i edrych gan fod popeth mor ddieithr. Pan gyrhaeddon ni'r ffordd bren yn arwain at y ffas lo eisteddodd pawb i lawr, a chlywais rywun yn gweiddi *'Let's make a start'*. Dyma'r cludfelt Meco yn cychwyn gydag uffarn o sgrech, a chodi llond twll o ofn arna i!

Ar ôl gorffen hyfforddi fe es i Lofa'r Park a chael fy anfon i weithio gyda bachan o'r enw Will, yn adeiladu awyrffordd ddychwel. Roedd Will tua chwe throedfedd dwy fodfedd, a'r ffordd ddim mwy na rhyw lathen o uchder, felly roedden ni'n gweithio ar ein pengliniau. Roeddwn i'n defnyddio bocs cwrlo i lenwi'r dram â glo. Dw i'n cofio Will yn cnoi baco, ac yn llyncu rhywfaint mewn camgymeriad, a wnaeth iddo gyfogi – a thagu fel dafad.

Ar ôl cwpla fan 'na, es i weithio ar stent [lle gwaith] gyda boi o'r enw Ivor. Mae e wedi hen farw bellach, ond byddai'n arfer rhoi sawl swllt i fi fel trymps [arian a dalwyd i'r gwas o gyflog colier] – tua 2s 6d, tipyn o arian bryd hynny. Pan oeddwn i'n 21 oed, fe ges i stent fy hun, pymtheg llath wrth bum troedfedd. Roedden ni'n defnyddio tyllwr niwmatig a mandrel i dynnu'r glo i lawr a'i roi ar gludfelt. Yna, daeth peiriant tandorri i'r pwll, a dyna un o'r tasgau mwyaf dychrynllyd i fi ei wneud erioed, gyda dyn o'r enw O. G. Davies a finnau'n gorfod clirio'r rwbel ar ôl i'r peiriant naddu heibio, a glo yn hongian uwch ein pennau wrth i ni rawio – sôn am fecso. Fel roedden ni'n clirio ar ôl y peiriant un diwrnod, dyma ddarn enfawr o lo yn cwympo ac yn dal troed Glyn 'Sais' Evans yn sownd yn erbyn y cludfelt. Dyma bawb yn gweiddi *'Don't start the Meco'* – byddai'r peiriant wedi tynnu troed 'Sais' i ffwrdd. Fe gawson ni dipyn o sbort hefyd, wrth gwrs, a bues i'n gweithio ar y ffas am rai blynyddoedd wedyn.

Un diwrnod, roedden ni wedi cloddio'r glo top i gyd ac roedd fy myti yn crafu'r glo gwaelod pan aeth e'n rhy agos at un o'r cynhalbyst. Daeth hwnnw'n rhydd gan ollwng carreg fawr ar ei ben. Yn ffodus, tarodd ymyl y garreg yn erbyn cebl ei gap lamp neu fe fyddai wedi torri ei asgwrn cefn yn hytrach na jyst torri gwythïen yn ei gefn. Dyma ni'n galw Glyn Dobb y dyn ambiwlans a roddodd ei fys ar y clwyf a stopio'r llif gwaed cyn rhwymo'i gefn a'i roi ar stretsier – roedd e'n edrych fel Maharajah mewn cadair sedan! Sôn am chwerthin, yn enwedig gan nad oedd y ddamwain mor ddifrifol ag a ofnwyd yn wreiddiol.

Un o gymeriadau'r Park oedd David Roberts, neu'r Kid Glove Collier i bawb arall. Roedd e a bachgen arall yn cloddio'r ffordd fynediad a'r stent gyntaf, ac yn clirio'r ddwy ardal erbyn i bawb arall glirio un. Roedd e fel injan ddyrnu.

Tua 1959 [10 Ebrill 1959], digwyddodd damwain drasig i ddau fachgen ifanc, y naill yn bedair ar bymtheg a'r llall yn ugain oed. Roedd eu tadau yn gweithio ar y ffas ar y pryd hefyd, ar y brig ac ar y gwaelod. Roedd yna rowlen yn y wythïen lo ac roedd dau baciwr yn tynnu cog [math o gynhalbost dros dro i'r to] gyda 'buller' [dyfais gadwyn ar gyfer tynnu cynhalbyst o'u lle]. Roedd y ddau fachgen yn gweithio ar y ffas lo o'u blaenau, a'r cludfelt rhyngddyn nhw – cludfelt a oedd, oherwydd y rowlen, uwch eu pennau gan fod y llawr yn pantio o'u blaenau. Dyma'r ddau baciwr yn tynnu'r cog, yn sylweddoli bod y to yn cwympo i lawr, ac yn hyrddio'u hunain tuag at y cludfelt i fynd allan o'r ffordd. Roedd y cwymp mor ddifrifol, nes i'r ddau baciwr gael eu gwasgu yn erbyn y cludfelt a'u lladd. Daliwyd y ddau fachgen yn sownd dan bentwr o goed, dur a cherrig. Lladdwyd un yn y fan a'r lle, ond llwyddodd y llall i ddianc a bu farw yn y theatr lawdriniaeth yn ddiweddarach.

Roeddwn i'n gweithio yn y stent nesaf ond un i'r cwymp, ac ar ôl y profiad hwnnw fe sylweddolais i ba mor lwcus oeddwn i. Penderfynais i adael y pyllau glo a gorffen ym mis Awst. Cafodd dynion eraill eu lladd pan oeddwn i'n gweithio danddaear, ond ddim mor agos â hyn. Diwydiant ofnadwy yw'r diwydiant glo, er bod hwyl i'w gael weithiau hefyd a brawdoliaeth gref.

Ken Simcox

Glofa'r Park, 1965
Parc Colliery, 1965

Funny times, sad times

My great, great grandfather Daniel Edwards ('Dan Coedwr') came to the Rhondda in the 1860s as a timber contractor to the Ocean Coal Company. He supplied timber to Parc Colliery and his wife ran a local grocery/cobblers shop. At this time the Rhondda was a Klondike with all the collieries working. Treorchy was teeming with people who had come to the area; everyone here seems to have come from somewhere else! My grandfather told me about the fairs that used to be held on open ground by the Cardiff Arms in Treorchy. There used to be boxing booths, shies and 'thruppenny touch women' *(women of 'negotiable virtue')* that used to come up from Cardiff. My grandfather also used to talk about the Red Cow in Treorchy where the colliers would have a few pints and then start fighting and how he and his friends would be able to pick up the pennies which had fallen out of the fighters' pockets – he used to make a fair bit of money.

I left school at fifteen and worked in a local foundry but, when I was seventeen in 1949, I went to Wattstown Colliery Training Centre to start my mining career. The first day I went down my eyes were everywhere as everything was so strange. When we got to the timber road leading to the coal face we sat down and I heard someone shout out "Let's make a start" and the Meco conveyor started up with an almighty screech and frightened me to death!

I did my training at Wattstown Training Centre and then went to Park Colliery where I was put to work with a chap called Will on building a return airway. Will was about six foot two and the roadway was only about a yard high so we were working on our knees. I was filling the coal out with a curling box to fill the dram. I remember that Will chewed tobacco and him swallowing some by mistake which made him retch – he was coughing like a sheep.

After finishing the roadway I went to work with a chap called Ivor on a stent, he's long gone now but he used to give me quite a few bob for 'trumps' – about 2s 6d, a lot of money then. When I was twenty one I got my own place which was a fifteen yards by five feet long stent. We were using a pneumatic puncher and mandrel to bring the coal down and filling it on to a conveyor. Then an undercutting machine was brought in and that was one of the most frightening work I had done as a man called OG Davies and me used to have to clear up the spillage after the cutter had 'flitted' and there'd be coal hanging above us while we shovelled – very worrying. One day while we were cleaning behind the cutter a huge slip of coal fell and trapped Glyn 'Sais' Evans's foot against the conveyor. Everyone shouted "Don't start the Meco" – because, if it had started it would have pulled 'Sais's' foot off. We also had our share of fun, of course and I carried on working on the face for the next few years.

One day we had worked the top coal off and my butty was taking up the bottom coal and got too close to a roof support which came out bringing down a large stone on his head. Luckily the edge of the stone was deflected by his cap lamp cable or it would have severed his spine instead of just cutting a blood vessel in his back. We called for Glyn Dobb the ambulance man and he put his finger on the wound and the blood stopped. He was then bandaged up and put on a stretcher – the way he was bandaged made him look like a maharajah riding on a sedan chair! We had to laugh, especially as the accident hadn't been as serious as we had first thought.

One of the characters at Parc was David Roberts who was known as the 'Kid Glove Collier'. He and a boy worked both the gate road and the first stent and they used to clear the two areas as quickly as the rest of us did one. He was like a threshing machine.

In around 1959 *(10 April 1959)* a tragedy happened which involved two young boys, one nineteen and one twenty years old. Their fathers were also working on the face at the time, one at the top of the face and one at the bottom. There was a roll in the coal seam and two packers were pulling out a cog *(type of temporary roof support)* with a 'buller' *(a chain device for pulling out roof supports)*. The two boys were working on the coal face in front of them and between them was the conveyor which, because of the roll, was above them as the floor was dipping down in front of them. The two packers pulled out the cog and realised that that the roof was coming down and hurled themselves down towards the conveyor to get out of the way. The fall was so tremendous that the two packers were crushed against the conveyor and killed and the two boys were caught under all the timber, steel and stone which came down on them. One boy was killed immediately and the other was got out but died on the operating theatre.

I was working in the next but one stent to the fall and, after that experience I thought how lucky I was and decided to get out of the pits and finished in the August. Other men had been killed during my time underground but they weren't as close as this one. The coal industry is a horrible industry although we did have a bit of fun and there was always a strong comradeship.

Ken Simcox

Wnes i 'rioed yfed diferyn

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1931 yn Stryd Pleasant, Pentre. Roedd fy nhad yn gweithio yng nglofa Abergorki tan iddo gael damwain pan gwympodd carreg o'r to, ei hyrddio ymlaen, a thorri pump o fysedd ei droed i ffwrdd – dim ond stwmpyn oedd ganddo'n weddill. Oherwydd hyn, fe ddwedais i na fyddwn i byth yn gweithio danddaear, felly ar ôl gadael yr ysgol es i weithio mewn bragdy lleol.

Ond pan oeddwn i'n chwech ar hugain oed, fe benderfynais i geisio am swydd yn yr 'Hook and Eye' [Glofa Glen Rhondda]. Es i weld y swyddog hyfforddi a chael cyfle ganddo. Bues i yn y ganolfan hyfforddi yn Wattstown am ychydig cyn cychwyn fel colier cynorthwyol yn yr Hook and Eye. Roedd glofa Blaen Rhondda wedi cau, a symudwyd y dynion lan i'r Hook. Oherwydd hyn, fe ges i'n anfon i wneud gwaith pacio, sef codi waliau sych y tu ôl i'r ffas wedi'u llenwi â pha bynnag gerrig oedd ar gael. A dyna fues i'n ei wneud am ryw chwe blynedd.

Wnes i ddim aros yn y lofa ar ôl hyn, achos fe aeth y caetsys yn sownd yn y siafft unwaith neu ddwy, ac felly doedden nhw ddim yn gweithio. Roedd hyn yn golygu bod rhaid i ni gerdded i siafft Gorllwyn y lofa, taith serth iawn, a gwelais rai o'r hen ddynion yn bustachu oherwydd effeithiau'r dwst ar eu hysgyfaint. Dyma fi'n meddwl, 'Os na ei di mas nawr, fyddi di fel 'na'. Felly, dychwelais i'r bragdy, ac aros yno. Ond yn rhyfedd ddigon, wnes i 'rioed yfed diferyn yn fy myw!

Danny 'Pentre' Phillips

Never drunk a drop in my life

I was born in July 1931 in Pleasant Street, Pentre. My father worked in Abergorki Colliery until he had an accident when a stone fell from the roof threw him forward and cut off five of his toes – he only had a stump left. Because of this I always said that I'd never work underground and, when I left school, I went to work in a local brewery.

However, when I was twenty six years old, I decided to try for a job in the 'Hook and Eye' *(Glen Rhondda Colliery)*. I went up to see the training officer and he gave me a start. I went to the training centre in Wattstown for a short time and then started as an assistant collier down the 'Hook and Eye'. Blaen Rhondda Colliery closed and they moved the men up to the Hook. Because of this I went packing which was basically building dry stonewalls behind the coal face filled with whatever stone was available, and stayed in that job for about six years.

I didn't stay in the colliery after this because the cages got caught in the shaft a couple of times which put them out of action. This meant that we had to walk up to the Gorllwyn shaft of the colliery which was a very steep walk and I saw some of the older men struggling because of the effects the coal dust was having on their lungs. I thought "If you don't get out, you'll be like that". So I went back to the brewery where I started and stayed there. Funnily enough I've never drunk a drop in my life!

Danny 'Pentre' Phillips

Glofa Glen Rhondda - 'The Hook and Eye'
Glenrhondda Colliery - 'The Hook and Eye'

Dychwelyd i fyd diwydiant

Cefais fy ngeni yn Griffithstown ym mis Hydref 1924. Gadewais Ysgol Ramadeg Abersychan ym 1941 a mynd yn glerc gyda chwmni'r Great Western Railway. Ym mis Gorffennaf 1943, gwirfoddolais fel aelod o griw awyr yr RAF pan oeddwn i'n ddeunaw oed a naw mis, a mynd cyn belled â De Rhodesia [Zimbabwe heddiw] lle'r oedd criw mawr o beilotiaid yn disgwyl i gael eu hyfforddi mewn gwersyll dros dro yn Bulawayo. Er mwyn lleihau'r pwysau, sefydlwyd cynllun lle gallai peilotiaid wedi'u hyfforddi'n rhannol naill ai ailhyfforddi fel peilotiaid gleider neu gael eu 'rhyddhau i ddiwydiant'. Ar ôl gwirfoddoli ar gyfer yr Awyrlu, doeddwn i ddim eisiau ymuno â'r Fyddin fel peilot gleider felly gofynnais am gael dychwelyd i fyd diwydiant.

Dyna ddeall wedyn y byddai hynny'n golygu gweithio danddaear, ond doedd hynny ddim yn ddrwg i gyd gan y byddwn i fwy na thebyg yn gallu mynd adref. Cefais fy rhyddhau o'r RAF ym mis Ebrill 1945. Ar ôl wythnos o wyliau, dechreuais yng nghanolfan hyfforddi Oakdale a mynd i Lofa Hafodyrynys tan fis Hydref 1947 pan wnes i ailymuno â'r Great Western Railway – o un swydd i'r llall yn syth, heb fynd ar y dôl na dim.

Rhaid cyfaddef fy mod i'n falch o'r profiad o weithio danddaear. Fe gwrddais â dynion da, ac mae rhai o'r hen lowyr sydd ar ôl yn dal i 'nghofio i. Wna i fyth ddeall pam bod amaturiaid fel ni wedi cael lampau diogelwch fflam a oedd yn debygol o ddiffodd wrth daro yn erbyn rhywbeth, a'ch gadael chi yn y tywyllwch, yn hytrach na lampau trydan fel gweithwyr proffesiynol. Profodd fy myti pa mor ddiogel oedd y lampau hyn. Bu'n profi am nwy mewn cornel heb ei hawyru mewn hedin newydd [llwybr danddaear] roedden ni'n ei ddatblygu, a chael ffrwydrad bach y tu mewn i'r lamp.

Ar fy niwrnod cyntaf yn Hafodyrynys, dangoswyd y ffas lo i fi a chefais fy nghyflwyno i fy ngholier, Wock, oedd yn tyllu o dan lwmp enfawr o lo oedd wedi'i gynnal gan ddim mwy na chwpwl o brops – am agoriad llygad! Ar y pryd, roedd y ffas lo'n cael ei thorri â llaw; pan gyflwynwyd peiriant torri glo, roedd rhawio'r glo mân a adawyd ar ôl fel rhawio huddygl sych – doedd dim dampo! Fe wnes i wir fwynhau gweithio gyda'r reparwyr [dynion a oedd yn trwsio'r ffyrdd danddaear], roedden nhw'n fedrus dros ben gyda bwyell, yn gwneud a thrwsio cynhalbyst pren.

Y braw mwyaf ges i oedd wrth lwytho dram. Wrth geisio gwthio lwmp mawr o lo i'w le dros ymyl ucha'r dram, roeddwn i'n sadio fy nghefn yn erbyn cynhalbost. Ond, yn hytrach na bod y lwmp yn mynd i'w le,

dyma'r cynhalbost yn llithro o'i le a'r to'n cwympo ar fy mhen. Trwy lwc, dim ond ychydig o rwbel rhydd ddaeth i lawr ond dw i'n cofio meddwl pa mor bell i

Returned to industry

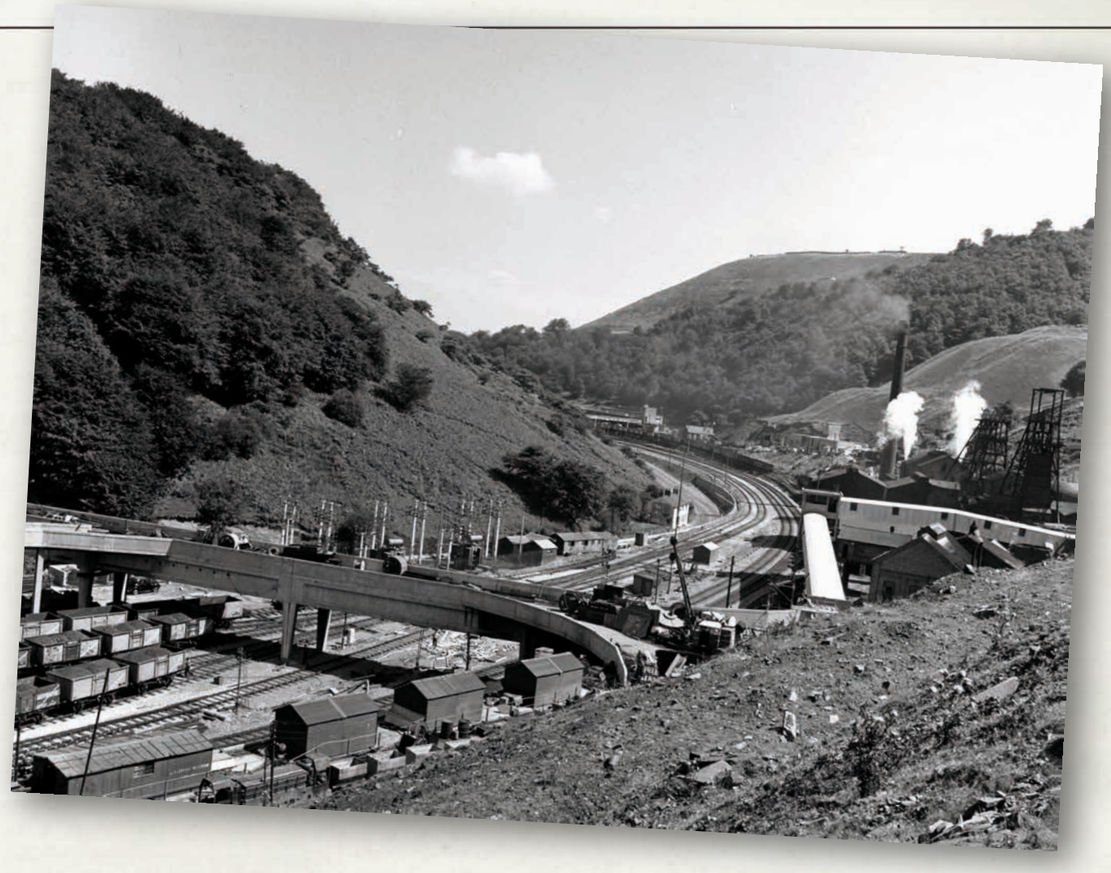
I was born in Griffithstown in October 1924. I left Abersychan Grammar School in 1941 and became a clerk on the Great Western Railway. In July 1943 I volunteered for RAF aircrew at the age of eighteen years and nine months old and got as far as Southern Rhodesia *(Zimbabwe)* were there was a logjam of pilots waiting for training in a transit camp in Bulawayo. To ease the congestion a scheme was started whereby we partially trained pilots could either retrain as glider pilots or be 'released to industry'. Having volunteered for the RAF I didn't want to go into the Army as a glider pilot so I asked to be returned to industry.

This was when I discovered that it meant working underground but I decided that this wasn't too bad as I would probably be able to return home. I was discharged from the RAF in April 1945. After a week's leave I started at Oakdale Training Centre then went to Hafodyrynys Colliery until October 1947 when I rejoined the Great Western Railway – straight from one job to another, no signing on the dole or anything.

I have to say that working underground was something I'm glad I experienced. I met some good men and am still remembered by some surviving colliers. I could never understand why we amateurs were issued with flame safety lamps which were likely to be extinguished if knocked, leaving you in the dark, instead of electric ones like the professionals. That the lamps worked safely was demonstrated by my 'butty' *(workmate)*. He tested for gas in an unventilated corner of a new heading (underground roadway) we were developing and got a miniature explosion which stayed inside the lamp

On my first day in Hafodyrynys I was shown to the coal face and introduced to my collier, 'Wock', who was holing underneath a huge lump of coal only held in position by some props – an eye opener! At this time the face was all hand cut, when a coal cutter was introduced loading the small coal left behind was like shovelling dry soot – there was no damping down! I really enjoyed working with the repairers *(men who created the roadways)*, their skill with an axe, making and repairing timber roof supports, was amazing.

My biggest fright occurred whilst loading a dram. Trying to force a large lump of coal into position above the top edge of the dram, I had my back against a prop for purchase. However, instead of the lump going into place, the prop slipped out and the roof above came down. Luckily for me it was only a small amount of loose rubble but I remember wondering how far up my body the fall would come. One memorable morning my butty, who shall be nameless, came to work with a huge hangover,



Glofa Hafodyrynys (ar y chwith)
Hafodyrynys Colliery (to the left of image)

fyny 'nghorff y byddai'r cwymp wedi cyrraedd. Un bore cofiadwy, daeth fy myti (wna i ddim datgelu ei enw fe) i'r gwaith gyda chlamp o ben mawr, ond roeddwn i wedi magu digon o brofiad erbyn hynny i reoli'r lle fy hun.

Un o'r ceffylau halio yn Hafodyrynys oedd Quack, ac os oedd ei gefn yn crafu'r to neu'r pren uwchben, byddai'n gwichian, yn neidio ac yn piso. Roedd ei halier, Jack Turton dw i'n credu, yn awyddus iawn felly i gael digon o le uwch ben, ble bynnag yr âi. Yn ystod gaeaf 1946-47, roedd hi'n eira mawr a thrên y glowyr o Bont-y-pŵl yn methu cyrraedd Hafodyrynys am ryw dridiau. Pan lwyddodd pawb i gyrraedd y gwaith o'r diwedd, ein jobyn cyntaf oedd clirio'r eira er mwyn cyrraedd y ceffylau. Roedd yr eira mor drwchus nes ei fod yn gorchuddio'r wagenni glo ar y seidins yn llwyr.

Os oedd y colier wedi cael wythnos dda neu'n credu bod ei gynorthwy-ydd yn haeddu hynny, byddech chi weithiau'n cael tâl ychwanegol, o hyd at hanner coron [12½ ceiniog] yr wythnos, ar ben cyflog o bum punt yr wythnos cyn y didyniadau. Fe briodais i ym mis Awst 1947, felly cafodd fy ngwraig newydd ychydig fisoedd o brofiad o olchi dillad glöwr cyn i fi ddychwelyd i'r rheilffyrdd – am lai fyth o arian, ond stori arall yw honno.

Desmond Samuels

but I had gained enough experience by then to keep the place going on my own.

One of the haulage horses at Hafodyrynys was called 'Quack' and if he 'roughed' *(if his back touched the roof or overhead timber)* he would squeal, buck and urinate. His haulier, who I believe was called Jack Turton, was therefore very keen on ample headroom where ever he was going. During the winter of 1946/47 there was heavy snow and the miners' train was unable to get from Pontypool to Hafodyrynys for about three days. When we eventually got to work our first job was to clear away the snow so that the horses could be attended to. The snow was so deep that it completely covered the coal wagons on the sidings.

The wages of five pounds a week before stoppages were sometimes supplemented by up to half a crown *(12 ½ pence)* by your collier if he had had a good week or thought that his assistant deserved it. I got married in August 1947 so my new wife had a few months experience of washing miners' clothes before I returned to the railway – for even less money, but that's another story.

Desmond Samuels

Criw Datblygu Penallta 1960au. Ch-d Don Owens, Archie Young, John Sharpe, Dai Lewis a Bill 'Biscuit' Jones
Penallta Development Gang 1960s. l-r Don Owens, Archie Young, John Sharpe, Dai Lewis and Bill 'Biscuit' Jones

Roeddwn i'n gweithio gyda chriw da bob amser

Cefais fy ngeni yn William Street, Tir-y-berth, ym 1937. Daeth un tad-cu – roedd un yn hanu o ogledd Cymru, a'r llall o Wlad yr Haf – i weithio ym Margoed. Heidiodd llawer o bobl yma yn y dyddiau hynny pan oedd gwaith wastad ar gael. Bu 'nhad yn gweithio yng nglofeydd Penallta, Britannia a Bedwas.

Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed, a mynd i weithio am sbel yn y Stadium yng Nghaerffili, yn gwneud padiau breciau ar gyfer beiciau cyn mynd i weithio yn y pyllau glo. I Fargoed yn gyntaf a gwneud 16 wythnos o hyfforddiant cyn cael y cyfle i ddewis fy mhwll fy hun; Penallta ddewisais i. Dechreuais fel ostler, yn clirio'r stablau a gofalu am y ceffylau; dylech chi fod wedi gweld yr holl lygod mawr yno! Fy swydd gyntaf oedd gweithio gyda gŵr o'r enw 'Billy Trousers' o Nelson, a gafodd ei lysenw oherwydd ei fod mor fyr nes bod llinyn gwasg ei drowsus yn cyrraedd tua chanol ei frest. Pan oeddwn i'n ddeunaw oed, ac yn dal i fod ym Mhenallta, cefais fy ngalw i'r fyddin. Es i weld y rheolwr, O'Sullivan, i ddweud wrtho, ac fe gymerodd y papurau oddi wrtha i, eu rhwygo'n ddarnau, a dweud wrtha i am ddychwelyd lawr y pwll. Dyna'r dwetha glywais i am y peth.

Dyma fi'n ymuno â'r gang riparwyr – yn atgyweirio llwybrau danddaear, gosod cledrau a symud peiriannau. Roedden ni'n gweithio yng nglofeydd Taff Merthyr, Britannia a Phenallta. Roedd y gang yn datblygu'n griw da iawn, ac roeddwn i'n gweithio oriau hir gan gynnwys y penwythnosau a'r gwyliau gan fod gen i chwech o blant, ac angen yr arian!

Bues i'n helpu gyda'r tân yn nhŷ pwmpio Pengam yng nglofa Britannia. Buon ni'n gweithio ochr yn ochr â Gwasanaeth Achub y Pyllau rhag ofn bod angen codi rhywbeth trwm. Roedd hynny'n destun pryder ar y pryd rhag ofn y byddai'n cau'r pwll – un peth dy'ch chi ddim eisiau mewn glofa yw tân.

Ym 1966, roedden ni'n gweithio yng nglofa Taff Merthyr pan gafon ni'n hanfon i Aber-fan. Roedd hi'n anhrefn llwyr yno; a ninnau'n sefyll ar dip glo oedd yn symud. Roedd fy mhen i'n llawn arogl nwy o'r pibelli wedi torri a'r tai yn symud, roedd e'n hunllefus. Pan welon ni fod yr ysgol wedi'i chladdu, fan 'ny oedd canolbwynt popeth wedyn. Welais i erioed ddiwrnod tebyg, y glaw, y tawch, drewdod nwy – fel ffilm arswyd. Gobeithio na fydd rhywbeth tebyg yn digwydd byth eto.

Bu'n rhaid i fi roi'r gorau iddi yn y lolfa oherwydd salwch, ond er hynny, dw i'n falch fy mod wedi bod lawr y pyllau a bydden i'n mynd yn ôl fory pe bawn i'n gallu. Roeddwn i'n gweithio gyda chriw da bob amser, yn mynd mas gyda'n gilydd i chwarae dartiau, sgitls a phŵl. Byddai'n braf ailagor y glofeydd eto; er mwyn cael pobl ifanc oddi ar y strydoedd ac yn ddigon pell oddi wrth gyffuriau.

John Sharpe

I always worked with good butties

I was born in William Street, Tiryberth in 1937. One of my grandfathers, one was from north Wales and the other from Somerset, came to work in Bargoed. Lots of people came here in those days, there was always work available. My father worked in Penallta, Britannia and Bedwas Collieries.

I left school at fifteen and worked for a while in the Stadium in Caerphilly making brake pads for bikes before signing up for the pits. I started in Bargoed and did sixteen weeks training before being asked to choose which pit I wanted to work in; I picked Penallta Colliery. I started as an ostler, cleaning stables and looking after the horses, you should have seen all the rats there! My first job was working with a man called 'Billy Trousers' from Nelson who got his nickname because he was so short his trouser waistband used to be up around his chest. While I was at Penallta I reached eighteen and got my call up papers for the army. I went to the manager, O'Sullivan, and told him and he took the papers of me, ripped them up and told me to get back down the pit. I never heard anything else about it afterwards.

Then I went with the repairing gang – repairing underground roadways, laying rails and moving machinery. We covered Taff Merthyr, Britannia and Penallta Collieries. The development gang were all good butties *(work mates)* and I used to work all sorts of hours including weekends and holidays as I had six kids and needed the money!

I was involved in the Pengam pump house fire down Britannia Colliery. We worked alongside Mines Rescue in case any heavy lifting was required. It was worrying at the time in case it closed the pit – one thing you don't want down a colliery is a fire.

In 1966 we were working in Taff Merthyr Colliery and were sent up to Aberfan. It was chaos there; we were standing on a moving coal tip. All we could smell was gas from the broken mains and the houses were moving, it was a nightmare. When we found that the school was buried all activity was concentrated there. I've never seen a day like that, the rain, the mist, the smell of gas – it was like a horror film. I hope that nothing like that will ever happen again.

I finished in the colliery because of ill health but I'm glad I went into the pits and I'd go back tomorrow if I could. I always worked with good butties, we went out together to play darts, skittles and pool. It would be nice to have the collieries open again; it would get the kids off the roads and away from the drugs.

John Sharpe

Tarianau, pastynau a chŵn

Yr her fawr gyntaf i'r streic yng nglofa Celynen South oedd y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol a gynhaliwyd ar 12 Tachwedd, pan dderbyniwyd deiseb wedi'i llofnodi gan ddeugain aelod yn datgan *'We the undersigned would like to agenda a return to work'*. Mewn cyfarfod cythryblus dros ben, gwrthododd y cadeirydd bleidlais ar y ddeiseb. Ond fe ganiataodd bleidlais i asesu barn yr aelodau am y streic (gwahaniaeth technegol), gyda'r canlyniad bod 144 o blaid streic a 65 yn erbyn.

Gwrthodwyd y sefyllfa hon gan 19 aelod, a ddychwelodd i'r gwaith ar y dydd Llun canlynol. Mewn cyfarfod cyffredinol brys, cafwyd cytundeb unfrydol i gondemnio hyn, a gwrthod gweithio gyda'r bradwyr yn y dyfodol a thynnu ein dynion diogelwch oddi ar y shiffftiau roedden nhw'n eu gweithio. Os 'gweithio' hefyd – yr unig beth oedd rhaid iddyn nhw ei wneud oedd cyrraedd y pwll er mwyn bodloni'r NCB [Bwrdd Glo Prydain]. Fe glywon ni hefyd bod Cyfrinfeydd Celynen North a Marine bellach yn cefnogi'n galwad ni am gynhadledd adalw. Y bore canlynol, trefnwyd piced mawr yn y pwll, lle gwelwyd un o'r golygfeydd mwyaf treisgar ers helyntion gwrth-undebaeth y 1930au.

Daeth rhyw bum cant o bicedwyr wyneb yn wyneb â thua 200 o heddlu gyda tharianau, pastynau a chŵn. Llwyddwyd i drechu'r heddlu ger y brif fynedfa, felly newidion nhw eu tactegau a mynd trwy'r seidins isaf a thrwy'r olchfa. Roedd yna ramp serth tua 60 llath yn arwain o'r olchfa i ben y pwll. Fe'u daliwyd nhw'n ôl gyda phibelli dŵr am sbel, ond roedd pethau wedi mynd yn rhemp erbyn hynny a bu'n rhaid i fi fynd i ben y pwll a rhwystro'r dynion rhag gwthio dramiau i lawr y pwll ac achosi difrod mawr. Wedyn o fewn dim, roedd yr heddlu wedi heidio i ben y ramp yn eu gêr terfysg llawn, ac yn ymosod ar bawb a phopeth a oedd yn symud.

Rhedodd pawb. Es i swyddfa'r peiriannydd ac esgus gwneud galwad ffôn ac aethon nhw heibio. Mae amser yn chwarae triciau ar y cof, ond dw i'n rhyw feddwl iddi gymryd pedair awr i'r heddlu 'adennill' y pwll. Dyma'r tro cyntaf erioed i Heddlu Gwent ddefnyddio offer terfysg. Cafodd Cadeirydd ac Ysgrifennydd y Gyfrinfa ganiatâd i weld y rhai oedd wedi torri'r streic ac apelio arnyn nhw i fynd adref: roedden nhw wedi gwneud eu pwynt, ac roedd hi'n bryd iddyn nhw ddychwelyd i'r gorlan er mwyn osgoi anaf neu farwolaeth hyd yn oed. Ond gwrthod hyn wnaeth y torwyr streic – gydag un yn bygwth nôl ei ddryll a saethu'r ysgrifennydd, a hyn oll o flaen heddweision a safai yno'n crechwenu. Ac o'r diwrnod hwnnw ymlaen, dim ond ein haelodau ni'n hunain fu'n picedu yng nglofa Celynen South, ac ni welwyd y fath drais yno byth wedyn. Parhaodd y picedu torfol, ond roedd presenoldeb sylweddol yr heddlu yn ein rhwystro rhag stopio'r bradwyr rhag gweithio. Roedd yno gryn wthio a hyrddio, ond trodd yr holl beth yn dipyn o chwarae plant wrth i fis Ionawr droi'n Chwefror.

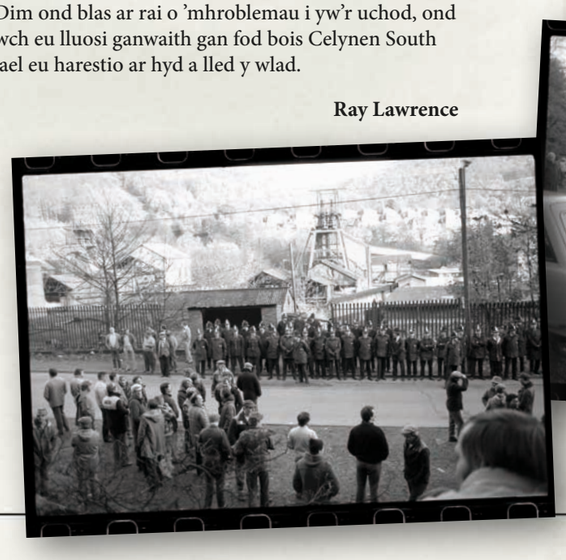
Tua'r adeg honno y des i, a'r llu o ddinasyddion oedd yn ufuddhau i'r gyfraith ar y llinell biced, yn ymwybodol o wir natur plismona modern. Bydden nhw'n ein gwawdio ni drwy sôn am faint o gyflog roedden nhw'n ei ennill, ac yn pwyntio at rywun a dweud y bydden nhw'n ei dalu i'r celloedd a mynd draw i'w gartref a ****** ei wraig. Byddai un cwnstabl, gafodd ei lysenwi'n 'No-neck', yn cicio picedwr yn fwriadol a'i arestio pan fyddai'n taro'n ôl. Roedd cael eich arestio heb unrhyw reswm yn y byd yn gyffredin, jyst er mwyn gostwng y niferoedd ar y llinell biced. Ni chafwyd yr un picedwr a arestiwyd ar linell biced Celynen South yn euog gan lys. Fel ysgrifennydd y Gyfrinfa, roeddwn i'n mwy na fy siâr o sylw gan yr heddlu, er y bydden nhw'n gwadu hynny, siŵr o fod.

Cefais fy arestio ar fympwy am daflu hoelion o dan fan. Doedd dim hoelen wedi cael ei thaflu wrth gwrs, a chafodd honiadau'r Arolygydd eu gwrthod gan yr heddweision ar y lein hyd yn oed. Cafodd yr achos ei daflu mas o'r llys. Dro arall, gofynnodd Arolygydd arall i fi ddangos y llwybr hawl tramwy oedd yn croesi'r lofa. Dyma fi'n ufuddhau, a chael fy arestio am dresmasu. Wnaeth yr achos ddim cyrraedd y llys hyd yn oed. Wedyn, prin hanner awr cyn cyfarfod cyffredinol pwysig gyda'r camerâu teledu yno yn dyfalu ein bod am ddychwelyd i'r gwaith, cefais fy arestio gan yr heddlu am yrru fan oedd yn rhy drwm medden nhw. Cefais fy nghadw am ddwy awr tra buon nhw'n archwilio'r fan, ond roedd popeth yn iawn a chefais fy rhyddhau. Cafodd y cyfarfod ei ohirio er mwyn disgwyl amdanaf i, er cryn ddifyrrwch i bawb.

Tra'r oeddwn i'n gyrru, byddwn i'n cael fy stopio unwaith neu ddwy bob dydd er mwyn i'r cerbyd gael ei archwilio. Doedd gen i mo'r dogfennau y tro cyntaf y digwyddodd hyn, felly es i â nhw i orsaf heddlu'r Coed-duon yn nes ymlaen y diwrnod hwnnw. Cefais fy arestio'n ddiweddarach am beidio â dangos y dogfennau hyn. Unwaith eto, cefais fy nghadw am sbel yn ddi-gyhuddiad. Pan ges i fy nghyhuddo am daflu hoelion, gwrthodwyd cymorth cyfreithiol i mi, er bod pob glöwr arall ar streic wedi cael hynny. Ond fe ges i gymorth yn y pen draw.

Dim ond blas ar rai o 'mhroblemau i yw'r uchod, ond gallwch eu lluosi ganwaith gan fod bois Celynen South yn cael eu harestio ar hyd a lled y wlad.

Ray Lawrence



Yr heddlu a'r picedwyr yng nglofa Celynen South
Police and pickets at Celynen South Colliery

Riot shields, batons and dogs

The first major challenge to the strike at Celynen South Colliery came at the General Meeting held on the 12th of November when a petition was received signed by 40 members that stated; "We the undersigned would like to agenda a return to work." In a volatile and rowdy meeting the chairman refused to put the petition to the vote. He did allow a vote to test the members' feelings on the strike *(a technical difference)* which resulted in a 144 votes to 65 votes' decision to stay out.

This position was not accepted by 19 members who returned to work on the following Monday. At a hurriedly convened general meeting it was unanimously agreed to condemn this action, and not to work with these 'scabs' in future and to withdraw our safety men on the shifts that these people work. If work was the term, they only had to arrive at the pit to satisfy the NCB. It was also reported that the Celynen North and Marine Lodges were now supporting our call for a re-call conference. The following morning mass picketing was arranged at the pit and the most violent scenes since the non-unionism fights of the 1930s occurred.

About five-hundred pickets faced around two-hundred police armed with riot shields, dogs and batons. We beat off the police approach to the main entrance to the pit, so they switched tactics and brought them through the bottom railway sidings and through the washery. From the washery to the pit top there was a steep ramp about 60 yards long. We held them off there using fire hoses for a while, but things had become out of control by then and I had to go to the pit top and stop men trying to push trams down the pit and causing serious damage. Next thing I knew the police were up the ramp in full force and in riot gear and attacking anything that moved.

Everybody ran. I went into the engineer's office and pretended to make a phone call and they passed me by. Time plays tricks with the memory but I would think it took the police four hours to 'recapture' the pit. It was the first time in its history that the Gwent Police had used riot gear. The Lodge Chairman and Secretary were then permitted to see the strike-breakers and appealed to them to return home, they had made their point, now for the sake of avoiding injury or death it was time to return to the fold. The strike-breakers refused, one threatening to fetch his shotgun and blast the Secretary, and this in front of police officers who just smirked. From that day onwards picketing at the Celynen South Colliery was carried out by our own members only, and the violence never reached those levels again. Mass picketing continued with a heavy police presence preventing them from stopping the 'scabs' from working. There was much pushing and shoving but the whole situation became just a masquerade as January turned to February.

It was around this time that I, and the many law abiding citizens on the picket line, became aware of the true style of modern policing. We would be taunted by such remarks about how much wages they were earning, they would point out someone and taunt him by saying they would lock him up and then go to his house and **** his wife. A particular PC we nicknamed 'No-neck' would deliberately kick a picket and then arrest him when he retaliated. Arrests were common for no reason but to reduce the numbers on the picket line. Not one picket arrested at the Celynen South picket line was convicted by a court. As Lodge Secretary I came in for particular attention from the police, although I am sure that they will deny this.

I was arbitrarily arrested for throwing nails under a van. Of course no nails were thrown and even the police on the line refused to support the Inspector's allegations. The case was thrown out of court. On another occasion I was asked by another police inspector to show him the 'right of way' leading across the colliery. I duly obliged and was arrested for trespassing. The case didn't even reach court. On another occasion just a half hour before an important general meeting where a return to work had been predicted by the television, the police arrested me for supposedly driving an overweight van. I was detained for two hours while the van was checked and found to be OK and then released. The meeting was adjourned to wait for me amongst much amusement.

Whilst driving I would be stopped a couple of times a day and the vehicle checked. On the first occasion I didn't have my documents with me and duly took them to Blackwood police station later on in the day. Some time later I was arrested for not producing these documents. Again I was held for a while and not charged. On the nail throwing incident when I was charged, legal aid was refused for me, although it had been granted to every other striking miner in trouble. After a while it was then granted.

I have just illustrated some of my own problems, but this can be multiplied many times as the men from the Celynen South were arrested throughout the country.

Ray Lawrence

Dim byd i gwyno amdano

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1931, yn Lamb Row, Blaenafon. Daeth fy hen dad-cu i Flaenafon o ardal Stepaside, Sir Benfro, tua 1854. Roedd fy nhad-cu'n gweithio yn y pyllau hefyd, ond bu farw ym 1919 felly does gen i ddim cof ohono; dywedodd pobl iddo farw'n ifanc oherwydd 'gorweithio'. Bu 'nhad yn gweithio yn Big Pit fel haliwr gyda'r ceffylau danddaear, cyn rhoi'r gorau iddi yn ei bumdegau oherwydd arthritis.

Pan oeddwn i'n ddwy ar bymtheg oed, dechreuais yn swyddfa Cwmni Blaenafon am dâl o tua 20 swllt yr wythnos. Gofynnais i'r rheolwr cynhyrchu am godiad cyflog a rhoddodd chweugain arall i mi, ond cyn pen deufis, cefais brentisiaeth fel ffitiwr. Es i Ysgol Dechnegol Abertyleri a gwneud fy hyfforddiant glofaol yn Oakdale. Un o'r bechgyn eraill a hyfforddodd gyda ni oedd Keith Frampton, a gafodd ei ladd yn ddiweddarach yn ffrwydrad Six Bells. Ar ôl cwpl o flynyddoedd, dychwelais i weithio yn Big Pit.

Pan ddechreuais i'n Big Pit, roedd yr injan weindio yn dal i ddefnyddio rhaff fflat, ond pan newidiwyd y system weindio ym 1952 bues i'n helpu cwmni Uskside Engineering. Dyma ni'n tynhau rhai o'r bolltau gyda gordd ugain pwys – *'So they'd never move again!'*

Cefais fy nghyflogi fel ffitiwr pen pwll, ond bues i danddaear gryn dipyn hefyd, yn enwedig ar shifft nos pan oedd rhywbeth wedi torri neu os oedd angen adeiladu injan halio newydd. Pan oedden ni danddaear, bydden ni'n cael ein bwyd yn y stablau gyda'r ceffylau, er eu bod yn llawn 'black pats' [math o chwilen ddu]. Un o'r ceffylau oedd 'Patch', ac roedd e'n enwog am ddwyn bwyd o bocedi pobl – ceffyl bach poblogaidd iawn!

Ar ôl i Big Pit gau, es i lofa'r Marine, oedd yn fawr iawn o gymharu â Big Pit ond dyna'r swydd orau ges i erioed. Ond fe gollais i fy swydd, a thair blynedd yn ddiweddarach, ym mis Mawrth 1989, roedd y lofa wedi cau – popeth wedi mynd.

Roedd yna awyrgylch braf yn Big Pit a chriw da o weithwyr. Hen le oer yn y gaeaf hefyd, ac roedden ni'n gorfod dadmer y pibelli'n aml i gadw'r lle i redeg. Byddech chi ar ben y tip yn y gaeaf yn sortio gyrwyr twp yr injan halio fyddai'n gyrru'r dramiau'n rhy bell lan y carriage [rheilffordd halio'r tip] fel bod rhaid i ni fynd lan i drwsio'r difrod. Un mis Ionawr, dim ond newydd gyrraedd pen y tip oedden ni pan giciodd rhywun y bwced tân oedden ni'n ei ddefnyddio i gadw'n dwylo'n gynnes. Roedd hi mor oer roedd y sbaner wedi rhewi yn fy llaw! Nôl yn y 'stafell ffitio wedyn roeddwn i'n dechrau cynhesu pan gefais fy anfon gan y peiriannydd i drin y boeleri – o un eithaf i'r llall!

Gweithdy'r Ffitwyr Pwll Mawr
Big Pit Fitting Shop

Er bod hwyl i'w gael, roedd pethau difrifol yn digwydd weithiau. Un penwythnos, roedden ni wedi bod yn gweithio yng nghrombil y pwll ac yn dychwelyd i'r brig tua 11 o'r gloch. Roedd criw yn sefyll o amgylch y stof, a dywedodd y dyn nesa' ata i fod ei ddwylo yn teimlo'n rhyfedd braidd. Aeth ymlaen i weithio ar y sgriniau wedyn, a wnes i ddim meddwl rhagor am y peth. Ar ôl i ni gwpla dyma ni'n mynd i'r baddondai lle'r oedd cynnwrf mawr. Roedd e wedi cwympo i'r llawr a marw yn y loceri yn 57 oed. Flynyddoedd ynghynt, lladdwyd ei frawd o dan y sgriniau ar ôl i wagen rolio drosto.

Dw i'n cofio gweithredu'r offer turnio yn y gweithdy ffitio [derbynfa a siop anrhegion Big Pit heddiw], a chael ar ddeall ei fod eisoes yn hen pan brynodd Cwmni Blaenavon yr offer yn ail law flynydde'n ôl! Ger y gweithdy ffitio, roedd Elled Slope [cloddfa ddrifft fach a agorodd yn y 1940au cyn ei chau ym 1951, mae tŷ'r injan halio yno hyd heddiw] a dw i'n cofio nhw'n ei hagor. Dw i ddim yn credu iddyn nhw gael dram llawn o lo yno erioed chwaith, gan fod cyflwr y to mor wael.

Dw i'n cofio'r Arglwydd Robens [Cadeirydd Bwrdd Glo Prydain] yn dod i agor cloddfa ddrifft Blaentyleri [ar y bryn uwchben Big Pit]. Adeiladon nhw hewl goncrid hir ar draws y mynydd er mwyn ei gludo yno i dorri'r dywarchen gyntaf. Ond mewn gwirionedd fe gyrhaeddodd e, cael dishgled o de, cyn i'r chauffeur ei yrru'n syth nôl i Lundain heb hyd yn oed weld y gloddfa! Doedd e ddim yn fachan neis iawn, doedd neb yn ei hoffi o gwbl.

Yn y llun, fi sydd ar y chwith gyda'r cap, a Leslie Jenkins, a gafodd ddau gap ysgolion rygbi Cymru, ar y dde. Malcolm O'Brian yw'r un yn y canol, a ddechreuodd weithio ar y sgriniau, yn codi cerrig o'r glo. Yna, daeth yn labrwr ar yr wyneb cyn gweithredu'r offer stopio wagenni ar ben y pwll, oedd yn rhyddhau'r dramiau o'r caetsys. Pan ddaeth weindio glo i fyny siafft Big Pit i ben ac agor cloddfa newydd ym 1973 [Blaenavon New Mine] cafodd waith yn y gweithdy ffitio. Pan gaeodd Big Pit cafodd ei drosglwyddo i lofa Blaenserchen. Collodd ei swydd yno'n ddiweddarach, a bu farw'n fuan wedyn. Roedd yn fachan ffein, a dw i'n falch fy mod wedi cwrdd ag e. Fe welwch 'mod i'n gwisgo cap yn y llun. Roedden ni i fod i wisgo helmed bob amser, ond cap fyddai gen i wastad wrth weithio yn y gweithdy ffitio. Yn y llun hwn, roedden ni newydd drwsio gerbocs ac yn ei lwytho ar droli yn barod i fynd nôl i lawr y pwll.

No complaints

I was born in June 1931 in Lamb Row, Blaenafon. My great grandfather came to Blaenavon from the Stepaside area in Pembrokeshire around 1854. My grandfather also worked in the pits but he died in 1919 so I don't remember him, I was told that he died a young man because he was 'worked out'. My father worked in Big Pit as a haulier with the horses underground; he finished work in his fifties with arthritis.

I started work at seventeen years old and worked as an office boy with the Blaenavon Company earning about 20 shillings a week. I asked the production manager for a rise and he gave me ten bob extra but two months later I got an apprenticeship as a fitter. I went to Abertillery Technical School and did my colliery training at Oakdale Colliery. One of the boys training with us was Keith Frampton who was later killed in the Six Bells explosion. After a couple of years I came back to work at Big Pit.

When I started at Big Pit the winding engine still had a flat rope but when the winding system was changed in 1952 I helped Uskside Engineering during the change over. We tightened some of the bolts with a twenty pound sledge hammer – 'So they'd never move again!'

I was employed as a surface fitter above ground but actually went underground a lot especially on night shifts if there was a breakdown or if a new haulage engine had to be built. When we were underground we used to have our food in the stables with the horses even though it was full of 'black pats' *(a type of cockroach)*. One horse was Patch and he used to be well known for going into pockets after food – a popular little horse!

I went to Marine Colliery after Big Pit closed. I found Marine very big after Big Pit, but it turned out to be the best job I ever had. Then I was made redundant and three years later, in March 1989, the colliery itself finished – it was all gone.

There was a good atmosphere in Big Pit; there was a nice set of chaps. It was cold in the winter and we often had to thaw out the pipes to keep it going. You'd be on top of the tip in the winter sorting out the crackpot haulage engine drivers who would pull the drams up the 'carriage' *(the colliery tip haulage railway)* too far so we had to go up and sort out the damage. One January we hadn't been up the tip two minutes when someone kicked the fire bucket (brazier) which we used to warm our hands down the tip. That day I had the spanner actually frozen in my hand. Back in the fitting shop later I was thawing out and the engineer sent me to sort the boilers out – from one extreme to the other!

Although we used to have a laugh sometimes serious things happened. One weekend we were working on pit bottom and came up the pit at about eleven o'clock and there were a couple of us around the stove and the man next to me said that his hands felt funny. He later went to do a job on the screens and I thought no more about it. When we finished and went to the baths there was a commotion and we found out that he had collapsed and died in the lockers at 57 years old. Years before the same man's brother had been killed under the screens when a wagon ran over him.

I remember operating the lathe in the fitting shop *(now the reception and gift shop at Big Pit)* and being told that it was already old when the Blaenavon Company had bought it second hand many years before! Near to the fitting shop in Big Pit was the Elled Slope (a small drift mine opened in the 1940s and abandoned in 1951. The Elled Slope haulage engine house is still standing at Big Pit today) which I remember being driven in. I don't think that they ever got a dram full of coal out of there, I think that it had a poor 'top' (bad roof conditions).

I remember Lord Robens *(Chairman of the National Coal Board)* coming to open the Blaentillery Drift Mine *(Located on the hillside above Big Pit)*. They built a long concrete road across the hillside to get his car there so he could cut the first sod. In fact he came to Big Pit, had a cup of tea, got back in his chauffeur driven car and drove back to London – never even saw Blaentillery Drift! He wasn't a very nice man, he wasn't liked at all.

In the photo I'm on the left wearing a cap and Leslie Jenkins, who had two schoolboy caps at rugby for Wales, is on the right. The man in the middle is Malcolm O'Brian who started off working on the screens picking stone from the coal. Then he became a surface labourer and later operated the 'retarders' at the top of the pit which released the drams from the cage. When coal stopped being wound up the Big Pit shaft and they opened the new drift in 1973 *(Blaenavon New Mine)* he got a job in the fitting shop. When Big Pit closed he transferred to Blaenserchen Colliery. He was made redundant from there but died soon afterwards. He was a nice chap and I'm glad I met him. You'll see I'm wearing a cap in the photo. We were supposed to always wear a helmet but I always put a cap on when I worked in the fitting shop. In the photo we had just repaired a gear box and were loading it onto a trolley ready to go back down the pit.

My wife's father Howell Williams worked at Big Pit on the Garw coal face and his father and grandfather also both worked at Big Pit as well as running The Rock and Fountain public house. When I used to have to go into the Garw face to repair the coal cutters I had to take my lamp battery off to get into the face because it was so low!

I played cricket for Blaenafon and football for Forgeside Youth Club. I also used to go drinking in the Conservative Club – although all the members voted Labour! I worked in Big Pit for quite a few years and, although I was usually up to my neck in grease, I loved every minute of it – you won't hear me complaining about Big Pit.

Owen Thomas

Roedd tad fy ngwraig, Howell Williams, yn gweithio ar ffas lo Garw yn Big Pit – fel ei dad a'i dad-cu o'i flaen, yn ogystal â rhedeg tafarn The Rock and Fountain. Pan oeddwn i'n gorfod mynd i ffas Garw i drwsio'r peiriannau torri glo, roedd rhaid i fi dynnu'r lamp fatri i ffwrdd gan fod y to mor isel!

Bues i'n chwarae criced i Flaenafon a phêl-droed i glwb ieuenctid Forgeside. Roeddwn i'n arfer yfed yn y Con Club hefyd – er mai pleidleiswyr Llafur oedd pob aelod! Bues i'n gweithio yn Big Pit am sawl blwyddyn, ac er mod i'n drwch o olew a saim fe wnes i fwynhau bob eiliad – chlywch chi mohona i'n cwyno am Big Pit.

Owen Thomas

Fy anfon i'r pyllau glo

Ganwyd fi yn Grangetown, Caerdydd, ym 1929. Gwneuthurwr boeleri yn y dociau oedd 'nhad, ac roedd gen i frawd ugain mlynedd yn hŷn a chwaer ddeunaw mlynedd yn hŷn felly fi oedd cyw melyn ola'r teulu. Symudodd y teulu i Benarth yn ystod y rhyfel i helpu fy chwaer, tra'r oedd ei gŵr bant gyda'r Awyrlu (enillodd Fedal Gwasanaeth Neilltuol). Fe symudon ni rhag y bomio yng Nghaerdydd ond cael ein bomio ym Mhenarth wedi'r cyfan. Cafodd ein tŷ ar Ffordd Stanmore ei daro gan fom tân, a darodd lwybr concrid dwy fodfedd a mynd yn syth drwyddo gan adael twll tair modfedd ar ei ôl. Tarodd bom arall ar y to, a dw i'n cofio fy nhad gyda phwmp troed i fyny'r grisiau a phawb arall yn rhedeg lan a lawr gyda bwcedi o ddŵr – roedden ni'n cadw recordiau finyl lan llofft aeth yn wenfflam! Cafodd y tŷ ar y pen, oedd yn feithrinfa a chlinig, ei chwalu i'r llawr.

Rhwng unarddeg a phymtheg oed roeddwn i'n aelod o'r sgowtiaid, a 'nghyfraniad i i'r ymdrech ryfel oedd croesawu aelodau'r WAAFs (Awyrlu Cynorthwyol y Menywod) oedd yn dod i Benarth i hyfforddi, a chario eu bagiau ar gert o'r orsaf i'r llety. Roedd hi'n dipyn o gamp cadw'r bagiau rhwng y ddwy olwyn a rhwystro fy hun rhag cael fy nhaflu i'r awyr – dyw Penarth ddim yn lle gwastad iawn.

Gadewais yr ysgol ym mis Ionawr 1945. Aethon ni'n ôl i Grangetown ar ddiwedd y rhyfel. Fy swydd gyntaf oedd rhedeg negeseuon yn yr Home and Colonial Stores, ond wrth sgubo'r llawr un dydd dyma fy nghot yn bachu yn y cloriannau pres a marmor enfawr ar y cownter a'u tynnu nhw'n deilchion i'r llawr. Roedd gen i rywfaint o gywilydd mynd yn ôl yno, a dechreuais weithio i gwmni o'r enw Electrical Equipments ar Heol Dumballs oedd yn cynhyrchu gwefrwyr batris ar gyfer llongau tanfor, ond dim ond chwe mis fues i yno.

Un o'r tasgau oedd platio, sef trin asid heb unrhyw fenig – roedd fy nwylo i'n farciau i gyd, a fi'n ysu i adael. Lan yr hewl roedd cwmni o'r enw British Electrical Repairs Ltd, yn Wharf Street, felly es i yno a dechrau fel prentis trydanol yn bedair ar ddeg a chwe mis. Roedd hon yn waith neilltuedig gan fod y cwmni'n trwsio offer trydanol ar gyfer y pyllau glo, ond fe ges i ngalw i'r fyddin yn 21 er hynny, ac fe es i'r cyfweliad gyda ffrind. Roedden ni'n dau am ymuno â'r Llynges, ond dyma fi'n gadel i'n ffrind fynd gyntaf a chafodd ei ddewis i fynd i'r môr. Erbyn i fi fynd i mewn, fe ddwedon nhw fod y Llynges yn llawn a ches i fy anfon i'r pyllau glo.

Roeddwn i fod i weithio fel driliwr yn y pyllau, ond ar ôl deall fy mod i wedi gwneud gwaith trydanol, ces i fy anfon i lofa'r Prince of Wales yng Nglynebwy, fel trydanwr Gradd Un. Ar y pryd, doedd dim glo'n cael ei gloddio yn y Prince of Wales ac roedd yn cael ei ddefnyddio fel pwll pwmpio. Roedd criw o ffitwyr cynnal a chadw, siop drydanol a storfeydd ar gyfer Ardal Rhif 6 Bwrdd Glo Prydain yn y Prince of Wales ar y pryd. Rhan fawr o 'ngwaith oedd trwsio offer trydanol fyddai trydanwyr y lofa ddim yn eu trin fel arfer. Dyma'r math o waith fues i'n ei wneud yn British Electrical Repairs Ltd, felly doedd hi ddim yn swydd wahanol iawn. Roeddwn i'n aelod o'r criw trwsio oedd yn cael ei anfon i ble bynnag oedd ein hangen, gan ei bod hi'n haws trwsio motor ac ati yn y fan a'r lle neu danddaear yn hytrach na dod ag e i'r gweithdy.

Dw i'n credu 'mod i wedi bod ym mhob glofa yn Ardal Rhif 6. Ches i ddim blas aruthrol ar y gwaith chwaith, oherwydd y bos annifyr – y bos anoddaf i weithio iddo erioed! Roeddwn i'n byw yn Nhredegar, yn 22 Parkville, ac ro'n i'n gallu gwylio clwb rygbi Tredegar Ironsides drwy'r ffenestr. Dyna lle'r oeddwn i'n gynnes braf, a nhw'n wlyb stecs yn chwarae ar ochr mynydd. Y gostyngiad ar lo 'nghadwodd i yn y pyllau, deg llwyth y flwyddyn dw i'n credu, ond roedden ni'n rhoi dau lwyth yn ôl ar gyfer gweddwon y glowyr.

Pan adewais i'r pyllau i fynd i'r gwaith dur, roedd y cyflog yn well (trueni na fydden i wedi sylweddoli hynny'n gynt!), gallen i fod wedi fforddio dau lwyth o lo y mis ac roedd y rheolwyr yn wych. Trydanwr yn yr Heavy End yng ngwaith Glynebwy oeddwn i, a byddwn i'n gweithio yn lle bynnag oedd fy angen i nes dod yn drydanwr yn y ffyrnau golosg. Bues i yng Nglynebwy am ddwy flynedd tan agorodd Llanwern, a phan es i yno am gyfweliad, pwy oedd yn fy nghyfweld i ond cyn-beiriannydd Glynebwy. Arhosais i yn Llanwern tan troi'n 65 oed. Roedd Llanwern yn cwtogi ar y gweithlu erbyn diwedd fy ngyrfa i, ond ches i ddim tâl diswyddo oherwydd prinder technegwyr.

Roeddwn i'n hapus i dreulio'r ddwy flynedd ar hugain olaf fel technegydd cyfarpar ac awtomatiaeth, yn enwedig gan taw dim ond offer ysgafn oedd rhaid i fi gario. Rown i'n gwerthfawrogi hyn yn fawr erbyn diwedd fy ngyrfa.

Malcolm McCann

Directed to the coal mines

I was born in 1929 in Grangetown, Cardiff. My father was a boiler maker on the docks and I had a brother twenty years older than me and a sister eighteen years older so I was the baby of the family. We moved to Penarth during the war to help my sister whose husband was in the RAF (he won a Distinguished Service Medal). We moved away from the bombing in Cardiff but we were bombed in Penarth instead. Our house in Stanmore Road was hit by an incendiary bomb which hit the two inch thick concrete path and went straight through leaving a three inch round hole. Another bomb hit the roof and I remember my father upstairs with a stirrup pump and the rest of us running up the stairs with buckets of water – we had vinyl records stored upstairs, they didn't half go up in flames! The end house was a nursery/clinic and it was completely flattened.

I was a boy scout from eleven to fifteen years old and my contribution to the war effort was to meet WAAFs *(Women's Auxiliary Air Force)* coming to Penarth for training at the station and take their kit bags to their accommodation in the 'troop cart'. It was quite an act to keep the kit bags balanced between the two wheels and also stop me being shot up in the air - Penarth is quite a hilly place.

I left school in January 1945. When the war ended we went back to Grangetown. My first job was as an errand boy in the Home and Colonial Stores but, while I was sweeping the floor one day my dust coat caught in the big brass and marble scales which was on the counter and it broke all over the floor. I was a bit ashamed to go back afterwards and I started work with a firm called Electrical Equipments on Dumballs Road which made battery chargers for submarines, but I only stuck it for six months.

One of the jobs was 'plating' which meant handling acid without any gloves – I had marks all over my hands and wanted to get out. Just up the road was a firm called British Electrical Repairs Ltd. *(BERL)* in Wharf Street so I went there and started an electrical apprenticeship at fourteen and a half years old. I was regarded as being in a reserved occupation as BERL were repairing electrical equipment for the mines. However I was called up at twenty one and went to the interview with a friend. We both wanted to go into the Navy but I let my friend go in first and he was chosen to go to sea but when I went in they told me the Navy was now full up and I was directed to the coal mines instead.

I was lined up to become a driller in the mines but when they found out I had done electrical work I was sent to the Prince of Wales Colliery in Ebbw Vale as a Grade One electrician. At that time Prince of Wales had stopped raising coal and was used as a pumping pit. At Prince of Wales there was a gang of maintenance fitters, an electrical shop and an area electrical stores for Area No. 6 of the National Coal Board. A big part of my work was repairing electrical equipment which was not generally handled by colliery electricians. It was the type of work I'd been doing in BERL so my job didn't change much. When I was in Prince of Wales I was a member of a repair gang that was sent to wherever we were needed as it was easier to repair a motor or whatever in situ or underground rather than bring it to the workshop.

I don't think that there was a colliery in No. 6 Area that I haven't been to. I didn't enjoy the job much because I had an unpleasant boss – the most difficult boss I've ever had! I lived in Tredegar in 22 Parkville and could watch Tredegar Ironsides RFC through the window. I was in the warm and they were soaking wet playing on the side of a mountain. What kept me in the mines was the concessionary coal, I think it was ten loads a year, but we gave two loads back for miners' widows.

When I left the pit for the steelworks the wages were better (I wish I had realized that earlier!) and I could have afforded to buy two loads of coal a month and the management was great. I was an electrician in what they called the Heavy End of Ebbw Vale Works and used to work anywhere they needed me until I became an electrician in the coke ovens. I stayed in Ebbw Vale for two years until Llanwern opened and I went there for a job and was interviewed by my former engineer from Ebbw Vale. I stayed in Llanwern until I was sixty five. Llanwern were reducing their workforce towards the end of my working life but I failed to get redundancy due to the shortage of technicians.

I was happy to spend the last 22 years of my service as an instrument and automation technician, especially as I only needed to carry a lightweight number of tools, this was especially appreciated when I was in my later years.

Malcolm McCann

Crefftwyr a phrentisiaid yng nglofa'r Prince of Wales – Anhysbys, John Ashton Philip Evans, Malcolm McCann. Rhes flaen: Dennis John (fforman cynorthwyol) Dennis Noble, John Green

Craftsmen and apprentices at Prince of Wales Colliery - Unknown, John Ashton Philip Evans, Malcolm McCann. Front row – Dennis John (Asst. foreman) Dennis Noble, John Green

Roedden ni yno ar eu cyfer nhw

Cefais fy ngeni yn Nhrehafod, Cwm Rhondda, ym 1936. Roedd fy nhad yn golier ym mhwll Lewis Merthyr, cyn gorfod rhoi'r gorau iddi ym 1946 oherwydd clefyd y llwch [pneumoconiosis]. Chafodd e'r un geiniog o bensiwn, fel miloedd o drueiniaid eraill, fel oedd yn gyffredin ar y pryd. Ond fe gafodd swm o arian fel iawndal fodd bynnag. Er mwyn cynnal ei deulu, bu'n rhentu ac yn gweithio tyddyn bychan, fel sawl glöwr arall.

Pan adewais i'r ysgol yn bymtheg oed ym 1951, dechreuais i weithio mewn ffowndri ar ystâd ddiwydiannol Trefforest. Fy uchelgais ar y pryd oedd ymuno â'r Gwarchodlu Cymreig. Roedd fy nhad yn gobeithio na fyddwn i'n gwneud hynny, gan fod dau o 'mrodyr wedi gwasanaethu gyda'r Fyddin – un yn dioddef yn ofnadwy o siel-syfrdandod a'r llall wedi'i anafu'n wael. Felly, rhwng 17 ac 18 oed, dechreuais weithio fel un o fois Bevin yng nglofa Lewis Merthyr.

Dyma fi'n cwblhau'r hyfforddiant glofaol yn y National Colliery, Wattstown, lle dysgais y sgiliau angenrheidiol gan golier medrus (math o brentisiaeth gynnar). Ar ôl hyfforddi ar y ffas lo am ddwy flynedd, fe wnes gais llwyddiannus am swydd clerc mesur. Cyfrifoldeb y clerc mesur oedd mesur yr holl waith ar un neu fwy o'r ffasys glo; roedd y gwaith hwn yn hynod bwysig gan fod pob glöwr yn cael ei dalu yn ôl ei gynnyrch, a'r clerc mesur oedd yn cofnodi. Roedd stent pob colier yn mesur deunaw troedfedd o hyd wrth chwech i saith troedfedd o uchder, a phedair troedfedd chwe modfedd o drwch – tua naw llathen sgwâr (8.5 metr sgwâr heddiw). Dyma'r cyfanswm dyddiol, gyda'r glo'n cael ei dorri gan geibiau niwmatig neu gyda chymorth tyllau ffrwydro. Roedd hon yn swydd bwysig iawn, a fi'n mwynhau. Bues i'n glerc mesur am ryw bedair neu bum mlynedd. Y cam amlwg nesaf yn y diwydiant oedd mynd yn swyddog y lofa; fel clerc mesur, roeddech chi'n dechrau meithrin dealltwriaeth o sut oedd y lofa'n gweithio a holl elfennau gwahanol cynhyrchu glo.

Gwnes gais am gwrs hyfforddi i fod yn swyddog, a dilyn cwrs swyddog llawn amser cyntaf Bwrdd Glo Prydain ym 1961/62, yn Ysgol Fwyngloddio Trefforest. Erbyn 1963, roeddwn i wedi pasio fy mhapurau ac wedi dechrau fel swyddog yn Lewis Merthyr – fel taniwr ffrwydron i gychwyn ac yna fel ffeiarman [dirprwy]. Bues i'n swyddog tan 1964. Gydol yr amser hwnnw, bues i hefyd yn ddyn achub rhan-amser gyda thîm achub Lewis Merthyr. Roedd hyn o fantais gan fod y lofa'n agos iawn i'r orsaf achub yn Dinas, a olygai fy mod i'n rhan o bob digwyddiad neu ddamwain lofaol fwy neu lai, rhwng 1959 a 1981. Y digwyddiad cyntaf rwy'n ei gofio oedd Six Bells; es i ddim yno fy hun, ond roeddwn i'n gofalu am yr orsaf achub yn lle'r criw llawn amser a atebodd yr alwad frys.

Roeddwn i'n briod erbyn hynny ac yn byw gyda Sheila fy ngwraig a'n merch Susan mewn tŷ bach ym mhentref Dinas. Ymhen dipyn, cafodd y tai eu dymchwel dan y Ddeddf Cynllunio Gwlad a Thref, felly symudon ni i Riwgarn, Trebanog. Wnaethon ni ddim setlo o gwbl yn Rhiwgarn, a bues i'n ffodus ym 1964, pan ddaeth swydd wag yn yr Orsaf Achub fel Brigadydd llawn amser. Roedd tŷ yn mynd gyda'r swydd, gan fod rhaid i chi fyw yn yr orsaf er mwyn gallu ymateb yn gyflym i unrhyw ddigwyddiad. Bues i gyda'r Gwasanaeth Achub Glofeydd tan yr oedran ymddeol gorfodol, sef 45 oed. Roedd yn rhaid i chi ymddeol o'r Gwasanaeth Achub erbyn hynny gan fod deddfwriaeth mwyngloddio'n dweud nad oeddech chi'n cael defnyddio offer anadlu glofeydd ar ôl troi'n 45 oed.

Yn ystod fy nghyfnod gyda'r Frigâd Achub, fe wnaethon ni ddelio â chant a mwy o argyfyngau o bob math. Roedd y 1960au a'r 1970au yn gyfnod prysur iawn – fe wnaethon ni ymateb i gymaint o argyfyngau nes ein bod ni'n dysgu ein crefft o brofiad ymarferol. Mae yna drychinebau y mae'r cyhoedd yn cofio amdanyn nhw hyd heddiw, gan gynnwys Aber-fan, Six Bells, Cambrian, Tower a Cynheidre, er taw dim ond canran fechan o'r galwadau brys yr ymatebwyd iddyn nhw yw'r rheina. Rhaid i fi ddweud bod ein cydweithwyr o ardaloedd glofaol eraill wedi cefnogi tîm Dinas gant y cant bob amser. Beth bynnag oedd yr argyfwng – ffrwydradau, problemau awyru neu danau – roedd y glowyr yn gwybod y byddai tîm o ddynion achub medrus a phrofiadol yn ceisio dod i'r adwy. Fel arall, fyddai'r glowyr hynny ddim yn mentro danddaear o gwbl. Roedd Gorsaf Achub Glofeydd Dinas gyda'r sefydliad achub gorau yn y Deyrnas Unedig.

Gorffennais gyda'r criw achub ym 1981, a mynd yn swyddog diogelwch ar gyfer Bwrdd Glo Prydain, Ardal De Cymru. Plisman glofeydd oeddwn i i bob pwrpas a'r rôl oedd gwarchod a diogelu asedau'r Bwrdd Glo ym mhob cwr o'r De. Ymddeolais o'r swydd hon ym 1987.

Pe bai'r cyfle'n codi heddiw, byddwn i'n falch o wneud y cyfan eto – oedd, roedd yna ddyddiau du, ond roedden ni fel criw proffesiynol a medrus yn cael boddhad o wneud gwaith a'i wneud yn dda. Mae byw a gweithio gyda'n gilydd am dros ugain mlynedd, weithiau dan amgylchiadau ofnadwy, wedi meithrin cyfeillgarwch a chwlwm arbennig sy'n dal i fodoli hyd heddiw.

Roy Hamer

Roy Hamer a Ceri Thompson,
(Curadur Pwll Mawr),
Cofeb Glowyr Cwm Rhondda, Dinas

We were there for them

I was born in Trehafod in the Rhondda in 1936. My father worked as a collier in Lewis Merthyr Colliery but had to finish in 1946 because of debilitating pneumoconiosis. Like thousands of other poor souls he did not get any pension, as was the norm at this time. He did however receive a sum of money as compensation. In order that he was able to support his family, like a lot of other miners, he rented and worked a smallholding.

When I left school in 1951 at the age of fifteen. I started work in a foundry on Treforest Trading Estate. At this time my ambition was to join the Welsh Guards. My father was hopeful that I would not join up as two of my brothers had served in the army, with one suffering terribly from shell shock and the other being badly wounded. Therefore between the ages 17-18 I started working at Lewis Merthyr Colliery as a Bevin boy.

I completed my mining training at the National Colliery, Wattstown. Where I learned the necessary skills from a trained collier (a kind of early apprenticeship). After doing my training at the work face, which lasted for over 2 years I applied for a vacancy as a measuring clerk, I was lucky enough to be successful. The measuring clerk was responsible for measuring all the work done on one or more coalfaces, the importance of this job centred on the fact that all colliers were paid on what they produced and the measuring clerk was sole arbitrator of that. Each collier's stent was eighteen feet long by between six and seven feet high and four feet six inches deep – this worked out about nine square yards (or approximately 8.5 square meters in today's money). This production was on a daily bases, with the coal being cut by pneumatic picks or assisted by shot firing. This was an important job which I enjoyed. I was a measuring clerk for about four – five years. After this the obvious move, within the industry was to become a colliery official, as a measuring clerk you began to develop an understanding of how a colliery worked including all the different facets of coal production.

I applied for a training course to become an official and went on the first full time official's course that the National Coal Board introduced in 1961/62, held at Treforest School of Mines. By 1963 I had passed my papers and started as an official in Lewis Merthyr, first as a shot - firer and then as a 'fireman' *(deputy)*. I remained as an official until 1964. Throughout this time I had also been a part-time mines rescue man in the Lewis Merthyr rescue team. This was advantageous because the colliery was situated very near the Mines Rescue Station at Dinas. This meant that I was involved in virtually all mining incidents from 1959 – 1981. The first incident I recall was that of Six Bells, I did not actually attend but manned the rescue station in place of the full-time team who were at the emergency.

Roy Hamer and Ceri Thompson
(Curator, Big Pit) at
Rhondda Miners' Memorial, Dinas

During this time I was married and, together with Sheila and Susan my daughter, lived in a little house in Dinas. After a short while (Under Town and Country Planning) the houses were being demolished for improvement so we moved to Rhiwgarn in Trebanog. We did not settle in Rhiwgarn and I was fortunate in 1964 when a vacancy turned up at the Rescue Station, Dinas for a full-time Brigades man. This position included provision of a house as you had to be based at the station to be able to respond timeously to any incident. I remained in the Mines Rescue Service until the enforced retirement age of forty five. At this age you had to retire from the Rescue Service because mining legislation stated that you could not use the essential breathing apparatus after the age of forty five.

During my time in the Rescue Brigade we were involved in over one hundred emergencies of all types. The 1960s and 70s were very busy times – we responded to so many emergencies that we were learning our trade from practical experiences. Disasters that are remembered today by the general public including Aberfan, Six Bells, Cambrian, Tower, and Cynheidre Collieries are but a small percentage of the emergencies attended. I must say that at all times the team at Dinas were supported by our colleagues from other mining areas. At any of these incidents, be they explosions, ventilation or fires the miners knew a trained team of experienced professional Mines Rescue Men would be coming to try and help them. If this had not been the case then those same miners would not have ventured underground. The Mines Rescue Station at Dinas was one of the finest Emergency Organisations in the U.K.

I finished in the Mines Rescue in 1981 and became a security officer for the National Coal Board, South Wales Area. In effect I was a colliery policeman this role was to protect and preserve the Coal Board Assets for all South Wales. I retired from this post in 1987.

Given the chance or opportunity I would gladly do it all over again – there were very bad times but we as a team of trained professionals had fulfilment at a job well done. Living and working together for over twenty years under sometimes distressing circumstances has bonded a friendship and team spirit that still exists today.

Roy Hamer

Yr 'Hook and Eye'

Cefais fy ngeni yn Baglan Street, Treherbert ym 1935. Roedd fy nhad a 'nhad-cu wedi gweithio fel coliers ym mhwll Fernhill. Gadewais yr ysgol ym 1950 a mynd i weithio i Fisco's, cwmni peirianneg ysgafn ar Ystâd Hirwaun. Bues i yno am bymtheg mis, ond roedd gweithio yno gyda'r holl olew yn effeithio ar fy nghroen i ac yn achosi plorod, felly gadewais i weithio ar rownd laeth y Co-op. Roeddwn i'n 17 oed erbyn hynny, a dywedodd fy nhad wrthyf am fynd i'r pwll glo gan fy mod i ar fin cyrraedd oed 'listio i'r fyddin. A dweud y gwir, roedd treulio blwyddyn neu ddwy yn y fyddin yn apelio, ond roedd fy nhad yn benderfynol.

Felly, fe es i Fernhill a gwneud 16 wythnos o hyfforddiant yng Nglofa Rhif 9 Wattstown, sef y man hyfforddi ar y pryd. Treuliais wyth wythnos yn y lofa ac wyth wythnos yn Ysgol Lofaol Crawshay Bailey, Tonpentre – neu wythnos yn y pwll ac wythnos yn y lofa am yn ail. Yna, fis cyn cwblhau'r hyfforddiant, cefais lythyr o lofa Fernhill yn dweud nad oedd lle ar fy nghyfer i yno, ond y byddan nhw'n fy anfon i bwll Glen Rhondda, neu'r 'Hook and Eye' i bawb arall.

Roedd yr Hook and Eye yn adnabyddus fel pwll a oedd yn gwneud y tro gyda'r hyn oedd eisoes ar gael yn hytrach na phrynu o'r newydd – doedd diogelwch ddim yn flaenoriaeth yno! Bues i'n gweithio yn y Gorllwyn, gwythïen ddwy droedfedd, fel gwas colier ar y system piler a thalcen. Roeddwn i'n llenwi'r dram â bocs cwrlo, yn torri cynhalbyst pren ar gyfer y to, yn clirio'r glo a dorrwyd, yn gosod cledrau a chodi waliau sych yn y gob [yr ardal lle tynnwyd glo]. Byddai tyllwr yn dod i mewn ar ôl i'r shifft ddydd orffen i ddrilio tyllau ffrwydro, a byddai'r taniwr wedyn yn tanio'r twll i chi'n barod ar gyfer y shifft nesaf. Dim ond ar shifft ddydd oeddwn i. Roedd fy nghydweithiwr, y colier Eddie Philips, yn fachan ffein, ac yn arfer rhoi trymps chweugain i mi.

Arferai'r colier dorri'r glo o'r wythïen gyda mandrel [caib torri glo] a byddwn i'n clirio'r glo a dorrwyd trwy ei rawio i'r bocs cwrlo a'i gludo neu lusgo yn ôl er mwyn llenwi'r dram. Bues i'n gweithio gyda sawl colier gan gynnwys Will Emmet a Ned Reece. Roedd yn waith caled, yn enwedig ar ôl bod mas yn dawnsio'r noson gynt a chodi am hanner awr wedi pump wedyn. Doeddech chi ddim yn gwbl effro, ond byddwn i'n bwrw 'nghefn yn erbyn y to garw reit aml – byddai hynny'n fy neffro! Roedden ni'n llenwi tua phedair dram y dydd, yn dibynnu a oedd digon o gerrig mawrion wedi cwympo fel y gallem gau'r gob ynghynt a chael mwy o amser i lenwi'r dram.

Bues i'n was colier yn y Gorllwyn am bedair blynedd, cyn mynd lan i Big Pit i weithio ar y cludfelt gyda glöwr o'r enw Jim Carver ar shifftiau'r prynhawn a'r nos. Yng Nglynrhondda, roedden nhw'n galw'r Gorllwyn yn 'bwll bach'. Wal hir fecanyddol oedd yn Big Pit, ar y llaw arall, yn hytrach na philer a thalcen, a chariwyd y glo ar gludfeltiau. Roedd gwaith cludfelt yn haws, ac roeddech chi'n gallu sefyll i fyny hefyd. Roedd gan bob un ohonom stent deuddeg troedfedd sgwâr a gâi ei gweithio gan golier a'i was. Bues i yno am ryw ddeng mlynedd i gyd, gan gynnwys y cyfnod dan hyfforddiant.

Byddai'r cludfelt yn cael ei symud ymlaen bob dau ddiwrnod ac, un diwrnod, roedden ni'n dal i glirio'n glo ni, ond roedd y colier yn y stent nesaf wedi gorffen ac fe aeth i'r gob i godi cynhalbyst pren. Roedd wrthi'n clirio'r rwbel pan gwympodd carreg a thorri'i wddf. Bu tipyn o gwymp wedyn, a chafodd ei gladdu am ddeng munud, felly bu'n rhaid i ni ei gloddio oddi yno cyn rhoi'i gorff ar stretsier a'i gludo mas.

Er mai dyna'r unig farwolaeth, fe welais i dair damwain gas. Roedd un bachan, Don Poole, wedi clirio'i stent pan ddaeth lwmp o garreg i lawr a thorri'i goes; cafodd dyn arall, Gwilym 'Babi' Davies, ei gladdu pan ddisgynnodd postyn haearn, cynhalbost a 'ball of mine' [cnepyn haearn] arno, torri sawl asen, a'i adael yn anymwybodol. Cafodd y trydydd ei gladdu wedi i'r to gwympo.

Mae'n siŵr mai f'ewythr Elias Jones wnaeth fagu fy niddordeb mewn cymorth cyntaf. Roedd yn gynorthwy-ydd meddygol yng nglofa Tŷ Draw tan iddi gau a daeth i weithio yn yr Hook and Eye wedyn. Roedd fy nhad wedi gwneud ychydig o gymorth cyntaf, ond pan gafodd dyn ei ladd yn Fernhill, a 'nhad yn methu helpu, roedd yn teimlo nad oedd yn ddigon da neu ddim yn gwybod digon, felly collodd ddiddordeb. Pan oeddwn i'n 16 oed, bues i'n mynychu dosbarthiadau nos Ambiwlans Sant Ioan yn Nhreherbert, gan barhau am dair blynedd. Ond rhois y gorau iddi, a wnes i ddim ailafael yn hynny nes i fi ddechrau gweithio yn Plastic Engineers, Trefforest. Yn y diwedd, bues i gydag Ambiwlans Sant Ioan am 42 mlynedd. Cefais Fedal Gwasanaeth Hir a Medal y Lleng Brydeinig ym 1984.

Idris Williams yn lifrai Sant Ioan pan gafodd ei ddyrchafu'n Frawd-Swyddog, 1997

The Hook and Eye

I was born in Baglan Street, Treherbert in 1935. My grandfather and father had both worked as colliers in Fernhill Colliery. I left school in April 1950 and worked in 'Fisco's', a light engineering company on the Hirwaun Estate. I was there for fifteen months but working with all the oil there effected my skin and gave me pimples so I finished and went to the Co-op milk round. I was seventeen then and my father told me to go into the colliery as I was coming up to the age for conscription into the forces. To be honest I wouldn't have minded a couple of years in the army but he said no.

So I went to Fernhill to sign on and then did sixteen weeks training in No. 9 Wattstown Colliery which was the training place at the time. I was eight weeks in the colliery and eight weeks in the Crawshay Bailey Mining School in Ton Pentre – it worked out as one week in the pit the next in the school. Then, a month before my training was due to finish, I had a letter from Fernhill saying that there was no room for me there so they put me in Glenrhondda Colliery, which was known as the 'Hook and Eye', instead.

The 'Hook and Eye' was known as a pit which made do with what they had rather than buy new, safety wasn't their main priority! I worked in the two feet seam, the 'Gorllwyn', as a collier's boy on the pillar and stall system. I was 'boxing coal' *(filling the dram with a curling box)*, cutting timber roof supports, clearing the cut coal, laying rails and dry walling the gob *(the area from which coal had been taken)*. A 'borer' came in after the day shift had finished to drill shot holes and the shotsman would fire the hole ready for you the next shift. We were only working the day shift. The collier I was working with was Eddie Philips, a nice chap, he used to give me ten bob 'trumps' *(collier boys were partly paid from their collier's wages)*.

Idris Williams in St John's uniform when promoted to 'Officer Brother', 1997

The collier used to cut the coal from the seam with a 'mandrel' *(coal cutting pick)* and I used to clear the cut coal by filling it into the curling box and carry or drag it back to fill the dram. I worked with a few colliers including Will Emmett and Ned Reece. It was hard work especially after going out dancing the night before and get up at half past five. You weren't really wide awake but I'd often hit my back against the rough roof – which used to wake me up! We used to fill about four drams a day, all according if enough large stones had come down so that we could wall the gob quicker and had more time to fill a dram.

I was a collier's boy in the Gorllwyn for four years after which I went up to the 'Big Pit' on conveyor work to work with a collier called Jim Carver on afternoons and nights. In Glenrhondda the Gorllwyn was known as the 'Little Pit' and the 'Big Pit' was mechanised long wall, rather than pillar and stall, and the coal was carried out on conveyors. Conveyor work was easier and you were able to stand up. We each had a twelve feet square stent *(working place)* worked by a collier and his boy. I was there for about ten years in all including when I was training.

The conveyor was moved forward every two days and, one day, we were still clearing our coal but the collier on the next stent had finished his and went into the gob to put wooden 'cogs' *(roof supports)* up. He was clearing the rubble when a stone came down and broke his neck. There was a bit of a fall of roof after the stone had come down and he was buried about ten minutes so we had to dig him out before we could put his body on a stretcher and carry him out.

That was the only fatality I witnessed but I saw three nasty accidents. One chap, Don Poole, had cleared his stent when a stone came down and broke his leg, another chap, Gwilym 'Babi' Davies, was buried when a steel post and flat *(roof supports)* and a 'ball of mine' *(ironstone nodule)* fell on him, broke a few ribs, and knocked him out and the third was buried under a fall of roof.

I probably picked up my interest in first aid from my uncle Elias Jones who was medical attendant in Ty Draw Colliery until it closed then he came to work in the Hook and Eye. My father had done a bit of first aid but a man had been killed in Fernhill and my father had been unable to help so he felt that he wasn't good enough or knew enough so he lost interest. From the age of sixteen I attended classes with St John's Ambulance in Treherbert in the evenings for three years. However, I stopped and didn't really take it up again until I started work in Plastic Engineers in Trefforest. I eventually did forty two years with St John's. I received the Long Service Medal in 1984 and the British Legion Medal in 1984.

Gorffennais yn y lofa ar ôl damwain. Roedden ni'n clirio'r gob a chwympodd cryn dipyn o'r to am ein pennau. Daeth dau bostyn pren i lawr ar fy nghoesau, ac yna tipyn o rwbel. Drïes i droi a gwasgu i ryddhau fy nhraed, gan niweidio fy ffêr wrth wneud – fe wnes i bopeth ond ei thorri hi! Bues i ar absenoldeb salwch wedyn achos doedd dim modd i fi wisgo sgidie gwaith. Tua mis wedyn, es i lan i'r lofa a gofyn i Ernie Breeze, y rheolwr dros dro (roedd David Evans ein rheolwr yn absennol oherwydd salwch) a allen i gael swydd ysgafnach. Dywedodd e nad oedd unrhyw swyddi ysgafn ar gael, felly byddai'n rhaid i fi ddychwelyd i weithio ar y glo. Ond doedd hynny ddim yn bosib, am na allwn i wisgo esgid waith. Cafodd Mr Breeze ei ladd yn ddiweddarach, yn ffrwydriad y Cambrian ym 1965.

Gadewais y lofa ym mis Ebrill 1961 a mynd i weithio fel gyrrwr yn y St Mellons County Club. Bues i'n gweithio mewn sawl lle gwahanol wedyn, gan gynnwys trin peiriant tanio yn Ffynnon Taf a gweithredwr peiriannau yn Plastic Engineers cyn cael fy hun ar y clwt. Yna, ar 5 Tachwedd 1975, dechreuais weithio fel gofalwr mewn iwnifform yn Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd. Dyna'r swydd orau ges i erioed, pawb fel un teulu mawr yno. Ym 1964, cafodd Oriel Lofaol yr amgueddfa ei hagor gan y frenhines. Roedd yn mesur 52 troedfedd wrth 39 troedfedd, ac yn cynnwys arddangosfeydd o weithio'r ffas lo, system awyru ac offer achub, a chas â lampau a medalau ar y pen. Fe wnes i bechu Gerwyn Thomas, Ceidwad Cynorthwyol y casgliadau Diwydiannol, pan dynnais sylw at ambell gamgymeriad – yn enwedig ag yntau'n gyn-beiriannydd glofaol!

Caeodd yr oriel lofaol ym 1993 ac fe wnes i ymddeol ym mis Mawrth 2000 pan oeddwn i'n 65 oed. Dw i'n dychwelyd yno'n aml, ac mae'r lle wedi newid yn aruthrol – celf a hanes natur yw popeth yno nawr. Dw i'n credu ei bod hi'n well gyda'r hen gasgliadau.

Idris Williams

Fy ngyrfa lofaol

Cefais fy ngeni yng Nglynebwy ym 1956. Roedd fy nhad yn weithiwr shifft nos fel oferman yng nglofa Waunllwyd. Pan gaeodd Waunllwyd ym 1963, cafodd gynnig swydd yng nglofa'r Marine, ond derbyniodd dâl diswyddo yn lle hynny ac fe symudodd y teulu i'r Barri gan agor siop yno. Ar ôl rhyw dair blynedd, roedd yn fethdalwr. Un diwrnod, roedd yn nhafarn y Castle yn y Barri, pan ddywedodd dyn wrtho eu bod nhw'n chwilio am weithwyr yng nglofa Bedwas. Cafodd gynnig swydd fel gweithiwr danddaear, ond bu'n rhaid i ni adael y tŷ yn y Barri a symud i ystâd newydd sbon Graig y Rhaca ger Trethomas. Ond gan nad oedd y tai yn barod, neilltuwyd carafán ar ein cyfer. Y dyddiad symud oedd dydd Gwener, 22 Hydref 1966.

Y bore hwnnw, cawsom alwad ffôn i ddweud nad oedd y garafán ar gael mwyach, gan ei bod wedi'i chlustnodi fel llety brys i rai a effeithiwyd gan drychineb Aber-fan. Cawsom alwad ffôn arall wedyn, yn cynnig swydd i dad yng nglofa Lady Windsor yn lle hynny, yn ogystal â thŷ yn Ynys-y-bwl – a dw i'n dal i fyw yno heddiw. Bu 'nhad yn gweithio danddaear fel wyrcman cyffredin am sbel, cyn cyfarfod â'i hen gyfaill yno, Ken Kitson, arbenigwr twnelu ar gyfer yr NCB. O fewn ychydig wythnosau, roedd yn swyddog unwaith eto.

Pan adewais i'r ysgol, fe es i ganolfan hyfforddi'r NCB yng nglofa Britannia. Yno, gofynnwyd i fi a fyddwn i'n hoffi gwneud addysg bellach. Cynigiwyd cwrs prentis crefft glofaol i fi yng Ngholeg Technegol Llwyn-y-pïa. Treuliais bedair blynedd fel prentis crefft a dwy flynedd fel prentis peirianneg glofaol cyn dilyn cwrs Ordinary National Diploma ym Mholytechnig Trefforest. Yn ystod y cyfnod hwn, roeddwn i hefyd yn gweithio danddaear yn y Lady Windsor, fel gwas colier i ddechrau ac yna fel glöwr fy hun. Dechreuais weithio ar y ffas lo gonfensiynol heb beiriannau, a hynny gyda bois go fawr. Dim ond deg stôn a hanner oeddwn i, yn wlyb domen, ac wedi blino'n lân fel arfer nes 'mod i'n cwympo i gysgu amser swper nôl adref! Ar ôl dwy flynedd a hanner o hyn, roeddwn i'n propio a bario [cynnal y to] ar ffas lo wedi'i mecaneiddio'n rhannol â pheiriant torri glo AB 16. Wedyn, treuliais flwyddyn fel gyrrwr peiriant torri yn ngwythïen Bute ar ffas lo wedi'i mecaneiddio'n llawn.

Tan hynny, roeddwn i wedi bod mewn coleg technegol lle'r oedd y darlithwyr yn rhannu taflenni, a chan fod gen i gof ffotograffig, roeddwn i'n gallu darllen a chofio'n eitha rhwydd. Bellach, roeddwn i'n fyfyriwr llawn amser yn y Polytechnig ac yn gorfod mynychu darlithoedd ac ysgrifennu fy nodiadau fy hun. Doeddwn i ddim yn dda iawn am wneud hyn, felly roeddwn i'n straffaglu braidd. Fe ddaliais ati am sbel, ond un diwrnod, dyma fi'n cyrraedd gartre', taflu'r briffces i gornel y stafell a dweud 'Sa i'n cyffwrdd yn hwnna 'to – wy di cal llond bola!' Fe es i'n ôl i'r Lady Windsor, lle'r oedd Mr Elwyn Jones yr is-reolwr yn siomedig gyda mi, ond cynigiodd swydd ar y lamp i fi [un o swyddogion y lofa]. Doeddwn i ddim eisiau gwneud hynny, fodd bynnag, ac fe gwplais yn y lofa ym mis Chwefror 1979.

Dechreuais weithio yn ffatri Aero Zips yn ystâd ddiwydiannol Trefforest. Roeddwn i'n ennill £71 yr wythnos yn y lofa, a £62 yn y ffatri, felly doedd dim llawer

I finished in the colliery after an accident. We were clearing the gob and a lot of the roof came down and two wooden posts came down on my legs followed by some big stuff. I tried to twist and squeeze to get my feet out and damaged my ankle in the attempt – I had done everything except break it! I went on the sick as I couldn't get a working boot on. After a month I went up the colliery and asked Ernie Breeze the temporary manager, because our manager David Evans was on the sick, if I could have a light job. He said that there were no light jobs so I'd have to go back on the coal. As I couldn't get a boot on I finished. Mr Breeze was later killed in the Cambrian Colliery explosion in 1965.

I finished in the colliery in April 1961 and then worked as a driver in St Mellons County Club. After that job I worked in a number of places including shot blasting machinery in Taff's Well and then as a machine operator in Plastic Engineers when I was made redundant. Then, on November 5th 1975 I started as a uniformed attendant in the National Museum of Wales in Cathays Park. Best job I'd ever had, it was like a family there. In 1964 the museum's Mining Gallery' was opened by the Queen. It was fifty two feet long by thirty nine feet wide with displays showing coal face workings, ventilation and rescue with a case with lamps and medals at the end. I upset Gerwyn Thomas, the Assistant Keeper of the Industry collections when I pointed out some mistakes, especially as he had been a mining engineer!

The mining gallery closed in 1993 and I finished in March 2000 when I was sixty five years old. I often go back to Cathays Park and it's changed a lot - it's all Art and Natural History now. I think that it was better with all the other collections they used to have there.

Idris Williams

My Mining Career

I was born in Ebbw Vale in January 1956, my father was a night shift overman in Waunllwyd Colliery. When they closed Waunllwyd in 1963 he was offered a job in Marine Colliery but he took redundancy instead and we moved to Barry and opened a shop. After about three years he became bankrupt. One day he was in the Castle pub in Barry and met a chap who told him that they were looking for men at Bedwas Colliery. He was offered a job as an underground worker but we had to get out of the property in Barry and move to the new Graig y Rhacca estate near Trethomas. Because the houses weren't ready yet we were allocated a caravan. The date we were to move in was Friday October 22nd 1966.

That morning we had a phone call telling us that the caravan was no longer available as it was earmarked as emergency housing for people effected by the disaster at Aberfan. Another phone call came later, my father was offered a job in Lady Windsor Colliery instead, as well as a house in Ynysybwl – the same house as I am living in today. My father worked underground as an ordinary workmen for a while, then met his old friend underground at Lady Windsor Ken Kitson who was a tunnelling expert for the NCB and within a couple of weeks he became an official again.

When I left school I went to the NCB training centre in Britannia Colliery. In the training centre I was asked if

Adrian Edwards a Viv Williams (Swyddog Tân) yn y swyddfa, Glofa Oakdale, 1987

Adrian Edwards and Viv Williams (Fire Officer) in the office at Oakdale Colliery, 1987

I'd like to do further education and was offered a mining craft apprentice course in Llwynypia Technical College. I eventually did four years as a craft apprentice and two as a mining engineering apprentice before attending an Ordinary National Diploma course at Treforest Polytechnic. During this time I was also working underground at Lady Windsor, first as an assistant collier, then a collier. At first I worked on a 'conventional' *(un-mechanised)* coal face where I was working with some big bruisers and I was only ten and a half stone soaking wet so I was usually worn out and used to fall asleep in my dinner when I went home! After two and a half years

o wahaniaeth. Roeddwn i'n pacio ac yn anfon bocsys o sipiau – dim byd o gymharu â gwaith glo! Bues i yno o fis Chwefror tan fis Hydref 1979, pan es i ddisgo yng ngwesty'r Thorne, Abercynon, a chwrdd â hen ffrind i mi, John Evans, peiriannydd mecanyddol yng nglofa Bedwas. Dywedodd John fod y lofa wedi cyflwyno cynllun bonws newydd a'u bod nhw'n chwilio am glercod mesur – felly, yn eironig iawn, dechreuais i weithio ym Medwas ym mis Tachwedd 1979.

Roeddwn wedi bod yno am dri mis pan wnes i gwrdd â bachan o'r enw Graham Walters, y swyddog awyru, a ofynnodd i fi fod yn gynorthwy-ydd iddo. Dyma Gwilym Thomas, y pennaeth hyfforddiant, yn gofyn i fi fynd yn ôl i'r coleg i wneud cwrs City & Guilds mewn awyriad glofeydd. Roeddwn i'n poeni braidd, gan nad oeddwn i'n boblogaidd iawn yn Llanisien [pencadlys y Bwrdd Glo yn y De] ar ôl iddyn nhw wario ffortiwn ar fy addysg, a finnau wedi rhoi'r gorau iddi. Ta beth, gwnes gais am le yng Ngholeg Cross Keys a chael fy ngwrthod. Felly, fe ffoniais i Gwilym Thomas a dweud wrtho beth oedd wedi digwydd, ac fe wedodd e 'Gad di bopeth i fi'. Cyn hir, cefais lythyr yn dweud eu bod wedi fy nerbyn i ar y cwrs.

Daeth swydd wag fel swyddog awyru yng nglofa Celynen North. Fodd bynnag, doeddwn i ddim yn rhy hapus fel cynorthwy-ydd oherwydd roeddwn i wedi clywed nad oedd Celynen North yn bwll da iawn gan fod y ffyrdd yno'n fach a phwysedd uchel yr awyriad. Fe wnes i ymgeisio yn y diwedd, ond es i ddim i'r cyfweliad. Roeddwn i danddaear ym Medwas, a holodd Gomer Griffiths, oferman y pwll, sut aeth pethau. Dywedais fy mod i heb fynd i'r cyfweliad, a dyma fe'n dweud 'Byddai gen i fwy o barch tuag atat ti pe baet ti wedi mynd i'r cyfweliad a methu yn hytrach na pheidio mynd iddo o gwbl – cer i ffonio Gwilym Thomas a gofyn iddo dy ailystyried di.'

Felly, ffoniais Gwilym Thomas gan ymddiheuro a gofyn a fyddai'n fodlon ailfeddwl. 'Dw i wedi gwneud fy mhenderfyniad', meddai a rhoi'r ffôn i lawr. Y diwrnod canlynol, dyma Gwilym yn ffonio a dweud wrthyf am ddod i Celynen North erbyn 2pm. Roeddwn i'n meddwl fy mod i am gael llond pen, ond cefais fy mhenodi ym mis Rhagfyr 1983 ac yno bues i tan 1985.

Yn Celynen North oeddwn i adeg Streic y Glowyr. Roeddwn i'n aelod o'r COSA [Colliery Officials and Staff Area], a oedd yn gysylltiedig ag Undeb y Glowyr [NUM]. Er bod y lofa ar streic, roedd gwaith diogelwch yn dal i gael ei wneud, a chefais ganiatâd i weithio yn ôl disgresiwn yr NUM. Pan ddaeth y streic i ben, caewyd wyneb y lofa, a symudais i lofa Oakdale tan i honno gau ym 1989, ac yna i Penallta tan y caewyd y pwll hwnnw ym mis Tachwedd 1991. Gadewais y diwydiant glo a derbyn tâl diswyddo wedyn.

Ychydig cyn Nadolig 1991, cefais alwad ffôn gan Mr David Fox, rheolwr Glofa'r Tower, yn gofyn i fi fynd draw fel swyddog awyru ar gontract, i ofalu am ddraeniad nwy methan yn y pwll. Arhosais yno tan fis Ebrill 1994 – y tro olaf i fi weithio danddaear. Ymunais ag Aeroquip yng Nghaerdydd wedyn, cwmni cynhyrchu pibelli hydrolig. Caeodd hwnnw yn y flwyddyn 2000, a dechreuais weithio ym melinau papur Caerffili ac yno bues i tan fis Mawrth 2014.

I grynhoi, fe ges i yrfa wych yn y diwydiant glo yng nghwmni cydweithwyr a ffrindiau rhagorol – ysgol brofiad dda a'm helpodd ym mhob agwedd ar fy mywyd wedyn.

Adrian Edwards

Glo nid gwagle

Roedd pentrefi glofaol y De ar streic, a glo – y dibynnai pawb arno am wres a dŵr twym – yn fwyfwy prin. 'Wy'n gofod mynd i ôl glo' gwaeddodd fy mrawd. Fy nhad oedd yn mynd fel arfer, ond roedd i ffwrdd yn picedu, roedd e wastad i ffwrdd yn ddiweddar: roedd gen i hiraeth ar ei ôl. Doedd fy mam ddim adre chwaith, roedd hi yn mas casglu parseli bwyd gyda gwragedd y glowyr. Byddwn i'n mynd gyda hi fel arfer, ond dywedodd mam ei bod hi'n rhy oer, a 'ngadael i dan oruchwyliaeth fy chwaer annifyr a atebodd 'Wel, sa i'n mynd, mae'n llawer rhy oer'. Nodiodd ei ffrind Julie fel ci bach ufudd wrth ei hochr.

'Ddo' i' poerais, heb feddwl ddwywaith. 'Dw i moyn dod – sa i'n aros gyda hi!' 'Iawn, ond cofia wisgo'n ddigon cynnes, Squirt' atebodd fy mrawd gan fwytho fy mhen i. 'Awn i ôl Dai i'n helpu ni.' Deng munud yn ddiweddarach, roeddwn i'n barod, wedi 'nghladdu dan gymaint o ddillad nes mod i prin yn gallu symud fy mreichiau, a het mor fawr nes cuddio fy llygaid yn llwyr bron. Roeddwn i'n barod i fynd, a chyda Dai'n gwmni, dyma wneud y daith fer ar draws y ffordd a chroesi'r bont i'r hen dip glo.

Roedd y tip yn anferth, yn fôr o ddu, a chryn dipyn o bobl yno'n barod, dynion a menywod fel morgrug hyd y lle. Roeddech chi'n gallu eu gweld o bell, yn neidio i mewn ac allan o'r tyllau, yn rhawio glo i'r sachau neilon. Unwaith roedd y sachau'n llawn, bydden nhw'n eu cario ar eu cefnau neu mewn hen bramiau i ddiogelwch, yn ofni i'r heddlu gyrraedd a'u dal nhw wrthi. Chi'n gweld, roedd yr hyn roedden ni'n ei wneud yn anghyfreithlon, lladrata mewn gwirionedd, ond roedd pawb mewn dybryd angen am wres ac yn barod i wneud beth bynnag oedd rhaid i gadw'u teuluoedd yn gynnes.

I was 'propping and barring' *(supporting the roof)* on a partly mechanised face which had an AB 16 coal shearer. From there I spent a year as a shearer driver in the Bute seam on a fully mechanised coal face.

Up to then I had been in technical college and the lecturers had given hand outs which, as I had a photographic memory, I could read and remember quite easily. Now I was a full time student at the Polytechnic I had to attend lectures and take my own notes down which I wasn't very good at, so I struggled. I persevered for a while but one day I came home and threw my briefcase into the corner of the room and said "I'm not picking that up again – I've had a gutsful!" I went back to Lady Windsor where the under manager, Mr Elwyn Jones, expressed his disappointment with me but offered me a job 'on the lamp' *(as a mine official)*. However, I didn't want a job on the lamp and finished in the colliery in February 1979.

I started in the Aero Zips factory on the Treforest Trading Estate. I was earning £71 a week in the colliery and £62 in the factory so the pay wasn't much different. I was packing and dispatching boxes of zips – nothing compared to colliery work! I was there from February until October 1979 when I went to a disco in The Thorne Hotel, Abercynon, and bumped into John Evans, the mechanical engineer in Bedwas Colliery, who was an old friend. John told me that a new bonus scheme had been introduced in the colliery and said that they were looking for measuring clerks – so, ironically, I started in Bedwas in November 1979.

I was there for three months and then met a chap called Graham Walters the ventilation officer who asked me to become his assistant. The head of training, Gwilym Thomas, asked me to go back to college to do a City and Guilds course in mine ventilation. I was a bit concerned because I wasn't exactly flavour of the month in Llanishen *(NCB headquarters, South Wales)* because they had spent a lot of money on my education and I had just jacked to all in. Anyway, I applied for the course at Cross Keys College and was turned down. So I phoned Gwilym Thomas and told him what had happened and he said "Leave it to me" and I soon received a letter accepting me on the course.

A job came up as ventilation officer in Celynen North Colliery. However, I was comfortable as an assistant and I'd heard that Celynen North wasn't exactly a prime pit as it had small roadways and high pressure ventilation. I did apply in the end but didn't actually turn up for the interview. I was underground at Bedwas and Gomer Griffiths the pit overman asked me what had happened with the Celynen North job. I told him I hadn't turned up for the interview and he said "I would have thought more of you if you'd turned up and failed rather than you just not turn up – go and phone Gwilym Thomas and ask him to reconsider you."

So I rang Gwilym and apologised and asked if I could be reconsidered. He said "I've already made my decision" and put the phone down. The next day Gwilym phoned me up and told me to be in Celynen North by 2pm. I thought I was going to have a bollocking and be told I couldn't have the job. However, I was actually appointed in December 1983 and remained there until 1985.

I was at Celynen North during the miners' strike. I was a member of COSA *(Colliery Officials and Staffs Association)* which was affiliated to the NUM. Although the colliery was on strike, there was still safety work being done and I was allowed to work at the NUM's discretion. When the strike ended they closed the surface at the colliery and I moved to Oakdale Colliery, where I worked until it closed in 1989, then to Penallta until that closed in November 1991 when I took redundancy from the coal industry.

Just before Christmas 1991 I got a phone call from Mr David Fox, manager of Tower Colliery, asking me to come up as a contract ventilation officer taking care of methane drainage at the pit. I stayed in Tower until April 1994 – the last time I worked underground! From Tower I went to Aeroquip in Cardiff who made hydraulic hoses. That closed in 2000 and I started in the paper mills in Caerphilly where I worked until March 2014.

To sum up, I had a great mining career with some fabulous team mates, it gave me a good grounding which has helped me in all aspects of life.

Adrian Edwards

Coal Not Hole

The mining villages of south Wales were out on strike, and coal, which everyone relied on for heat and hot water, was running low. "I have to go and get coal" my brother shouted. My father usually went but he was away picketing, he was always away lately: I missed him. My mam was out too, collecting parcels of food with the miners' wives. I normally went with her but she said it was too cold today and I had been left under the watchful eye of my dreaded sister who said "Well, I'm not going, its way too cold." Her friend, Julie, sat beside her nodding her head in agreement.

"I'll come" I blurted out, almost before I thought it. "I want to come – I'm not staying with her!" "OK, but wrap up warm Squirt" replied my brother, giving my head an affectionate pat. "We'll go call for Dai to help us." Ten minutes later I was ready, wearing so many layers of clothes I could hardly move my arms, and a hat so big you could hardly see my eyes. We were ready to go and, joined by Dai, we made the short journey across the road and over the bridge to the old coal tip.

Dyma Mr Jones, hen ŵr bach boldew, yn galw 'Shw'mae blant. Eich tad mas yn picedu ife?' 'Ydi byt' atebodd fy mrawd. 'Os felly, fe alwa i heibo nes mlaen 'da dou fag.' Un fel 'na oedd Mr Jones, mor garedig, fel pawb arall. Roedd yr ysbryd cymunedol yn fyw iawn.

Cefais radell gan fy mrawd, wrth iddo fe a Dai rawio am y gorau. 'Rho'r glo drwy hon a'i hysgwyd hi' meddai, gan bwyntio at y glo. A dyma fi'n gwneud hynny, yn shiglo'r glo, llenwi'r bagiau a'u llusgo i'r guddfan. Roedd y bagiau'n drwm, finnau'n oer, fy wyneb ar dân a 'nhrwyn yn rhedeg. Roedd fy mrest i'n llawn dwst a oedd yn achosi i fi duchan a thagu. Er hynny, daliais ati i lenwi'r bagiau a chlustfeinio ar sgyrsiau fy mrawd, Dai a Mr Jones. Roeddwn i'n teimlo real oedolyn yn gwrando arnyn nhw'n hel clecs am yr heddlu, 'Moch' yn eu geiriau nhw, a chwarddais o'u clywed yn galw 'scabs' ar y glowyr hynny oedd yn parhau i weithio, a mwynhau eu hiaith anweddus yn dawel bach.

Yn sydyn, dyma sŵn teiars yn sgrechian a sgrialodd pawb wrth i ddynion mewn iwnifforms du neidio o'r faniau gwyn. Yr heddlu oedd yna. 'Cer i gwato!' gwaeddodd fy mrawd wrth iddo redeg i ffwrdd. Edrychais o 'nghwmpas mewn braw, roedd cymaint o ofn arna i, doeddwn i ddim yn gallu anadlu, ac roedd fy nannedd yn clecian gan oerfel a braw. Neidiais i'r twll yr oedd Mr Jones wedi bod yn palu ynddo, a swatio yno'n dawel, fy mhengliniau at fy mrest. Syllais ar lwmp o lo a'i grafu gyda'm hewin. Teimlai'n oer a chaled, ac roedd yn sgleinio fel diemwnt. 'Mae'n fwy llwyd na du,' meddyliais. Roedd llwch y glo'n llenwi fy ffroenau ac yn gwneud i fi fod eisiau tagu, rhois fy llaw ar fy ngheg er mwyn osgoi hyn.

Meddyliais am fy nhad, a oedd yn gweithio danddaear bob dydd, a chrychu fy nhrwyn mewn ffieidd-dod. 'Sa i moyn gweithio danddaear pan dw i'n hŷn', meddais dan fy ngwynt. Dechreuais ddiflasu, a phob eiliad yn teimlo fel oes. Roeddwn i'n fferru, a'm dwylo'n iasol. Edrychais ar fy menig â dau dwll mawr yn y bysedd. Er bod angen menig newydd arna i, doeddwn i ddim eisiau gofyn i mam gan fod arian mor brin.

Roedd pob man yn dawel fel y bedd erbyn hyn, a dim sŵn gweiddi yn unlle. Codais fy mhen a gweld esgid, clamp o esgid fawr sgleiniog. Roedd gen i ormod o ofn anadlu hyd yn oed. Yna, daeth wyneb i'r golwg, wyneb ifanc caredig gyda gwallt coch pigog. 'Nage plisman yw e', meddyliais wrthyf fi fy hun. Roeddwn i wedi clywed 'nhad yn sôn gymaint am yr heddlu, pa mor frwnt a ffiaidd oedden nhw, yn clatsio glowyr gyda phastynau a'u cadw dan glo. Doedd e ddim yn debyg i fochyn chwaith. Ond heddwas oedd e, heb os, gallwn weld ei iwnifform nawr. Syllais arno, yn disgwyl iddo siarad, ond ni ddywedodd yr un gair o'i ben. Gwenodd arna i a sylwais ei fod wedi colli dant. 'Tybed ai ar y llinell biced ddigwyddodd hynna' meddyliais. Winciodd arna i, a gweiddi 'Sneb yma Alf' cyn diflannu gydag un winc olaf.

Llanwodd fy nghlustiau â sŵn injans. Roedd fy mhen-ôl wedi rhewi a 'nhraed yn wlyb ac oer. Roeddwn i ofn

'Glo yn yr eira' 1984, Natalie yr ail o'r dde

'Coal in the snow' 1984, Natalie is second from the right

hefyd, yn ofni bod fy mrawd wedi mynd adre' a ngadael i. Gallwn ddychmygu fy chwaer a'r hen Julie gas 'na'n eistedd yna'n chwerthin a finnau ar goll, a dechreuais lefain. 'Dyma ble'r wyt ti, Squirt' medd llais fy mrawd wrth iddo ymddangos dros y twll, 'Wy di bod yn 'whilo'n bobman amdanat ti. Dere, awn i adre.' Sychais fy llygaid a neidio allan o'r twll. 'Bacha sach a rhed am dy fywyd cyn iddyn nhw ddod nôl' gorchmynnodd fy mrawd. Gafaelais mewn sach, ond roedd yn rhy drwm i'w chodi, felly dyma fi'n ei llusgo a rhedeg gynted ag y gallwn, gan stopio bob hyn a hyn i godi fy nhrowsus.

Roedden ni gartre cyn pen dim, ac fe lusgais i'r sach drwodd i'r ystafell fyw. Roedd yn teimlo'n ysgafnach erbyn hyn, a gwelais glamp o dwll yn y gwaelod – roedd hanner y glo wedi mynd. Dechreuodd fy chwaer a'r hen Julie annifyr 'na chwerthin o weld y braw ar fy ngwyneb. 'Da iawn Squirt', meddai fy mrawd, 'ry'n ni di llanw 21 sach o lo i bara drwy'r gaeaf, ac fe nes ti gwato rhag y moch, aros di tan fydda i'n dweud wrth dad, bydd e mor browd'. Saethodd olwg flin at fy chwaer, a stopiodd y giglan gwirion. Roeddwn i mor falch ohonof fi fy hun, doeddwn i ddim am sôn 'run gair am y plismon na'r twll yn y sach, fy nghyfrinach i oedd honno. Trois at fy chwaer a thynnu tafod arni.

Natalie Butts-Thompson

The tip was huge, a sea of black, and there were quite a few people there already, men and women. You could see them in the distance jumping in and out of holes with their shovels filling their nylon sacks with coal. Once full they would carry the sacks on their backs or in old prams to safety, in fear of the police arriving and catching them. You see, what we were doing was illegal, theft in fact, but everyone was desperate for heat and prepared to go to any lengths to keep their families warm.

Mr Jones, an elderly plump man called out "How be kids. Your father out picketing is he?" "Yeah Butt" answered my brother. "In that case I'll drop two bags in later." He was like that was Mr Jones, very kind, but so was everyone else. The community spirit was very much alive.

My brother handed me a griddle as him and Dai shovelled for coal. "Put the coal through here and shake it" he said, gesturing towards the coal. I did as I was told, shaking the coal, filling the bags and dragging them to a hiding place. The bags were heavy, I was cold now and my face was stinging, and my nose was running. The coal dust clogged in my chest and made me cough and splutter. But I kept filling the bags, listening to the conversation between my brother, Dai and Mr Jones. I felt very grown up listening to them talking about the police, 'Pigs' they called them, and I laughed when the referred to the miners who worked as 'Scabs' and secretly enjoyed their foul language.

All of a sudden there was a loud screech of tyres and everyone scattered as men in black uniforms charged out of the white vans. It was the police. "Hide!" shouted my brother frantically as he ran off. I looked around me in panic, I was so scared I could hardly breathe and my teeth were chattering together from the cold and fright. I jumped into the hole where Mr Jones had been digging and sat there quietly, my knees bent up into my chest. I examined the coal and scraped it with my fingernail. It felt hard and cold and was glistening like a diamond. "It's more grey than black" I thought. The coal dust filled my nostrils and made me want to cough; I put my hand over my mouth to prevent this.

I thought of my father who worked underground every day and wrinkled my nose in disgust, "I don't want to work underground when I'm older" I muttered to myself. I was getting bored now, it felt like I'd been there for hours and I was freezing, my hands were cold. I examined my gloves which had two big holes in the fingers. I needed new gloves but didn't want to ask Mam as money was tight.

It had gone quiet now, I couldn't hear any shouting. I looked up and saw a shoe, a great black, shiny shoe. I was too scared to breathe. Then a face appeared and looked down at me, a kind young face with spiky ginger hair. "It can't be a policeman" I thought to myself. I'd heard my dad talk about the police, how they were nasty and hit the miners with truncheons and locked them up. He didn't look like a pig either. But it was the police, I could see his uniform now. I stared at him, waiting for him to speak but he didn't, he just smiled and I noticed he had a tooth missing, "Wonder if that happened in the picketing" I thought to myself. He winked at me, "No one down here Alf," he shouted before giving me another wink and disappeared.

The sound of engines starting filled my ears, my bum was freezing and my feet were wet and cold. I was scared too, scared my brother had gone home and left me. I could imagine my sister and horrible Julie sitting there laughing because I was lost and I started to cry. "There you are, Squirt" came my brother's voice as he appeared over the hole, "I've been looking for you. Come on, let's go." I wiped my eyes and quickly jumped up out of the hole. "Grab a bag and run before they come back", commanded my brother. I grabbed a sack but it was too heavy to lift so I dragged it, running as quickly as I could, stopping every now and then to pull my trousers up.

We were home in minutes and I dragged the sack through the living room. It felt lighter now and then I noticed a big gaping hole in the bottom, half my coal had gone. My sister and awful Julie started giggling at the look of horror on my face. "Well done, Squirt", my brother said, "We filled twenty one sacks of coal to see us through the winter, and you hid from the pigs, wait until I tell Dad, he'll be so proud." He shot my sister a warning look and the giggling stopped. I felt myself fill with pride, I wasn't going to tell him that the policeman had seen me or that my sack had a hole; that would be my secret. I turned to my sister and poked out my tongue.

Natalie Butts-Thompson

O Durham i'r Bwl

Cefais fy ngeni yn Blackhall, pentref glofaol yn Swydd Durham, ym mis Hydref 1937. Roedd fy nhad yn löwr, yn ogystal â'm dau frawd. Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed ym mis Medi 1952, a dechreuais weithio yng nglofa Blackhall ar 5 Ionawr 1953. Cefais hyfforddiant yng nglofa Horden. Fy nhasg gyntaf oedd gweithio ar y sgriniau [codi cerrig o'r glo], cyn mynd danddaear fel gweithiwr halio ac ymlaen i'r ffas lo ei hun wedyn.

Roedd glofa Blackhall wedi'i rhannu'n ddwy ran, pwll y gogledd a phwll y de. Pwll sych oedd un y de, a defnyddiwyd peiriannau torri aer cywasgedig Hardiax, ceffylau a thybiau. Gwaith talcen a hedin oedd e, ac roedden ni'n gweithio fesul dau – un yn defnyddio peiriant yn yr hedin a'r llall yn defnyddio rhaw i lenwi'r tybiau â glo wedi'i dorri a'i danio. Roedd y gwythiennau tua thair troedfedd o uchder – tair troedfedd chwe modfedd ar y mwyaf. Roedd y tybiau'n dal deg canpwys o lo, a ninnau'n arfer llenwi rhwng 30 a 35 o dybiau bob shifft. Yna, byddai'r tybiau llawn yn cael eu cludo i ffwrdd gan 'utters' a'u merlod, a'r rhai gweigion yn cymryd eu lle. Bues i'n gweithio ym mhwll y de am ddeng mlynedd.

Ym 1960, fe gwympodd y to wrth i fi weithio ar rowlen yn y strata. Torrwyd fy nghoes a chefais anaf mawr ar draws fy ysgwydd a bues i ffwrdd o'r gwaith am chwe mis. Ar ôl iddyn nhw 'nghael i allan, fe'm rhoddwyd ar stretsier a'i roi ar dram isel wedi'i thynnu gan 'set' [rhes o dybiau]. Perygl arall oedd y 'carbonas' [boncyffion coed petraidd], hen ddiawl o bethau oedden nhw, yn amhosib i'w gweld, ond pan fyddech chi'n tynnu'r glo oddi tanynt, byddan nhw'n disgyn. Dw i'n cofio dwy farwolaeth yn Blackhall, y ddau yn y siafft. Cafodd un dyn ei ladd pan ddaeth y gât diogelwch i lawr arno ar ben y pwll, a disgynnodd y llall i'w farwolaeth lawr y siafft.

Roedd pwll y de yn cau, a chawsom ein trosglwyddo i bwll y gogledd. Roedd pwll y gogledd yn hynod o wlyb, ac mewn gwirionedd, roedden ni dair milltir a hanner o dan Fôr y Gogledd – er nad dŵr y môr oedd y bai, ond y strata ei hun. Ta waeth, fe ddes i adre un diwrnod a gweld hysbyseb fawr yn y Daily Herald yn dweud bod glofa'r Lady Windsor yn ne Cymru yn chwilio am lowyr. Felly, fe wnes i lenwi'r ffurflenni a'u postio i'r De. Yna, ar ôl ychydig fisoedd, fe ges i ateb yn dweud bod tri o aelodau'r undeb yn dod i Durham i holi'r ymgeiswyr. Dywedwyd eu bod nhw'n recriwtio am y rheswm syml mai dim ond hanner llawn oedd ffasys Lady Windsor, gan fod digonedd o waith ar gael tu allan i'r diwydiant. Roedd swyddogion de Cymru dan yr argraff bod glowyr gogledd-ddwyrain Lloegr yn dueddol o aros yn y glofeydd am oes, tra bod llawer o ddynion de Cymru yn gweithio yn y pyllau glo dros yr haf ac yn mynd i weithio mewn swyddi eraill yn yr hydref. Yn y dyddiau hynny, roeddech chi'n gallu gorffen un swydd ar ddydd Gwener a dechrau swydd newydd ar ddydd Llun.

Mr Crane gyda baner Durham, Diwrnod Hwyl Lady Windsor, 2013
Mr Crane with the Durham banner, Lady Windsor Fun Day, 2013

From Durham to Ynysybwl

I was born in October 1937 in Blackhall, a mining village in County Durham. My father was a miner as were my two brothers. I left school at fifteen in September 1952 and started work in Blackhall Colliery on January 5th 1953. I did my training at Horden Colliery. I started on the screens *(picking stone from the coal)*, and then went underground at Blackhall as a haulage worker and then progressed onto the actual coal face.

Blackhall Colliery was divided into two parts, the North and South Pits. The South Pit was a dry pit and used blast *(compressed air)* Hardiax cutting machines, ponies and tubs. It was stall and heading work and we worked in 'sets' of two men, one working on the machine in the heading and the other filling out the cut and fired coal by shovel into the tubs. The seams were about three feet high - the highest being three feet six. The tubs held ten hundredweight of coal and we used to fill between thirty and thirty five tubs a shift. The filled tubs were taken away by 'putters' and their ponies and empties were brought in to replace them. I worked in the South Pit for ten years.

In 1960 I went under a fall while I was working on a roll in the strata and got a broken leg and a large gash across my shoulder and was out for six months. After they got me out they put me on a stretcher which was placed on a low bed tram and pulled out behind a 'set' *(train of tubs)*. Another danger were the 'carbonas' *(petrified tree trunks)* they were devils, you couldn't see them but when you removed the coal from under them they'd come down. I remember two fatalities at Blackhall, both in the shaft. One man was killed when the safety gate came down on him at the top of the pit and the other fell down the shaft.

The South Pit was being closed and we were to be transferred to the North Pit. The North Pit was very wet, in fact we were three and a half miles under the North Sea, but it wasn't sea water that made it wet but water from the strata itself. Anyway, I came home from work one day and in the Daily Herald was a big spread saying that miners were wanted in Lady Windsor Colliery in south Wales. So I filled the forms in and sent them down to south Wales. Then, after months, I had a reply saying that three union members were coming up to Durham to interview applicants. We were told that the simple reason they were recruiting was that the faces at Lady Windsor were only half manned because there were lots of jobs available outside the industry. The officials from south Wales were under the impression that miners in the North East coalfield tended to stay in the collieries for a lifetime whereas, in south Wales, a lot of men would work in the colliery in the summer then be off to a different job in the autumn. In those days you could finish in one job on a Friday and start a new one on the Monday.

Beth sy'n mynd ymlaen fan hyn? Ffotograff dirgel o'r 1970au
What's happening here? A mystery photograph from the 1970s

Felly, fe ddois i lawr am gyfweliad, yna cawsom lythyr i ddweud wrthym am ddod lawr i dde Cymru ar 5 Ebrill 1963. Roedd pymtheg ohonom yn rhan o'r criw cyntaf. Cafodd ein dodrefn a'n heiddo eu cludo mewn fan Flay's Haulage, a theithiais innau, fy ngwraig a'n dau blentyn ar drên o Durham i Gaerdydd. Yng Nghaerdydd, cawsom ein croesawu gan swyddogion yr NUM a'n rhoddodd ar fws i Other Street Chapel, Ynys-y-bwl, lle'r oedd gwledd yn ein disgwyl. Cawsom gymaint i'w fwyta, nes bod y plant yn sâl ar ôl gormod o hufen iâ! Yna, aethpwyd â ni i'r safle carafanau lle byddem yn byw, ac aeth ein gwragedd i'r Co-op, a oedd wedi aros ar agor yn hwyr i ni gael digon o fwyd am yr wythnos. Fe wnaethon ni gofrestru i weithio yn y lofa tra'r oedd ein gwragedd yn siopa. Y noson honno, aethom i'r Bomb am ddiferyn a chawsom y fath groeso fel petaen ni wedi byw yno erioed.

Dechreuais weithio yn y Lady Windsor ar shifft brynhawn ddydd Llun 8 Ebrill 1963. Aethom i'r wythïen Naw Troedfedd gan feddwl beth ar y ddaear oedden ni wedi cytuno iddo – roedd hi'n amhosib gweld yr hedin gyda'r holl lwch. Ond meddyliais i, 'Dy'n ni gyd yma nawr, waeth i ni glatsio bant'. Doedden ni ddim yn hoffi'r lle gan ein bod ni wedi arfer â gweithio mewn llefydd isel ac yn hoff o deimlo'r to yn erbyn ein cefnau, ond yma, roedden ni'n gweithio mewn gwythiennau uchel. Problem arall oedd y dillad. Yn Durham, roedden ni'n arfer gweithio mewn festiau a siorts, ac un diwrnod, fe welodd Mr Rawlings y rheolwr un o'r bois ym mhendraw'r ffas wedi'i wisgo felly. Rhythodd arno a gofyn 'Beth 'ych chi'n neud?' 'Gweithio!' oedd yr ateb. Atebodd y rheolwr, 'Ewch i wisgo amdanoch, achos pan wy'n gweld dyn yn gwisgo fel'na, mae'n arwydd o awyru gwael, a does dim awyru gwael yn y lofa hon'. Felly, bu'n rhaid iddo wisgo'i drowsus. Pan welon ni'r stablau, cawsom ein synnu gan faint y ceffylau. Merlod oedden ni'n eu defnyddio yng ngogledd-ddwyrain Lloegr, ond yn fan hyn, roedden nhw'n fwy na cheffylau'r Co-op! Yna fe welon ni faint y dramiau a meddwl 'Myn duw!' – roedden nhw'n anferth o gymharu â'r tybiau bach roedden ni'n gyfarwydd â nhw.

Roedd enwau gwahanol ar yr offer a'r cyfarpar hefyd – er enghraifft:

Lady Windsor	Durham
Post	Prop
Sledge	Mel
Mandrel	Pick
Puncher (caib niwmatig)	Scalloper neu Windy pick
Hatchet	Axe
Tommy box	Bait tin
Shorts	Hoggers

Yn y ffas wal hir ar y wythïen Naw Troedfedd yn Lady Windsor, roedden ni'n llenwi glo ar panzer [cludfelt haengaled]. Weithiau, byddai bar crafu yn dod yn rhydd o sianel y cludfelt ac yn bachu ynddoch chi wrth i chi blygu dros y cludfelt – fe ges i'n nharo sawl tro ganddo. Bariau dolen a physt ffrithiant oedd yn cynnal y to. Pan ddaethon ni i lawr gyntaf, roedd yr amgylchiadau gweithio yn anodd ymdopi â nhw, yn enwedig â ninnau wedi arfer gweithio mewn llefydd tair troedfedd o uchder – o gymharu â thros chwe throedfedd yma, ond buan y daethom i arfer â hynny.

Bues i'n gweithio ar y ffas lo tan 1970 neu 1971, pan gefais fy mhenodi'n ddirprwy tan gaeodd y pwll ym 1988.

O'r hanner cant ohonom ddaeth lawr i'r Lady Windsor o Durham, dim ond rhyw chwech sydd ar ôl erbyn hyn. Awn i ddim yn ôl i Durham i fyw nawr, dim ond ar gyfer priodasau ac angladdau. Yng Nghymru, 'Geordie' ydw i, er mai Mackem ydw i mewn gwirionedd fel brodor o Wierside nid Tyneside, ond yn Durham, maen nhw'n dweud mai Cymro ydw i!

Russell Crane

So they came up and interviewed us and we later got letters telling us when we were to come down to south Wales on the 5th April 1963. There were fifteen of us in the first batch. Our furniture and belongings were taken down in a van by Flay's Haulage and my wife, two children and myself caught the train from Durham to Cardiff. In Cardiff we were met by NUM officials who put us on a bus to the Other Street Chapel in Ynysybwl where a big spread had been put out for us, so we were well fed in fact the kids were sick from eating too much ice cream! We were then taken to the caravan site where we were to live and our wives were taken to the Co-op which had stayed open late for us to stock up with food for the week. While our wives were shopping we signed on in the colliery. That night we went to the 'Bomb' for a drink and were made as welcome as if we had lived there all our lives.

I started work in Lady Windsor on afternoon shift on Monday 8th April 1963. When we went into the Nine Feet seam we wondered what we had led ourselves into - you couldn't see into the heading for all the dust. But I thought "We're all down here now, might as well knuckle down to it." We didn't like it because we were used to working in low height and liked to 'feel the roof against our backs' while here we were working in high seams. Another problem was our clothing. In Durham we used to work in vests and shorts and one day the manager Mr Rawlings saw one of the boys on the tail end of the face dressed like that. The manager took one look and said "What are you doing?", "Working!" came the reply. The manager said "Go and put you clothes on because when I see a man dressed like that it's a sign that the ventilation is poor and there's no bad ventilation in this colliery". So he had to go and put his trousers on. When we saw the stables we were surprised by the size of the horses. In the north east we used ponies and here they were bigger than the Co-op horses! Then we saw the size of the drams and thought 'O God!' - They were huge compared to the small tubs we were used to.

There were also different names for tools and equipment - for example:-

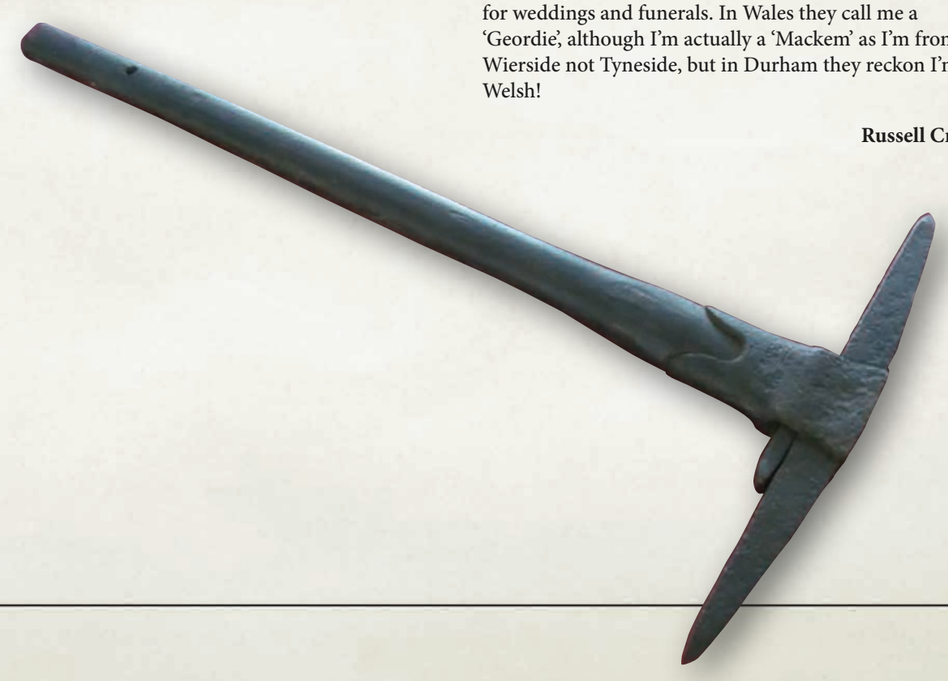
Lady Windsor	Durham
Post	Prop
Sledge	Mel
Mandrel	Pick
Puncher (pneumatic pick)	Scalloper or Windy pick
Hatchet	Axe
Tommy box	Bait tin
Shorts	Hoggers

On the long wall face on the Nine Feet seam at Lady Windsor we were hand filling coal onto a 'panzer' *(an armoured conveyor)*. Sometimes a 'flight' *(scraper bar)* would come loose from the conveyor channel and catch you as you leaned over the conveyor – I got hit a few times from those. The roof was supported by link bars and friction posts. When we first came down we found it tough to get used to, especially as we were used to working in three feet of height and here it was over six feet, but we soon got used to it.

I worked on the coal face until 1970 or 1971 when I became a deputy until the pit closed in 1988.

About fifty of us came down to Lady Windsor from Durham, but there are only about six of us left now. I wouldn't go back to live in Durham now and only go back for weddings and funerals. In Wales they call me a 'Geordie', although I'm actually a 'Mackem' as I'm from Wierside not Tyneside, but in Durham they reckon I'm Welsh!

Russell Crane



Croeso i waith glo!

Fe'm ganed yn y Gilfach-goch ym 1935. Gadewais yr ysgol adeg y Nadolig 1950, a chychwyn gweithio ar ddydd Calan 1951. Es i ganolfan hyfforddi lofaol Wattstown i gael fy hyfforddiant danddaear, a Crawshay Villa, Tonpentre ar gyfer gwersi ystafell ddosbarth. Ar ôl hynny, dychwelais i'r Gilfach-goch a chychwyn ar y ffas hyfforddi ym mhwll Trane. Wrth i ni gerdded i mewn ar y diwrnod cyntaf, fe wnaethon ni basio dyn yn cael ei gludo mas ar ôl cael ei ladd gan gwymp – am groeso i waith glo! Penderfynodd un o'r bechgyn roi'r gorau iddi ar ôl gweld hynny, a mynd i weithio gyda chwmni lle cafodd ei anafu ar ôl i olwyn ôl rhyw lori fynd drosto.

Wedi'r hyfforddiant cychwynnol, fe'm rhoddwyd i weithio gyda cholier ar y ffas lo ym mhwll Britannic. Clifford Jones oedd fy nghyd-weithiwr cyntaf i, neu 'Slasher' i bawb arall. Roedd yn gomiwnydd rhonc a wrthodai weithio ar ddydd Sadwrn am ei fod yn credu y byddai'r tunelledd ychwanegol yn cau'r pyllau ynghynt. Hefyd, doedd e ddim yn credu y dylai'r glowyr fod yn berchen ar eu tai eu hunain, gan fod hynny o gymorth i'r perchnogion, gan y byddai gennych fwy i'w golli petaech chi'n mynd ar streic.

Tra bûm yn gweithio gydag e, buom yn agor ffordd newydd ac yn cloddio mynedfa gaeedig. Roedd cludfelt yno i gario'r glo i'r brif ffordd, ond roedd ffas lo yn ei defnyddio hefyd, felly doedden ni ddim yn gallu llwytho'n glo ni ar y belt bob amser a byddai'n pentyrru'r glo wrth ddisgwyl i'r cludfelt wagio. Felly, byddwn i'n eistedd yno'n llaesu dwylo. Yno'r oeddwn i, yn taflu cerrig mân at bost a byddai Cliff yn stopio a gofyn 'Beth yw hwnna?', gan feddwl mai cerrig yn disgyn o'r to oedd y sŵn, a allai olygu bod cwymp i ddod. Doeddwn i ddim yn deall beth oedd e'n feddwl, felly dywedais nad oeddwn i'n gallu clywed unrhyw beth. Ar ôl tipyn, byddwn yn dechrau taflu cerrig eto a byddai'n gofyn a oeddwn i'n gallu clywed unrhyw un, a dyna ddechrau'r un hen rigmarôl eto. Ymhen hir a hwyr, dyma fe'n sylweddoli beth oeddwn i'n ei wneud, ac fe ges i bryd o dafod ganddo.

Cefais le fy hun pan oeddwn i'n ddeunaw oed, sy'n reit anghyffredin, achos roeddech chi'n gorfod bod yn un ar hugain oed fel arfer. Doedd y coliers eraill ddim yn hoffi hyn, achos 'mod i'n rhoi gormod o drymps i'm gwas. Roedd gen i gar erbyn 1954 hefyd, a dw i'n cofio'r glowyr hŷn yn dweud 'Glowyr yn dod i'r gwaith mewn car! Pe bai'r hen lowyr yn eu gweld'. Dechreuais ar gwrs addysg bellach hefyd, mewn dosbarth nos i ddechrau yn Crawshay Villa ac yna yn ystod y dydd wedi cael amser o'r gwaith. Bues i wrthi am dair blynedd, ond dechreuais fynd mas i yfed gyda rhai o'r bechgyn eraill, a rhoi'r ffidil yn y to.

Glofa Britannic

Britannic Colliery

Pan oeddwn i lawr y Britannic, byddwn i'n gweithio 'split shifts' [lawr y pwll tua un y prynhawn] yn clirio'r stentiau oedd heb eu gorffen yn ystod y shifft ddydd. Roeddwn i fod i orffen tua naw o'r gloch, ond byddwn i'n dal ati. Un noson, wnes i ddim gweithio 'mlaen, ond fe benderfynodd bachan arall – oedd ddim yn hoffi'r ffaith 'mod i'n cael cyflog llawn yn ddeunaw oed – barhau i weithio. Roedden ni'n teithio ar y bws adref yr wythnos ganlynol, pan glywais i fe'n dweud nad oedd wedi'i dalu am weithio'r noson honno, felly edrychais ar fy mhapur cyflog, a sylwi mai fi oedd wedi cael ei dâl goramser. Felly, es i at yr amserwyr y diwrnod canlynol i ddweud eu bod nhw wedi gwneud camgymeriad. Wrth y ffenestr, roedd yna giw o ddynion oedd wedi cael problemau gyda'u cyflogau, a phan gyrhaeddais i'r ffenestr, gofynnodd yr amserwr 'Faint yn brin wyt ti te?' a phan ddywedais i wrtho mod i wedi cael gormod o dâl, fe ddywedodd 'Cer o 'ma!'

Wrth lenwi'r to y tu ôl i'r ffas, byddech chi'n gorfod tynnu'r pyst dros dro allan er mwyn adeiladu'r paciau parhaus. Roeddech chi'n cael tua saith swllt a chwe cheiniog am godi'r paciau a swllt am bob postyn a dynnwyd allan. Un diwrnod, pan edrychais ar fy mhapur

Welcome to mining!

I was born in Gilfach Goch in 1935. I left school Christmas 1950 and started work on New Year's Day, 1951 and went to Wattstown Colliery Training Centre for underground training and Crawshay Villa, Ton Pentre, for classroom work. After that I went back to Gilfach Goch and went on the training face at Trane Pit. On the first day as we were walking in we passed a man being carried out who'd been killed under a fall – a really good welcome to mining! One of the boys finished after he saw that and worked in a firm where he was injured when the back wheel of a lorry went over him.

After initial training I was put to work with a collier on the coal face in the Britannic pit. The first man I worked with was called Clifford Jones whose nickname was called 'Slasher'. He was a rank communist who refused to work Saturdays because he thought the extra tonnage would close the pits down earlier. He also didn't believe that miners shouldn't own their own houses because it helped the owners as you had more to lose if you went on strike.

While I was working with him we were opening up a new roadway so we were working a block end. There was a conveyor belt to take our coal onto the main road but there was also a coal face filling onto it so we weren't always able to fill our coal onto the belt so he used to pile the coal up while he was waiting to fill out. Therefore I would be sitting down with nothing to do. So I was sitting down flicking small stones at a post and Cliff would stop and say "What's that?", thinking that the noise was stones falling from the roof which could mean an imminent roof fall. I didn't know what he meant so I said I couldn't hear anything and after a while start flicking stones again and he'd ask again if I could hear anything and we'd go through the same thing. After a while he realised what I was doing and I had a real row.

I got my own place when I was eighteen which was unusual as you usually had to be twenty one. The other colliers didn't like it because I used to give my boy too much 'trumps' *(money given out of a collier's pay to his boy helper)*. I also had a car by 1954 and remember the older miners saying "Miners coming to work in a car! If only the old colliers could raise their heads." I also started further education, at first in night class in Crawshay Villa and later on day release. I did it for three years but started going drinking with some of the other boys and packed it in.

When I was down Britannic I used to work 'split shifts' *(down the pit about one o clock in the afternoon)* cleaning up 'stents' *(working places)* which hadn't been finished from the day shift. I was supposed to finish about nine o'clock but I used to work on. One night I didn't work on but one bloke, who particularly didn't like the fact that I was being paid full money at eighteen, did. We were on our way home on the bus the next week and I heard him saying that he hadn't been paid for the night he'd worked on, so I looked at my docket and found that I'd been paid his overtime. So I went to the timekeepers the next day to tell them they'd made a mistake. There was a queue at the window of men who had problems with their dockets and when I reached the window the timekeeper asked me "How much have you been underpaid then?" and when I said I'd actually been overpaid he said "Get out!"

When you were packing the roof behind the coal face you used to have to pull the temporary posts out to build the permanent packs. You got paid, say seven shillings and sixpence for putting the packs up and a shilling for every post you pulled out. One day, when I checked my docket, they'd paid me the price of a pack for pulling out each post and the price of a post for the pack. After my last experience with the timekeepers I decided not to say anything and the same over payment happened the week after. I'm not sure how the mistake happened but I had lent my car to one of the measuring clerks *(who calculated*

cyflog, gwelais eu bod nhw wedi talu pris pac am dynnu bob postyn, a phris postyn am y pac. Penderfynais gadw'n dawel ar ôl fy mhrofiad diwethaf gyda'r amserwyr, ond digwyddodd yr un peth yr wythnos ganlynol hefyd. Wn i ddim sut digwyddodd y camgymeriad, ond roeddwn i wedi benthyg fy nghar i un o'r clercod mesur gael mynd am brawf gyrru, felly dw i'n credu mai ad-dalu'r ffafr hwnnw oedd e.

Arhosais yn y Britannic tan i'r lofa gau. Dyma'r pwll olaf yn y Gilfach-goch, a chefais fy nhrosglwyddo i lofa'r Cwm. Er mai gweithwyr y Cwm oeddem ni'n swyddogol, roedden ni'n mynd i lawr y pwll yng nglofa Coedely [oedd wedi'i chysylltu â glofa'r Cwm danddaear] ac yn gorfod teithio ar gertiau i'r Diamond Dump yn y Cwm. Roedden ni'n cyrraedd y gwaith hanner awr ar ôl pawb arall, felly dyma fi'n meddwl, 'I'r diawl â hyn' a phenderfynu ymuno â'r Awyrlu. Ar fy niwrnod olaf yn y pwll, roedd dyn yn torri pwcinz [cynyddu uchder y ffordd danddaear] pan roliodd carreg oddi ar y cludfelt a thorri ei goes. Felly, cafodd dyn ei gludo mas ar stretsier ar fy niwrnod cyntaf danddaear, ac fe helpais i gludo dyn o'r gwaelodion ar fy niwrnod olaf.

Es i nôl fy nghyflog olaf o Coedely, gan ddisgwyl gweld yr holl arian oedd yn ddyledus i mi, wythnos mewn llaw ac ati, ond y cwbl oedd yno oedd fy nhâl wythnosol. Dyma fi'n cwyno wrth yr amserwr, a'm hanfonodd at amserwr y Cwm i ddatrys y mater. Roedd ciw hir yno, a phan gyrhaeddais i'r ffenestr, fe ddywedon nhw 'Wnawn ni anfon e atat ti' ond dywedais mod i angen y cyflog nawr. Felly, es i lawr y coridor lle'r oedd swyddfa 'Mad Mac' [Mr McDonald, rheolwr y lofa]. 'Allwch chi ddim dod mewn', meddai ei ysgrifenyddes, ond atebais i 'Rhy hwyr' ac es i mewn i weld Mac a chael cythraul o ffrae fawr. Sylweddolodd mod i'n ymuno â'r Awyrlu, felly dyma fe'n pwyllo a dechrau trafod hynny. Yn y man, fe'm hanfonwyd yn ôl i'r swyddfa gyflogau i gael fy nhâl.

George Jury

Max a'r micsar

Cefais fy ngeni yng Nghwm-gwrach ym 1948, yn Tan y Bryn Terrace neu'r 'Baltic' ar lafar gwlad. Dywedodd fy nhad ei bod wedi'i henwi felly ar ôl i ymwelydd ddweud un tro 'mae'n gwmws fel bod yn y Baltig' oherwydd ei bod hi mor oer a gwyntog y diwrnod hwnnw. Cafodd Tan y Bryn ei adeiladu tua 1830 neu 1840 i gartrefu gweithwyr gwaith glo a haearn y Wenallt. Arferai trigolion Cwm-gwrach ddod i'r ardal hon am dro gan ei bod yn frith o fywyd gwyllt, a thua diwedd yr haf, byddai pobl yn heidio i glywed cân yr eos. Roedden ni'n ffodus, gan mai dim ond agor y ffenestri oedd rhaid i glywed y deryn hyfryd hwn.

Coedwigwr yn Nhal-y-bont ar Wysg oedd fy nhad-cu, ac yn ôl yr arfer bryd hynny, dilynodd ei fab hynaf ef i'r diwydiant coedwigaeth ac, yn ystod yr Ail Ryfel Byd, daeth yn brif goedwigwr ar ystâd y brenin yn Sandringham. Cafodd fy nhad, y mab iau, waith ar fferm, ond gan nad oedd yn mwynhau hynny, fe'i hanfonwyd i ffair Aberhonddu i fynd 'ar y stand'. Dyma pryd oedd bachgen yn gorfod sefyll ar blatfform, yn noeth at ei ganol er mwyn i bobl deimlo ei gyhyrau cyn bidio i'w hurio – yn union fel hen ffeiriau caethweision America gynt.

Cafodd swydd ar fferm Pencae, ger safle glo brig modern Selar, a hynny ar gontract a olygai ei fod yn ennill £16 bob chwe mis. Mis Tachwedd oedd hi, ac ar ôl gadael y trên cafodd ei gludo gan geffyl a chert i'r fferm. Ar ôl

William John Davies

dadlwytho'i eiddo, fe'i hanfonwyd i lofa'r Empire i ddwyn glo o'r tip gwastraff. Doedd e ddim yn hoffi gweithio ar y fferm gan fod y ffarmwr yn ddyn eitha crintachlyd, ond ar ôl ychydig, daeth i nabod bechgyn y pentref, ac aeth un ohonyn nhw i weithio i'r rheilffyrdd. Cynigiwyd ei hen swydd i 'nhad ar fferm wahanol, ac yno y buodd am dair blynedd ar ddeg tan i'r ffermwr roi'r gorau iddi. Yna, cynigiodd am waith yng nglofa'r Empire. Ar y ffordd yno, cyfarfu â dyn arall o'r enw Sid Bailey a holodd i ble'r oedd e'n mynd, a dywedodd fy nhad ei fod wedi clywed am swydd wag yng nglofa'r Empire. Dywedodd Sid mai dyna lle'r oedd e'n mynd hefyd. Meddai Sid, 'Wil, ma 'da ti wraig a phlentyn a dw i'n sengl, felly af i adre', dw i'n siŵr bydd cyfle arall'. Fy nhad gafodd y swydd, gan gychwyn fel llifiwr ac yna saer coed tan iddo ymddeol oddeutu 1966.

the work on a coal face) to go on a driving test and I think he did me a favour with my pay.

I stayed in Britannic until it closed, it was the last colliery in Gilfach Goch, and was transferred to Cwm Colliery. Although the batch I was in were classed as Cwm workers, we actually went down the pit in Coedely Colliery *(which was joined to Cwm underground)* and had to travel on mine cars into the Diamond Dump in Cwm. We were getting into work half an hour after the other men so I thought "Bugger this" and decided to join the Royal Air Force. The last day I worked a man was 'cutting pwcinz' *(increasing height in a roadway)* and a stone rolled off the belt and broke his leg. So, the first day I worked underground a man was carried out on a stretcher and the last day I worked I helped to carry a man out.

I went for my last docket in Coedely Colliery and was expecting all the money I was owed to be on my docket, week in hand etc., but all there was on there was my week's pay. So I complained to the timekeeper and he sent me over to the timekeeper in the Cwm to sort it out. There was a long queue and when I got to the window I was told "We'll send it to you" but I told him I wanted the money now. So I headed down the corridor to where 'Mad Mac's' *(Mr McDonald, the colliery manager)* office was. His secretary said "You can't come in here" but I said "Too late" and went into see 'Mac' and we had a hell of a barney, but he eventually realised that I was joining the Air Force and everything calmed down and we talked about that instead. He eventually sent me back to the pay office for my money.

George Jury

Max and the mixer

I was born in 1948 in Tan y Bryn Terrace, Cwmgwrach, a street which was locally known as 'The Baltic', my father told me that it got its name from a visitor's comment that "It's just like being in the Baltic" because it was so cold and windy that day. Tan y Bryn was built around 1830 or 1840 to house workers of the Venallt Coal and Iron Works. This was the area where the inhabitants of Cwmgwrach used for walks. It teemed with wildlife and, during the late summer, crowds would gather to hear the nightingales sing. We were lucky as we could just open the window and listen to this wonderful bird singing.

My grandfather was a forester in Talybont on Usk and, as was the custom then, his eldest son followed him into the forestry and, during the Second World War, became Head Forester on the King's Estate at Sandringham. My father, being younger, got a job on a farm but didn't like it, so he was sent to Brecon Fair to go 'on the stand'. This was when a boy had to stand on a platform stripped to the waist and have their muscles felt by people who would then bid for the chance to hire them - exactly like the old American slave markets!

He was given a job on Pencae Farm, which was near the modern Selar Opencast site, on a contract which earned him sixteen pounds every six months. It was November and he was met off the train by a horse and cart which took him to the farm. When he had unloaded his stuff he was taken over to the Empire Colliery to pinch coal from the waste tip. He didn't like working on the farm as the farmer was rather mean, but after a while he got to know boys in the village and one of them went for a job on the railway and he was offered his old job on a different farm where he stayed for thirteen years until the farmer finished. He then went to try for a job in the Empire Colliery. When he was on his way there he met another man called Sid Bailey who asked him where he was going and my father told him that he had heard that there was a vacancy in the Empire Colliery. Sid told him that's where he was going as well. Sid said "Will, you have a wife and child and I am single so I'll go back home there will be another opportunity later." My father got the job and worked first as a sawyer and eventually a carpenter until he retired around 1966.

My grandfather on my mother's side was a deputy at Empire Colliery and also a tenant farmer at Ynys Gron Farm which he worked from 1926 until he died in 1941. The next tenant farmer at Ynys Gron was Bert Coombes the famous miner/writer who wrote 'These Poor Hands' and other books about his experiences in the mining industry

It was through his association with the colliery that I got a job as a colliery electrician and started my mining career at Blaengwrach Colliery. I started in April 1963 and did my sixteen weeks mining course at Aberamman Training Centre and afterwards to Aberdare Technical College to do my electrical apprenticeship. I eventually obtained my Class 2 Certificate. I worked as an apprentice under an electrician on days and afternoon

Roedd fy nhad-cu ar ochr fy mam yn ddirprwy yng nglofa'r Empire, ac yn denant ar fferm Ynys Gron hefyd lle bu'n gweithio o 1926 tan iddo farw ym 1941. Tenant nesaf Ynys Gron oedd Bert Coombes, yr awdur o löwr enwog a ysgrifennodd These Poor Hands a llyfrau eraill am ei brofiadau yn y diwydiant glo.

Diolch i'w gysylltiad ef â'r pwll, fe ges i swydd fel trydanwr glofa. A dyna gychwyn fy ngyrfa i yng nglofa Blaen-gwrach. Dechreuais ym mis Ebrill 1963 a dilyn cwrs mwyngloddio 16 wythnos yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Aberaman ac yna ymlaen i Goleg Technegol Aberdâr ar gwrs prentisiaeth trydanol. Llwyddais i gael tystysgrif dosbarth 2 yn y diwedd. Bues i'n brentis i drydanwr ar shifftiau dydd a'r prynhawn tan i fi droi'n 18 oed, ac roeddwn i'n gorfod gweithio shifftiau nos hefyd. Erbyn hyn, roeddwn i'n un o dîm o drydanwyr a oedd yn cynnwys Max Boyce oedd yn gweithio tuag at dystysgrif peirianneg drydanol ar y pryd.

Roedd pwll newydd Blaen-gwrach wedi cloddio heibio hen lefelydd glofa'r Empire, ac wedi gosod offer mecanyddol newydd yno – ond doedd yr amodau ddim yn addas felly dychwelyd at yr hen ddull o rawio â llaw wnaethon ni. Roedd hi'n brysur iawn ar y shifft nos a'r shifft ddydd, ond ar ôl troi'r cludfelt [ei symud ymlaen] roedd shifftiau'r prynhawn yn dawel dros ben. Felly, roedd gennym bethau i'w gwneud er mwyn lladd amser, fel chwarae criced danddaear a chwarae mig gyda'n lampiau wedi'u diffodd! Mae'r Max Boyce welwch chi ar lwyfan yn union fel yr oedd yn y lofa – dw i'n cofio ni'n gosod injan halio newydd, ac roedd yna gymysgwr sment yno, felly aeth Max i guddio yn y cymysgwr a mynd yn sownd. Y peth nesaf, dyma'r drysau aer yn agor ac fe sgrialodd pawb i guddio. Yr is-reolwr oedd yno, a phan welodd Max e, fe ddywedodd 'Allwch chi 'nghal i mas o 'ma?' ac meddai'r rheolwr, 'ti ath i mewn, gei di gal dy hun mas gw'boi!'

Bob parti Nadolig, Max oedd yr adloniant bob amser. Treuliais ddeunaw mis yn gweithio gyda Max cyn iddo adael y pwll i weithio yn y Metal Box, Castell-nedd ym 1967. Dw i'n credu mai mynd er mwyn ei fam wnaeth e, gan nad oedd hi am iddo weithio danddaear gan i'w dad gael ei ladd yn y lofa ychydig cyn i Max gael ei eni. Pan aeth ar This is Your Life ym 1978, cefais i a'r bois eraill ein gwahodd draw i'r stiwdio i hel atgofion am ei yrfa fel glöwr.

Bues i'n Blaen-gwrach tan i'r lofa gau ym 1983, a throsglwyddais i lofa Aberpergwm wedyn. Pan gaeodd honno ym mis Hydref 1985, cefais waith ar safle glo brig lleol, ond dyna'r swydd anoddaf ges i erioed. Nid oherwydd y gwaith ei hun, ond y ffaith fod pawb yn gweithio er ei fwyn ei hun, fyddai neb yn rhoi help llaw i chi fel criw'r lofa, roedd popeth mor ddieithr a gwahanol i mi. Felly, es i'n ôl i'r glofeydd a chael swydd trydanwr gyda'r contractwyr mwyngloddio, Thyssen. Arhosais gyda nhw am ryw bedair blynedd, a hynny mewn sawl pwll gan gynnwys Penallta, Deep Navigation, Taff Merthyr, Blaenant a phrosiect Carway Fawr. Ar ôl hynny, bues i'n gweithio i Ryan Mining, a oedd wedi prynu cwpl o byllau bach tan i'r cwmni fynd i drafferthion ariannol.

Heblaw am weithio yn y diwydiant glo, roedd fy niddordebau'n cynnwys chwaraeon, garddio a ffermio. Cyfrannais at sawl sefydliad, a bues i'n drysorydd clwb rygbi Cwm-gwrach rhwng 1971 a 1980, yn gadeirydd Cyfrinfa'r NUM Blaen-gwrach rhwng 1977 a 1978, yn ysgrifennydd cyffredinol a thrysorydd Cymdeithas Arddwriaeth Cwm-gwrach o 1984 hyd heddiw, ac yn ysgrifennydd glofa Lyn ac yn aelod o Bwyllgor Gweithredol Ardal De Cymru o Undeb y Glowyr (NUM).

Ffarweliais â'r diwydiant ym 1995 oherwydd problemau gyda'm cefn, a oedd wedi mynd o ddrwg i waeth dros y blynyddoedd. Yn wir, fe'm rhybuddiwyd y byddwn i mewn cadair olwyn pe na byddwn i'n rhoi'r gorau iddi. Er hynny, byddwn i'n dychwelyd fory nesa' pe tawn i'n holliach. Joies i mas draw, er ei fod yn waith caled, er ddim hanner mor galed i fi fel trydanwr o gymharu â bois y ffas lo. Roedd yno gymdeithas arbennig, pawb yn gefn i'w gilydd – mae gen i hiraeth mawr.

W. J. Davies

Max Boyce ym Mhwll Mawr
Max Boyce in Big Pit

shifts until I was eighteen and had to work nights as well. I was now in a team of electricians which included Max Boyce who was doing his electrical engineering certificate at that time.

Blaengwrach New Mine had driven past the old Empire Colliery workings and had new mechanised equipment installed, however conditions weren't suitable so we went back onto the old hand filling method. It was very busy on the night and day shift but, after the conveyor was 'turned' *(moved forward)* afternoon shifts were very quiet. So, we had to do things to pass the time like playing cricket underground and playing hide and seek with our lamps out! What you see on stage with Max Boyce is what he was like in the colliery - I remember we were putting in a new haulage engine and there was a cement mixer so Max got into the cement mixer and got stuck. At that moment we heard the air doors opening and ran away to hide. It was the under manager and when Max saw him he said "Can you get me out?" and the manager replied "You got in there you can get out yourself!"

When we had a 'do' at Christmas, Max was always the entertainment. I worked with Max for about eighteen months before he left the pit to work in Metal Box in Neath in 1967, I think that this was to make his mother's life easier because she wasn't fussy on him working underground as his father had been killed in the colliery just before he was born. When he was on 'This is Your Life' in 1978, I was invited to the studios with some of the other boys to cover his mining career.

I worked in Blaengwrach until it closed in 1983 and then transferred to Aberpergwm Colliery. When Aberpergwm closed in October 1985 I got a job on a local opencast site but it turned out to be the hardest job I'd had. This wasn't because of the work but because everyone on the site were out for themselves, nobody would put themselves out to give you a hand like they did in the colliery, it was very alien to me. So I went back to the collieries and got a job as electrician with Thyssens the mining contractors. I worked for them for about four years in a number of pits including Penallta, Deep Navigation, Taff Merthyr, Blaenant and the Carway Fawr project. After that I worked with Ryan Mining who had bought up a couple of small mines until they got into financial difficulties.

Besides working in the coal industry, my hobbies included sport, gardening and farming. I contributed to various organisations and was the Treasurer of Cwmgwrach RFC from 1971 to 1980, the Chairman of Blaengwrach NUM Lodge in 1977 – 1978, General Secretary and Treasurer of Cwmgwrach Horticultural Society from 1984 to the present and Secretary of Lyn Colliery and member of the Executive of the South Wales Area of the NUM.

In 1995 I finished in the industry due to back trouble which had got increasingly worse over the years. In fact I was told that if I didn't finish I would end up in a wheelchair. However, if I was fit enough I'd go back tomorrow. I really enjoyed mining although it was hard, although not as hard for me as an electrician as it was for the man on the coal face. The camaraderie was there, everybody would help everyone else – I really miss it.

WJ Davies

Tynna lun ohona i!

Cefais fy ngeni yng Nglynebwy ym 1956. Roedd un o ffrindiau 'nhad yn syrfëwr, ac roeddwn i'n meddwl am fod yn syrfëwr tir ond roedd angen cymwysterau Safon Uwch ar gyfer hynny, felly roedd rhaid i fi feddwl am ffordd arall o fynd ati. Felly, pan adewais i'r ysgol ym 1973, fe es i swyddfeydd Ystrad Fawr a chael gair gyda phennaeth recriwtio'r NCB a ofynnodd 'Alli di gychwyn ddydd Llun?' a dyna fu. Es i Goleg Cross Keys am ddeuddydd yr wythnos a threulio gweddill yr amser gyda Orlando Davies, syrfëwr Big Pit.

Yn y bôn, dyletswydd syrfëwr glofa yw cerdded o gwmpas y lle'n dweud 'Palwch yma', felly roedd rhaid i bopeth fod yn iawn y tro cyntaf. Roedd tri ohonom yn yr adran dirfesur: Orlando Davies, Roy 'Dockam' Preece y cynorthwy-ydd danddaear a fi fel syrfëwr cynorthwyol. Roedd Big Pit yn lle gwych i weithio, roedd yna rywbeth arbennig ynglŷn â'r lle. Lle bach oedd e, gyda dim ond 250 o ddynion, felly roedd pawb yn nabod pawb fwy neu lai. Roedd cryn dipyn o hwyl a thynnu coes, a phan oedden ni'n defnyddio'r theodolit, roedden nhw wastad yn dweud 'Tynna lun ohona i!' Petawn i ond yn cael punt bob tro glywais i hynna!

Roedd Big Pit yn bwll gwlyb ac isel iawn. Roedd hi'n anodd teithio i lawr y prif lwybrau oherwydd y trawstiau uchel o dan gledrau'r dram a oedd yn rhy bell oddi wrth ei gilydd, ac yn llithrig hefyd. Pan ddechreuais i'n Big Pit, dywedwyd wrthyf mai dim ond am ddwy flynedd y byddwn i yno cyn i'r lle gau. Felly, doedd dim gwaith atgyweirio na chynnal a chadw ar y llwybrau. Fodd bynnag, ni chaewyd y pwll gan ei fod yn dal i wneud elw, ond mater o drwsio wrth fynd oedd hi.

Pan oedden i ar wyneb y pwll, roedden ni'n ysgrifennu'r adroddiadau statudol, yn ymchwilio i achosion posib o ddŵr yn dylifo ac archwilio hen gynlluniau'r pwll. Cofiwch nad pwll glo yn unig oedd Big Pit, roedd yno hen fwyngloddiau haearn hefyd.

Gadewais Big Pit ym 1979 am eu bod nhw'n gadael y lle i fynd er mwyn ei gau, a dim ond syrfëwr rhan-amser oedden nhw ei angen, felly trosglwyddais i Abertyleri (glofeydd Cwmtillery/Roseheyworth). Roedd Abertyleri'n fwy cosmopolitan na Big Pit gyda gweithwyr o bobman, ac yn dipyn mwy o faint hefyd. Roeddwn i'n archwilio ochr Cwmtyleri o'r pwll, a olygai pedair milltir a hanner o gerdded, felly swydd i'r ifanc a'r heini oedd hi. Yna, bues i'n ochr Roseheyworth o'r pwll tan iddo gau ym 1985, ac es ymlaen i lofa'r Marine wedyn. Roedd y Marine yn hunllef, gan fod y rheolwr blaenorol wedi cael cyflenwad da mewn ambell wythïen felly roedd y lle wedi'i ysbeilio erbyn i'r rheolwr newydd gymryd yr awenau. Roedd y streic newydd ddod i ben hefyd, y 'sgrifen ar y mur a dim awch nag ymroddiad yno.

Pwll Mawr
Big Pit

Caeodd glofa'r Marine ym mis Mawrth 1989 ac es i faes peirianneg sifil, gan wneud gwaith llawrydd gyda chwmnïau Baywater Construction, HBG, Tarmac a Wimpey, yn gweithio ar bontydd, strwythurau, rheilffyrdd ac Ysbyty Tywysoges Cymru ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr. Ymddeolais yn 2004.

Rwy'n gweld eisiau Big Pit, ac roedd Cwmtyleri'n iawn, ond roeddwn i'n falch o ymuno â'r byd peirianneg sifil. O ddewis, byddwn i wedi mynd yn beiriannydd sifil yn syth o'r ysgol – roedd yn fywyd tipyn haws na'r lofa. Wedi dweud hynny, roedd Big Pit yn sbort ac fe gawson ni dipyn o hwyl yno.

Mike Gooding

Take my photo

I was born in Ebbw Vale in 1956. A friend of my father was a surveyor and I was thinking of becoming a land surveyor but I needed A Levels so had to find another way of becoming one. So, when I left school in 1973 I went to Ystrad Fawr offices and had a word with the NCB head of recruitment and he said "Can you start Monday?" and that was that. I went to Cross Keys College for two days a week and spent the rest of the time with Orlando Davies the surveyor at Big Pit.

Basically a colliery surveyor goes around saying "Dig here" so we had to get it right. There were three of us in the surveying department, Orlando Davies, Roy 'Dockam' Preece the linesman and myself the assistant surveyor. Big Pit was a great place to work, there was something about the place. It was a small pit, only about 250 men so we knew just about everybody. There was lots of banter, when we were using the theodolite it was always "Take my photo", I wish I had a pound for every time I heard that.

Big Pit was a very wet and low pit. Travelling out bye (walking the main roadways) was hard because of the high sleepers under the dram rails which were too far apart and it was slippery as well. When I started at Big Pit I was told that I'd only be there two years before it closed. So, there was no real maintenance or repairs in the roadways. However, the pit didn't close because it was making money, but it was still make do and mend.

When we were on the surface we did the statutory reports, investigations into potential inrushes of water and checking old mine plans. Remember that Big Pit didn't only have coal workings, it had old ironstone workings as well.

I left Big Pit in 1979 because they were running it down for closure and only needed a part time surveyor and transferred to Abertillery *(Cwmtillery/Roseheyworth Collieries)*. Abertillery was more cosmopolitan than Big Pit with a workforce from all over, it was also much bigger. I used to run (survey) the Cwmtillery side of the pit and it was a four and a half mile walk in so it was a job for the young and fit. I was then in the Roseheyworth side until it closed in 1985 and I went to Marine Colliery. Marine was a nightmare as the previous manager had good runs in a couple of seams so it had been ransacked by the time the new manager took over. It was also just after the strike, the writing was on the wall, and there was no motivation.

Marine closed in March 1989 and I went into civil engineering and I did free-lance work with Bywater Construction, HBG, Tarmac and Wimpey's, working on bridges, structures, railway lines and the Princess of Wales' Hospital in Bridgend. I retired ten years ago (2004).

I miss working in Big Pit and Cwmtillery was OK, but I was glad to go into civil engineering. Given the choice I'd have gone into civil engineering straight from school, after the colliery it was a lot easier, but Big Pit was fun, we had good laughs there.

Mike Gooding

Pedair cenhedlaeth o lowyr

Cefais fy ngeni ar 8 Hydref 1934 yn Llwyncelyn ger y Porth, Cwm Rhondda. Dw i'n bedwar ugain oed erbyn hyn. Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed, gan mai dyma'r flwyddyn gyntaf oedd yr oedran gadael ysgol wedi codi o bedair ar ddeg oed. Roeddwn i'n gwybod erioed lle fyddwn i'n gweithio – y gweithdy ffitio yng nglofa Lewis Merthyr. Roedd fy nhad, Dick Edwards oedd ef hefyd, yn fforman gof, a oedd yn swydd tipyn pwysicach na bod yn ffitiwr yn y dyddiau hynny gan fod gofaint glofeydd yn gwneud popeth. Dim ond ymdrin ag injans weindio a halio oedd ffitwyr mewn gwirionedd.

Nid felly y bu. 1950 oedd hi, ac undeb yr NUM yn gwylio pwy oedd yn cael swyddi yn y gweithdai ffitio. Felly, ar ôl treulio 16 wythnos yng nghanolfan hyfforddi'r glofeydd yn Wattstown, sef wyth wythnos yn y lofa ac wyth wythnos yn ystafell ddosbarth yr ysgol hyfforddi yn Clydach Court, Trealaw, dyma gychwyn gweithio yn iard goed Lewis Merthyr. Roeddwn i yno am ychydig fisoedd cyn i 'nhad gael gwaith i fi yn y baddondai pen pwll newydd am ychydig fisoedd, cyn dychwelyd i'r iard goed. Ymhen tipyn, cafodd fy nhad swydd i fi fel morthwyliwr y gof yn y gweithdy trwsio dramiau. Fy nhad oedd fy mos, bellach!

Un diwrnod, dywedodd wrthyf am fynd i'r gweithdy ffitio a dysgu sut i ddefnyddio'r peiriant drilio. Roedd y turniwr yn y gweithdy ffitio wedi ymfudo i Awstralia, ac roedd swydd wag yno. Gan fod fy nhad ar delerau da gyda'r peiriannydd, cefais swydd fel ffitiwr. Roedd hyn yn y dyddiau cyn prentisiaethau go iawn, ac roeddech chi'n dysgu wrth weithio. Un peth dw i'n ei gofio am weithio ar domen y pwll yn y nos oedd gallu gweld y goleuadau ffwrnais Dowlais yn y pellter.

Dw i'n cofio'r ffrwydrad ym mis Tachwedd 1956 hefyd. Roedd hyn yn dipyn o ysgytwad i'r pwll gan nad oedd Lewis Merthyr yn cael ei ystyried yn bwll mor beryglus â hynny. Cafodd dau ddyn eu lladd yn syth, a bu saith arall farw o'u hanafiadau gan gynnwys Mr Fox y rheolwr. Yn ôl fy nhad, pan gludwyd Mr Gildas Jones, yr oferman, i fyny'r pwll, fe glywodd dderyn yn canu, ac meddai Mr Jones 'Feddylies i 'rioed y byddwn i'n clywed hynny eto'. Yn anffodus, bu farw o'i anafiadau'n ddiweddarach.

Roeddwn i yn yr ardal pan fu ffrwydrad rhyw dridiau'n ddiweddarach, a dw i'n cofio gweld cotiau'r dynion yn dal i hongian a'r bocsys bwyd yn y pocedi. Dw i'n cofio Ken Jeffs, ffitiwr a oedd yn cydweithio â mi, yn cyffwrdd yn un o'r cotiau a honno'n disgyn yn ddarnau oherwydd y gwres y bu ynddi.

Ym 1956, fe gwrddais i â'r wraig, priodi a chael tŷ cyngor ym Mynwent y Crynwyr. Tua'r adeg honno, roedd yr NCB wedi penderfynu adeiladu golchfa yn Lewis Merthyr, ond roedd cymaint o ddrwgdeimlad rhwng y glowyr a rheolwyr y pwll nes i'r cynlluniau gael eu newid, a chodwyd yr olchfa ym mhwll Tymawr yn hytrach. Roedd hyn yn golygu bod glo o Lewis Merthyr yn dod i'r brig yn siafft Tymawr ac mai dim ond dynion a chyflenwadau oedd yn mynd i lawr siafft Lewis Merthyr. Felly, roedd hi'n dawel yn Lewis Merthyr, yn teimlo fel gweithio shifft dydd Sul bob dydd, ac allwn i ddim goddef hynny.

Gallen i fod wedi cael swydd yn ffatri Hoover, Merthyr Tudful, gan fod fy ngwraig a'i theulu yn gweithio yno, ond fe benderfynais roi cynnig arall ar y lofa. Roeddwn i eisiau trosglwyddo i lofa Abercynon, ond fe'm hanfonwyd i'r Deep Navigation yn lle hynny, gan fod ffitwyr wedi gadael i weithio yn Hoover.

Fe es i'r Deep Navigation a churo ar ddrws y rheolwr. Vernon Savage oedd ei enw, ac roedd e'n ddyn da am gael glo mas. Fe oedd rheolwr glofa ieuengaf Prydain hefyd – pan agorodd y drws, roeddwn i'n meddwl mai gwas swyddfa oedd e! Dywedodd fod Wally Jones y peiriannydd yn cael problem gyda'r pympiau, ac mai yntau fyddai'n fy nghyfweld yn ei le. Gofynnodd gwestiynau wrth i fi sefyll wrth y drws, heb gynnig i fi eistedd na dim. Ar ôl y cwestiynau, dywedodd 'Dechreua ddydd Llun' ond roedd rhaid i fi weithio pythefnos o notis yn gyntaf. Wythnos cyn Nadolig 1960 oedd hi.

Pan ddechreuais i, ches i ddim byd i'w wneud gan y fforman. Duw a ŵyr pam. Felly, erbyn y Pasg, dim ond cymysgu gyda'r ffitwyr eraill oeddwn i o hyd. Roedden nhw'n newid olwynion weindio siafft Rhif 2 oedd heb eu newid ers can mlynedd. Roedd modd defnyddio 'cathead' i'w codi, ond roedd angen newid y bracedi a byddai'n rhaid i rywun fynd lan gyda'r rigiwr i'w helpu gan ei fod braidd yn hen. Doedd dim ysgol, dim ond pigau i ddringo i fyny, ond gwirfoddolais i – dyma gyfle i fi wneud fy marc.

O hynny ymlaen, roeddwn i'n rhan o'r tîm, yn gweithio'r penwythnosau a phopeth. Es i bobman, danddaear ac ar yr wyneb. Fi oedd llaw dde'r fforman. Pan ymddeolodd ym 1965, aeth Doug Gardner yn fforman/ffitiwr ac fe es i'n bartner

Deep Navigation 1978

A fourth generation miner

I was born on the 8th of October 1934 in Llwyncelyn near Porth in the Rhondda and am now eighty years old. I left school at fifteen as it was the first year that leaving school had gone up from fourteen. From my earliest memories I always knew where I was going to work – the fitting shop in Lewis Merthyr Colliery. My father, also Dick Edwards, was a foreman blacksmith which was a more important job than being a fitter in those days because colliery blacksmiths made everything whereas the fitters only really dealt with the winding and haulage engines.

It didn't turn out as I planned. It was 1950 and the NUM was watching who got jobs in the fitting shop. So, after spending sixteen weeks in Wattstown Training Centre, which was eight weeks in the colliery and eight weeks in the training school classroom at Clydach Court, Trealaw, I started in the Lewis Merthyr timber yard. I was there a few months when my father got me a job working on the new pithead baths for a few months before I returned to the timber yard. After a while my father got me a job in the dram repair shop as a blacksmith's striker. So my father was now my boss.

One day he said to go to the fitting shop and learn how to use the drilling machine. The turner in the fitting shop had emigrated to Australia and there was a vacancy. As my father was well in with the engineer I got a position as a fitter. Those were the days before proper apprenticeships and you learned on the job. One thing I remember was working up the colliery tip in the night and being able to see the light from the Dowlais furnaces in the distance.

I also remember the explosion in November 1956. It was a shock to the pit as Lewis Merthyr wasn't regarded as an exceptionally dangerous colliery. Two men were killed immediately and seven others died of their injuries including Mr Fox the manager. My father told me that when Mr Gildas Jones, the overman, was brought up the pit he heard a bird singing and said "I never thought I'd hear that again." Unfortunately he died of his injuries later.

I was in the area where the explosion occurred about three days later and I remember seeing the men's coats still hanging up with their 'tommy boxes' (food boxes) still in the pockets. I remember Ken Jeffs who was a fitter working with me touching one of the coats and it falling apart because of the heat it had been subjected to.

In 1956 I met my wife, got married and got a council house in Quakers Yard. Around this time the NCB had decided to build a washery at Lewis Merthyr but there was such bad feeling between the miners and the management at the pit that they changed the plans and built the washery at Tymawr instead. This meant that the coal from Lewis Merthyr was brought up the Tymawr shaft and only men and supplies went down the Lewis Merthyr shaft. So it was quiet in Lewis Merthyr, like working a Sunday shift every day, and I couldn't take to that.

I could have got a job in Hoovers in Merthyr, as my wife and her family were working there, but I decided to give the colliery another try. I wanted to transfer to Abercynon Colliery but I was directed to Deep Navigation *(DN)* instead because they had lost fitters to Hoovers.

I went up to DN and knocked on the manager's door. He was called Vernon Savage who was a good man for getting the coal out. He was also the youngest colliery manager in Great Britain – when he opened the door I thought he was an office boy! He said that Wally Jones the engineer had a problem with the pumps so he would interview me instead. He asked me questions standing by the door, didn't ask me to sit down. After the questions he said "Start Monday" but I had to work two weeks' notice first. That was the week before Christmas 1960.

When I started the foreman wouldn't give me anything to do, I don't know why. So by Easter I was still just mixing in with the other fitters. They were changing No. 2 sheaves *(the winding wheels for the shaft)* which hadn't been changed for a hundred years. The 'cathead' could be used to raise the sheaves but they had to change the brackets and the rigger was getting past it so someone had to go up with him. There was no ladder just spikes to climb up, but I volunteered – a chance for me to make my name.

After this I was in, I was working weekends and everything. I went everywhere, underground and surface, I became the foreman's right hand man. When he retired in 1965, Doug Gardner became foreman/fitter and I teamed up with Bartholomew 'Batty' Marshall. 'Batty' was actually a repairer *(repairing roadways underground)* but used to help the fitters to do jobs underground on weekends. We had to move a 'pair of 10s' *(an underground haulage engine)* which was in a block

i Bartholomew 'Batty' Marshall. Reparwr oedd Batty mewn gwirionedd, ond arferai helpu'r ffitwyr i weithio danddaear ar benwythnosau. Roedd rhaid i ni symud pâr o 10s [injans halio danddaear] a oedd yn y pen caeedig. Gan fod tipyn o nwy yno, roedd gennym ofn symud yr injan ac roeddwn i'n pryderu y byddai'n cymryd cryn dipyn o amser. Ond fe ddangosodd Batty i fi sut i wneud hyn. Tynnodd y pigau, bachu'r rhaff halio mewn dolen [a oedd yn cynnal to'r llwybr] a'i dynnu allan wrth ei bwysau ei hun – sôn am fachan hyderus!

Dro arall, roedden ni'n adeiladu byncer storio tanddaearol 100 tunnell yn ystod y gwyliau, ac yn gweithio shifftiau deuddeg awr. Roedd oferman o'r enw Len Sam yn sôn wrth Batty am sŵn chwibanu yn siafft yrru ei gar. Dywedodd Batty y byddem yn bwrw golwg arno pan ddoi i fyny'r pwll. Pan ddes i allan o'r baddondai ar ddiwedd y shifft, roedd Batty o dan y car. Beth wnaeth e oedd rhoi weipar [cerpyn a ddefnyddiwyd gan ffitwyr i lanhau saim oddi ar beiriannau] er mwyn rhoi pwysau ar y siafft yrru. Ond aeth y cerpyn yn sownd wrth i'r siafft droi a rhwygo ei ddau fawd i ffwrdd. Ar ôl gwella o'i anafiadau, daeth yn ôl i weithio ac roedd e cystal heb ei fodiau ag yr oedd gyda nhw.

Bu farw Doug Gardner ym 1977 a gofynnwyd i fi fod yn fforman/ffitiwr. Doedd gen i fawr o awydd gwneud hyn, gan fy mod i'n ennill arian da fel oeddwn i. Fodd bynnag, aeth fy mam i'r ysbyty ym mis Tachwedd 1977 a chymerais y swydd er mwyn cael mwy o amser i'w gweld hi. Dois i arfer â'r gwaith, felly, ac er i mam farw adeg y Nadolig, fe ddaliais ati. Roedd rhaid i fi gael cyfweliad yn gyntaf, a daeth rhywun o Lanisien [pencadlys De Cymru yr NUM], dweud y byddwn i'n cael pensiwn, a dyna ddiwedd y cyfweliad. Tan hynny, roedd gennyf dystysgrif mecanig Dosbarth 2 felly trefnwyd i fi fynd i Swyddfa Ardal Ystrad Fawr i wneud Tystysgrif Dosbarth 1.

Fe wnes i'r swydd tan 1989 pan benderfynais gymryd tâl diswyddo, a chaeodd y pwll yn fuan wedyn. Ymunais â staff diogelwch Hoover am naw mis, cyn cael cynnig swydd gyda Hollybanks, cwmni contractwyr a oedd yn gweithio yng ngolchfa Penallta. Bues i yno am ddeunaw mis cyn i'r pwll gau. Alla i ddim dychmygu dilyn gyrfa arall, roeddwn i'n mwynhau'r ochr gynllunio a chyflawni'r holl jobsys hynny. Dw i'n credu y byddwn i'n mynd yn ôl yfory a gwneud y cyfan eto.

Dw i'n löwr pedwaredd cenhedlaeth. Cafodd fy hen dad-cu, Morgan Edwards, ei eni yn fferm Ffordd Isaf, Ton-teg, ym 1837. Bu'n gweithio yng ngwaith tunplat Crawshays, yna ar Gamlas Morgannwg cyn mynd i'r pyllau glo. Aeth lan i'r Porth a gweithio yng nglofa Insole y Cymer, cyn marw ym 1911. Ganed fy nhad-cu, Edward Edwards, ym 1877. Fe oedd prif amserwr cwmni Lewis Merthyr, a bu farw ym 1939. Roedd fy nhad yn fforman gof Lewis Merthyr, a finnau wedyn.

Richard 'Dick' Edwards

Fy swydd olaf

Fe'm ganed yng Nghraig-cefn-parc ym mis Ebrill 1929. Robert oedd fy enw, ond gan ei fod yn enw teuluol a sawl Robert yn y teulu'n barod, roedd pawb yn fy ngalw i'n Roy, ar ôl Rob Roy. Bu 'nhad yn gweithio yn y pyllau cyn troi'n docynnwr bysiau. Es i'r ysgol yng Nghlydach, ac ym 1944, dechreuais weithio yng nglofa Nixon [glofa Clydach Merthyr] a gweithio ar y sgriniau fel pob bachgen= newydd. Doedd prentisiaethau go iawn ddim ar gael bryd hynny, felly gweithiais am chwe mis gyda'r gofaint, yna chwe mis gyda ffitwyr ac ati nes troi'n un ar hugain. Fe wnes i rywfaint o waith stafell ddosbarth er nad oedd hynny'n orfodol, roeddech chi'n dueddol o ddysgu wrth eich gwaith yn hytrach na gwneud prentisiaeth, yn wir, fe ddysgais i fwy ar ôl gadael yr ysgol nag yn yr ysgol. Aeth y bechgyn eraill a gychwynnodd ar y sgriniau ymlaen i'r maes cyfrwyaeth, yn trwsio coleri a harneisiau ceffylau, ac eraill i weithdy'r saer.

Y prawf ar gyfer cael eich dewis fel gof oedd tywallt dŵr ar yr einion, rhoi dur eirias arno a tharo gordd ar y dur; os oedd yn fflat, roedden nhw'n gwybod y byddech chi'n forthwyliwr da. Roedd yna glec fawr wrth daro, a byddai llawer o'r bechgyn yn rhedeg mas, ond arhosais i yn y fan a'r lle. Roeddwn i'n gweithio yng ngweithdy'r gof pan ddaeth y glofeydd dan reolaeth Bwrdd Glo Prydain (NCB). Dw i'n cofio Idris Williams, y gweithiwr ieuengaf, ac Isaac Hill, y gweithiwr hynaf, yn codi'r faner uwchben y tŷ weindio. Daeth newidiadau'r drefn wladoli i rym yn raddol, roedd un o ddynion Powell Duffryn ['PD'] gynt yn rheolwr arnom, ac roedd ganddo agwedd llawer llymach na'r arfer tuag at yr undeb. Roedd gennym is-reolwr o PD yn ddiweddarach hefyd – roedd dieithriaid yn dechrau cyrraedd.

Defnyddiwyd cloddfa Abergelli fel llwybr awyru ar gyfer glofa Nixon, ond ar ôl darganfod glo yno, cefais fy nhrosglwyddo yno fel ffitiwr pan oeddwn i'n un ar hugain oed. Roedd tua chant o ddynion yn gweithio yno, mewn gwaith talcen a hedin, a'r glo'n cael ei gludo gan geffyl a chert. Bydden nhw'n torri'r glo orau gallen nhw gyda chaib ac yna'n ffrwydro'r gweddill i ffwrdd. Daethon nhw â chludfeltiau ac yna cludwyr gogrwn i'r pwll maes o law, roedden nhw'n swnllyd a llychlyd dros ben ac roedd rhaid i'r ffitwyr wneud cryn dipyn o waith cynnal a chadw arnyn nhw. Roedd rhaid cadw'r cludfeltiau mewn llinell syth ac roedden ni'n gorfod defnyddio bullers yn aml i gael llinell y ffas yn iawn. Ond y prif waith oedd cynnal y pympiau gan ei fod yn bwll hynod o wlyb – roeddwn i'n yfed y dŵr pan oedd syched arna i!

Bues i'n gweithio yn y drifft am ryw wyth mlynedd tan i'r lofa gau ym 1959. Roedden nhw'n cau glofeydd yr ardal er mwyn cloddio glofa Brynlliw. Roedd tua 600 o ddynion yn gweithio ym Mrynlliw, a'r gwahaniaeth

end. There was a bit of gas so we were afraid to move the engine and I was apprehensive that it would take some time. But 'Batty' showed me how to do it. He removed the holding down spikes, hitched the haulage rope to a ring *(roadway roof support)* and pulled it out under its own power – a man with supreme confidence!

Another time we were building a 100 ton underground storage bunker during holiday time and we were working twelve hour shifts. An overman by the name of Len Sam was telling 'Batty' about a whistling sound in the prop shaft of his car. 'Batty' told him he'd have a look when he came up the pit. When I came out of the baths at the end of the shift 'Batty' was under the car. What he had done was to put a 'wiper' *(a rag used by fitters to clean grease off machinery)* to put pressure on the prop shaft. The wiper caught as the shaft turned and pulled both his thumbs off. After he recovered from his injuries he came back to work and was as good without his thumbs as he'd been when he had them.

Doug Gardner died in 1977 and I was asked to become foreman/fitter which I didn't really want to do as I was earning good money as I was. However, my mother was taken into hospital in November 1977 and I eventually took the job because I would have more time to see to her. So I got used to the job and, although my mother died at Christmas I stuck to it. I had to be interviewed at first and someone came up from Llanishen *(NCB offices)*, told me that I would be superannuated, and that was the interview. Up to then I had a mechanic's Class 2 Certificate so it was arranged for me to go to Ystrad Fawr Area Offices to do my Class 1 Certificate.

I did the job until 1989 when I took redundancy, the pit shut soon after. I got a job at hoovers on security for nine months, then I was offered a job with Hollybanks a contracting firm which was working on Penallta Washery. I was in Penallta for eighteen months until it closed. I can't imagine doing a different career, I enjoyed the planning and carrying out all the jobs I was involved in. I think that I could go back tomorrow and do it all over again.

I am a fourth generation miner. My great grandfather, Morgan Edwards was born in Fordd Isaf Farm in Tonteg in 1837. He worked in Crawshay's Tinplate Works, then on the Glamorgan Canal then in the mines. He went up to Porth and worked in Insole's Cymmer Colliery and died in 1911. My grandfather, Edward Edwards was born in 1877 and ended up as head timekeeper of the Lewis Merthyr Company and died in 1939. My father was a foreman blacksmith in Lewis Merthyr and then there was me.

Richard 'Dick' Edwards

My last job

I was born in April 1929 in Graig Cefn Parc. I was named Robert but it was a family name and there were lots of Roberts, so I became 'Roy' after 'Rob Roy'. My father worked in the mines but later became a bus conductor. I went to school in Clydach and in 1944 started work in Nixon's Colliery *(Clydach Merthyr Colliery)* and worked on the screens like all the new boys. Proper apprenticeships weren't available at that time so I worked six months with the blacksmiths, then six months with the fitters and so on until I was twenty one. I did do a bit of classroom work but it wasn't compulsory, you tended to learn 'on the job' rather than serve a proper apprenticeship, in fact I learnt more after I left school than I did in school. Other boys who started on the screens went into saddlery, repairing horse collars and harness, others into the carpentry shop.

The test for being chosen as a blacksmith was to put water onto the anvil, put a red hot steel on it and bring a sledge down on it, if you did it flat they knew you would make a good striker. There would also be a bang as you did it and a lot of the boys would run out, but I stayed put. I was working in the blacksmiths when the collieries were taken over by the National Coal Board. I remember Idris Williams, the youngest worker and Isaac Hill, the oldest one raising the flag above the winding house. The changes under nationalisation were gradual, we had a former Powell Duffryn *('PD')* man as manager and he had a much tougher attitude to the union than we were used to. Later we had a 'PD' undermanager – 'strangers' started to come in.

Abergelli Drift was used as an airway for Nixon's but they found coal there so I was transferred there as a fitter when I was twenty one. There were about a hundred men working there and the work was stall and heading and the coal removed by horse and dram. They would cut the coal so far with a pick then blow the rest down *(with explosives)*. Eventually they brought in belt conveyors and then 'jigger conveyors', these were very noisy and dusty and the fitters really had to work to maintain them. The conveyors had to be kept in a straight line and we often had to use 'bullers' *(a mechanical device officially called a prop withdrawer)* to get the face line right. The main work was maintaining the pumps as it was a very wet pit – I used to drink the water when I was really thirsty!

I worked in the drift for about eight years until the colliery closed in 1959. They were closing collieries in the area to man Brynlliw Colliery. There were 600 men working in Brynlliw, it was a big difference as it was a pit *(shaft mine)* rather than a drift where you could walk in and out – he couldn't come out for a fag! When I started in Nixon's they could smoke underground and used naked flame 'carbide lamps'. Nixon's started using safety lamps about 1947. Brynlliw was always a safety lamp mine. The fitters had electric cap lamps and the colliers had 'bombies' *(electric hand lamps)* at first, then later cap lamps. When we were using carbide lamps we used

mwyaf oedd mai pwll [mwynglawdd siafft] yn hytrach na drifft lle'r oeddech chi'n gallu cerdded mewn a mas – allech chi ddim picied allan am fwgyn! Pan ddechreuais i ym mhwll Nixon, roedden nhw'n caniatáu i chi smygu danddaear ac yn defnyddio lampau carbid fflam noeth. Dechreuodd Nixon ddefnyddio lampau diogelwch tua 1947. Pwll lamp ddiogelwch oedd Brynlliw erioed. Roedd gan y ffitwyr lampiau cap trydan, a'r coliers bombies [lampiau llaw trydan] i ddechrau, cyn cael lampiau cap. Pan oeddem ni'n defnyddio lampiau carbid, bydden ni'n gwisgo cap â phlât metel ar y tu blaen i ddal y lamp, ac yna yn y 1950au, bu'n rhaid i ni wisgo helmedau.

Cymraeg oedd iaith y pwll yn Nixon ac Abergelli, a Chymraeg oeddech chi'n dueddol o siarad yn naturiol â phawb, ond Saesneg yn bennaf oedd iaith Brynlliw. Dysgais rywfaint o Almaeneg hyd yn oed ym Mrynlliw, gan y contractwyr glofaol [o gwmni Thyssen]. Roeddwn i'n gallu cynnal rhywfaint o sgwrs mewn Almaeneg, a dweud ambell reg hefyd!

Roedden nhw'n torri'r glo ym Mrynlliw trwy 'lowyr parhaus' a 'Joy Loaders' yn cloddio'r hedins a'r lefelydd. Erbyn 1962, daeth peiriannau 'power loading' [peiriannau torri a chludwyr cyfnerthol] i Frynlliw. Roedd yn waith caled i'r ffitwyr a oedd yn trwsio'r pibellau Gullick [y llinellau hydrolig ar gyfer gweithredu'r cynhalbyst]. Roedd un ffas aradr [math o beiriant torri] yn 22 modfedd o uchder, felly roeddech chi'n gorfod gweithio ar eich pengliniau. Yna daeth y torwyr disg a gwneud bywyd ychydig yn haws, ond roedd llawer o'r chwistrelli dŵr ar y pennau naddu yn dueddol o flocio a'r pibelli [llinellau hydrolig] yn cael eu torri gan gerrig yn disgyn. Erbyn hynny, roeddwn i'n Beiriannydd Cynorthwyol felly dim ond am gyfnodau byr oeddwn i ar y ffas lo, gan fy mod ar hyd a lled y lofa.

Yr unig drafferth oedd fy mod i wastad ar alwad. Byddai'r bos yn llwyddo i osgoi dod i mewn os oes rhywbeth wedi digwydd; arferai ei wraig ateb y ffôn a dweud 'Mae'n ffili dod mewn achos ma fe 'di bod yn y dafarn', ond fyddai 'ngwraig i byth yn dweud celwydd. Wrth feddwl yn ôl, fodd bynnag, roedd yr holl oriau goramser yn golygu bod gen i bensiwn gwell. Bues i'n gweithio fel hyn nes ymddeol ym 1983, pan gaeodd Brynlliw.

Roeddwn i'n undebwr mawr. Roeddwn i'n aelod o COSA, oedd yn rhan o'r NUM ac eto ddim, os ydych chi'n deall beth sydd gen i. Roedd menywod y ffreutur yn aelodau o COSA a bydden nhw wastad yn ennill y bleidlais os oeddech chi eisiau streicio. Bues i'n gadeirydd COSA am tua 6 mis ym Mrynlliw, a chefais lamp wrth ymddeol.

Doedd Brynlliw ddim yr un fath ag Abergelli, roedd yn gyfuniad o'r Garn Goch, glofa Mountain a'r Hendy, ac felly'n cynnwys pob math o bobl wahanol o byllau gwahanol ac roedd yn cymryd tipyn o amser i bawb ddod i nabod ei gilydd. Y rhai ddaeth o Abergelli gafodd y dewis cyntaf o ran swyddi. Yn rhyfedd ddigon, coliers Abergelli ddaeth yn ddirprwyon a thanwyr ym Mrynlliw. Ni oedd yno gyntaf, felly ni gafodd y dewis cyntaf. Daeth tri ohonom a oedd yn ffitwyr yn is-fformyn shifftiau, gan orfod gweithio tair shifft wyth awr, gan gynnwys dydd Sadwrn a dydd Sul, shifftiau nos, saith diwrnod yr wythnos – doedd fy ngwraig ddim yn cwyno gan fod yr arian yn llifo!

Dw i ddim yn difaru gweithio yn y lofa, a dweud y gwir, gallen i fod wedi mynd i ICI yn Waunarlwydd. Roedd dyn o ICI eisiau i fi fynd yno gan fod ffitwyr y lofa yn well na'r rhai oedd ganddyn nhw, oherwydd eu bod nhw'n dueddol o weithio o'u pen a'u pastwn eu hunain a ddim yn rhedeg ato bob whip stitsh. Fe drïais i am swydd yn Metal Box, Castell-nedd hefyd, ond pan ddangoswyd y lle i mi, roedd yn rhy swnllyd a meddyliais na fuaswn i'n teimlo'n gartrefol yno.

Gweithiais am ddeugain mlynedd yn y lofa, a gorffen pan oeddwn i'n 54 oed. Roedd hyn yn fy siwtio i'r dim gan fy mod yn cael pensiwn llawn, a doedd fy ngwraig ddim yn holliach, felly roedd modd i fi aros adref a gofalu amdani am y deng mlynedd y buodd hi byw wedi hynny. Bellach, dw i'n byw ar fy mhen fy hun, mae gen i osteoporosis yn fy mhengliniau a dw i'n cael trafferth gyda'm bysedd, felly erbyn i fi gael fy hun yn barod, mae'n bryd mynd lawr i'r caffi a chael pryd da o fwyd am y dydd. Bu farw fy rhieni'n 70 oed, felly roedd cyrraedd y deg a thrigain yn drobwynt i mi. Doeddwn i ddim wedi meddwl y byddwn i'n cyrraedd 85 oed.

Doedd Brynlliw ddim yn bwll peryglus iawn a ches i ddim anafiadau cas o gwbl, dim ond torri bysedd. Doedd dim llawer iawn o achosion o broblemau'r frest chwaith – arferai'r coliers gnoi baco, wn i ddim a oedd y poer yn helpu. Roedd llawer iawn o fois Thyssen [contractwyr mwyngloddio] yn arfer â chymryd snisin ac roedd hi'n rhyfedd fod dyn yn gallu gweithio wyth awr heb smygu ac yna'n rhuthro i gael mwgyn wrth gyrraedd y brig.

Fy swydd olaf ym Mrynlliw oedd llosgi'r rhaffau tywys, ac roedd ffitwyr yn gweithio yn y siafft pan gyrhaeddodd tair lori â stwff oedd i fod i gael ei ollwng i lawr y siafft. Dwedais wrthyn nhw lle i fynd – dyna oedd fy jobyn olaf i!

Robert 'Roy' Williams

Peiriant llafnu glo ar y Wythïen Chwe Throedfedd, Brynlliw, 1977

Coal shearer on the Six Feet Seam, Brynlliw, 1977

to wear a cap with a metal plate on the front to hold the lamp, then, in the 1950s, we had to wear helmets.

The language of the pit in Nixon's and Abergelli was Welsh, you tended to use Welsh automatically with everyone, but in Brynlliw it was mainly English. I even learned some German in Brynlliw from the mining contractors *(Thyssens)*, I could carry on a conversation, and even use a few swear words!

They cut the coal in Brynlliw with 'continuous miners' and Joy loaders working heading and stalls. By 1962 'power loading' *(cutting machines and armoured conveyors)* came into Brynlliw. It was hard work for the fitters repairing Gullick pipes *(the hydraulic lines for operating the roof supports)*. One plough *(a type of cutting machine)* face was twenty two inches high, so you had to work on your knees. Then disc cutters came in and it became a bit easier but a lot of the water sprays on the cutting head used to block up and the pipes *(hydraulic lines)* used to get broken by falling stones. By this time I was Assistant Engineer so was only on the face for short periods as I was all over the colliery.

The only trouble was that I was always on call. My boss would always get away with not coming in, if something had gone wrong, his wife used to answer the phone and say "He can't come in because he's been down the pub" but my wife would never lie. Thinking back, though, all the overtime I worked meant that I had a better pension. I worked like this until I retired in 1983 when Brynlliw closed.

I was a strong union man. I used to be in COSA *(Colliery Officials and Staff Area)* which was a part of the NUM but not quite part of it, if you follow my meaning. The canteen girls were part of COSA and they used to out vote you if you wanted to take action. I was chairman of COSA at Brynlliw for about six months and was given a lamp when I retired.

Brynlliw wasn't the same as Abergelli, it was a combination of Garn Goch, Mountain Colliery and Hendy so it was a load of people from different pits who took a while to click. However, the ones who came from Abergelli had the pick of the jobs. Funnily enough, it was the Abergelli colliers who became deputies and shotfirers at Brynlliw. We were there first so had the pick of the jobs. Three of us fitters became shift charge hands and had to work three eight hour shifts, working Saturdays and Sundays, working night shifts, seven days a week – my wife didn't complain as the money was coming in!

I have no regrets in working in the colliery, in fact I could have gone to ICI in Waunarlwydd. A chap from ICI wanted me to go there because the colliery fitters were better than the ones they had because they were used to working under their own initiative and didn't keep running to him all the time. I also went to get a job in Metal Box in Neath but, when I was shown around, it was too noisy and I didn't think that I'd feel at home.

I worked forty years in the colliery and finished when I was fifty four. The redundancy suited me as I was top of the pension and my wife wasn't fully fit so it suited me to stop home and look after her for the ten years she lived after that. I now live on my own, I have osteoporosis in my knees and have trouble with my fingers so by the time I get ready it's time to go down the café and have a good meal for the day. Both my parents died at seventy so being seventy was a watershed for me. It wasn't really in my life plan to be eighty five.

Brynlliw wasn't a very dangerous pit and I didn't have any bad injuries, just cut fingers. There also wasn't a high incidence of chest problems either – the colliers used to chew tobacco, whether the saliva helped I don't know. A lot of Thyssen's men *(mining contractors)* used to take snuff and it was strange that a man could work eight hours without smoking then rushed to smoke as soon as they got to the surface.

My last job at Brynlliw was burning the guide ropes and there were fitters working in the shaft when three lorries arrived with stuff which was to be tipped down the shaft. I told them to bugger off – that was my last job!

Robert 'Roy' Williams

Y gyrrwr ambiwlans

Cefais fy ngeni ym Mhontlotyn ar 6 Chwefror 1924. Roedd fy nhad yn löwr yng nglofa Tynewydd, Pontlotyn, ac yna yn y Pidwellt, Rhymni. Lladdwyd ei frawd yn ffrwydrad Senghennydd ym 1913. Yn ddiweddarach, daeth yn swyddog atal llwch ar ôl gorfod rhoi'r gorau i weithio danddaear oherwydd clefyd y llwch [pneumoconiosis]. Bu'n aelod o Frigâd Ambiwlans Sant Ioan am flynyddoedd. Gadewais yr ysgol pan oeddwn i'n 14 oed a dechrau gweithio yng ngarej Southend yn gwerthu petrol a dysgu gwaith mecanig sylfaenol am bedair blynedd. Gorffennais yno ym 1938 a dechrau fel gyrrwr ambiwlans yng Ngorsaf Achub Glofeydd Tredegar Newydd.

Byddem yn cludo glowyr clwyfedig i Ysbyty Aberbargoed, a oedd yn ysbyty Powell Duffryn [Cwmni Glol], am sesiwn therapi bob dydd Llun, dydd Mercher a dydd Gwener. Doedd dim llawfeddyg yn yr ysbyty, felly roedd un yn dod yno bob dydd Mawrth, a byddem yn cludo cleifion ar y diwrnod hwnnw i gael llawdriniaeth. Ar ben hyn, os oedd damwain yn y lofa, yna ni fyddai'n gorfod ymdrin â hynny. Er bod gen i dystysgrif Ambiwlans Sant Ioan, roedd cynorthwy-ydd meddygol yn gorfod ymuno â ni wrth gludo'r clwyfedig i'r ysbyty.

Roedd gennym ddau ambiwlans gyda'r cyfarpar mwyaf sylfaenol: stretsier, blancedi a bocs cymorth cyntaf – dim byd fel sydd gan barafeddygon heddiw. Dau yrrwr oedd wrthi, dyn ar alwad 24 awr y dydd, a fi. Roedd yn rhyfedd, ond roedd hi'n ymddangos ein bod ni wastad yn cael dwywaith cymaint o ddamweiniau wythnos cyn gwyliau'r glowyr.

Doedden ni byth yn gwybod beth i'w ddisgwyl ar ôl cael galwad. Un tro, roedd gŵr yn gyrru cerbyd locomotif a'i fab yn gweithio gydag ef. Disgynnodd y mab a chael ei ladd gan y locomotif. Dro arall, fe wnaeth dyn [nid glöwr] gyflawni hunanladdiad trwy neidio o flaen trên ar wyneb y pwll. Bu'n rhaid i ni ei godi a'i roi mewn sach. Doedd dim baddondai pen pwll yn y dyddiau hynny, felly os oedd yna farwolaeth, roedd rhaid i ni gludo'r corff i'w gartref a'i olchi yn y stafell ffrynt. Dw i'n cofio un achos yn arbennig pan dorrodd glöwr ifanc newydd briodi ei gefn, a ninnau'n gorfod ei gludo'n ôl adref o'r ysbyty at ei wraig. Achosodd hynny dipyn o loes i fi am eu bod nhw mor ifanc. Achos trist arall oedd pan rwygwyd braich bachgen ifanc i ffwrdd danddaear gan ei ladd – roedd ei deulu newydd brynu piano iddo.

Fe gawson ni dipyn o hwyl hefyd; roedd un dyn yn cwympo oddi ar ysgol yn gyson, a ninnau wastad yn ei gludo i'r ysbyty, felly cafodd swydd oedd yn cadw'i draed ar y ddaear wedyn. Un diwrnod, cawsom ein galw ato eto – roedd e wedi camu'n ôl a chwympo i dwll yn y llawr! Os oedd dyn yn gorfod mynd i'r ysbyty, yr arfer oedd mynd â'i ddillad adref at ei deulu. Roedd gan un gŵr goes bren, a bu'n rhaid i fi gario ei ddillad dan un fraich, a'i goes dan y fraich arall.

Cafodd gwasanaeth ambiwlans PD ei gymryd drosodd gan y Gwasanaeth Iechyd Gwladol pan gafodd y pyllau eu gwladoli, a bu'n rhaid i fi orffen fel gyrrwr ambiwlans. Yn hytrach, es i Weithdai Canolog Bargoed lle'r oeddwn i'n trwsio peiriannau danddaear ar gyfer Ardal De Cymru. Doeddwn i ddim wedi gweithio danddaear o'r blaen, felly roedd rhaid i fi gael hyfforddiant danddaear unwaith yr wythnos. Byddem ni'n cael ein galw mas i lofeydd amrywiol â phroblemau arbennig na allai'r ffitwyr glofa eu datrys. Yna, bues i'n gweithio yng Ngweithdai Canolog Tredegar o 1960 ymlaen.

Ffarweliais â'r diwydiant ym 1984, ychydig cyn i'r streic gychwyn. Roeddwn i'n lwcus iawn, achos buon nhw mas am ddeuddeg mis. Roedd yn streic chwerw iawn.

Haydn Jones

Haydn Jones a'i ambiwlans, 1938

Haydn Jones and his ambulance, 1938

The ambulance driver

I was born in Pontlottyn on February 6th 1924. My father was a miner in Tynewydd Colliery, Pontlottyn, then in the Pidwellt in Rhymney. His brother was killed in the Senghenydd explosion in 1913. He later became a dust suppression officer because he had to finish underground with 'dust' *(pneumoconiosis)*. He was a serving brother in the St John's Ambulance – he did years with them. I left school when I was 14 and started in the Southend Garage serving petrol and learning basic car mechanics for four years. I finished in 1938 and started as an ambulance driver in New Tredegar Mines Rescue Station.

We used to take injured miners to Aberbargoed Hospital, which was a Powell Duffryn *(Coal Company)* hospital for therapy every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There was no surgeon based in the hospital so one was brought in every Tuesday and we used to transport patients in on that day for their operations. On top of this, if there was an accident in a colliery we had to deal with it. I had a St John's Ambulance certificate but we had to be accompanied by a medical attendant when taking the casualty to hospital.

We had two ambulances, fitted with very basic equipment, a stretcher, blankets and a first aid box – nothing like the paramedics have today. There were two drivers, the twenty four hour on-call man and me. It was strange, but we always seemed to have twice as many accidents the week before the miners' holidays.

When we were called out you never knew what to expect. One case was a man driving a loco and his son was working with him. The son fell off the loco which ran over him and killed him. Another one was when a man (not a miner) committed suicide by jumping in front of a train on the surface, we had to pick him up in a sack. There was no pithead baths in those days so if we had a fatal we took him to his house and washed him in the front room. One incident that I especially remember was when a young miner who hadn't long got married broke his back underground and we had to take him from the hospital back home to his wife. That really upset me as they were so young. Another sad case was a young boy whose family had just bought him a piano – he had his arm ripped off underground and died.

We had a few laughs though, one man kept falling off ladders and we were always taking him to hospital so he was given a job at floor level. One day we were called out again for him - he had stepped backwards and fell down a hole in the floor! It was the custom that, if a man was taken into hospital, we would take his clothes home to his family. One man had a wooden leg and I had to carry his clothes to his home under one arm and his leg under the other.

The PD ambulance service was taken over by the National Health Service after the pits were nationalised and I had to finish as an ambulance driver. Instead I went to Bargoed Central Workshops where I was repairing underground machinery for the South wales Area. I hadn't had to work underground before but I now had to do once a week underground training. We used to get called out to various collieries for special problems that the colliery fitters couldn't handle. From 1960 I worked in Tredegar Central workshops.

I finished in the industry in 1984, just before the strike started, I was lucky as they were out for twelve months, it was a very bitter strike.

Haydn Jones

Hanner canrif yn Big Pit

Gadewais yr ysgol ym mis Ebrill 1934 pan oeddwn i'n bedair ar ddeg oed. Roeddwn i'n gobeithio cael unrhyw fath o swydd cyn gynted â phosib oherwydd roedden ni yng nghanol caledi'r Dirwasgiad, a finnau'n awyddus i gyfrannu at incwm y teulu. Roedd hyd yn oed y rhai oedd yn ddigon ffodus i gael swydd ond yn gweithio tri neu bedwar diwrnod yr wythnos.

Oherwydd 'mod i'n hanu o deulu o lowyr, roedd hi'n anorfod y byddwn i'n parhau â'r traddodiad, felly dyma ddechrau gweithio yn Kays Slope, rhyw filltir neu ddwy o Big Pit, fel gweithiwr wyneb ar y sgriniau. Roeddwn i'n derbyn cyflog shifft ddydd a oedd, gan gynnwys gweithio ar y Sadyrnau, yn cychwyn ar 71 ceiniog cyn didyniadau. Felly, 65 ceiniog fyddwn ni'n mynd adref gyda mi!

Y drefn yn y glofeydd ar y pryd oedd bod disgwyl i chi ddatblygu o'r wyneb i weithio danddaear ymhen amser. Roedd unrhyw un a wrthodai wneud hynny heb reswm arbennig o dda yn gorfod gadael y diwydiant. I mi, hen waith llafurus oedd mynd o dan yr wyneb, gan mai ychydig iawn o beiriannau, os o gwbl, oedd yn cael eu defnyddio. Roedd torri glo ag offer llaw, a hyd yn oed driliau llaw, yn gyffredin iawn.

Mae'n siŵr ei bod hi'n ddwy flynedd arall cyn y cefais fy nhrosglwyddo o Kays Slope i Big Pit, ac erbyn hynny, roeddwn i wedi hen arfer â gweithio danddaear. Roedd pethau'n dal yn anodd yn ariannol, fodd bynnag, sy'n f'atgoffa i o'r amser y cyflwynwyd wythnos swyddogol o wyliau yn y diwydiant glo, heb unrhyw dâl wrth gwrs. Roedden ni'n croesawu'r dyddiau o seibiant yn fawr iawn, yn wahanol i'n gwragedd a'n rhieni, gan fod y pecyn cyflog yn llai yr wythnos ganlynol.

Pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel ym 1939, gwnes gais i ymuno â'r RAF. Ond diwrnod cyn i fi 'listio, cefais lythyr i ddweud bod yr apwyntiad wedi'i ganslo, gan fod cymaint o ddynion yn gadael y diwydiant glo i wneud gwasanaeth milwrol. Penderfynwyd y byddai gwaith glo'n cael ei ddynodi'n waith neilltuedig gan ei fod yn hollbwysig i sicrhau goroesiad Prydain.

Yn fuan wedyn, daeth Mr Ernest Turner y rheolwr ataf ac awgrymu y dylwn i roi cynnig ar gymhwyso fel dirprwy. A dyna wnes i. Roedd hwn yn benderfyniad doeth ar y pryd oherwydd, ar ôl dilyn y cwrs hyfforddi angenrheidiol, fe es ymlaen i fod yn oferman ac wedyn yn swyddog diogelwch.

Fel y soniais ynghynt, ychydig iawn o fecaneiddio oedd wedi'i wneud danddaear yn Big Pit, sy'n f'atgoffa i o gyfraniad pwysig ceffylau o ran cludo glo o'r ffas. Fe'u defnyddiwyd i halio dramiau glo i fannau casglu, neu 'turnouts' , lle bydden nhw wedyn yn cael eu codi i ben y pwll. Os ydw i'n cofio'n iawn, roedd tair stabl danddaear ac ostler neu was stabl yn gyfrifol amdanyn nhw. Roedd ganddo hanner cant o geffylau dan ei ofal ar un adeg.

Wrth i amodau'r glöwr wella'n raddol dros y blynyddoedd, gwellodd pethau i'r ceffylau hefyd. Pan oedden ni'n cael pythefnos o wyliau blynyddol, bydden nhw'n cael eu cludo i'r brig yn y caetsys newydd ac yn mynd i bori ar gaeau lleol. Pan oedd eu gwyliau ar ben, roedd hi fel petaen nhw'n synhwyro eu bod yn dychwelyd i weithio. Dw i'n cofio sawl tro pan oedd y ceffylau'n gyndyn i wneud hynny, gyda chryn wthio a strancio cyn llwyddo i'w denu'n ôl danddaear. 1974 oedd y tro diwethaf i geffylau gael eu defnyddio'n Big Pit.

Erbyn y 1960au, roedd yr holl wythiennau trwchus o lo yng nghyffiniau Big Pit wedi'u cloddio, ac roedden ni'n gorfod chwilio a chwalu yn bellach ac yn bellach danddaear am gyflenwadau newydd. Erbyn diwedd y 1970au, roedden ni'n mynd i bedwar cyfeiriad gwahanol o fewn cwmpas o bron i chwe milltir, sefyllfa na allai barhau am byth. Er hynny, cawsom rywfaint o lwyddiant trwy wella rhai o'r peiriannau torri a oedd yn ein galluogi i dorri glo o onglau newydd o wythiennau cyfredol am y tro cyntaf erioed. Dw i'n cofio'r cam hwn yn iawn, gan iddo ymestyn oes y pwll ryw ddwy flynedd y tu hwnt i argymhellion gwreiddiol y syrfewyr.

Yn anochel, economeg oedd piau'r gair olaf, a daeth y gwaith cynhyrchu i ben ddechrau'r 1980au. Cafodd rhai o'r dynion eu trosglwyddo i lofeydd eraill, tra gadawodd llawer y diwydiant am byth.

Yn ffodus, nid dyma'r bennod olaf yn hanes Big Pit ar ôl cymryd y penderfyniad i'w weddnewid yn amgueddfa lofaol sydd yma o hyd. Braint ac anrhydedd oedd cael cyfrannu at y project hwnnw tan 1984 pan benderfynais fod hanner can mlynedd yn y diwydiant glo yn hen ddigon i unrhyw ddyn!

Bill Gunter

My fifty years at Big Pit

I left school in April 1934 at the age of fourteen. I was hoping to find a job of some description as soon as possible because they were the hard times of the Depression and I was anxious to make my own contribution to the household income. Even those fortunate enough to have a job often found themselves to be working for only three or four days a week.

Because I came from a family of miners it was inevitable that I would carry on in the tradition and started work in Kays Slope, a mile or two from Big Pit, as a surface worker on the 'screens'. I was on 'dayshift wages' which, including working on Saturday, commenced at seventy one pence before deductions. My take-home pay was sixty five pence!

The system in the collieries at that time was that, after a certain period of time, you were expected to progress from surface to underground working. Anyone refusing to do so without an exceptionally good reason was asked to leave the industry. I found working below the surface very laborious indeed as there was little, if any, machinery in use. Coal cutting with hand tools and even hand-operated 'borers' *(drills)* were the norm.

It was probably another two years before I transferred from Kays Slope to Big Pit, by which time I had become accustomed to underground work. Financially, however, things were still difficult which reminds me of the introduction of an official week holiday, without pay of course, in the coal industry. We more than welcomed the days of rest but wives and parents dreaded it as the pay packet was short the following week.

When war broke out in 1939 I applied to join the RAF. However, the very day before I was due to report for enlistment, a letter arrived informing me that my appointment was cancelled due to the large numbers of men leaving the mining industry for military service. It had been decided that mining was to be declared a 'reserved occupation' as it was vital to the country's survival.

Shortly after this I was approached by the manager, Mr Ernest Turner, who suggested that I should 'have a go' at obtaining my deputy's papers, which I subsequently did. This was a wise decision at the time as, following the necessary training, I eventually progressed to overman and later to safety officer.

As I mentioned earlier, there was little mechanisation underground at Big Pit and that reminds me of the important part that horses played in the transportation of coal from the coal face. They were used to haul drams of coal to collection points which were known as 'turnouts' from where they would be lifted to the pit head. As I recall there were three stables underground and the animals were under the charge of an ostler. At one time he had fifty horses in his care.

As conditions for the miner gradually improved over the years, so did those of the horses. When we got a two week annual summer holiday they would be brought to the surface in modified cages and put to graze in local fields. When their holidays were over, it was as if they sensed that they were going back to work. Many a time I recall the amount of resistance they put up, with much pushing a shoving involved, before they could be coaxed back underground. Horses were last used at Big Pit in 1974.

By the 1960s all the thick seams of coal in the immediate vicinity of Big Pit had been exploited and we found ourselves having to look further and further underground for new supplies. By the late 1970s we were heading in four different directions with a radius of almost six miles, a situation which could not continue indefinitely. However, there was some measure of success by way of our own ingenuity in improving some of the cutting machinery which enabled coal to be cut from previously untried angles from existing seams. I well remember this action as it extended the life of the pit for some two years beyond the original recommendations of the surveyors.

Inevitably economics took their toll and, in early 1980, production finally came to an end. Some men transferred to other collieries, many left the industry for good.

Fortunately Big Pit was not completely beaten as the decision was taken to transform it into the mining museum it is today. I was privileged to play a part in the project until 1984 when I finally decided that fifty years in the coal mining industry was enough for any man!

Bill Gunter

Gyrfa gymysg

Cefais fy ngeni ym Margoed ym mis Awst 1945 – roedd hi'n bwrw! Roedd fy nhad-cu yn was stabl yng nglofa Pengam pan gafodd ei ladd gan res o dramiau aeth allan o reolaeth. Wrthi'n rhedeg yn ôl i geisio achub ei geffyl oedd e pan gafodd ei daro gan y dramiau. Roedd fy nhad yn gweithio yng nglofa Groesfaen fel torrwr ar y talcenni oedd wedi'u mecaneiddio. Roeddwn i'n was cigydd rhan amser tra'r o'n i yn yr ysgol, a phan adewais i, bues i'n was cigydd llawn amser tan i fi gael y sac – ches i 'rioed wybod pam. Felly, cynigiais am swydd yn y pwll a mynd i Ganolfan Hyfforddiant Bargod ym 1961.

Roeddech chi'n gorfod treulio chwe wythnos yn y ganolfan hyfforddi ac yng Ngholeg Technegol Bedwellte. Yn y diwedd, es i lofa'r Groesfaen ar gyfer fy hyfforddiant danddaear fel gwas colier ar ffas lo gonfensiynol. Roeddwn i hanner ffordd drwy'r hyfforddiant pan adewais i fynd i weithio'n ffatri cynhyrchion rwber Heston ym Mhengam. Dechreuais yn y labordy, cyn cael y sac – wn i ddim pam eto, ond efallai bod gan y ffaith 'mod i'n dipyn o hipi hirwallt ar y pryd, rywbeth i'w wneud â'r peth. Cefais swydd yn adran bondin Heston yn lle hynny, a phara yno am ryw ddwy flynedd. Roedd rhaid i fi roi'r gorau iddi achos bod y cemegau'n gwneud drwg i'm stumog i.

Dychwelais i'r pwll glo i gwblhau'r hyfforddiant, ac erbyn hynny, roedden nhw wedi agor ffas hyfforddi wedi'i mecaneiddio gyda chludwr cyfnerthol a thorrwr disg. Er hynny, fe'm hanfonwyd i'r man trosglwyddo lle'r oedd un cludfelt yn llenwi'r llall, a dim ond glanhau a gwylio'r beltiau oeddwn i – am swydd ddiflas! Gorffennais fy hyfforddiant a mynd i weithio yng nglofa Ogilvie, er fy mod i'n mynd i lawr hen siafft Maclaren a ddefnyddiwyd fel siafft deithio [cludo dynion]. Yna, bydden ni'n neidio ar gludfelt ymlaen i fynd ymlaen i Ogilvie cyn cerdded lan i'r lamprwm [lle'r oedd dynion yr ardal yn cwrdd â'i gilydd cyn shifft]. Roeddwn i'n dal i weithio y tu allan i'r ffas lo, mewn gwirionedd dyna'r unig dro i fi weithio mewn tîm yn ystod fy ngyrfa [ar y ffas lo], pan fyddwn i'n gweithio gyda rhaw i glirio llwyth o lo fyddai wedi cwympo o'r to. Ond dyma gapten y tîm yn dweud wrthyf 'Nid dyma'r lle i ti', a'm hanfon allan o'r ffas i drin pren [cael cynhalbyst pren i'r ffas lo].

O hynny ymlaen, roeddwn i'n gweithio yn y man trosglwyddo, yn trin coed, torri pwcinz yn ogystal â chyfnod yn cludo powdwr ag ati i'r taniwr. Y broblem oedd bod gen i gyflwr o'r enw Pes Cavus neu droed fwaog [anffurfiad ar y droed gyda phont droed uchel sy'n eithaf stiff] a nam ar y glun, felly doedden nhw ddim yn hoffi 'ngweld i'n gweithio ar y ffas lo. Dim ond tasgau pitw i nghadw i mas o'r ffordd fyddwn i'n gael, ond roeddwn i eisiau ennill rhagor o arian. Roedd hi fel petaen nhw'n teimlo trueni drosta i oherwydd fy nghyflwr, a doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi hyn, felly es i ar streic un dyn. Ces i'n rhoi yn y man trosglwyddo un diwrnod, ond dywedais wrthyn nhw am ffeindio rhywun arall gan fy mod i eisiau gweithio ar y ffas. Bu cwympo mas, a cherddais mas.

Dyna'r ail dro i hynny ddigwydd. Y tro cyntaf oedd pan ddaeth bachgen yn ôl wedi salwch, a chafodd ei anfon at dîm y ffas tra ces innau fy symud i'r man trosglwyddo. Gadewais a mynd i fyny'r pwll i fynnu taw fi oedd yr hynaf, ac mai fi ddylai fod wedi mynd ar y ffas cyn bachgen arall. Enillais i mo'r ddadl, ond dywedodd y swyddog y byddai'n talu cyfradd uwch i mi, ond mod i ddim i ddweud wrth neb. Arhosais yn y man trosglwyddo ar yr un gyfradd â'r dynion eraill ar y ffas lo, tan i'm troed waethygu, a chefais fy anfon wedyn i weithio ar wyneb y pwll fel 'grease monkey', yn iro'r dramiau a'r cludydd cylched tan i fi gael salwch stumog eto. Collais fy swydd ar sail absenoldeb, aeth yr NUM ati i ddadlau fy achos, a chefais fy swydd yn ôl. Fodd bynnag, pan gefais nodyn salwch gan y meddyg, cefais lythyr yn gofyn i fi fynd i'r ysbyty a chael y sac eto. Pan es i at y rheolwr i drafod hyn,

Glofa Ogilvie, 1975
Ogilvie Colliery, 1975

I can't really complain

I was born in Bargoed in August 1945 – it was raining! My grandfather was an ostler in Pengam Colliery who was killed when a journey of drams ran away. He was running back to try and save his horse when the journey hit him. My father worked in Groesfaen Colliery as a cutter man on mechanised faces. I was a part-time butcher's boy when I was in school and when I left school I became a full-time butcher's boy until I got sacked – I still don't know why. So I tried for a job in the pit and went to Bargoed Training Centre in 1961.

You had to do six weeks in both the training centre and Bedwellty Technical College. I ended up in Groesfaen Colliery for underground training as a collier's boy on a conventional *(un-mechanised)* coal face. I finished half way through the training and went to work in Heston's Rubber Products factory in Pengam. I started in the lab but was sacked from there, again I've no idea why but I was a bit of a long-haired hippy at the time so perhaps that had something to do with it. I got a job in the bonding department of Heston's instead and stayed there for about two years. I had to finish because my stomach was playing up because of the chemicals.

I went back to the pit to finish my training and, by then, they had opened up a mechanised training face equipped with an armoured conveyor and a disc cutter. However, I was put on a transfer point to work where one conveyor filled out onto another and was just cleaning up and watching the belts – it was very boring. I finished my training and went to work in Ogilvie Colliery, although I actually went down through the old Maclaren shaft which was used as a 'travelling' *(man riding)* shaft. We then travelled through to Ogilvie on a man riding conveyor belt and then a walk up to the lamp station (where the men in a district met before their shift). I was still working outside the coal face, in fact the only time in my career that I worked 'in the team' *(on the coal face)* was when a lot of roof coal had been dropped down and I worked with a shovel to help to clear it. However, the team captain said to me "This is not for you" and sent me out of the face 'on timber' *(getting wooden roof supports into the coal face)*.

From then on I was either on a transfer point, timber, cutting 'pwcinz' *(cutting the floor of the roadway to make room for drams)* as well as a stint as a powder monkey carrying stuff around for the shotsman. The problem was that I have Pes Cavus *(a deformity of the foot which has a very high arch and is relatively stiff)* and a deformity of the hip, so they didn't like me working on the coal face. Because of my condition they would only give me menial jobs out of the way but I wanted to earn more money. I felt that they were taking pity on me because of my condition, which I didn't like, so I went on a one-man strike. They had put me on a transfer point one day but I told them to get someone else, I wanted to work on the face so we had an argument and I walked out.

That was the second time, the first time was that a boy came back to work after being on sick and was put into the face team while I was put on the point. I walked out and went up the pit to claim seniority as I should have gone into the face before the other boy. I didn't win the argument but the official said he'd pay me the higher rate but told me not to tell anybody. I stayed on the point on the same rate as the other men were getting on the coal face until my foot got worse and I was sent to work on the colliery surface as a 'grease monkey', greasing drams and the circuit conveyor until my stomach played up again and I went on the sick. I was sacked for absenteeism but the NUM fought my case and I was re-instated. However, when the doctor signed me off I was sent a letter to go to hospital and was sacked again. When I went to see the manager about it he told me to "Get off my pit!" This was 1972, I had done about eleven or twelve years in the colliery. I always felt that I could have worked on the coal

fe atebodd 'Cer mas o 'mhwll i!' Roedd hyn ym 1972, a finnau wedi treulio tua unarddeg neu ddeuddeg mlynedd yn y pwll. Roeddwn i wastad yn teimlo y gallen i fod wedi gweithio ar y ffas lo, gan 'mod i'n gwneud fy ngorau glas, er bod fy nghorff yn talu'n ddrud am hynny nawr.

Pan gychwynnais i yn y ganolfan hyfforddi, ces brawf meddygol i brofi fy mod i'n ddigon iach i weithio danddaear, ond, er gwaethaf fy anabledd, yr unig gwestiwn ges i oedd 'Wyt ti'n gallu gwisgo sgidie gwaith?' Atebais fy mod i, felly dyma nhw'n dweud bod hynny'n iawn i ddechrau. Wnaethon nhw ddim gwneud nodyn mai swyddi di-ddim oedd yn addas i fi – y swyddogion oedd yn gwrthod gadael i fi weithio ar y ffas lo, y nhw oedd yn pallu gadael i fi ennill fy mara menyn.

Ar ôl gorffen yn y pwll, es i ar gwrs peirianneg mainc, cael swydd mewn ffatri, a dechrau weldio yno tan i fi gael ffrae gyda'r bos a chael y sac. Yna, ces swydd mewn ffatri blastigau yn Rhymni a bues i yno am ddeuddeg mlynedd tan iddyn nhw ganfod fy mod i'n 'anaddas' – fel mae'n digwydd, fi oedd cadeirydd yr undeb llafur ar y pryd! Brwydrais yn erbyn y diswyddiad, ond ddwedodd fy nghynrychiolydd undeb yr un gair o'i ben! Erbyn hyn, roedd hi'n 1988 a finnau'n chwilio am waith. Roeddwn i'n heneiddio erbyn hyn hefyd, ac yn anabl – gallwch ddychmygu beth oedd canlyniadau hynny. Ond fe ges i swydd arall mewn ffatri blastigau wahanol, yn cynhyrchu ffenestri. Sôn am lafur gorfodol, doeddwn i ddim yn ennill digon i dalu'r rhent. Felly, penderfynais roi'r ffidil yn y to a chymryd absenoldeb salwch. Dw i ar dâl salwch hyd heddiw.

Bues i am dro i Big Pit gyda'r teulu, a chwerthin pan oedd ymwelwyr yn holi am dai bach y glowyr. Yr unig dai bach welais i danddaear oedd y rhai ym mhwll hyfforddi Bargoed – wedi'u hadeiladu uwchben nant danddaear. Ond fel arfer, roedd y dynion yn ateb galwad natur lle bynnag oedden nhw ar y pryd. Roedd un oferman yn ymbalfalu drwy'r ffas lo pan roddodd ei law mewn pentwr o 'faw'. Sylwodd e ddim, ond bob tro'r oedd yn sychu chwys o'i ben, roedd yn dweud 'Ma'r lle ma'n drewi o gachu!'

Pe tawn i wedi'n rhoi ar y ffas lo, byddwn i wedi aros yn y pwll. Ond roedd y man trosglwyddo yn fy hala i'n benwan. Y swyddogion oedd y broblem, yn teimlo trueni drosta i a neilltuo tasgau pitw i mi. Roedd bois y ffas wastad yn fy nhrin i'n gyfartal, ac er na allwn i wneud popeth, roeddwn i'n gwneud fy ngorau glas bob amser. Cefais yrfa gymysg, weithiau'n hapus, weithiau'n uffernol, ond alla i ddim conan mewn gwirionedd, achos fy mai i oedd rhai o'r problemau.

Anhysbys

face as I always used to work as hard as I could, although my body is paying for that now.

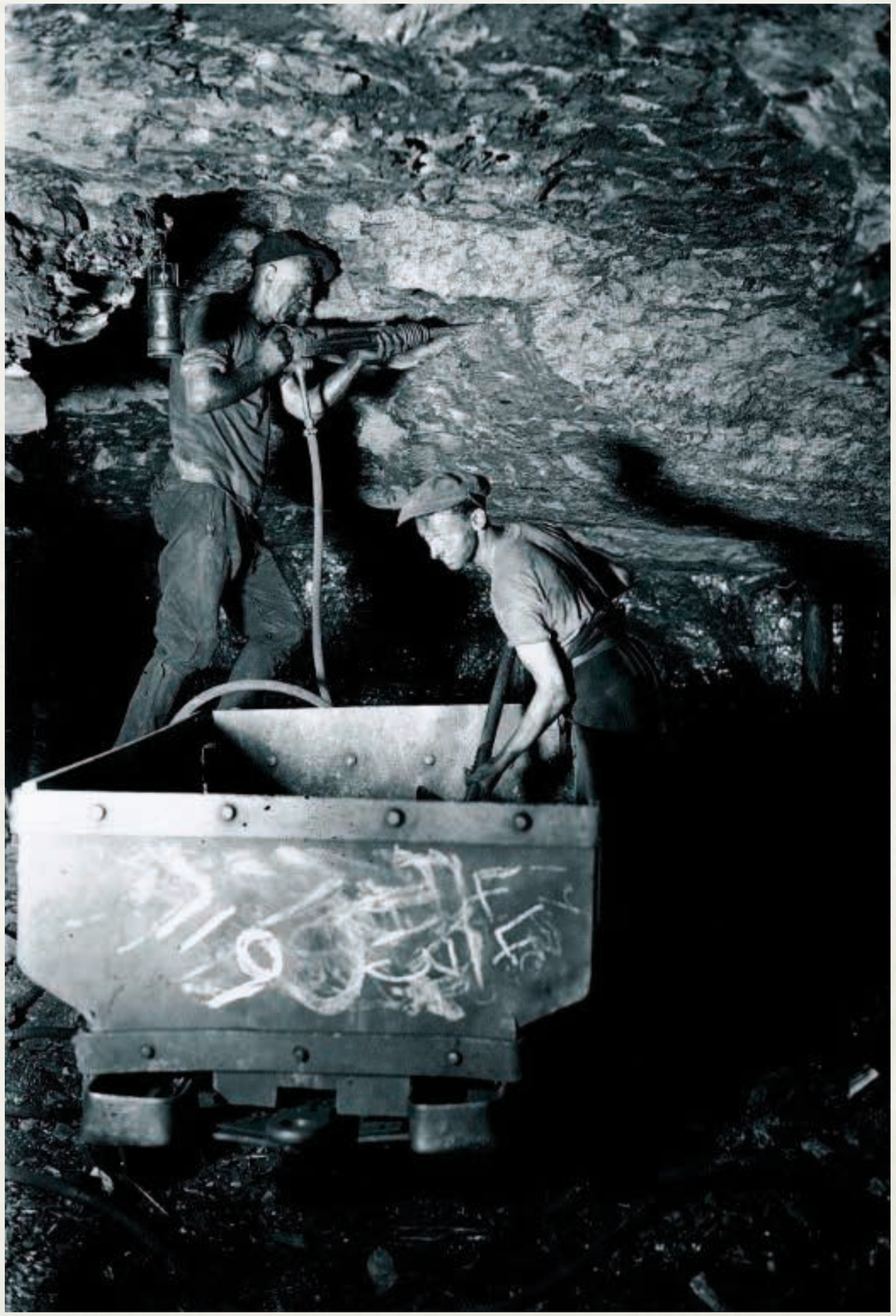
When I started in the training centre I had a medical to prove that I was fit to work underground but, in spite of my disability, the only question they asked me was "Can you wear boots?" I said I could so they said it was OK to start. They didn't mark me down to do menial work, it was the officials who wouldn't let me work on the coal face, they wouldn't let me earn my crust.

After I finished in the pit I did a course in bench engineering, got a job in a factory and took up welding until I had a row with the boss and was 'sent up the road' *(sacked)*. I then got a job in a plastics factory in Rhymney where I worked for twelve years until they found that I was 'unsuitable' – I happened to be the trade union chairman at the time! I fought against the dismissal but the union man defending me didn't open his mouth. It was 1988 and I was looking for a job, I was knocking on by now and I was disabled – you can imagine what it was like. However, I did get another job in a different plastics factory making windows. It was slave labour, I wasn't earning enough to pay the rent. So I jacked it in and went on the sick and I'm still on the sick today.

I visited Big Pit with the family and was amused when visitors ask where the miners went to the toilet. The only toilets I've ever seen underground were the ones in the training pit in Bargoed - they were built over an underground stream. Usually men went where they were. One overman was making his way through the coal face when he put his hand in a pile of 'muck'. He didn't notice, but every time he wiped the sweat off his face he said "There's a terrible smell of s*** around here".

If I had been put on the coal face I would have stayed in the pit, instead I was put on a transfer point which used to drive me mad. The officials were the problem, they used to feel sorry for me and give me menial jobs. The boys on the face used to treat me as an equal, I couldn't always do everything they did but I always tried my best. My working life was sometimes happy, sometimes awful, but I can't really complain as some of the problems I had were my fault.

Anon



Er cof am *Aberfan* 1966-2016

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