

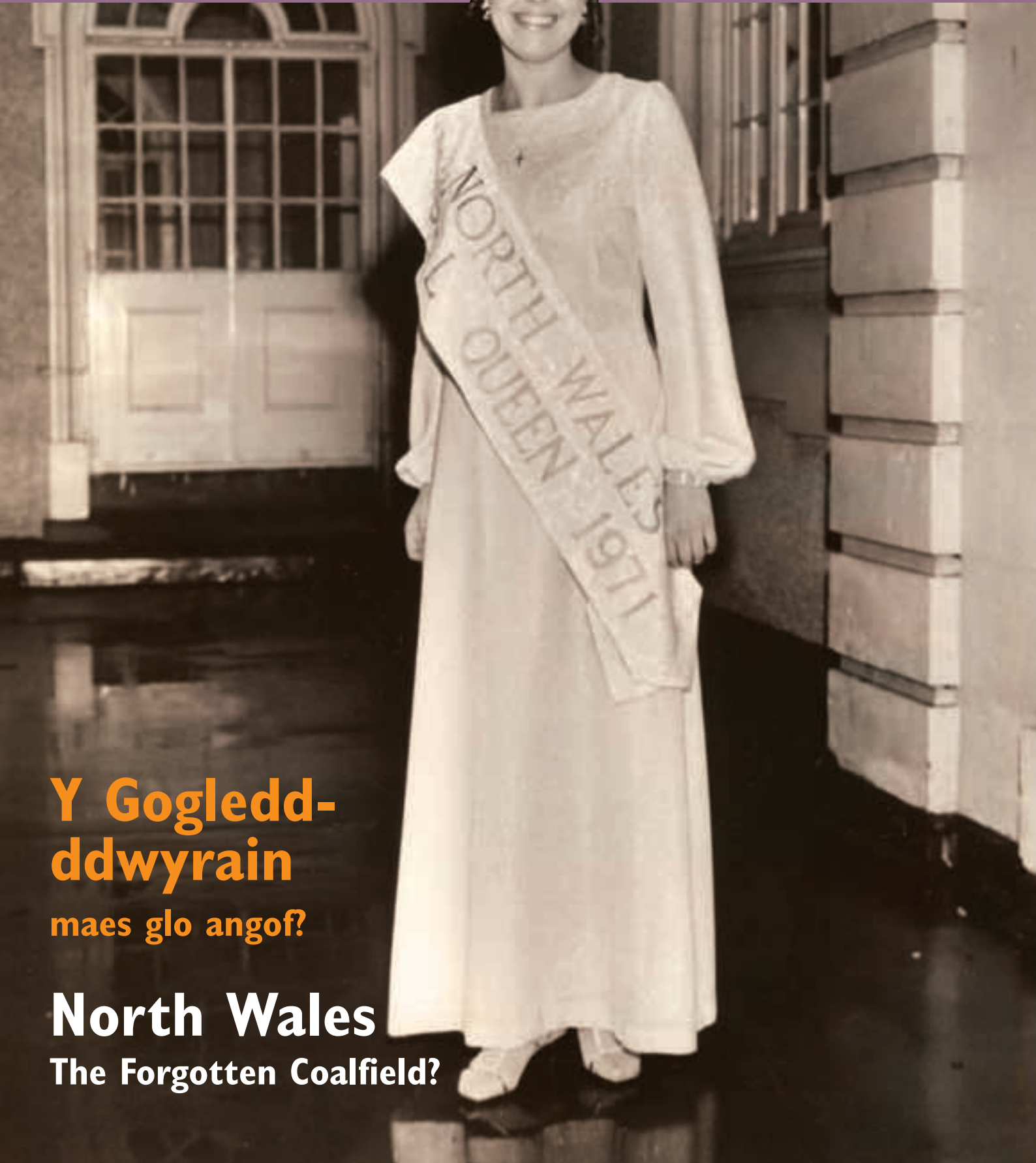
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GLO COAL



**Y Gogledd-
ddwyrain**

maes glo angof?

North Wales
The Forgotten Coalfield?

Soniwch am y diwydiant glo yng Nghymru, a chymoedd y De sy'n dod i feddwl y rhan fwyaf ohonom. Ond mae hanes hir a balch o gloddio glo yn y Gogledd hefyd, hanes sy'n ymestyn yn ôl dros gannoedd o flynyddoedd.

Gellir rhannu maes glo'r Gogledd yn ddwy ran gyfleus tua naw milltir o led. Mae'r rhan ogleddol yn hen Sir y Fflint yn bennaf, ac yn ymestyn o'r Parlwr Du ar yr arfordir gogleddol i gyfeiriad y de-ddwyrain i Benarlâg a Brychdyn ger Caer. Ardaloedd Brymbo, y Waun, Rhiwabon a Wrecsam yn yr hen Sir Ddinbych yw canolbwynt y rhan ddeheuol. Cloddiwyd rhywfaint o lo ar Ynys Môn hefyd, yn nhalcenni bas Cors Ddyga ger pentref Malltraeth.

Cloddiwyd glo yn y Gogledd ers yr Oesoedd Canol, ond ni ddaeth yn ddiwydiant pwysig yn economaidd tan oes y Tuduriaid. Erbyn yr ail ganrif ar bymtheg, roedd glo o byllau Syr Roger Mostyn yn Sir y Fflint yn cael ei allforio i Iwerddon, tra'r oedd pyllau Syr Thomas Myddleton yn Sir Ddinbych yn mynd o nerth i nerth. Cafodd glo ei gloddio ym Môn tua'r un cyfnod hefyd.

Erbyn y ddeunawfed ganrif, roedd y diwydiant glo'n dueddol o ddilyn llwyddiant y diwydiant haearn lleol, ac yn sgil y twf cyflym denwyd llawer iawn o fewnfudwyr i weithio yn y Gogledd-ddwyrain. Erbyn 1913, roedd y maes glo'n cynhyrchu tair miliwn tunnell y flwyddyn cyn dirywio'n raddol ar ôl y Rhyfel Mawr, fel ym meysydd glo'r De. Erbyn 1968, dim ond glofeydd Bers, Gresfordd a'r Parlwr Du oedd yn dal ar waith. Caeodd y Parlwr Du, pwll glo olaf Gogledd, ym 1996.

Ni ddioddefodd pyllau'r Gogledd gymaint o ddamweiniau enbyd â rhai'r De. Er hynny, cafodd 266 o ddynion eu lladd mewn ffrwydrad yng nglofa Gresfordd ar 22 Medi 1934, gan gynnwys tri aelod o Frigâd Achub y Glofeydd. Dyma'r trydydd trychineb gwaethaf yn hanes diwydiant glo Cymru, ar ôl glofa Senghennydd ym 1913 pan laddwyd 439, a glofa'r Albion ym 1894 pan gollwyd 290.

Ni fyddai'r rhifyn hwn o GLO yn bosibl heb gyfraniadau Ymddiriedolaeth Cymdeithas Glowyr Gogledd Cymru Cyf, eu hanes llafar a'u casgliadau ffotograffau. Roedd eu gwybodaeth leol a'u brwdfrydedd yn amhrisiadwy. Diolch o galon i bob un ohonoch.

Ceri Thompson,
Curadur

When people think of the Welsh coal industry they tend to think of the valleys of south Wales. However, north Wales also has a proud coal mining heritage dating back hundreds of years.

The coalfield can be conveniently divided into two sections, around nine miles in width. The northern section is largely in the old county of Flintshire and extends from Point of Ayr on the northern coast in a south-eastward direction to Hawarden and Broughton near Chester. The southern section is centred on Brymbo, Chirk, Ruabon and Wrexham in the old county of Denbighshire. In addition, on Anglesey, coal is found in shallow workings in the Malltraeth Marshes.

Coal mining has been carried on in north Wales since the Middle Ages but only became economically important during the Tudor period. By the seventeenth Century coal was being exported to Ireland from the mines owned by Sir Roger Mostyn in Flintshire, while in Denbighshire the mines owned by Sir Thomas Myddleton were expanding. Around this time coal was also being mined on Anglesey.

During the eighteenth century the coal industry tended to follow the fortunes of the local iron industry, the rapid growth of which led to a large influx of immigrant workers into north-east Wales. By 1913 the coalfield was producing three million tons a year but like south Wales went into a gradual decline after the First World War. By 1968 only Bersham, Gresford and Point of Ayr Collieries were still in production. Point of Ayr, the last colliery in north Wales, closed in 1996.

North Wales was largely free of the huge colliery disasters that blighted its sister coalfield in south Wales. However, on the 22nd September 1934, an explosion at Gresford Colliery killed 266 men, including three members of the Mines Rescue Brigade. After Senghenydd in 1913 with 439 dead and Albion in 1894 with 290 dead, Gresford was the third biggest disaster in Welsh mining history.

This edition of GLO would not have been possible without contributions from the oral history and photographic collections of the North Wales Miners' Association Trust Limited. Their local knowledge and enthusiasm was invaluable. We owe a debt of gratitude to you all.

Ceri Thompson,
Curator

Ar y ffas yng Nglofa Bers, 1986
On the face in Bersham Colliery, 1986



Dysgu Gwers

Dysgais fy nghreffft yng Nglofa Gresffordd ac, yn naturiol, roedd y prentisiaid i gyd yn mynnu gweld y wal danddaearol oedd wedi selio cyrff y 154 o ddynion a laddwyd yn y trychineb. Ar ôl gorffen hyfforddi, dechreuais weithio ym mhrif Lofa Llai. Roedd hyn, mewn ffordd, yn gwireddu proffwydoliaeth y diweddar Mr Benny Williams, Prifathro Ysgol Uwchradd Llai. Bob bore, byddwn i a'm ffrind Charlie Lloyd yn hwyr i'r ysgol, ac yn gorfod ysgrifennu llinellau fel cosb. Er bod y prifathro yn wr goddefgar, byddai'n aml yn pwyntio atom ac yn dweud pethau fel "I'r pwll glo ei di, 'machgen i" neu "Davy Griffiths, mae 'na lamp i ti yng Nglofa Llai ac mae dy enw di arni'n barod". Ei eiriau olaf ar ddiwedd ein dyddiau ysgol oedd "Alla i ddim fforddio pin ac inc i chi'ch dau - ewch o'ma!". Aeth Charlie i weithio yn siafft rhif 1, ardal 13, a minnau yn siafft rhif 2, ardal 17.

Ar fy niwrnod cyntaf, cefais f'anfon i weithio gyda gyrrwr injan a edrychodd arna i a dweud "Un bach ifanc wyt ti - eistedda ar y fainc 'na, a chysga". Roeddwn i wedi gwylltio braidd, a dywedais wrtho fy mod i wedi cael fy nysgu i beidio byth â chysgu danddaear, ond fe atebodd "Yli 'ngwas i, mae gan y llywodraeth fwy o bres na chdi!". Yr wythnos ganlynol, cefais fy nhrosglwyddo i ardal 11 ym mhwll rhif 1 a darganfod bod y taniwr (a oedd yn byw drws nesaf i mi) yn weithiwr tipyn mwy brwdfrydig. Dysgais am injans aer cywasgedig a sut i glymu tybiau ar ddarn diddiwedd o raff. Yn wir, roeddwn i'n dadwneud popeth a ddysgais yn orielau hyfforddi Gresffordd. Byddem yn halio llwythi o ddeunyddiau - pyst, cloriau, pyst dur, pyst Dowty, beltiau, bagiau tywod, bradisiau, sgotsis a thrawstiau, tyrbeini torri glo - roeddwn ni'n eu cludo nhw i gyd!

Yn ystod yr wythnosau cyntaf yn Llai, fe welais ddyn mewn cot wen yn cael mwgyn y tu allan i'r ystafell feddygol. Sam Dingily oedd ei enw, ac roedd am gael gair gyda mi. Dywedodd, "Hei fachgen, gad i fi roi rhywbeth defnyddiol i ti ei wneud" a chefais fy hel yn aelod o'r tîm cymorth cyntaf ieuencid danddaear. Fi oedd arweinydd y tîm, Charlie fy ffrind gorau yn ddirprwy, a thri bachgen arall. Fe gawson ni amser bendigedig ar ddiwrnodau hyfforddi yn y pwll, a mynychu cystadlaethau Bwrdd Glo Prydain yn Blackpool ac ar hyd a lled y gogledd. Pe bai Sam Dingily ond yn gwybod fy mod wedi cyrraedd uchelfannau Urdd Sant Ioan a'r Frigâd Ambiwylans, byddai'n chwyrlio yn hytrach na throi yn ei fedd!

Un o'r pethau rwy'n ei gofio fwyaf yw'r holl sgyrsiau y byddem yn eu cael danddaear adeg 'snapin' (amser bwyd). Roeddwn ni wedi'n magu i beidio â thrafod gwleidyddiaeth na chrefydd yn y dafarn, ond roeddwn ni'n trafod popeth dan haul yn y pwll glo. Beth bynnag oedd dan sylw, roeddwn ni'n trin a thrafod a'i dynnu'n rhacs, ond byth yn negyddol, ac roeddwn i bob amser yn gadael gyda rhywbeth i gnoi cil drosto. Pan ymunais â'r Eglwys a chlywed am y "cyfarfod siapter" pan fyddai'r clerigwyr lleol yn dod ynghyd, credais y byddai'n debyg i'n sgyrsiau danddaear. Ond yn nhermau pêl-droed, roedd sgyrsiau'r pwll glo yn perthyn i'r Uwchgynghrair tra bo trafodaethau'r clerigwyr yn debycach i safon y Cheshire League.

Roedd rhai cymeriadau danddaear y byddech yn eu hosgoi'n llwyr ar yr wyneb. Roeddwn nhw'n gallu bod yn ddigon annifyr, ac yn rhegi bob yn ail air. Un diwrnod, fodd bynnag, wrth i mi godi a sefyll ar fy nhraed ar ôl gorffen fy snapin, dyma'r wal ochr yn disgyn am fy mhen a dymchwel ar draws y llwybr. Cefais fy llorio'n llwyr dan domen o siâl. Y dynion cyntaf a ddaeth gyda'u rhawiau i'm hachub, oedd yr union rai roeddwn i'n ceisio'u hosgoi danddaear. Roedd yna ymdeimlad arbennig o frawdgarwch. Doedd neb yn sôn amdano, ond roedd e yno a phawb yn ei ddeall a'i dderbyn.

Dyna un o'r gwersi gorau a gefais mewn bywyd erioed. Fe gafodd effaith fawr arna i hefyd, oherwydd pan godais ar fy nhraed, meddai un o'm cydweithwyr "Dai Bach, mae rhywun i fyny fan'nâ'n edrych ar dy ôl di". Fe wnaeth i mi feddwl, rhaid cyfaddef, a sylweddoli fy mod i'n feidrol wedi'r cyfan.

Y Parchedig David Griffiths

Learning a Lesson

I did my training in Gresford Colliery and, naturally, all the trainees had to see the wall underground that sealed off the bodies of 154 of the men killed in the disaster. After training I started work at Llay Main Colliery and, in a way, this was the fulfilment of a prophecy made by the late Mr Benny Williams, Headmaster of Llay Secondary School. Every morning, my best friend, Charlie Lloyd, and I was late for school and had to write lines. The headmaster was a tolerant man but would often point at us and say things like "Pit for you lad" or "Davy Griffiths, there's a lamp for you in Llay Main Colliery with your name on it." His final statement came at the end of our school days "I can't afford the nibs and ink for you two - get out!" Charlie ended up in 13s District, No.1 Shaft and I ended up in 17s, No.2 Shaft.

On my first day I was put with an engine driver who looked at me and said "You're a young one - sit on that plank and have a kip." Indignantly I informed him that I had been trained never to sleep underground, but he answered "Young man, the Government has more money than you!" The following week I was transferred to 11s District in No.1 Pit and discovered that the fireman (who lived next door to me) had a much more demanding work ethic. I began to learn about compressed air engines and how to lash journeys of tubs onto the endless rope. In fact I found myself unlearning everything I had been taught in the training galleries at Gresford. We hauled and mauled loads of material - props, lids, steel props, Dowty props, belting, sandbags, brattice cloth, chocks and girders, turbines for coal cutters - you name it we transported it!

During my first few weeks at Llay Main I saw a man in a white coat standing outside the Medical Room having a ciggie. His name was Sam Dingily and he indicated that he wanted to speak to me. He said "Hey lad, let me give you something useful to do" and dragooned me into the Junior Underground First Aid

Team. I was the leader and my number two was Charlie, my best school pal plus three other chaps. We had a fantastic time having training days up the pit and going to NCB competitions in Blackpool and all over the north. If Sam Dingily knew the dizzy heights that I reached in the Order of St John and the Ambulance Brigade, he wouldn't just turn in his grave - he would revolve!

Among the things that I always remember from my days in the pit are the chats we had underground when we were 'on snap' (food break). You were always brought up to never talk about politics or religion in a pub, but underground we talked about everything. Whatever the topic was we talked it through and pulled it to pieces, but it was never a negative thing and I always came away with something to think about. When I came into the Church and heard about the 'Chapter Meeting' when all the local clergy got together, I thought that it would be like the talks we used to have in the pit. However, talks in the mine were, in football terms, up in the Premier Division, while the talks amongst the clergy were down in the Cheshire League.

There were characters underground that you wouldn't want to have anything to do with on the surface. They could be quite horrible, some using obscene and obnoxious expletives every other word. However, one day I stood up after finishing my snap and the side wall of the roadway collapsed across the roadway, leaving me flat out under a pile of shale. It was the men that I didn't want anything to do with who were the first there with their shovels to dig me out. There was a comradeship that was never spoken about, it was simply understood.

That was one of the best lessons in life that I had ever had. It was also a telling time personally in as much as, when I was back upright again, one of my workmates said "Dai Bach, somebody up there is watching over you." I must admit, it did make me think and realise that I was mortal.

Rev. David Griffiths



Gwasanaeth coffa trychineb Gresffordd, 2010
Gresford disaster memorial service, 2010



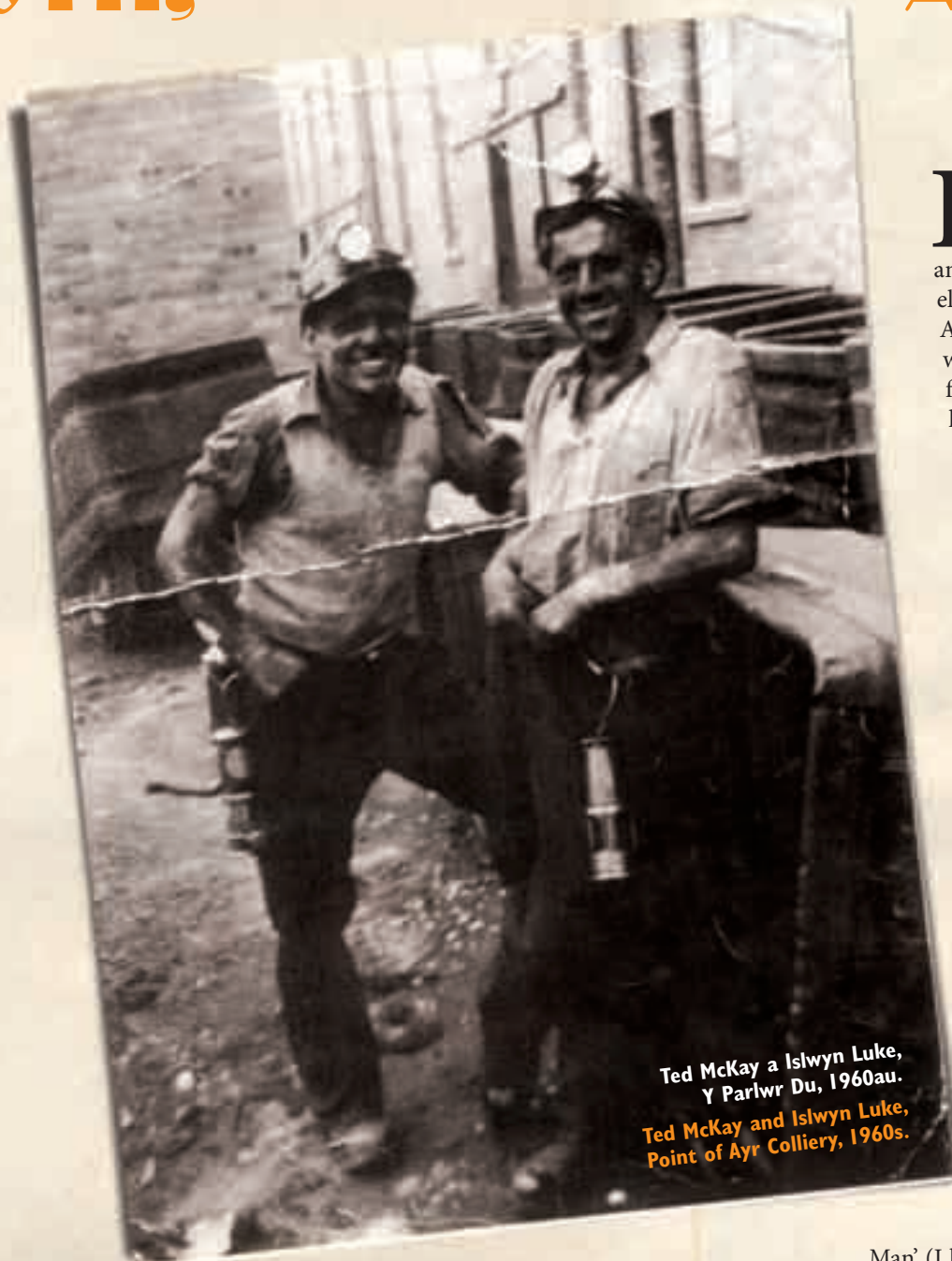
Cewri cedyrn, cyfiawn

Llanc ifanc yn fy arddegau oeddwn i ym 1950, yn cerdded i fyny'r llwybr hir i Lofa'r Parlwr Du. Doedd gen i ddim geirda, CV na thystysgrifau ysgol. Fel pawb arall, roeddwn i'n gorfod mynd allan i chwilio am waith fy hun. Roedd llawer yn dibynnu ar pa gapel roeddech chi'n aelod ohono. Roedd un o'r is-reolwyr yn dod o Ffynnongroyw, ac os oeddech chi'n mynd i'w gapel e, byddai'n siŵr o edrych ar eich ôl chi. Roedd llawer o'r goruchwylwyr yn bregethwyr lleyg. Fe es i weld Herbert Evans yr is-reolwr, ac yn y llais nodweddiadol hwnnw sy'n perthyn i bob is-reolwr, gofynnodd i mi beth oeddwn i eisiau. "Gwaith" atebais. "Wyt ti'n gallu codi'n fore?", gofynnodd, "Ydw" atebais, "Gei di dechrau dydd Llun felly". A dyna fo, fy niwrnod cyntaf yn niwydiant glo'r Gogledd. Daeth fy niwrnod olaf 42 mlynedd yn ddiweddarach.

Ar y pryd, dim ond glofa fach o ryw 700 o weithwyr oedd y Parlwr Du. Hon oedd yr unig lofa yn y Gogledd gyda'i holl dalcenni o dan y môr, lle'r oedd llongau glo yn angori ychydig lathenni o'r siafftiau. Nid oedd y dulliau gweithio wedi newid ers canrif a mwy, sef system o 'weithio talcennau'. Roedden ni'n gweithio mewn talcen 12 troedfedd o led, gyda dau löwr ym mhob tîm yn defnyddio "Iron Man" i dorri glo (gwelais beiriant tebyg yn amgueddfa ddiwydiannol Beamish), dau lwythwr yn llenwi'r glo â llaw i'r twb canpwys a gyrrwr y merlyn yn eu cludo yn ôl a blaen at yr haliwr rhaffau ar y prif lwybrau.

Roedd gan y Parlwr Du bedair stabl o dan y ddaear ac un ar ben y pwll, ac mae'n siŵr bod rhyw saith deg o geffylau yno i gyd. Ceffylau mawr cryf fel rhai fferm oedd yn gweithio yng nghrombil y pwll, a merlod mynydd Cymreig oedd yn gweithio rhwng y prif lwybrau a'r talcenni glo. Doedd dim cludfeltiau yn y lofa yr adeg honno, ac roedd cynhalbyst pren yn dal yr holl dwneli. Roedd pawb bron yn siarad Cymraeg yno, a doedd dim baddondai pen pwll yno yn y dyddiau hynny.

I ddechrau, cefais fy hyfforddi yng Nglofa Gresffordd cyn dychwelyd i'r Parlwr Du fel gyrrwr merlyn yn y talcen glo. Dingo oedd enw'r merlyn, ac roedd eisoes wedi gweithio am ugain mlynedd danddaear, â phum mlynedd arall ganddo cyn ymddeol. Roedd bywyd yn galed i'r ceffylau; yr amodau'n galed gyda'r to mor isel nes crafu'u pennau a'u cefnau. Byddai'n rhaid cloddio rhwng trawstiau'r rheilffordd er mwyn iddynt allu mynd a dod yn y twneli.



Ted McKay a Islwyn Luke,
Y Parlwr Du, 1960au.
Ted McKay and Islwyn Luke,
Point of Ayr Colliery, 1960s.

Doedden nhw byth yn gweld golau dydd; gallent fod ym mherfeddion y lofa am hyd at bum mlynedd ar hugain. Byddai'r ceffylau yn aros yn eu stablau am wythnos neu bythefnos cyfan adeg ein gwyliau blynyddol, ac ar ôl inni agor y drysau, bydden nhw'n rhedeg fel ffyliaid i lawr y twnnel ac yn rholio yn y llwch. Am olygfa wych.

Y broblem gyda merlod y pwll oedd eu bod yn gwybod ble'n union yr oedd eu stablau, a phe baech chi'n eu gadael yn rhydd am un funud fach, bydden nhw'n crwydro'n ôl i'r stabl – hyd yn oed os oeddech chi'n gweithio ddwy filltir i ffwrdd. Roedd merlod a cheffylau ar waith yn y Parlwr Du tan 1967, sy'n hwyr iawn gan fod y mwyafrif o byllau glo'r Gogledd wedi'u

All fine and honourable men

In 1950 I was a teenager walking up the long pit road to Point of Ayr Colliery. I had no references, CV or any school certificates. I, like everyone else, had to go out and find my own job. A lot depended on which chapel you went to. There was an under manager from Ffynnongroyw and, if you went to his chapel, you were well looked after and many of the overmen were lay preachers. I went to see Herbert Evans the under manager and he asked me, in the kind of voice that all under managers seem to have, what I wanted, "A job" I replied, "Can you get up early?" he asked, "Yes" I replied, "Then start on Monday." And that was it, my first day in the north Wales coal industry. My last day was to be 42 years later.

Point of Ayr Colliery (known in Welsh as Y Parlwr Du) was at that time a small pit of about 700 men. It was the only colliery in north Wales with all its workings under the sea and the coal ships would tie up just yards from the shafts. The methods of working there had not changed in a hundred years and were known as the 'pillar and stall system'. The working places were 12 feet wide and a team consisted of two colliers who cut the coal with what we called an 'Iron

Man' (I have only seen one since and that was in the industrial museum at Beamish) and two loaders who hand-filled the coal into 10 cwt. tubs and a pony driver who brought in empty tubs and took out the full ones to the rope haulage on the main roadways.

Point of Ayr had four stables underground and one on the surface, there must have been about seventy horses in all. The horses working around pit bottom were big farmyard types while the ones working between the main roadways and the coal faces were small Welsh mountain ponies. At that time the colliery did not have any conveyor belts and the roadways were all held up by timber supports. It was almost entirely Welsh speaking and did not have pithead baths.

I received my initial training at Gresford Colliery before going back to Point of Ayr as a coal face pony driver. My pony was called Dingo and he had already worked 20 years underground and was to work for another five years before he retired. It was a hard life for the horses; they often worked in conditions where the roof was so low they would catch their heads and backs. You would have to dig down between the rail sleepers so they could travel along the roadways. These horses never came up the pit; they could be down there for up to twenty five years. After our annual holidays, the horses would have been in the stables for a week or a fortnight and when we went to get them out they would all go mad, running down the roadways and rolling over in the dust, it was a wonderful sight.

The problem with the pit horses was that they all knew exactly where their stables were and, if you let them loose, if only for a minute, they would wander back there and the stables could be up to two miles away from where you were working. We had horses at Point of Ayr until 1967 which was quite late as most of the other pits in north Wales had long since become fully mechanised. When we changed our mining methods and went from hand cutting to machine mining they became surplus to requirements, but I've got a lot of very fond memories of the days when I was a pony driver in the 1950s.

Like most of the young drivers I became very protective of my horse, I can remember taking in green grass, carrots and apples for him. At the start of one shift I found out that Dingo had already worked a double shift so I refused to take him out again. This caused an argument with the ostler during which I threatened to report him to the RSPCA which got me a fresh pony and a note on my lamp to see the manager.

The face pony drivers were on a bonus system which gave them 3d a ton after they had hauled 100 tons. For the work we did I thought that this was grossly unfair. Also the colliers had a percentage of their tonnage deducted for 'dirt' in the coal ('baw'). I told the other drivers that we should be getting 6d a ton or 3d a ton from the first ton we hauled not the hundredth. I also argued that we should be paid on the full tonnage not after the 'dirt' had been deducted. I told the drivers that "If we stop the pit stops!" That got to the ears of the National Union of Mineworkers and there was a note on my lamp to go to the NUM offices.

mecaneiddio erbyn hynny. Pan ddechreuon ni ddefnyddio peiriannau, daeth cyfnod y ceffylau i ben. Mae gen i atgofion melys iawn o'r dyddiau'n trin ceffylau yn y 1950au.

Fel y rhan fwyaf o'r gyrwyr ifanc, roedd gen i feddwl y byd o'm ceffyl, ac rwy'n cofio mynd â glaswellt, afalau a moron iddo. Un diwrnod, deallais fod Dingo wedi gwneud shift ddwbl yn barod, ac felly gwrthodais fynd ag ef allan. Aeth hi'n ffræ rhyngof i a gwas y stabl. Ond ar ôl i mi fygwth dweud wrth yr RSPCA amdano, fe ges i ferlen arall a nodyn ar fy lamp i fynd i weld y rheolwr.

Roedd gyrwyr merlod y talcen glo yn cael eu talu yn ôl system fonws, lle'r oeddynt yn cael 6d y dunnell ar ôl cludo 100 tonn. Roeddwn i'n meddwl bod hynny'n annheg iawn o ystyried faint o waith roedden ni'n ei wneud. Hefyd, roedd y glowyr yn colli canran o'u cyflog am y 'baw' yn y glo. Dywedais wrth y gyrwyr eraill y dylem gael ein talu 6d y dunnell neu 3d y dunnell o'r dunnell gyntaf nid ar ôl y ganfed. Dylem hefyd gael ein talu am y dunnell lawn, heb ystyried a oedd 'baw' yn y glo. "Os ydyn ni'n segur, mae'r pwll yn segur!", oedd fy nadl i. Clywodd Undeb Cenedlaethol y Gweithwyr Glo am hyn maes o law, a chefais nodyn ar fy lamp i fynd i swyddfa Undeb y Glowyr (NUM).

Dyma'r tro cyntaf i mi gyfarfod â swyddogion yr NUM. Ein swyddog ar y pryd oedd Jack 'Carreg Lwyd', dyn â llais cyfoethog a chras. Treuliodd gryn amser yn esbonio'r ffyrdd gorau o ddatrys problemau yn y

gwaith. Rwy'n ei gofio'n dweud "Felly, rwy'ti eisiau 6d. Wel, ti'n gofyn am 2d i ddechrau, yna 2d arall ymhen ychydig, a 2d arall yn nes ymlaen, a dyna ti – wedi llwyddo i gael chwe cheiniog. Ond os ei di atyn nhw a mynnu 6d ar unwaith, dim siawns!" Nid oedd byth yn gweiddi na tharo'r bwrdd â'i ddwrn, ond roedd ganddo rywbeth arbennig, a gallai ddarbwylo'r rheolwr ei fod yn gwneud ffafr arbennig ag ef trwy ofyn am gyflogau neu amodau gweithio gwell. Ei athroniaeth oedd ennill y fargen orau bosibl oddi wrth y rheolwyr heb beri unrhyw drafferth i'r gweithwyr – "Gallet ti wastad fynd yn ôl a rhoi cynnig arall arni." Roedd Jack Carreg Lwyd yn un o'r swyddogion olaf yn NUM oedd wedi profi blynyddoedd llwm a chaled iawn, a byddai gweld eisiau eu profiad gwerthfawr ymhen blynyddoedd i ddod.

Yn fuan wedyn, cefais fy anfon gan yr undeb i Gynhadledd Heddwch yn yr Almaen (rwy'n meddwl mai fi oedd yr unig un o'r lofa â phasbort ar y pryd) gyda phobl ifanc eraill o bob cwr o Ewrop. Roedd hyn yn y 1950au, a'r Ail Ryfel Byd yn dal yn boenus o fyw yn y cof. Rwy'n cofio'n iawn y chwerwder a'r atgasedd pur rhwng pobl o'r Iseldiroedd a'r Almaen yn arbennig.

Aethon nhw â ni i weld y Llen Haearn a oedd yn rhannu'r Almaen ar y pryd. O gopa'r mynydd, roeddech chi'n gallu gweld y weiren

This was my first real encounter with the NUM officials. The NUM delegate was Jack 'Carreg Lwyd' who had a wonderful rich gravelly Welsh voice. He spent a long time with me explaining the right and wrong way to go about solving problems at work. I well remember him saying "So you want 6d. Well you ask for 2d, then a little later another 2d, then a little later another 2d and you have you sixpence. But if you go in and demand 6d then you will not get it!" He never shouted or banged the table but he had a way about him and could convince the manager that he was doing him a favour by asking for improvements to wages or working conditions. His philosophy was to get the best possible deal from the management with the least amount of hurt to the workforce – "You can always go back and try again." Jack 'Carreg Lwyd' was one of the last of a breed of NUM officials who had experienced the really difficult years, their experience would be sadly missed in the years to come.

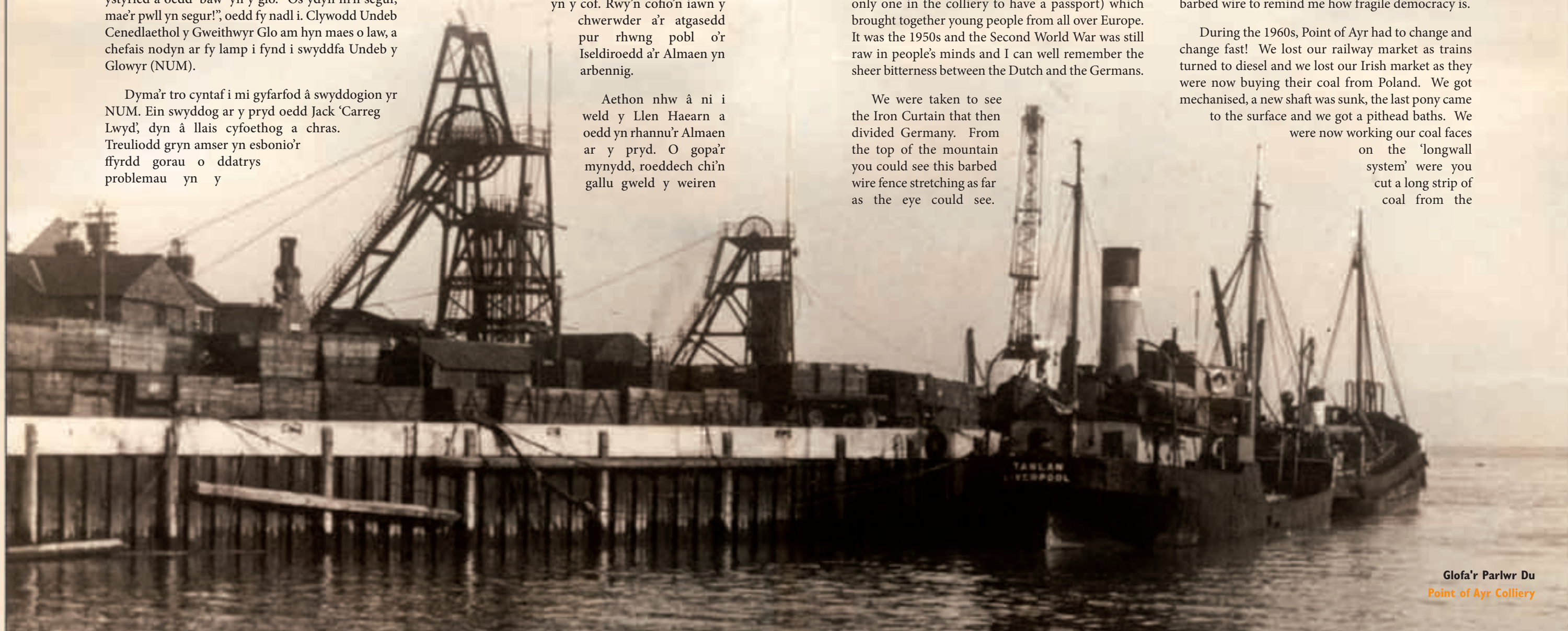
Some time after this, the union sent me to a Youth Peace Conference in Germany (I think that I was the only one in the colliery to have a passport) which brought together young people from all over Europe. It was the 1950s and the Second World War was still raw in people's minds and I can well remember the sheer bitterness between the Dutch and the Germans.

We were taken to see the Iron Curtain that then divided Germany. From the top of the mountain you could see this barbed wire fence stretching as far as the eye could see.

Behind this fence was a ten metre strip which was harrowed every three days so that footprints could be seen and all along the fence were watch towers. We were near a watch tower which had three armed guards. I went up to the fence and started to break off a piece of barbed wire which upset the conference organisers who shouted at me to come away from the fence as the guards had un-slung their rifles. I got my piece of wire but was reprimanded for being so foolish.

The self-appointed 'leader' of the British group went to the organisers to apologise for me and told them that "You can't expect anything better from the miners, they are always making trouble in the UK, and the Welsh miners are the worst of the lot." I knew that the guards wouldn't have shot me because, even though I was young and not very politically aware then, I could see that the fence wasn't there to keep me out but to keep their own people in. The incident had a tremendous effect on me which has lasted a lifetime; I had learnt that there was more to life than a Saturday night out in Rhyl. I still have that piece of barbed wire to remind me how fragile democracy is.

During the 1960s, Point of Ayr had to change and change fast! We lost our railway market as trains turned to diesel and we lost our Irish market as they were now buying their coal from Poland. We got mechanised, a new shaft was sunk, the last pony came to the surface and we got a pithead baths. We were now working our coal faces on the 'longwall system' were you cut a long strip of coal from the



Glofa'r Parlwr Du
Point of Ayr Colliery

bigog am filltiroedd maith. Tu ôl i'r ffens hon wedyn roedd llain deg metr o dir oedd yn cael ei aredig bob tri diwrnod fel bod modd gweld yr olion troed, a thyrrau gwylio bob cam o'r ffens. Roedden ni'n sefyll ger tŵr gwylio gyda thri gŵr arfog. Es i draw at y ffens a dechrau torri darn o'r weiren bigog. Cafodd trefnwyr y gynhadledd dipyn o fraw, a dyma nhw'n gweiddi arnaf i symud draw o'r ffens am fod y milwyr yn diosg eu gynnu. Llwyddais i gael darn o'r weiren bigog, ond cefais gerydd am ymddwyn mor anghyfrifol.

Aeth un o'r Prydeinwyr – a oedd wedi penodi'i hun yn rhyw fath o 'arweinydd' - at y trefnwyr i ymddiheuro ar fy rhan, gan ddweud "Beth arall fydddech chi'n ddisgwyl gan lowyr, maen nhw'n creu helynt byth a hefyd ym Mhrydain, yn enwedig glowyr o Gymru." Roeddwn i'n gwybod yn iawn na fyddai'r gwarchodwyr wedi saethu ataf oherwydd, er fy mod i'n ifanc ar y pryd ac yn anwybodus am wleidyddiaeth, roedd hi'n amlwg mai pwrpas y ffens oedd cadw'u pobl eu hunain i mewn, nid fy nghadw i allan. Cafodd y digwyddiad hwn effaith aruthrol a phellgyrhaeddol arnaf; a dysgais fod mwy i fywyd na nos Sadwrn yn y Rhyl. Mae'r darn o weiren bigog gennyf o hyd, er mwyn f'atgoffa pa mor fregus yw democratiaeth.

Yn ystod y 1960au, roedd yn rhaid i'r Parlwr Du newid - a hynny'n gyflym hefyd! Fe gollwyd y farchnad reilffyrdd gyda dyfodiad y trenau disel, a cholli'r farchnad Wyddelig wedyn wrth i Iwerddon fewnforio glo o Wlad Pwyl. Cyflwynwyd peiriannau yn y pwll, suddwyd siafft newydd, daeth y ferlen olaf i wyneb y pwll, a chawsom faddondai pen pwll. Bellach, roeddem yn defnyddio system "talcen hir", sef torri strided hir o lo o'r wythien, symud y cynhalbyst ymlaen a gadael i'r to y tu ôl i'r talcen gwympto tu ôl i chi. Roedd pawb braidd yn nerfus gan nad oedden ni erioed wedi defnyddio'r fath system o'r blaen. Roeddwn i'n gweithio gyda dyn o'r enw Wil 'Brown Cow' - does gen i ddim syniad beth oedd ei enw iawn, ond roedd pawb o'i deulu'n 'Brown Cow'. Dyna lle'r oedden ni, yn gadael i'r to ddisgyn tu ôl i'r talcen, heb neb yn dweud fawr ddim ond yn poeni'n dawel am wely'r môr uwch ein pennau. Ac meddai Wil yn sychlyd, "Peidiwch â phoeni hogia - ond os gwelwch chi bysgodyn, rhedwch fel fflamia!" Dyna i chi flas ar hiwmor o dan y ddaear. Roedd rhywun bob amser yn barod i godi gwên er mwyn torri ar y tensiwn.

Ni chafwyd dechrau da i'r drefn newydd o ddefnyddio peiriannau llafnu ar y talcenni glo. Roedd y rheolwr a'r NUM yn methu cytuno ar gytundeb, a'r NUM yn ein cynghori i beidio dechrau torri'r glo nes bod cytundeb wedi'i lofnodi. Ar ddiwrnod cyntaf y drefn newydd, aethom i gyd i'n manau gweithio. Er

bod pawb yn yr un cwch, fi oedd yn llywio'r peiriant llafnu newydd, ac felly roedd y pwysau i gyd arnaf i. Gwrthodais gychwyn y peiriant llafnu. Y diwrnod canlynol, anfonwyd pawb adref gan y rheolwr gyda'n ffurflenni P45 a llythyr yn dweud ein bod wedi cael y sac. Er bod rhai o'r bechgyn yn poeni, roeddwn i'n ffyddiog na fyddai'r NUM yn gadael i hynny ddigwydd ac, o fewn yr wythnos, roedden ni'n ôl gyda chytundeb wedi'i lofnodi a thalcen yn y Parlwr Du yn cynhyrchu glo gyda pheiriant llafnu am y tro cyntaf.

Roedd y rhyfel newydd orffen pan adewais i'r ysgol, felly dim ond addysg elfennol ges i, a ph'un bynnag, doedd dim disgwyl i bobl fel fi lwyddo'n academiaidd. Ychydig iawn o addysg ges i felly, ac fe es i'r pwll i weithio gyda dynion â hyd yn oed llai o addysg na fi. Ond y syndod mwyaf i mi, hyd yn oed pan oeddwn i'n ifanc, oedd bod rhai o'r dynion hyn yn feirdd, cantorion a cherddorion. Roeddwn i'n gweithio gyda thaniwr o'r enw Einion Evans, a doedd dim posib mynd i mewn i'w dŷ bron iawn oherwydd yr holl gadeiriau barddol a enillodd mewn eisteddfodau. Roedd ef a'i debyg yn ysgrifennu cerddi caeth, ac yn gyfarwydd â hanes y beirdd mawr i gyd. Roedd eraill prin eu haddysg yn perthyn i un o gorau niferus yr ardal ar y pryd, ac yn gwybod popeth am operâu ac arias a chantorion. Dyn a wŷr o ble cawson nhw'r holl wybodaeth, ond roedden nhw'n bobl hyddysg, ysgolheigaidd heb os.

Bu'r Parlwr Du yn bwl cynhyrchiol a phroffidiol am y rhan fwyaf o'i oes; a phan ddaeth y gwaith i ben, daeth 700 mlynedd o hanes glofaol y Gogledd i ben hefyd. Mae cofnodion yn dangos mai ym 1286 y cafodd glo ei gloddio am y tro cyntaf yn y Gogledd, a'r tro olaf oedd 1986. Daeth y teirw dur i chwalu'r pwll i'r llawr, a driliwyd twll yng ngwely'r môr er mwyn boddi'r hen dalcenni glo. Pan welais i'r safle ddiwethaf, roedd wedi'i sgrafellu'n lân a dim bricsen ar ôl hyd yn oed. Roedd wedi dychwelyd i'w gyflwr gwreiddiol – morglawdd o laid.

Gadewais dorch gyda'r gair 'COFIWCH' arni ger hen siafft Rhif 1, y siafft gyntaf i mi ddisgyn iddi yn fachgen, a chofio rhai o gymeriadau'r dyddiau hynny:

Einion Evans – bardd,

Moi Evans – pregethwr,

Cliff Price – tenor,

Jack Carreg Llwyd – ffynhonnell gwybodaeth am hanes y glowyr.

Cewri cedyrn, cyfiawn.

Ted McKay

coal seam, moved the roof supports forward and let the roof behind the face fall in behind you. We'd never worked this system before and everyone was feeling a bit apprehensive. I was working with a chap called Will 'Brown Cow', I have no idea what his proper name was, but all his family were 'Brown Cows'. We were letting the roof cave in behind the face and no one was saying much but everyone was worried about the sea bed above us. Then Will said, very drily, "Don't worry lads – but if you see any fish run!" That was the type of humour that you had underground, there was always someone who would come up with something humorous to break the tension.

The first mechanised 'shearer' coal face did not have a good start. The manager and the NUM could not agree on a contract and the NUM advised us not to start cutting coal without one being signed. On the day the coal face was due to start we all went to our working places. Although we were all in it together, I was the one actually operating the coal shearer so the pressure was all on me. I refused to start the shearer and the following day the manager sent us all home with our P45s and a letter to say that we had been sacked. Some of the boys were worried but I was confident that the NUM wouldn't let that happen and, within a week, we were all back with a signed contract and Point of Ayr's first shearer face was producing coal.

The Loaders of 18's Set, Durbog Seam

*In future years when tales are told
Of daring deeds of men so bold
I know that no-one will forget
The slogging lads of 18's set.*

*These are the lads that toil and sweat
Down the mine that's dark and wet.
For seven long hours they fill the coal
For a living wage their only goal.*

*Danger and hardship come their way
But on they go without dismay.
Cold pangs of fear they never feel
These dauntless lads with nerves of steel.*

*The work stained hand and coal face scar
Show you clearly that these lads are
Not idle rich, Luke and McKay
Earn every penny of their pay.*

*And when some grumblers cause a row
That coal is dear, just tell them how
That some with limbs and life do pay,
Yes, lads like Luke and Ted McKay.*

Einion Evans (Fireman, 18's Set)



The war had just finished when I left school so I'd only had an elementary education and, in any case, people like me weren't expected to amount to much in any case. So I went to the pit with little education and worked with men who had even less than I did. However, what always amazed me, even when I was young, was that some of these men were poets, singers and musicians. I worked with a fireman called Einion Evans and you couldn't get into his house for all the bardic chairs that he had won at Eisteddfodau. People like him wrote in strict metre poetry and they could tell you all about the great poets of history. People of little education, but they could be members of one of the many choirs we had then, these were men who could tell you about operas and arias and singers. How they managed to amass all this knowledge I'll never know but they were scholarly, knowledgeable people.

Point of Ayr was a productive and profitable pit for most of its working life; when it closed it ended 700 years of coal mining in north Wales. The first record of coal being mined in north Wales was in 1286 and the last in 1986. They bulldozed the pit flat and drilled a hole in the seabed and let the sea flood the workings. The last time I visited it the site it had been scraped clean, there was not even a brick left. It had returned to how it had been – just a tidal mud bank.

I laid a wreath with the single word 'COFIWCH' (Remember) on it by the old No. 1 shaft, the shaft I had first gone down as a boy, and remembered some of the men of those days:

Einion Evans – he was a poet,

Moi Evans – he was a preacher,

Cliff Price – he sang tenor,

Jack Carreg Llwyd – he was steeped in the history of the miners.

All were fine and honourable men.

Ted McKay

Braslun bach

A Little Sketch



Fe wnes i'r braslun hwn yn y Parlwr Du tua hanner can mlynedd yn ôl, a dyma'r unig ddarlun i mi ei wneud danddaear. Roedd dau ohonom yn gweithio ar y talcen glo ar y pryd, ac fe es i nôl mwy o goed i gynnal y to. Pan ddychwelais gyda'r pyst, roeddwn i'n gallu gweld fy nghydweithiwr yn trimio'r talcen gyda chaib llaw. Sefais yn y fan a'r lle a diffodd y lamp i serio'r llun yn fy mhen. Yna, defnyddiais bensil a llyfr cofnodi wedi'i fenthyl gan y taniwr, a gwneud braslun o'r olygfa o'm blaen.

Er fy mod i wedi hen adael y pwll erbyn hyn, mae'r braslun bach hwn yn dal i'm hatgoffa sut le oedd yno. Ond does dim modd cyfleu'r llwch yn y braslun, y llwch hwnnw a ddinistriodd iechyd cymaint o lowyr.

Ted McKay

Idrew this sketch underground at Point of Ayr some fifty years ago and it is the only drawing I ever did underground. There were two of us working together on the coal face and I went to fetch some timber to support the roof. When I came back onto the face with the prop, I could see my workmate trimming the face with a hand pick and stopped, turned off my lamp to get the picture in my head. Then, using a pencil and report book borrowed from the fireman, I sketched the scene in front of me.

I am out of the pit now but this little sketch reminds me of what it was like. However, what the sketch cannot capture is the dust we worked in, that dust which wreaked so much havoc with the health of so many miners.

Ted McKay



Stondin ddillad ail-law yn ffreutur Glofa Bers, tua 1970
Charity clothes stall at Bersham Colliery canteen, c.1970

Roedd Pawb yn Ffrindiau

Cefais fy ngeni ar Fawrth y cyntaf 1913, ac fe ddes i'n brentis ffitiwr yng Nglofa'r Fron yn 14 oed. Es i weithio fel ffitiwr yng Nglofa Gresffordd ym 1928, ac roeddwn i'n gweithio yn adran 'Dennis' y lofa ddydd Gwener 21 Medi 1934, ddiwrnod cyn y ffrwydrad. Roedd y bos wedi fy anfon i osod pibelli aer cywasgedig ar gyfer peiriannau tyllu - peiriannau a oedd yn creu 'twll drifftio' o ardal 142 i'r prif dwnnel er mwyn cael rhagor o awyriad gan fod y twnel i'n isel iawn ers streic 1926. Roedd angen mwy o aer gan fod yr ardal yn boethach nag erioed. Byddai'r twll pedair troedfedd sgwâr yn cael ei leinio â phibelli aer cynfas er mwyn gadael yr aer i mewn. Bob diwrnod, roedden ni'n drilio tyllau ar gyfer y ffrwydrad, a thua 2 o'r gloch y bore, pan fyddai'r dynion yn mynd i gael snapin byddai'r swyddog yn stopio'r ffan a thynnu'r pibelli cynfas i lawr er mwyn osgoi difrod pan fyddai'r ffrwydrad yn tanio.

Rwy'n credu mai'r hyn ddigwyddodd, oedd iddyn nhw ddilyn yr un drefn y diwrnod canlynol, ond bod nwy wedi ymgasglu rhwng cyfnod diffodd y ffan ac adeg tanio'r tyllau, a bod hyn wedi achosi'r danchwa. Ffrwydrodd y prif dwnnel gan chwalu'r prif banel trydanol a rhoi'r gwifrau ar dân. Roedd y glec yn diasbedain nes bod pobl ar y wyneb wedi'i chlywed. Llwyddodd rhai o'r dynion i ddianc ond cafodd y gweddill eu llosgi i farwolaeth - am erchyll! Roeddwn i'n adnabod pob un a fu farw yno, roedd pawb yn ffrindiau. Anghofia' i fyth mohonyr nhw.

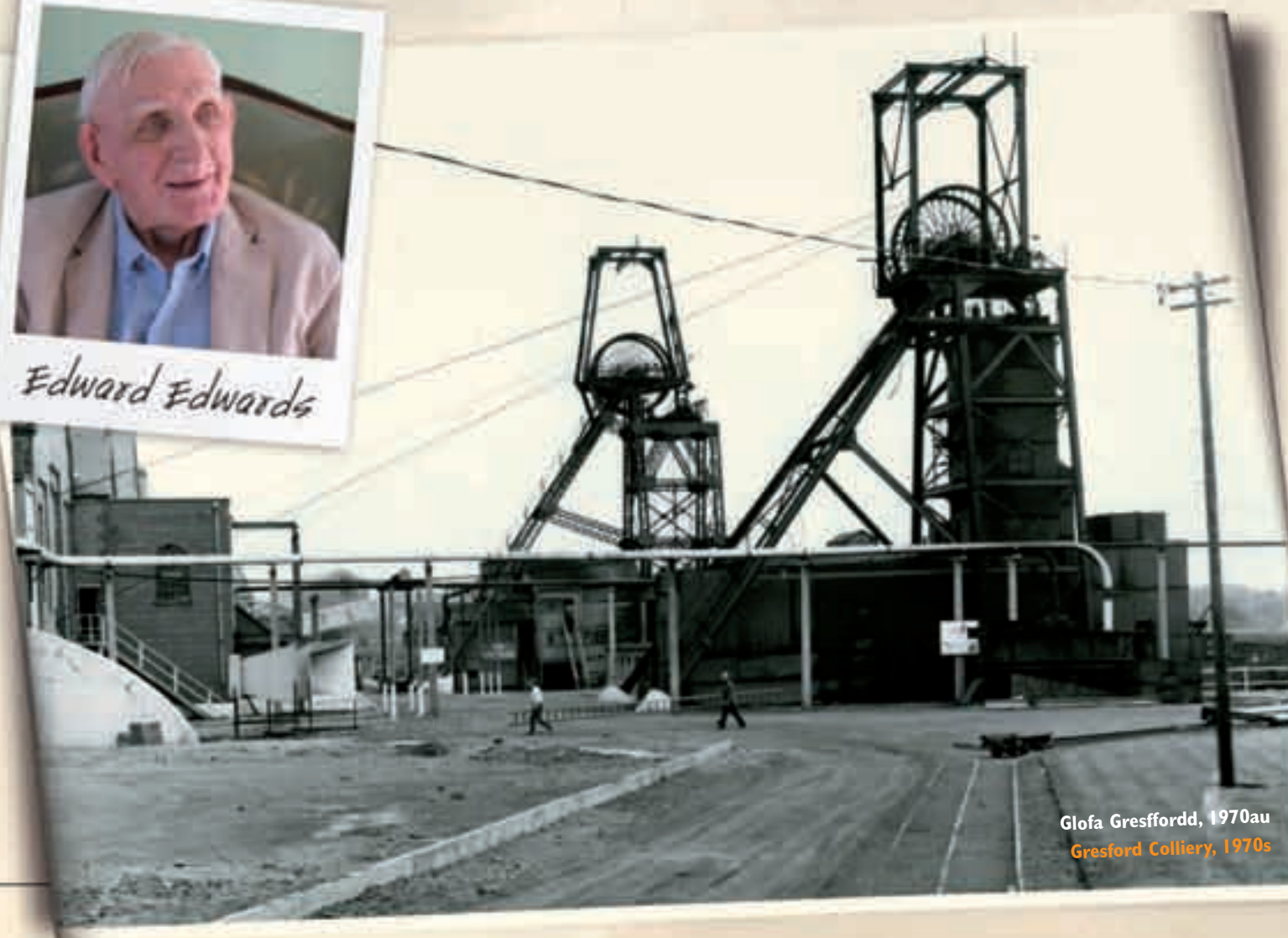
Digwyddodd y ffrwydrad tua 2 o'r gloch fore Sadwrn. Yn ddiweddarach y bore hwnnw, roeddwn i'n cerdded i'r gwaith ac yn clywed pobl yn dweud "mae Gresffordd ar dân!" ond chymerais i fawr o sylw. Ar ôl cyrraedd y lofa, roedd y lle dan ei sang. Es i weld fy mhennaeth, George Holmes. "Tyrd hefo fi," meddai ac aethon ni i lawr y pwll. Cefais fy anfon i nôl ceffyl o'r stabl a mynd â wagen yn llawn o dywod a diffoddwyr tân i adran 'Dennis' a oedd yn dal i losgi. Es i mewn mor bell â'r 'clytsh' (injan halio danddaear) a chyfarfod â Tommy Tilson, capten y tîm achub. Gwaeddodd hwnnw, "Eddie, dos allan - mae'n un ffrwydrad ar ôl y llall yma!" Roedd hynny'n ddigon o rybudd i mi, ac fe ruthrais yn ôl i waelod y pwll cyn gynted â phosibl!

Fe welais y pennaeth, a dweud wrtho fy mod i'n mynd adref. Dywedodd y dylwn ddychwelyd fore Sul er mwyn gosod pibelli ar gyfer peiriant fyddai'n cyrraedd o bwll Llai. Erbyn chwech yr hwyr,

roedden nhw wedi llwyddo i selio ardal y ffrwydrad. Y noson honno, pan es i weld taid, gofynnodd "Sut mae petha'?" Atebais innau eu bod nhw wedi selio ardal y ffrwydrad. "Beth?" ebychodd, "mi ffrwydrith fel corcyn potel!" Y dydd Mawrth canlynol, bu ffrwydrad ym Mhwl Martin, gan chwythu'r ffan yn rhacs a lladd un o'n dynion ar ben y pwll.

Pan gaeodd y pwll, fe es i weithio yng Nglofa Plas Power yn gyntaf ac yna i'r Bers, gan eu bod yn brin o ddynion. Dychwelais i Gresffordd ym 1938 ac aros yno tan y 1960au, pan es i weithio yng ngwaith dur Shotton. Roedd gen i lwyth o ffrindiau yng Ngresffordd, a phawb yn fy adnabod i fel 'Eddie the Fitter'. Roedd hyd yn oed y rheolwr yn gyfeillgar - wnes i erioed ddadlau hefo neb. Cefais fy ngladdu danddaear yn sgil cwmp glo mewn un talcen, a cholli llygad. Rwy'n 98 oed erbyn hyn, ac wedi cael bywyd da er gwaethaf popeth. Pe bawn i'n ddigon ifanc, byddwn i'n gwneud y cwbl eto.

Edward Edwards



Glofa Gresffordd, 1970au
Gresford Colliery, 1970s

We Were All Friends

I was born on the first of March 1913 and became an apprentice fitter at Fron Colliery at the age of fourteen. I went to work in Gresford Colliery in 1928 as a fitter and was in the Dennis section of the mine on Friday, 21st September 1934, the day before the explosion. I had been sent by my boss to install new compressed air pipes for 'boring' (drilling) machines. They were driving a 'drift hole' from the 142 district to the main roadway to provide extra ventilation as the roads had become very low during the 1926 strike. The district had become hotter and they needed to get more air in. The hole was about four feet square and would be lined with a canvas ventilation ducting to get the air in. Every day the holes would be drilled for the explosive charges and, about 2am, the men would go for 'snapping' (food) and the official would stop the fan and take the ducting down to prevent it being damaged when the explosives were fired.

What I believe happened was that they carried out the same procedure the next day but there had been a

build up of gas between the time the fan was stopped and the holes were fired which led to the explosion. The explosion blew out into the main roadway and smashed a main electrical panel and set the cables on fire. There was such a bang that it could be heard on the surface. Some men got out but the rest were all burnt - a terrible death. I knew all the men that died down there, we were all friends and I will never forget them.

The explosion happened at about 2am on the Saturday morning and later that morning I was coming to work and heard people saying "Gresford's blown up! Gresford's blown up!" but I didn't take much notice of them. When I got to the colliery yard the place was full of people. I went to see my boss George Holmes and he said "Come with me" and we went down the pit. He said to go to the stables to get a horse and take a wagon full of sand and fire extinguishers into the Dennis section which was still burning. I got as far as the 'clutch' (an underground haulage engine) where I met Tommy Tilson, the captain of the rescue team who shouted to me "Eddie, get out - explosions are going off one after another!" That was enough for me and I got back to the pit bottom as fast as I could.

I saw my boss and told him I was going home and he said to come back on Sunday morning to put up some pipes as they were bringing in a machine from Llay Pit. By six o'clock that night they had sealed off the explosion area. That evening I went to my granddad's and he asked "How are things going?" and I told him that they've sealed it up, "What?" he said "It'll blow up like a cork!" On the Tuesday an explosion came up the Martin Pit, blew the fan up and killed a man on the surface.

When the pit shut I went to Plas Power Colliery first then later went to Bersham which was short of men. I came back to Gresford in 1938 and stayed there until the 1960s when I went to work in Shotton (steel works). I had lots of friends in Gresford, they all knew me as 'Eddie the Fitter', even the manager was friendly - I never argued with anyone. I was buried underground by a fall of coal on one face and I lost an eye, but I'm now 98 years old and in spite of everything I've had a good life. If I was young enough I'd do it all over again.

Edward Edwards

Henry Dyke Dennis

Pan oeddwn i'n fachgen ifanc yn niwedd y 1930au, roeddwn i'n gweithio yn New Hall, Rhiwabon, i Henry Dyke Dennis, rheolwr gyfarwyddwyr Glofa Gresffordd a oedd hefyd yn landlord i ni. Gweithio yn y gerddi oeddwn i, yn gwneud gwaith syml fel sgubo a brwsio. Doedd gen i ddim brws chwaith. Roeddwn i'n gorfod defnyddio 'besom', ysgub wedi'i wneud o ganghennau coeden. Dechreuais wneud y gwaith hwn yn 14 oed, am 10 swllt yr wythnos.

Roeddwn i'n arfer ei weld bob dydd. Gorchwyl gynta'r dydd oedd golchi lloiau'r ystafell wydr a oedd yn ymestyn o'i dŷ i'w swyddfa, a gofalu am y planhigion ar y naill ochr. Byddwn i'n golchi'r llawr gyda darn o sach a dŵr oer, a byddai yntau'n cerdded heibio gan smocio. Ni fyddai'n torri gair nac yn cydnabod fy modolaeth, oni bai ei fod eisiau rhywbeth. Roedd ganddo sigarét bob tro, ac wrth iddo fy mhasio a minnau'n golchi'r teils llawr coch, byddai'n taflu ei sigarét ar y llawr yn ddirmygus. Felly, byddwn i'n codi'r sigarét ac yn cael rhyw fygn bach. Doeddwn i erioed wedi clywed am y math arbennig o sigarét o'r blaen, ond rwy'n gwybod mai 'Balkan Sobrane' oeddwn nhw, oherwydd byddai'n taflu pecyn gwag ar lawr weithiau.

Rhyw olwg digon cyffredin oedd arno, bob amser mewn siwt, ond cyffredin serch hynny. Roeddwn i'n arfer edrych arno a meddwl "Tybed ydy o'n cofio am y ddau gant chwedeg o ddynion a gafodd eu lladd yng Ngresffordd?" Go brin iddo 'rioed feddwl amdanynt.

Ailbriododd fy nhad, a chawsant eu troi o'u cartref yn yr Hafod, oherwydd roedden nhw'n mynd i'w gladdu fel rhan o'r domen ar gyfer y lofa. Felly, fe gawson nhw dŷ arall ar Ffordd Bangor. Roeddwn i'n gorfod mynd i fyw at fy llysfam a'i merch a'i brawd, felly. Doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi hynny o gwbl, felly gwnes gais am swydd yn gofalu am gŵn yn West Wycombe, Swydd Buckingham. Ond roedden ni'n cael ein llwgu i farwolaeth yno, felly, penderfynais ddianc un noson a dychwelyd adref! Fe es i Lofa'r Hafod wedyn, a gweithiais i'r diwydiant glo am ryw hanner canrif, o 15 oed tan i mi ymddeol yn 65.

Ken Aspinall

Ken Aspinall (dde) yn cyflwyno'r lamp ddiogelwch olaf a ddefnyddiwyd yng Nglofa Hafod i Joe 'Beagle', swyddog undeb. Mae Ceri, cath y lofa, yn y cefndir.

Ken Aspinall (right) presenting the last flame safety lamp used at Hafod Colliery to union official Joe 'Beagle'. Ceri the colliery cat can be seen in the background.



Tair cenhedlaeth o deulu Dennis, gyda Henry Dyke Dennis yn y canol.
Three generations of the Dennis family, Henry Dyke Dennis is the central figure.

Henry Dyke Dennis

When I was a young boy in the late 1930s, I used to work in New Hall, Ruabon, for Henry Dyke Dennis, the managing director of Gresford Colliery who was our landlord. I worked in the gardens doing the simple jobs like sweeping up but I didn't have a brush. I had to use a 'besom', which was made out of the branches of a tree. I was 14 when I started that job and I got 10 shillings a week.

I used to see him every day. My first job every morning was washing the floors in the conservatory which was from his house to the office and seeing to all the plants on each side. I'd be washing the floor with a piece of sack and cold water and he'd be walking past me with his cigarettes. He wouldn't speak to me, didn't know I existed, unless he wanted something done. He'd always have his cigarette and as he passed me washing the red tiles on the floor, he'd throw it down on the floor, just like that. So I used to pick it up and have a few puffs at it. I'd never heard of these cigarettes, but I knew they were called Balkan

Sobranie because he used to throw the empty packet down as well sometimes.

He looked quite ordinary, always had a suit on, but quite ordinary. I used to look at him and I used to think to myself "I wonder does he give a thought to all those two hundred and sixty six men dead at Gresford?" I don't think it entered his head.

My father remarried and they were turned out of the house in the Hafod, because they were going to bury it as part of the dirt bank for the colliery. So they got a house on the Bangor Road. That meant I'd have to live with my stepmother and her daughter and her brother. I didn't like that, so I applied for a job in West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, as a kennel boy. But we were starved to death there, so, one night, I did a bunk and came back home! Then, from there I went to the Hafod Colliery. I was in the coal industry for about 50 years, from the age of 15 until I retired at 65.

Ken Aspinall

The Closure of Gresford Colliery in 1973

*We've seen the end of Gresford, toil, sweat and dust
To be dismantled piece by piece and left to rust.*

*But not for us the memory, so many years ago
Of men who died a terrible death, deep down below.*

*I saw grown men shed their tears – no shame
For what had happened, you could not blame.*

*Fathers, brothers, sons are down
Trapped for ever below the ground.*

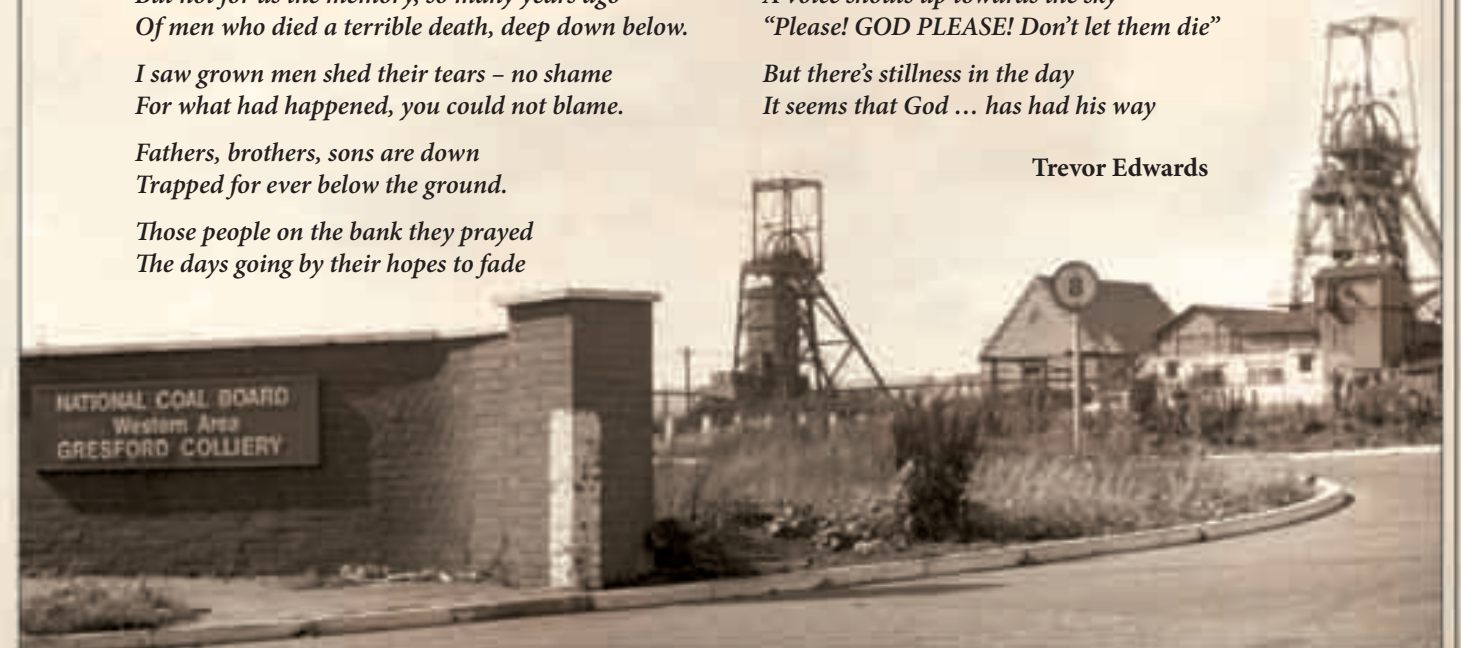
*Those people on the bank they prayed
The days going by their hopes to fade*

*To see their loved ones once again
It's not to be, it's all in vain.*

*A voice shouts up towards the sky
"Please! GOD PLEASE! Don't let them die"*

*But there's stillness in the day
It seems that God ... has had his way*

Trevor Edwards



“Mae 'na ddamwain wedi digwydd”

Roeddwn i'n drydanwr yn y Bers. Un diwrnod roedd swyddog hyfforddi am benodi dau neu dri o ddynion yn arsylwyr safle damweiniau, a chefais i fy newis. Wel, ar f'enaid i, roeddwn i ar shift nos yn y siop drydan ddiwrnod ar ôl bod ar gwrs yn Stoke on Trent, pan gefais alwad ffôn o'r ystafell lampau i ddweud eu bod nhw eisiau gair. Roedden nhw eisiau gwybod pwy oedd perchennog rhif lamp arbennig. Roeddwn i'n dda am gofio rhifau ar y pryd; rhywbeth a etifeddais gan fy nhad rwy'n credu oherwydd mae yntau'n dal i gofio rhifau ac enwau pawb yn y pwll hyd heddiw. Ar ôl gofyn beth oedd yn bod, atebon nhw “Byddai'n well i ti ddod yma i nôl dy lamp, oherwydd bydd rhaid i ti fynd danddaear. Mae 'na ddamwain wedi digwydd” ac roeddwn i'n gallu synhwyro bod rhywbeth mawr o'i le.

Es i draw mewn chwinciad a chynnau fy lamp. Yr unig swyddog yno ar y pryd oedd David Hussey, oedd newydd ddechrau gweithio fel swyddog cysylltiadau personol. Nid oedd ganddo unrhyw brofiad o fod danddaear mewn gwirionedd, ond fel swyddog, roedd yn paratoi i fynd i waelod y pwll. Yr unig beth a wyddem oedd bod rhywun wedi'i ladd, a bod angen inni wybod pwy. Roedd rhif y lamp yn agos iawn i rif lamp fy mrawd i, felly mae'n amlwg ei fod wedi cychwyn gweithio tua'r un adeg ag o. Wedyn fe gawson ni hyd i enw'r creadur, a cheisio deall pam nad oedd ei enw ar restr y shift b'nawn ac ati? Beth bynnag, aethom i lawr y siafft, a phwy oedd yn cerdded atom ni ond dau fachgen ifanc a gafodd eu hanfon gan ddirprwy a welodd y ddamwain.

Roedden nhw'n beichio crïo ac yn ceisio dweud beth oedd wedi digwydd. Trois at David Hussey a dweud, “Os ydi'r ddau yma fel hyn, sut siâp fydd ar weddill y pwll?” Ar ôl anfon y ddau i'r ffreutur, roedd rhaid i ni fynd ymlaen i safle'r ddamwain i weld beth oedd yn digwydd. Roedden nhw'n cludo'r corff allan ar hyd y llwybr aer, ac roedd hi'n amlwg bod y dynion yn ddigalon iawn. Dywedais wrth David Hussey, “Mae'n well i ti gael gair efo'r Oferman; allwn ni ddim cadw'r pwll ar agor heno neu mi fyddwn yn siŵr o gael damwain arall gyda'r dynion yn gweithio dan deimlad”.

Bu penderfyniad yn y fan a'r lle; a dywedwyd wrth y dynion “Pawb allan, i fyny i'r ffreutur, mae 'na ddamwain ddifrifol wedi digwydd.” Aethon ni i safle'r ddamwain yn gyflym, a gweld bod bachgen ifanc wedi bod yn gweithio gyferbyn â'r cludfelt gyda sgrafell, yn glanhau'r belt. Weithiau, byddai rwbél yn gollwng ac yn baeddu'r belt isaf. Mae'n debyg fod y bachgen wrthi'n glanhau'r belt isaf pan gafodd ei

lusgo i fyny'r ddolen - y 'tyniannwr'. Dywedais wrth David Hussey, “Mae'n ddigon syml, fe wnawn ni lun o safle'r ddamwain ar ôl dychwelyd i ben y pwll; rydyn ni'n gwybod yn union beth ddigwyddodd yma.” Fe gerddon ni oddi yno gyda'r dynion, pawb mor dawel â'r bedd, a chyrraedd pen y pwll erbyn un ar ddeg o'r gloch. Penderfynwyd anfon y dynion adref, a chymryd unrhyw ddatganiadau y diwrnod canlynol. Buon nhw wedyn yn ceisio ffonio cartre'r bachgen - roedd ei dad yn gweithio yn y lofa - ond doedd dim ateb. Cawsom wybod mai yn y Legion yn Johnstown yr oedd o mwy na thebyg, a dywedais wrth David Hussey, “Beth wyt ti am ei wneud?” Atebodd, “Wel, mi rwyf ti'n 'nabod pawb yma, bydd rhaid i mi adael popeth i ti.” “Ddoi di hefo fi?” gofynnais. “Wrth gwrs”, atebodd.

Aethon ni yn ei gar i'r Legion yn Johnstown, ac roedd e newydd ddod allan gyda'i wraig. Fe'n gwelodd ni'n dau a gofyn, “Beth ydych chi'n ei wneud yn fan'ma?” “Wel”, meddan ni, “fe gerddwn ni adre' hefo chi, dim ond rownd y gornel ydych chi 'te? Mi ddywedwn ni beth sydd wedi digwydd.” Erbyn deall, roedd y bachgen ifanc ar fin priodi a'i frawd wedi'i ladd prin chwe wythnos ynghynt mewn damwain beic modur. “Y nefoedd fawr” meddyliais, “mae rhai pobl yn cael y gofid i gyd”. Roedd hi'n ofnadwy. Aethon ni'n ôl i'r pwll, ac meddai David Hussey, “Allen ni ddim gwneud mwy.”

Martyn Allmand



“There's been an accident”

I was an electrician at Bersham and one day the training officer wanted two or three men appointed as accident site observers and I was one of the men picked. Well, blow me, I'm working a night shift in the electric shop the very day after attending the course in Stoke on Trent and I was in the shop when a phone call came from the lamp room to say they wanted to speak to me. They wanted to know who this particular lamp number was. I was pretty good on numbers at that time; I think it was a thing I inherited from my Dad because he, even to this day, still remembers peoples pit numbers and names etc. I asked was there any reason why, and they said “Well, you'd better come over and get your lamp on because you're going underground. There's been an accident” and I got the funny feeling that something was wrong.

I was over there like a shot, put a lamp on, and the only official there was a David Hussey, who'd recently started as the personal relations man. He hadn't really got underground experience but he was an official and he was getting prepared to go underground. All we knew was that somebody had been killed but we didn't know who and we were just trying to find out. The lamp number was very close to my brother's number, so it was somebody who started at roughly the same time. And then we got his name and we were wondering how come he's been missed off the afternoon shift lists etc, etc.? Anyway we got down the shaft and coming down the roadway towards us

were two young lads who'd been sent out the district by the deputy who'd discovered the accident. They were crying their eyes out and they tried to tell us the story of what had happened. I said to David Hussey “If these two are like this what's the rest of the pit going to be like?” We told these two lads to go to the canteen, we'd be joining them soon, but we'd have to go to the accident site to see what was going on. They were bringing the body out along the return airway, and you knew in your mind that the men were really upset. I said to David Hussey “You'd better get in touch with the Overman here; this pit can't go on working tonight because there's going to be another accident if they carry on working in this mood.”

The decision was made there and then; the men were told “Everybody out, up the canteen, there's been a serious accident.” We quickly got to the accident site and this young lad had been on the opposite side of the conveyor belt with a scraper, cleaning the belt. What that meant was the spillage sometimes got onto the bottom belt and fouled it. So he was cleaning this and most probably got dragged into the belt into the loop take up - the 'tensioner'. I said to David Hussey “It's quite simple, let's do the drawing of the accident site on the surface; we know exactly what happened here.” We walked out with the men, everybody was just so quiet, and we were back up the pit by eleven o'clock. It was decided that the men were going to be sent home and any statements would have to be taken the following day. Then they tried to ring the lad's home, his father worked in the colliery, but there was no answer. We were told that he would probably be at the Legion in Johnstown and I said to David Hussey, “What do you want to do?” He said “Well you know everybody I'll have to leave it to you.” I said, “Can you come with me?” He said “Of course I can.”

We went off in his car, got to the Legion in Johnstown and he was just coming out with his wife. He saw us and said “What you doing here?” And we said “Well, we'll walk home with you, you only live round the corner don't you? We'll tell you what's gone on.” It turned out that the boy was about to get married and his brother had died six weeks before in a motor cycle accident and you're thinking, my God, what some people have to go through. It was awful. We got back to the pit and David Hussey said “There's nothing more we could do.”

Martyn Allmand





'Ecstras' lleol yn eu gwisgoedd
Local 'extras' in costume

Actorion wedi'u gwisgo fel glowyr
Actors dressed as miners

Katherine Hepburn yng Nglofa'r Bers yn ystod gwaith ffilmio
Katherine Hepburn at Bersham Colliery during filming

The Corn is Green

Hanes athrawes Saesneg sy'n helpu i addysgu plant difreintiedig mewn ardal lofaol yn y Gogledd yw 'The Corn is Green'. Er bod y sgweier a'r bobl leol yn wrthwynebus iddi, mae'n mynd ati i gyflwyno rhinweddau Shakespeare, manteision rhifydddeg a rhagoriaeth gramadeg da i'r pentrefwyr. Mae'n cymryd bachgen lleol dan ei hadain, ac yn ei hyfforddi i ennill ysgoloriaeth i Rydychen.

Cafodd stori Emlyn Williams ei throï'n ffilm am y tro cyntaf ym 1945, gyda Bette Davis yn y brif ran. Ym 1978, ymddangosodd Katherine Hepburn mewn addasiad teledu o'r nofel. Er mwyn paratoi i bortreadu'r cymeriad, daeth yr actores i Lofa'r Bers, a chyfarfod Ken Aspinall yno.

"Hi oedd un o actoresau ffilm enwoca'r byd ar y pryd, a phan ddaeth hi draw i lofa'r Bers, roeddwn i'n gorfod archwilio'i chorff rhag ofn bod unrhyw ddeunydd smygu arni. Roedd rhaid i mi redeg fy nwylo ar hyd ei hasennau, ei chluniau a'i choesau, ac roedd rhai o ddynion y Bers yn eiddigeddus iawn gan mai un o Lofa'r Hafod oeddwn i, a dim ond trwsio'r siafft oeddwn i fod i wneud yno. Roedd dyn yn ei hebrwng o gwmpas, ond cyn gynted ag y cyrhaeddwn ni waelod y pwll, cafodd yntau bwl o banig a dychwelodd i'r brig. Ond fe aeth hi ymlaen i gerdded o gwmpas am dipyn danddaear."

Ken Aspinall

'The Corn is Green' is the story of an English schoolteacher who takes it upon herself to educate the deprived children of a small north Wales mining community. She faces opposition from both the squire and local people, but introduces the village to the joys of Shakespeare, the benefits of arithmetic, and the charms of good grammar. She takes a young local boy under her wing and sets about gaining him an Oxford scholarship.

The Emlyn Williams story was first filmed with Bette Davis in the leading role in 1945. In 1978 it was re-made for television and starred Katharine Hepburn. In order to play her role she visited Bersham Colliery where she met Ken Aspinall.

"She was one of the best known film actresses in the world then and when she visited Bersham pit I had to search her (for smoking materials). I had to feel her ribcage, thighs and legs and it caused a bit of jealousy amongst the Bersham men as I was from Hafod Colliery and all I was supposed to be doing there was a bit of repair work on the shaft. There was a bloke with her but, as soon as they got to the pit bottom, he panicked and they had to bring him straight back up. But she did go and walk around a bit underground."

Ken Aspinall

Mynd â'r llygod am dro

Ytro cyntaf i mi fynd i lawr y pwll yng Ngresffordd oedd trwy'r llwybr aer, ac roedd eich clustiau'n 'popian' bob tro wrth fynd heibio'r aergloeau. Wrth fynd drwy'r drws, roeddech chi'n gallu arogl holl arogleuon y pwll oherwydd dyna lle'r oedd yr hen aer yn pasio - yr 'aer dychwelyd'. Nid oedd yn ffres iawn, fel y gallwch ddychmygu. Mae'n anodd disgrifio'r arogl arbennig hwn. Roedd yn gynnes ac eto'n codi rhywfaint o ofn arnaf, oherwydd doeddwn i erioed wedi bod yno o'r blaen.

Yna, cyrhaeddais y man lle'r oedd yr arolygwyr pen pwll yn archwilio pawb i wneud yn siŵr nad oedd ganddynt fatis na thybaco cyn camu i'r gawell. Pan fyddai pawb yn y gawell, byddai'n disgyn 'Ffympl' - ac roedd y siwrnai drosodd mor sydyn.

Roedden ni'n cael reidid ar rai o'r cludfeltiau danddaear, sef y 'man-riding belts'. Roedd grisiau yn arwain at y cludfelt rwber, gyda phlatfform ar gyfer sefyll yn barod i neidio ymlaen ac i ffwrdd. Ar ôl neidio ymlaen, byddai'n rhaid plygu'ch pen gan fod y to'n isel iawn yn amlach na pheidio. Felly, roeddech chi'n gorfod ar ben y glo a ddeuai o'r talcen a neidio i ffwrdd pan fyddai arwyddion yn dweud wrthych am wneud hynny. Roeddech chi'n gorfod neidio'n gyflym hefyd, neu byddech chi'n taro yn erbyn y ddyfais ddiogelwch gan stopio'r cludfelt a'r holl broses o gynhyrchu glo. Fydddech chi ddim yn boblogaidd iawn pe bai hynny'n digwydd!

Ar ôl cyrraedd eich gweithle, roeddech chi'n gorfod hongian eich cot ar y cylchoedd a hongian eich tun brechdanau hefyd, oherwydd y llygod. Roedden nhw'n bla yn yr Hafod, a dydych chi ddim eisiau gwybod beth roedden ni'n ei wneud â nhw. Wrth sefyll ger y llwythwr yn disgwyl i'r tybiau gyrraedd, roedden ni'n dal y llygod a chael ras hefo nhw. Hefyd, roedden ni'n rhoi cebl ffrwydrion am eu gyddfau ac yn mynd â nhw am dro - rhywbeth i basio'r amser.

Fydddech chi ddim yn meiddio dweud eich bod yn hoffi'r llenwad yn eich brechdan, oherwydd dyna'r unig beth fydddech chi'n ei gael bob diwrnod wedyn. Rwy'n cofio dweud wrth mam fy mod i'n hoffi afalau, ac fe ges i frechdanau afalau am hydoedd wedyn - ac rwy'n golygu hydoedd! Doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi dweud nad oeddwn i eisiau'r brechdanau hyn rhag ofn i mi'i hypsetio hi. Roedd popeth yn blasu'n wahanol danddaear, yn wahanol iawn hefyd. Roedd brechdanau jam yn fendigedig, a synnech chi pa mor flasus oedd jam o dan y ddaear. Doedd gynnion ni



Keith Evans gyda thocyn lamp glofa'r Hafod a Gresffordd
Keith Evans holding his Hafod and Gresford Colliery lamp checks

ddim Kit-Kat na dim felly'r adeg hynny. Dim ond 'snapyn' oedd gennych, heb ei lapio, wedi'i roi yn eich bocs bwyd metel. Os oedd gennych ddarn o gacen hefyd, wel fe allwch ddychmygu sut olwg oedd arno erbyn i chi gyrraedd y gwaith â'r bocs wedi'i daflu o ochr i ochr.

Pan oeddwn i'n gweithio yng Ngresffordd, roedd bariau (*cynhalbyst dur*) yn cynnal y talcen glo. Roedd gennym fariâu estynedig i'w gosod arnynt hefyd er mwyn cynnal y tir ar ôl i chi glirio'r glo â rhaw. Ond roedd rhaid i chi glirio'r glo yn gyntaf cyn eu gosod. Ar y diwrnod arbennig hwn, wrth i mi gychwyn arni, fe gwmpodd y to. Cefais fy llorio gan slab o do chwe modfedd o drwch; ac fe ges i 'ngwthio i ganol y dŵr ar y llawr. Wn i ddim beth ddigwyddodd yn union, ond fe ges i nerth o rywle a llwyddo i godi'r slab oddi arnaf. Gallwn i fod wedi mygu'n hawdd, ond fe wnes i lapio fy mreichiau rownd y slab a chodi fy hun o'r dŵr.

Cefais ddihangfa lwcus arall yn y Parlwr Du. Wrthi'n tyllu'r graig uwchben y glo oeddwn i er mwyn creu lle i osod cynhalbyst neu gylchoedd ar gyfer ffordd fwaog. Roedden ni wedi gorffen tyllu'r ffordd er mwyn rhoi'r ffrwydrion ynddynt. Byddai'r taniwr yn 'paratoi'r powdwr' i chi (*sef rhoi'r ffyn ffrwydrion yn y tyllau*) a ninnau wedyn yn llenwi'r tyllau â thywod i ddal y 'powdwr' yn ei le. Roedd rhai cylchoedd uwch ein pennau, ac roedden ni'n sefyll ar blanciau er mwyn eu cyrraedd a'u llenwi. Ar y diwrnod arbennig hwn, fi oedd yn llenwi'r twll uchel, olaf, gyda thywod.

Wrth i mi stwffio'r twll, tynnais y ffon ffrwydrion allan er mwyn rhoi mwy o dywod yno a daeth y tsiarj allan, felly neidiais i lawr i gael y powdwr. Wrth i mi neidio'n ôl i fyny, disgynnodd y twnnel a chefais fy nharo'n ôl a'm claddu'n rhannol. Cafodd fy nghydweithiwr ar y platform ei daro hefyd, a cholodd ei helmed wrth ddisgyn a hollti'i ben ar y cylch.

Roedd rhaid i mi fynd i'r ganolfan feddygol, lle'r oedd y nyrs yn defnyddio brws bach i sgwrio pob rhan o'r corff oedd â briw. Rwy'n ei chofio hi'n iawn; roedd hi'n sgwrio mor galed nes bod dagrau yn fy llygaid. Ar ôl iddi orffen, dyma hi'n dweud "Does dim iawndal am hyn". Y pwynt oedd eich bod yn cael iawndal am unrhyw greithiau glas a fyddai'n datblygu yn sgil glo mewn briw. Rwy'n credu bod y rheolwyr wedi dweud wrth y nyrsys y byddai briw glân yn arbed llwyth o arian.

Gan fod yr ystafell ambiwlans ym mhen draw'r baddondai pen pwll, roedd sister nyrsio'r Bers yn arfer cerdded drwy'r ystafell wrth i'r dynion newid. Roedd hi'n cerdded fel dyn; ni'r dynion oedd yn cuddio rhagddi hi! Byddai'n mynd heibio'n

ddiseremoni a'r dynion yn siarsio'i gilydd "Argian, gwyliwch eich hun!" Byddai pawb yn bachu'u dillad ar unwaith, ond doedd hi ddim yn ymateb o gwbl - dim ond cerdded heibio'n ddiffwdan.

Sister Quinn oedd ei henw, a hi oedd yr unig berson yn y Bers i ddefnyddio ei henw go iawn gan mai llysenw oedd gan bawb arall. Roedd hi'n amhosibl deall pwy oedd pwy yng nghanol yr holl Roberts, Evans a Williams. Felly, fe ddyfeisiodd hi system yn y ganolfan feddygol a oedd yn dangos rhif pwll, enw go iawn a llysenw pob glöwr. Felly, pe bai rhywun yn ffonio'r ganolfan i holi am 'Alf Crash' roedd hi'n gwybod mai Alf Jones ydoedd go iawn.

Keith 'Tattoo' Evans

Taking mice for a walk

The first time I went down Gresford was through the up cast shaft and your ears used to 'pop' straight away as you went through the air locks. When you went through the doors you actually smelt everything that went on in the pit because that was where the stale air came up - the 'return air'. You can imagine that it wasn't exactly fresh, you can't explain that sort of smell, it was warm and it was a bit frightening because I'd never gone in there before.

Then I came to the cage where the banks man searched you for matches and tobacco before they let you into the cage. And then we all got into the cage and 'fump' the cage just dropped, it was so quick, and you were down at the bottom.

You were allowed to ride on some conveyor belts underground and these were called 'man-riding belts'. There were steps and a platform to let you get onto the rubber conveyor belt which wasn't stopped for you to get on and off but just kept going. So you just jumped on when it was moving and most probably you'd have to keep your head down because the roof was usually low. So you'd just lie on top of the coal coming out from the coal face and wait until you saw the notices telling you to get off and you had to do that quick because, if you missed the getting off platform, you'd hit the safety device and that would stop the conveyor and coal production and you weren't very popular if you did that!

When you got to your working place you had to hang your coat up on the rings and your snapping tin (sandwich box) also had to be hung up because of the mice. There were a lot of mice in Hafod and you wouldn't want to know what they did with them. When we were on the loader waiting for tubs to come in, we used to catch mice and we used to have races with them, you know. We also used to put shot firing cable around their necks and we used to take them for walks - just to pass the time away.

You wouldn't dare say that you liked something you'd had in your sandwiches because you'd have it every

single day from then on. I once said to my mother that I liked apples and she gave me apple sandwiches for ages, and I mean ages. You didn't like to say that you didn't want them because that might upset her. Everything tasted different underground, a lot different, jam butties were great, you wouldn't think how tasty jam was underground, but it was. You didn't have any Kit-Kats and things like that in them days. You just had 'snapping' and there wasn't wrapping around them, they were just in your metal food box. If you had a piece of cake as well you can imagine that, by the time you got into work and the box had been chucked around, it was all over the sandwiches anyway.

I was working at Gresford and we had the bars (*steel roof supports*) holding the face and we had forward extension bars that fitted on them so you could support the ground after you'd cleared of coal by shovel. But you couldn't put them up until you had cleared the coal and this particular day I started shovelling and the roof just came down. A six inch thick slab of roof flattened me; it pushed me to the ground into the water. I don't know what happened that day but I got strength from somewhere and I actually lifted it with my own body to get it off me. It could have easily suffocated me as I was in water but I just automatically put my arms out and lifted myself out of it.

I had another close call at Point of Ayr. The story behind that was that we were 'ripping' a road (*removing the rock above the coal to make room for arched roadway supports or 'rings'*). We finished boring all the holes in the road to put the explosives in. The fireman or the shot firer, he'd 'do your powder' (actually place the sticks of explosive in the holes) for you and then we'd ram the holes with sand to hold the 'powder' in place. Well we had the rings up and planks across so that we could stand on them to reach the higher holes and this particular day it was the last hole in the top that I was ramming.

As I rammed it, I pulled the stick out to put more sand in and it (the explosive charge) came out so I jumped down to get the powder and as I jumped down the whole heading came forward and I was knocked back and got partly buried. The chap that was working with me on the platform was knocked back and his helmet came off as he fell and he split his head open on a ring.



I had to come out of the pit to the medical centre and the nurse had a little brush and she scrubbed every part of the body that was cut. I remember it well; she scrubbed so hard that there were tears in my eyes when she was doing it. After she finished she said "There's no claim there". The point was that you got compensation for any blue scars which come from coal left in a cut. I think the pit nurses were told by management that if they could clean a cut out it was going to save a lot of money.

Because the ambulance room was at the end of the pithead baths, the nursing sister at Bersham used to walk straight through where the men were changing. She used to walk through like a man; we were the ones who were hiding ourselves from her! She'd just walk through and you'd hear "Christ, look out!" and as soon as you heard that everybody would cover up but there was no change in her face or nothing, she was stone-faced when she came through.

She was Sister Quinn and she was the only person known by her name at Bersham as everybody else had nicknames; because of all the Roberts, the Evans and the Williams people didn't know who was who. So she devised a system in the medical centre where she had the pit numbers and their real names on one side and on the other side she had their nicknames. So if someone rang the centre about 'Alf Crash' she knew it was really Alf Jones.

Keith 'Tattoo' Evans



Teulu o Lowyr

Cefais fy hyfforddi yng Nglofa Gresffordd, y pwll ofnadwy hwnnw a gipiodd fywydau 266 o ddynion ar 22 Medi 1934. Cipiodd ddau hen ewythr i mi hefyd, a daeth yn rhan o fywyd ein teulu am byth. Roedd Taid Griffiths a'i fab Tom yn rhan o'r gwaith achub, ond mewn dau dîm gwahanol.

Roedd mam newydd ddechrau gweithio fel morwyn cegin gefn mewn clamp o dŷ mawr ym mhentref Gresffordd, ac wedi cynilo arian am fisoedd er mwyn prynu cot newydd sbon lliw hufen. Ar ddiwrnod y ffrwydrad, roedd hi yng nghanol y dyrfa fawr a ruthrodd i iard y lofa. Daeth rhywun i'r golwg o waelod y pwll, a phawb yn gwthio ymlaen i weld pwy ydoedd. Cafodd mam ei dwyn gyda'r llif o bobl, a'i gwasgu yn erbyn y wagen lo. Baeddwyd ei chot newydd gan y baw ar saim ar y wagen, ac ni wisgodd mohoni byth wedyn.

Ar noson y ffrwydrad, roedd fy ewythr, Tommy Taylor, yn gweithio danddaear yng Ngresffordd er bod ganddo ddannodd boenus a'i geg wedi chwyddo'n fawr. Dywedodd y taniwr wrtho, "Tommy Taylor, dwyt ti'n dda i ddim fel'nna i mi heno – dos adra!" Ar ôl iddo gyrraedd y brig, dyma sŵn tanchwa anferth wrth i'r pwll ffrwydro. Gellech ddweud iddo fod yn lwcus dros ben, ond pan siaradais i ag ef flynyddoedd yn ddiweddarach, roedd yn teimlo'n reit isel. Pan holais beth oedd yn ei boeni, dywedodd ei fod yn teimlo'n unig a thrist, er gwaethaf ei deulu. Roedd ganddo hiraeth mawr am ei ffrindiau ysgol, ei gyfeillion o'r fyddin a'r bechgyn yr arferai chwarae pêl-droed â nhw. "Dylwn i fod wedi mynd hefo nhw ym 1934", meddai.

Fel un o griw'r frigâd achub, roedd Taid yn gyfrifol am fywyd y caneri. Roedd gan y deryn bach ei focs diogelwch ei hun â photel ocsigen fach ar y top y byddai Taid yn ei defnyddio i gario'r bocs ar ei ysgwydd. Wrth i'r tîm achub fynd ar hyd y twneli danddaear, byddai Taid yn cadw llygad barcud ar y caneri rhag ofn iddo guddio'i ben o dan ei adenydd. Roedd ganddo bric bach o dan ei gap, a byddai'n procio'r aderyn er mwyn iddo godi'i ben a thynnu sylw capten y tîm gan ofyn i bawb edrych yn ofalus ar y caneri. Os oedd yn rhoi'i ben yn ôl dan ei adenydd, byddai'r capten yn gorchymyn ei dîm i wisgo'u mygydau gan fod yr aderyn yn fwy sensitif na phobl i effeithiau nwy. Roedd cryn faich ar ysgwyddau dyn y caneri, oherwydd petai'r aderyn bach yn disgyn yn farw, byddai'r tîm achub yn gwrthod siarad ag ef am fod yn ddiofal o'r peryglon a oedd yn wynebu'r dynion.

Trawyd fy hen daid yn anymwybodol gan garreg fawr a ddisgynnodd o'r to. Cafodd ei anfon adref ac i'r gwely, ond erbyn y bore canlynol, roedd wedi marw. Galwodd meddyg y lofa heibio, ac yng nghwest y crwner yn ddiweddarach, dywedodd mai niwmonia yn hytrach na'r ddamwain laddodd taid. Ymhell cyn hynny, boddodd fy hen-hen daid Ishmael ac 13 o ddynion a bechgyn eraill yng Nglofa Brynmally ym mis Medi 1856. Roedden nhw wedi mynd i mewn i dwnnel yn groes i'r arwyddion 'No Entry' a 'Road Closed'; yn anffodus, dim ond Cymraeg roedden nhw'n siarad. Ni chafodd eu cyrrff eu darganfod tan fis Hydref.

Y Parchedig David Griffiths



A Mining Family

I trained in Gresford Colliery, that infamous pit that took the lives of 266 men on the 22nd September 1934. It also took two of my great uncles and became part of the fabric of my family's life. My granddad, Taid Griffiths and his son Tom were both involved in the rescue, but in different teams.

It so happened that my mother had started work as a scullery maid in a big house in Gresford village and had saved her coppers for many months to buy a new cream coloured coat. On the day of the explosion she was mingling with the crowds that had rushed down to the colliery yard. Someone came up from underground and there was a sudden push forward to see who had

come up. The great press of people virtually picked my mother up and squeezed her against a coal wagon. It was so black with coal and grease that she could never wear her posh new coat again.

On the night of the explosion my uncle, Tommy Taylor, was underground at Gresford with a raging toothache and a very swollen mouth. His fireman said to him "Tommy Taylor, you're no good to me tonight like that, man – go home!" When he got to the surface there was a great 'whoosh' as the pit exploded. Some might say that he was lucky, but when I spoke to him many years later he was rather depressed. When I asked him what was worrying him, he said that, despite his family, he was so sad and lonely. He missed his school pals, his army pals and his mates who he used to play football with. He told me he felt that "I should have gone with them in 1934."

As a rescue brigade man, my 'Taid' (grandfather) was responsible for the life of the canary. The little bird had its own little safety box with a small bottle of oxygen attached at the top which my Taid used to hold the box with on his shoulder. As the rescue team advanced along the underground roadways, Taid would keep looking at the canary and, if the bird had put his head under his wing, would take a small stick which was kept under the rim of his hat and prod the bird until it pulled its head back out. He would then call the attention of the team captain and they would watch carefully. If it put its head back under its wing, the captain would order his team to put their masks on as the bird was more sensitive than a man to the effects of gas. It was a very demanding role as if the canary dropped off his perch dead, the canary man would be 'sent to Coventry' for months, or even years, into the future, because he had not paid enough attention to the danger that his team mates were walking into.

My great grandfather was knocked out by a large stone falling out of the roof. He was taken home and put to bed but, by the next morning, he was dead. The colliery doctor called and later told the Coroner's Inquest that he had died of pneumonia rather than the accident. Going back even further, my great, great grandfather Taid Ishmael was drowned in Brynmally Colliery along with thirteen other men and boys in September 1856. They had entered a heading that they shouldn't have because there were notices stating 'No Entry' and 'Road Closed'; unfortunately they could only speak Welsh. Their bodies were not recovered until the October.

Rev. David Griffiths

Glud a Chlocsiai

Pan ddechreuais weithio am y tro cyntaf yn y diwydiant glo, roedden ni'n treulio wythnos mewn coleg technegol yn y dref. Roedd ganddyn nhw ddarn o raff halio, cadwyn a 'wagen', ac roeddech chi'n dysgu sut i gysylltu'r tybiau â'r rhaffau halio ymysg pethau eraill. Roedd yr hyfforddwr yn gyn-swyddog achub adeg trychineb Gresffordd. Yn ôl yr hyfforddwr, roedd y ffordd ddychwelyd mor isel nes bod dau o'r dynion achub wedi marw am fod eu mygydau wedi dod i ffwrdd wrth iddynt geisio troi'n ôl.

Y tro cyntaf yr es i danddaear, rwy'n credu mai arogl y lle wnaeth fy nharo i fwyaf. Hwnnw a'r tywyllwch - pan ddiffoddais y lamp, roedd hi'n anodd credu y gallai unrhywle fod mor ddu. Roedd mynd i lawr yn y gawell yn brofiad cwbl newydd hefyd. Roedd un o'r dynion weindio yn hanu o New Broughton, ac roeddech chi'n gwybod yn iawn mai fo oedd yn llywio'r gawell oherwydd roedd yn gafael yn y rhaff mor llac nes bod y gawell yn bowsio fel io-io ar ôl cyrraedd y gwaelod. Roedden nhw'n arfer dweud "Y diawl Dick Wynne sydd ar y pen arall!"

Dyma un o gyfrinachau'r gwaith i chi. Os oeddech chi'n rhwygoch trowsus yn y lofa, byddech chi'n defnyddio'r samplau o batrymau brethyn a gaech chi o siop y teiliwr wrth chwilio am siwt newydd. Roedden ni'n cadw swp ohonynt yn locer y baddondai. Ar ôl rhwygo'r trowsus, felly, byddech chi'n rhoi glud Copydex ar ddarn o sampl cyn defnyddioch clocsiai wedyn i bwysu'r sampl yn sownd yn eich trowsus. A dyna chi wedi trwsioch trowsus.

Roeddwn i'n gwisgo clocsiai â gwadnau heyrn pan ddechreuais weithio danddaear, a dim ond am ddwy neu dair blynedd cyn gadael y gwisgais i esgidiau. Arferai gŵr o New Broughton wneud tipyn o arian wrth drin clocsiai. Doeddech chi byth yn sefyll i lenwi'r dramiau glo, ond yn gwneud y gwaith ar eich gliniau â'ch traed wedi'u plygu o hyd. Felly, roedd gwadnau'ch clocsiai yn dueddol o gracio a byddech chi'n mynd â nhw ato fo, a byddai'n tynnu'r gwadn ac yn rhoi gwadn pren arno a heyrn wedyn, hoelio o'i amgylch - y cyfan am hanner coron. Felly, roedd gennych bâr o glocsiai am ddau hanner coron. Roedd ambell un yn cynhyrchu clocsiai yn y dref - fel siop Fletchers yn Charles Street, Wrecsam.

Bues i'n gweithio mewn gwythien lo o'r enw 'Crank' yn y Bers; dyna'r unig le i mi erioed rwygo fy nhrowsus wrth ei fachu yn erbyn y to! Dim ond rhyw ddwy droedfedd deg modfedd oedd y wythien hon. Byddai llawer o ddynion o Lofa Llai yn dod i weithio i'r Bers, ac ar ôl un golwg sydyn ar y 'Crank' yn

gwrthod gweithio yno. Fe wnes i gydweithio ag un ohonynt yn y gwaith dur wedyn; wnaeth e ddim mynd â'i offer i lawr i'r talcen glo hyd yn oed. "Dyna ddigon i mi", meddai, a gadael.

Gallai'r 'Crank' fod yn lle digon brawychus. Byddai'r peiriant torri glo yn torri llawer iawn o faw neu 'ddyffin' fel yr oedd yn cael ei alw. Byddech chi'n gorfod taflu'r 'dyffin' dros y cludfelt i'r man gwastraff y tu ôl i'r talcen glo. Un diwrnod, roeddwn wrthi'n gwneud hyn gan ddilyn y peiriant glo pan benderfynodd rhywun gwallgo ddechrau tanio ffrwydron o'r prif giât ymlaen.

Ar ôl iddo danio'r ffrwydryn cyntaf, meddyliais "Reit, dyna ddigon - dwi'n mynd o'ma", oherwydd pe bai'r peiriant torri yn mynd yn sownd ni fyddai digon o le i ddringo drosto na dros y cludfelt chwaith. Pe bai rhywbeth yn digwydd, fi fyddai yn ei chanol hi. Felly, fe wnes i adael y talcen glo a dweud wrth Ern Gittins yr arolygwr pen pwll, dyn o Goedpoeth, nad oeddwn i'n barod i weithio dan y fath amgylchiadau peryglus. "Ti'n iawn, arhosa di wrth y fynedfa efo'r dynion eraill", atebodd. Roedd hi'n hen wythien beryglus i weithio ynddi.

Roedden ni'n dychwelyd i ben y pwll ar ôl shift prynhawn yng Nglofa'r Bers, a dyma storm o fellt a tharanau yn dechrau. Torrwyd trydan yr injan weindio, a'n gadael yn gaeth yn y siafft o naw o'r gloch y nos tan hanner awr wedi un y bore. Dechreuodd gŵr o New Broughton ganu 'Jerusalem' yn y gawell - ac meddai un o'r bechgyn, "Mi fyddwn ni i gyd yn Jerwsalem cyn hir!"

Roedd dau geffyl yng nglofa'r Bers, sef Kelly a Punch. Roedd Punch yn wyn i gyd, ond byddai'n frown gan chwys a llwch glo erbyn diwedd y shift. Fyddai 'nhad byth yn gadael i mi gael diwrnod o'r gwaith, a phan oedd y rhan fwyaf o'r gweithwyr yn cael seibiant ddydd Calan, roeddwn i'n gorfod mynd i weithio. Dim ond dau ddyn oedd yn llenwi glo ar y talcen y diwrnod hwnnw, ac roedden nhw eisiau rhywun i dywys ceffyl a wagenni gwag i'w llenwi. A fi oedd hwnnw, wrth gwrs.

Rwy'n cofio'r tro cyntaf yr es i â Punch i lawr y twnnel, hyd heddiw. Roedd Bill gyda fi, un o weithwyr hŷn y lofa, ac fe aethon ni â'r ceffyl trwy'r drysau awyru i'r ffordd ddychwelyd gan ei bod hi'n gynhesach yno. Dechreuodd yr hen geffyl rollo ar ei gefn fel ci. "Mae'r cradur ar farw", meddwn i. "Duwcs, mae o'n iawn", meddai Bill, "Cael gwared ar chwain mae o!" Beth bynnag, cododd y ceffyl yn ôl ar ei draed ac i ffwrdd â ni.



Ceffyl olaf, Glofa'r Bers, 1952
Last horse at Bersham Colliery, 1952

Roeddech chi'n gallu tywys Kelly i lawr y twnnel, ei droi rownd a'i fachu, dim problem. Allech chi ddim gwneud hynny hefo Punch. Y peth cyntaf a ddysgais oedd gofalu bod y bachyn yn sownd i'r harnais ar ei gefn. Os byddech chi'n ei ollwng ar ei sodlau, byddai'n trio'ch cicio i farwolaeth - ac mae'n wir, oherwydd fe welais i hynny'n digwydd. Ond unwaith y byddech chi wedi'i fachu'n sownd a'i adael wrth fynedfa'r twnnel, byddai'n cerdded yr holl ffordd yn ôl i lawr yn y tywyllwch ar ei ben ei hun, dim problem.

Fe welais ddynion yn eu curo nhw gyda darnau o bren, ond os ydych chi am weithio gyda cheffylau, mae'n well i chi eu trin yn garedig oherwydd mae ganddyn nhw eu meddyliau eu hunain ac maen nhw'n siŵr o dalu'r pwyth yn ôl. Daeth taniwr newydd i weithio atom, hen ddyn blin. Doedd ganddo ddim profiad fel taniwr, ac wrth gwrs, aeth y gwaith yn drech nag ef, a dyma fo'n gwylltio gyda'r ceffyl a gweiddi "Cer o'ma'r cythraul!". A rhedodd y ceffyl i ffwrdd.

Gweiddodd y taniwr "Ble mae 'ngheffyl i?" ac atebodd rhywun "Wn i ddim - ti symudodd o!" Beth bynnag, anfonodd rhywun i chwilio am y ceffyl, a dyma fo'n rhedeg o gwmpas fel rhywbeth gwirion - fe aeth cyn belled â gwaelod y pwll, rwy'n meddwl. Ond roedd yna ffordd ochr yn arwain o'r twnnel, gyda chafn a rhywfaint o fwyd cheffylau. A dyna lle'r oedd y ceffyl yn y tywyllwch.

Dyma ffordd y ceffyl o dalu'r pwyth yn ôl i'r taniwr am fod mor gas tuag ato. Mae'n beth anhygoel bod ceffyl yn llwyddo i ganfod ei ffordd o gwmpas yr holl lwybrau tanddaearol heb 'run golau!

Er nad oes gennyf brofiad personol ohono fy hun, maen nhw'n dweud os oedd y to ar fin cwmpo yn y pwll, byddai'r ceffyl yn synhwyro bod rhywbeth o'i le ac yn gwrthod mynd ymhellach. Er bod cheffylau'n fendith o dan ddaear, roedden nhw'n gallu creu problemau os byddech chi'n eu pechu nhw. Ar ôl cyrraedd cyffordd, roeddech chi'n gorfod troi ac yn dibynnu ar y ceffyl i lusgo'r wagen rownd y gornel. Nawr, petaech chi'n digio'r ceffyl mewn rhyw ffordd, byddai'n dal i fynd ymlaen yn lle troi'r gornel, ac yn tynnu'r wagen oddi ar y cledrau. Ac wrth gwrs, doedd o ddim am eich helpu i godi'r wagen yn ôl. Dyma'i ffordd ef o ddweud "Cân di bennill mwyn i'th nain, fe gân dy nain i dithau!"

Raymond Goodwin

Copydex and Clogs



Raymond Goodwin

When I first started in the coal industry you had a week in the technical college in town. They had a little length of haulage rope, a chain, a 'wagon' and you learnt how to 'lash on' (connect the tubs to the haulage rope) and other training. The instructor was a former rescue station man who had been involved in the Gresford disaster. He told us that the return road was that low there that two of the rescue men that died had tried to turn around in the road and their masks had pulled off.

When you first go down the pit I think that it's the smell of the place that hits you and, if you switch your light off, you never knew anything could be so dark and as black. It was also an experience going down in the cage. There was one winding engine man from New Broughton and if he was driving you knew because he went that quick he had slack rope, so when you dropped so far the cage would bounce like a yo-yo. They used to say "Dick Wynne's on the damned end!"

It's a trade secret, but if you ripped your trousers in the colliery you used to get hold of a packet of those samples of cloth patterns that you used to get in tailors when you went to look for a suit. You'd keep a pile of them in your locker in the baths and, if you ripped your trousers, you'd lay one of the samples out on the locker step, get your Copydex glue out and spread it over it. A little tap with your clog to stick it down and you never had to bring your trousers home to repair them.

I wore clogs with irons when I worked first worked underground and I only went into boots two or three years before I left. There was one fellow from New Broughton used to make a bit of money from clogs. When you were filling coal you never stood up, you got on your knees so your foot was kind of bent. So your soles used to crack and you'd give them to him and he'd take the sole off and put a wooden sole on it, irons on it and nail around it and charge you half a crown. So you had a pair of clogs for two and six. If you wanted new clogs there were shops in town that made them - there was a shop in Charles Street, Wrexham, called Fletchers, they used to do clogs.

I worked in one seam in Bersham that they called the Crank; it was the only place underground that I ever ripped my trousers through catching them

against the roof! The seam was about two foot ten in height and there a quite a few men who came to work in Bersham from Llay Main Colliery who took one look at the Crank and refused to work there. I later worked with one of them in the steel works; he didn't even take his tools into the face. He said "That's enough for me" and out he walked.

Working on the Crank could be a frightening experience. The coal cutter used to cut a lot of dirt which they used to call 'duffing'. You used to have to sling this 'duffing' from the cutter track over the conveyor belt into the waste area behind the coal face. One day I was following the cutter up doing this and some mad man decided to start shot firing from the main gate up.

He fired one shot and I said "Right, I'm not having this - I'm coming from here", because if the cutter stuck it was too low to climb over it and it was also too low to climb over the belt. If anything happened I'd be right in the line of fire. So I came out of the face and said to Ern Gittins the overman, he was from Coedpoeth, that I wasn't going to work in that sort of danger. He said "Oh, you're right, stay here on the gateway with the rest of the men." It was a very bad seam to work.

We were going up the pit after an afternoon shift at Bersham Colliery and there was a thunderstorm. The storm cut out the electric winding engine and we were stuck in the shaft from nine o'clock in the night until half past one in the morning. There was a fellow from New Broughton in the cage and he started singing 'Jerusalem' - one of the boys said "We'll all be in Jerusalem before long!"

There were two horses in Bersham, Kelly and Punch. Punch was completely white, but at the end of the shift he would be brown with perspiration and coal dust. My father wouldn't let me take days off and when it was New Year which almost everybody took off, I had to go to work. There were only two men filling coal at the coal face and they wanted somebody to handle a horse to bring in wagons (the north Welsh language term for a coal tub, south Wales miners know them as 'drams' or 'trams') for them to fill. So of course I had the job.

I always remember the first time I took Punch in to the roadway. I was with an older man called Bill and we took him in through the ventilation doors into the return road where it was warmer. I said to this Bill, "This bugger's dying" because the old horse started rolling over on the floor just like a dog. "Oh, he's all right", Bill said, "He's only getting rid of

the fleas!" Anyway, the horse got back on his feet and I took him in.

You could lead Kelly down the heading, turn him around and hook him on, no problem. You couldn't do that with Punch. The first thing I was told was to make sure that the hook is hooked on his harness at the back. If you dropped it on his heels, he'd try and kick you to death and it was true because I saw it happen. But once you'd hooked it on and put him to the entrance of the heading he'd back all the way down in the dark on his own, no problem.

I've seen men wallop them with pieces of timber, but if you're going to work with horses you might as well be nice to them because they got a mind of their own will try and get their own back. We had a new fireman who was a nasty bugger. This chap wasn't used to being a fireman and, of course, it got on top of him a bit and he lost his temper with a horse and shouted "Get out you devil" and the horse ran didn't it.

The fireman shouted "Where's the horse?" and got the answer "I don't know - you shifted it!" Anyway he sent somebody out to look for the horse and he was running around like a fool trying to find him - I think he nearly got to pit bottom. But there was a little side road just off the heading where there was a tub and some horse feed and the horse was in there in the dark.

I think that was the horse's way of paying the fireman back for being nasty to him. It's marvellous when you think that he had no light and yet the horse could sense his way around the labyrinths of road underground?

I'd never experienced it myself but they do say that if there was an imminent fall of roof a horse wouldn't go through it because they could sense that there was something wrong. Horses were a godsend underground but if you really bugged them they could cause you problems. When you came to a junction in the roadway and you had to turn you had to depend on the horse to take the tub around the corner. Now if you'd bugged the horse in some way he wouldn't go round the corner he'd go straight across it and pulled the tub off the rails. Of course he wasn't going to help you to lift it back on. It was his way of saying "You treat me right and I'll treat you right!"

Raymond Goodwin



Carnifal y Bers, 1963
Bersham Carnival, 1963



Brenhines y Glo 1978

Glowyr oedd fy nau daid, ac roedd un yn gweithio yng nglofa'r Bers. Roedd y papurau lleol yn rhoi sylw i gystadleuaeth Brenhines y Glo bob amser, ac roeddwn i'n gwybod pwy oedd enillwyr y gorffennol. Felly, pan welais i'r hysbyseb ar gyfer y gystadleuaeth yn y papur, penderfynais gystadlu. Roedd hyn yn beth reit ffasiynol yn y dyddiau hynny. Enillais gystadleuaeth Miss Wrecsam ddwywaith, a fi yw Miss RAFA Wrecsam hyd heddiw, ar ôl i mi ennill y gystadleuaeth olaf un!

Er mwyn cystadlu am deitl Miss Brenhines y Glo, roedd rhaid i chi fod â chysylltiad â'r diwydiant glo, fel roedd gennyf i ar y pryd. Ar noson y gystadleuaeth yn Neuadd Les Llai, roeddwn i'n gorfod cael cyfweiliad mewn ystafell gerbron panel o bobl a oedd yn rhan o'r diwydiant. Rwy'n cofio teimlo'n nerfus iawn, fel petawn i mewn cyfweiliad swydd. Wedyn, roeddech chi'n gorfod cerdded o flaen cynulleidfya ac

ateb cwestiynau'r cyflwynydd – fel beth oedd eich cysylltiad â'r diwydiant glo, a sut fydddech chi'n hyrwyddo'r diwydiant glo pe baech chi'n ddigon lwcus i ennill. Roedd hi'n noson fawr, gyda chwrw rhad a chomedïwr, a llond lle o bobl. Roedd yn ddigwyddiad cymunedol go iawn.

Ar y cyfan, roedd awyrgylch da iawn ymhlith y merched, er bod ambell un yn sefyll ar wahân ac yn cadw draw oddi wrth y gweddill. Efallai eu bod nhw wedi cystadlu o'r blaen neu'n meddwl eu bod nhw'n well na phawb arall. Roedd y mamau yr un fath, yn sgorio merched ei gilydd a gofalu mai ei merch hi oedd yr orau. Roedd gwobrau'r gystadleuaeth yn reit dda, ond dim ond unwaith y gwnes i gystadlu a dod y drydydd.

Eileen Thomas-Woodhouse

Coal Queen 1978

Both of my taid (grandfathers) were miners, my one taid worked at Bersham. The Coal Queen competition was always covered in the local paper and I would have known who had won in previous years. So when I saw the advert for the Coal Queen competition in the paper, I decided to enter. In those days it was quite the fashionable thing to do, I won Miss Wrexham twice, and I still hold the title of Miss RAFA Wrexham, because I won the last competition they ever held!

To enter Miss Coal Queen you had to have a link to the coal industry, which I did. On the night of the competition in Llay Welfare, the competition involved going into a room to be interviewed by a panel of people who were part of the industry, I remember feeling very tense as if I was going on a job interview. Then you had to parade in front of an audience and were asked questions by the compère, questions such

as what were your connections with the industry and how you would represent and promote the coal industry if you were lucky enough to win. It was a big night out with cheap booze and a comedian, there were lots of people there it was a real community event.

Generally there was quite a good atmosphere amongst the girls, but there were always some that would stand to one side and not get involved. Maybe they had competed before or they thought they were better than the others. The mothers were the same, they would score each other's daughters, and make sure their own was the best. The prizes for the Coal Queen competition were good, but I only competed the one time and came third.

Eileen Thomas-Woodhouse

Tudalen flaenorol: **Brenhines y Glo Gogledd Cymru 1978 - Gaynor Roberts (2il), Tina Evans (Enillydd) ac Eileen Thomas-Woodhouse (3ydd)**

Previous page: **North Wales Coal Queen 1978 Gaynor Roberts (2nd), Tina Evans (Winner) and Eileen Thomas-Woodhouse (3rd)**

Cyfrifoldeb

Gweithiwr fferm oeddwn i'n wreiddiol, ond ar ôl priodi merch i löwr, fe es i weithio i'r pwll glo gan y byddwn i'n cael mwy o gyflog yno nag ar y tir. Ymunais â Glofa'r Parlwr Du pan oeddwn i'n 26 oed tua 1951, ac arhosais yno am ryw 32 mlynedd. Cefais fy hyfforddi yng Nglofa Gresffordd, er mwyn dod i arfer â gweithio danddaear am wn i. Yna, dychwelais i'r Parlwr Du lle bum i'n gwneud pob math o swyddi am tua deng mlynedd.

Awgrymodd rhywun y dylwn i weithio fel taniwr, felly es i'r coleg technegol yn Wrecsam am dros dri mis i ddysgu popeth am Ddeddf y Pyllau Glo. Fy nghyfrifoldeb pennaf fel taniwr (neu ddirprwy) oedd diogelwch ar y talcen glo, ac yna taniwr glo er mwyn i'r dynion ei lwytho gyda'u rhawiau ar y cludfelt. Roeddwn i'n gorfod creu tyllau'n gyntaf a'u llenwi â 'phowdr' (ffirwydron), yna byddwn i'n gorfod gwneud yn siŵr

nad oedd nwy yn y system awyru cyn tanio. Cyflwynwyd system arall a oedd yn gofyn i ni ffrwydro/tanio gydag aer cywasgedig, ond roedd yn beryglus ac aflwyddiannus.

Pam taniwr felly? Un rheswm oedd ei fod yn swydd staff, a olygai mwy o gyflog. Os oeddech chi adref yn sâl o'r gwaith, bydddech yn cael eich talu'r un fath. Roedd dynion y talcen glo yn gwneud gwaith ar dasg, felly po fwyaf o wagenni roedden nhw'n eu llenwi, mwyaf o arian roedden nhw'n ei gael. Roedd fy nghyflog i'n gyson drwy'r amser.

Bues i'n daniwr am 21 mlynedd. Roedd yn newid byd i mi, o fod ar waun a rhos Dinbych i weithio danddaear! Y cyfrifoldeb oedd elfen drymaff y gwaith. Pe bai unrhyw beth yn mynd o'i le, chi oedd yn gyfrifol a byddai'r rheolwr eisiau'ch gweld chi wedyn!

Bob Griffiths

Responsibility

I worked on a farm before going into the pit but I married a miner's daughter, so I went to work down the pit as there was more money there than on the farm. I went to work in Point of Ayr when I was 26 in about 1951 and stayed there for around 32 years. I went for training in Gresford Colliery, just to get used to being underground I suppose. Then I came back to Point of Ayr where I did all sorts of jobs for about ten years.

Somebody suggested I should go for a fireman's job so I went to the technical College in Wrexham for over three months to learn all about the Coal Mines Act. My first concern as a fireman (or deputy) was safety on the coal face and then shot firing the coal for the men to load onto the conveyor with shovels. The holes had to be bored and filled with 'powder' (explosives) and then I would have to check if the ventilation was clear of gas before firing. Another system came in where we were firing with compressed air but that was dangerous and wasn't very successful.

Why did I want to be a fireman? Well, it was a staff job for one thing so that meant more money. If you were home sick, you would get your money just the same. The men on the coal were on piecework so the more they filled the more money they would take home. My money was the same all the time.

I was a fireman for 21 years. It was a big change for me, coming from the moors in Denbigh and going underground! The responsibility was the heaviest part

of the job. If anything went wrong, you were responsible and the manager wanted to see you about it!

Bob Griffiths



Rhywle i gosod blodau

Diwrnod emosiynol dros ben oedd diwrnod dadorchuddio cofeb Gresffordd. Rwy'n cofio un o'r gweddwon yn dod ataf yn ei dagrau, fel yr oeddwn innau hefyd, pan ddywedodd, "Wyddoch chi mai dyma'r tro cyntaf mewn dros ddeugain mlynedd imi gael lle i roi blodau". Efallai ein bod yn dueddol o anghofio am bethau felly pan fydd trychineb yn digwydd – ac er bod ganddi syniad bras o leoliad y cyrff ymhell o dan y caeau, o'r diwedd roedd ganddi rywle y gallai ddod i gofio am ei hanwyliaid.

Roedd Charles a Diana yna (am ddynes hardd). Wn i ddim am Camilla, ond roedd pawb arall yno – y cynghorwyr i gyd, pawb. Roedden nhw wedi gosod rhaffau yno, felly dim ond rhai pobl arbennig oedd yn cael bod y tu mewn. Felly, es i chwilio am Margaret Capper oherwydd, o bawb, ei diwrnod hi oedd heddiw.

Cafodd ei brawd ei ladd yng Ngresffordd, ac roedd ei gorff wedi'i gladdu yng nghrombil y pwll. Ymhlith y llythyrau a godais yn swyddfa'r NUM, roedd llythyr ganddi a ysgrifennodd ym 1935 yn gofyn i'r cwmni a allent godi'r cyrff o'r gwaelodion tra'r oedd modd eu hadnabod o hyd. Ysgrifennodd lu o lythyrau tebyg am flynyddoedd wedyn. Anfonodd ei llythyr olaf ataf i, yn diolch am fy nghefnogaeth ar ôl i'r gofeb gael ei hadeiladu. Felly, es i chwilio am Margaret Capper oherwydd ei diwrnod hi oedd hwn, heb os. Ar ôl chwilio a chwilio, cefais hyd iddi o'r diwedd ym mhen arall y rhaffau, tu allan yng nghanol y dorf. Felly, fe godais y rhaff a dweud "Margaret, dewch i mewn" ond atebodd hi "Na, na". "Dewch i mewn Margaret, fach", mynnais, a chodi'r rhaff iddi.

Er ein bod ni'n sefyll gyda'n gilydd, roedd Margaret fel petai mewn byd arall - gallwn weld hynny ar ei hwyneb. Dywedodd, "Wyddoch chi beth, rwyf wedi bod yn disgwyl am hyn ers blynnyddoedd maith". Rwy'n amau a oedd hi'n hapusach chwaith, oherwydd gallwn ei gweld hi'n pwyntio ac amneidio ar rai o bobl y rhes flaen oedd yn plygu ac ymgrymu'n wasaidd, ac yn dweud, "Ydych chi'n cofio hwn a'r llall ac arall?" A dywedais innau, "Margaret, peidiwch â phoeni, fe af i weld David Griffiths." Ficer Gresffordd oedd David, a fu'n löwr pan oedd yn fachgen ifanc. Mi es i weld David a gofyn a fyddai'n fodlon dychwelyd yma gyda Margaret, fi ac un neu ddau arall, i ailgysegru'r gofeb y Sul canlynol. Roedd yn deall yn iawn pam yr oeddwn yn gofyn iddo. "Iawn", meddai.

Aethom yn ôl y Sul canlynol i ailgysegru'r gofeb gyda Margaret. Rwy'n credu bod hwn yn ddigwyddiad mwy priodol na'r dadorchuddiad ei hun. Gallaf ddychmygu'r holl gynghorwyr yn mynd â'u siwtiau swanc yn ôl i'r siop llogi dillad yng Nghaer cyn dilyn y Prins dros y gorwel pell. Ond faint oedd yn deall pwysigrwydd y seremoni mewn gwirionedd? I mi, roedd yr ail seremoni fach yn ddiffuant, ac roedd gennyf lwmp yn fy ngwddf. Addewais i Margaret Capper y byddwn i'n gadael blodau yno drosti wedyn, oherwydd roedd hi'n prysur heneiddio.

Bu'n byw yn yr un cartref gydol ei hoes, ond un diwrnod, dyma rywun yn torri i mewn ac ymosod arni, felly bu'n rhaid iddi adael a symud i fyw at aelod o'i theulu. Fuodd hi byth yr un fath ar ôl hynny, a bu farw'n fuan wedyn.

Ted McKay

Somewhere to lay flowers

The unveiling of the Gresford memorial was a very emotional day. I remember one of the widows came up to me and she was crying and she had me crying as well when she said, "Do you know this is the first time in over forty years that I've got somewhere to lay flowers". Maybe we don't usually think about that side of disasters but, although she knew roughly where the bodies were way down under the fields, she now had a place where she could come to remember.

Now Charles was there and Diana (God she was beautiful) was there. I don't know if Camilla was anywhere around but everyone else was there – all the councillors, you name them, they were all there. They had ropes up so only certain categories of people were allowed inside. So I went to look for Margaret Capper because of anybody it was her day.

Her brother was killed at Gresford and was still buried deep underground. In the letters which I picked up in the NUM office was a letter from her written in 1935 asking if the company could get the bodies of the victims out whilst they still were recognisable. And she'd been doing this for years after. Her first letter was 1935 and her last letter to me was written just after the memorial was built thanking me for my support. So I went looking for Margaret Capper because surely this was her day. I looked and looked for her and she was outside the ropes, outside with the crowd. So I lifted the rope up and said "Margaret come in" and she said, "No. no" but I insisted "You come in Margaret" and lifted the rope up and fetched her in.

Margaret and I stood together, we couldn't be further away, and I could see what she was thinking in her face. She said, "Do you know what, I've waited all these years for this". I didn't know if she was happier though because I could see that she was pointing out certain people who were there at the front, bowing and scraping, and she said, "Do you remember him?", "Do you remember him?" And I said, "Margaret, don't worry, I'll go see David Griffiths." David was the vicar of Gresford and had been a miner when he was a young lad. I went to see him and asked if he would come the following Sunday with Margaret, myself and one or two others and rededicate the memorial. He understood why I was asking, "Yes", he said.

We went back the following Sunday and rededicated the memorial with Margaret and I think that was more appropriate than what happened on the actual unveiling. I can imagine all those councillors taking their morning suits back to the hire shop in Chester and everybody riding off into the sunset after the Prince. But how many really knew what it was about. So I think that second little ceremony was poignant and, in fact, I had a lump in my throat over it and I promised Margaret Capper that I would always lay flowers there for her there afterwards because she was getting on.

She'd lived in the same house all her life but one day someone broke in and mugged her and she had to move out of the house and live with one of the family but she never fully recovered and she sadly died not long after.

Ted McKay

Cwllwm cyd-ddyn

Roeddwn i'n gweithio yng Nglofa'r Bers o 1979 tan 1985. Roedd y Bers yn wahanol i'r pyllau eraill; roedd awyrgylch da iawn yno, a chwlwm arbennig rhwng y bobl. Gallech ddweud unrhyw beth heb bechu neb. Roedd hynny'n beth gwyd i mi, gan fy mod yn hoffi barddoni am arferion hynod a rhyfedd rhai o fechgyn y pwll. Byddwn i'n darllen fy ngherddi dros yr uchelseinydd, p'un ai oeddynt am eu clywed ai peidio.

Roedden ni yng nghanol Streic y Glowyr ym mis Mawrth 1984, a minnau'n gefnogwr brwd. Gyda'r cyfryngau'n rhoi cymaint o sylw i'r streic, roedd hi'n amhosibl cael seibiant o gwbl. Ar ôl y streic, ysgrifennais lyfr a'i gyflwyno i'm cydweithwyr yn y lofa, a defnyddio elw'r llyfr i helpu'r glowyr a gollodd eu bywoliaeth wrth streicio. Gwerthais 500 o gopiâu a gwneud elw o £250. Dyma un o'm cerddi:

Bersham Pit Bottom

*It was cold, it was wet and it was noisy and rotten,
But I cherish the memory of Bersham Pit Bottom.
It's all over now, but was good while it lasted.
I remember Mark Davis and his dad, Fred the Bastard.
I sit quietly, and I think now and then,
Of Haydn Overcoat, Harold Jones, Tommy Three Ten.*

*There was Emyr, Eric, John the Whip and Gordon,
Mike Hett, McGoo and Big Dennis Morgan.
Gary Challinor, Elly, Big Joe and Herr Flick,
Derrick Ruabon, alias Derrick the Brick.
He would have a few pints and show off his trick,
And all he would need was a window and brick.*

*The line that he told the judge was the best:
"I'm losing my job, and I got so depressed".
They were all rough and ready, small, some burly,
Ten pints, Tommy Reid, Mike Devany and Shirly.
Ruben Wally, Pete Jones, and Bob the Brick,
Good men to work with, through thin and thick.*

*They were all good comrades, honest and true,
Except Jacky Pem – a Conservative Blue.
John Edwards shouts: "One more each side,"
And there's a mad rush to be on the first ride.
Where else could you find men like Lilly and Lucas?
They're as wise as the man from China – Confucius!*

*Then there was Alf, if you asked for a lift,
You wouldn't get one if you waited all shift.
Down the level would stroll old Ken Pockets,
At his leisurely pace carrying spanners and sockets.
The pits standing, and the blowers gone wonky,
There's a jinx down there and it's that Kevin Donkey.*

*The area men, they were there for a while,
Big Roy and Tony, I admired their style.
They said: "4 hours travelling and 3, that's 7."
So they came down at 8 and went up at 11.
Joe Ninety, Paul Hignett, and Eric Baker,
Front Dogs, Rams, Main Coal and Quaker.*

*I can hear Dai Barker, see Jonker from Llay,
Tenderfoot and Nigel, or is it Popeye?
The Night Shift Onsetters, Emrys and Fred,
Stirred so little we thought they were dead.
And what about Simon Van Winkle?
Every ten minutes we give him a tinkle.*

*"Hello, Simon, are you still awake?
Keep on your toes, we have records to break.
Simon would say: "On me, don't throw onus,
I stayed awake once and got no extra bonus."
Mark stammers: "Simon, are you quite sure?
You stayed awake once, but my memory's poor."*

*The electrical department, Dave Felton and Chris,
But the fitting department, best give it a miss.
Find worse fitters than these if you can,
There are no better bluffers than Hywel and Stan.
The Story of Bersham surely would never
Be complete without mention of Trevor.*

*Many years ago, when they sank the shaft,
They found Trevor down there, having a laugh.
He said: "Carry on while I bluff with this oil."
He was clearly scared by the sweat and the toil.
And what of the bosses, Symons, Kersly and Jack?
The three thought we had 'phones on our back.*

A bond between the people

I worked at Bersham Colliery from 1979-1985. It was different from other pits; there was a very good atmosphere down there, a bond between the people. Anything could be said and it wouldn't be taken to heart. It was great for me as I used to like writing poetry about the mannerisms and quirks of the boys down the pit. I used to read my poems out to them over the intercom if they wanted to hear them or not.

In March 1984 we had the miners' strike and I was an active supporter. The media was over publicising the strike making it impossible to take a break from it all. After the strike I wrote a small book dedicated to my mining colleagues which I sold to make money for miners who had been sacked during the dispute. I sold 500 and made £250. This is one of my poems:

*Sometimes at night, when I cannot sleep,
I see ghosts from the past, Jim the Liar, Phil Creep.
Old Elwyn Becker, and Delwyn his lad,
He'll be a good'un, if he's like his dad.
And here's a couple I nearly forgot,
'The Two Ronnies' - Ron Brick and Ron Snot.*

*That's most of the men, but what of the place?
To be truthful, it was a bloody disgrace.
The mechanical lot were running a bluff,
Which for the rest of us made it quite tough.
Pushing and shoving because they were too tired,
It's a wonder the lot of them hadn't been fired.*

*The dogs wouldn't drop, the gates were broke,
The maintenance there was only a joke.
When the carrier landed the place would rock,
We'd lift on a tub with a plank and a choc.
It was hard work and our backs were busting,
When the pit stopped they'd have us stone dusting.*

*The writing was already on the wall,
We were only waiting for the axe to fall.
A decision was taken to put the lid on.
Now it's quite sad that the colliery's gone.
It was cold, it was wet and it was noisy and rotten,
But I cherish the memory of Bersham Pit Bottom.*

Keith Hett



“Ble mae'r gath bore 'ma?”

Wrth adael yr ysgol yn 14 oed, dyma 'nhad yn rhoi gair o gyngor i mi ynglŷn â phlesio Mr John Jones, rheolwr Glofa'r Hafod. “Paid â phwyso yn erbyn wal y swyddfa, cadw dy ddwylo allan o dy bocedi, tynn dy gap a chofia ddweud 'syr' wrtho”. Fe basiais i'r prawf, ac yng Ngorffennaf 1932, cefais ddarn o bapur wedi'i stampio â'r geiriau 'Please give bearer a lamp'. Hwn oedd fy mhasport i fywyd fel glöwr, ac roeddwn i'n teimlo mor falch a phwysig wrth ymuno â 'nhad a 'mrawd yn y pwll.

Ar yr aelwyd, roedd dillad y pwll glo wastad yn hongian ar y gard o amgylch y tân glo agored a hosanau yn crogi o weiren o dan y pentan, ac roedd y boeler dŵr a'r bath tun yn cael eu defnyddio byth a hefyd. Roedd braster bacwn yn cael ei gadw mewn tun, a bydden ni'n defnyddio hen frws paent i iro'n clocsiau ac esgidiau gwaith. Pan nad oedden ni'n defnyddio ein poteli dŵr tun, byddent yn cael eu hongian wrth hoelen yn yr iard gefn, gydag ychydig o ddŵr a soda golchi yn y botel i atal y rhwd.

Roedd y gwagedd yn gorfod gweithio'n galed, gydag un lle tân yn ganolbwynt i'r holl waith coginio, pobi a berwi dŵr. Pe bai dynion yn gweld merch ar y stryd yn oriau mân y bore wrth gerdded i'r gwaith, roedd yn cael ei ystyried yn arwydd o lwc ddrwg, a byddai'r dynion yn dychwelyd adref.

Fy swydd gyntaf oedd cludo'r batri a'r ceblau ffrwydro a'r ffrwydron o ardal i ardal, ar gyfer y tanwyr. Roedd disgwyl i mi ddarparu dŵr hefyd er mwyn parato'i'r clai a fyddai'n dal y ffrwydron yn sownd yn y tyllau. Yn ddiweddarach, fe fues i'n was halio gyda'r ceffylau, a chododd fy nghyflog i 11/6 yr wythnos. Roedd gan y lofa dros 200 o geffylau ar y pryd, ac roedd y rheolwyr yn poeni mwy am iechyd a diogelwch y ceffylau na'r dynion – roedden nhw'n gorfod talu am y ceffylau tra'r oedd dynion yn sefyll yn y ciw dôl. Hen le caled a dienaidd i weithio ynddo oedd Glofa'r Hafod ym 1932, gyda chyfleusterau prin i'r dynion – os o gwbl. Doedd dim baddondai pen pwll yno tan 1938, a byddai'n rhaid i 'nhad a'm pum brawd gerdded adre'n ddu fel y frân cyn rhannu'r baddon tun ac ymolchi o flaen y tân. Roedd yn waith peryglus a chaled iawn. Roedd y glowyr yn debycach i gaethweision na gweithwyr.

Un diwrnod, roeddwn i'n cerdded adref o Lofa'r Hafod, yn ddu bitsh ac wedi blino'n lân, pan welais ryw gythrwfl yn Johnstown a chlywed bod tanchwa yng Ngresffordd. Roedd fy mrawd Lloyd yn gweithio yno, ond doeddwn i ddim yn poeni ar y pryd gan mai

ar y shifft prynhawn yr oedd o'n gweithio. Pan gyrhaeddais adref, soniais wrth dad am y danchwa a phan glywodd mam am hyn, roedd y tŷ yn ferw gwyllt. Cafodd pob stryd ei heffeithio mwy neu lai. Cerddodd fy mam gyda'r gwagedd eraill mewn perlewyr llwyr i'r lofa, gan ymuno â'r dorf a oedd yn gwylio ac yn gobeithio am y gorau. Aeth y tîm achub i lawr i'r pwll a cholodd rhai eu bywydau, a chludwyd deg corff i'r wyneb. Collodd Bobby, fy mrawd arall, ei goes ar ôl cael ei daro gan wagen a aeth allan o reolaeth danddaear, a chafodd fy nghefnder ei ladd wrth i'r to ddymchwel am ei ben. Rwy'n eu cofio nhw'n cludo'i gorff llychlyd du yn ôl adref gyda cheffyl a chert.

Roedd yr amodau'n ofnadwy a'r gwaith yn galed, yn drwm ac yn beryglus, ac eto roedd yna frawdoliaeth arbennig a hiwmor i ysgafnhau'r baich. Roedd llysenwau'n gyffredin – roeddech chi'n teimlo'n noeth heb llysenw – rhai fel Manny Cabbage, Harold Grapes, Hughie Carrots, Willie Book, Will Waistcoat, er enghraifft. Ben Pritchard, yr is-reolwr oedd y 'Supreme Command'. Y cwestiwn arferol am 5.15 bob bore oedd, “Ble mae'r gath bore 'ma?” Os oedd hi'n eistedd ar y bwrdd yn y caban, popeth yn dda, ond os nad oedd hi yno, roedden ni'n gwybod bod pethau'n giami gan fod y gath yn diflannu os oedd Ben yn taro'r bwrdd mewn hwyliu drwg.

Cyn i'r diwydiant glo gael ei wladoli, dim ond pan oedd galw am lo y byddem yn gweithio gan amlaf. Byddai corn y lofa'n canu am 6 yr hwyr i ddweud nad oedd gwaith y diwrnod wedyn. Ar ganiad y corn, byddai un glöwr o'r enw Llew Ezekial Phillips yn gweiddi ar ei wraig nad oedd Handel erioed wedi cyfansoddi cân mor felys! Ym 1939, cawsom ein gwyliau blynyddol cyntaf â thâl. Roedd awyrgylch y pwll yn gwbl wahanol ychydig ddyddiau cyn y diwrnod mawr (pan fyddai'r y gwyliau'n dechrau). Byddai'r glowyr yn cyfri sawl llath o lo oedd ar ôl i'w glirio, a byddai'r bechgyn halio yn cyfri faint o wagenni oedd i'w llenwi. Roedd pawb yn fwy ysgafndroed ac yn gwenu mwy nag arfer, ac yna byddai'r diwrnod mawr yn gwawrio – ‘Gwyliau'r Coliers’ i'r pentref cyfan. Byddai pob dyn yn mynd â sach o ddillad y pwll adref gydag ef (roedd gynnwys ni faddondai pen pwll erbyn hyn) a'r mamau a'r gwagedd yn eu croesawu'n ôl adref. Wedyn, glan y môr amdani i wario'r cyflog gwyliau.

Ym 1950, ymunais â'r gyfrinfa (undeb llafur) leol a chael y ffrainc o fod yn ysgrifennydd y gyfrinfa yn nes ymlaen. Ym 1968, sefais ar lwyfan Sefydliad y Glowyr gydag aelodau'r pwyllgor y tu ôl i mi, a dweud

wrth fil o lowyr y byddai'r hen lofa'n cau ar 9 Mawrth. Anghofia' i fyth mo'r tawelwch llethol yn y neuadd wedyn. Roedd hyn yn ddiwedd ar eu byd, gan fod y gwaith glo yn ffordd o fyw. Er na chynhyrfodd neb, roedd ansicrwydd y dyfodol yn pwysu ar feddyliau pawb.

Cefais fy nhrosglwyddo i Lofa Gresffordd gyda'r dynion eraill. Caeodd honno ym mis Tachwedd 1973, ac roeddwn innau fel ysgrifennydd y gyfrinfa yn ymwneud llawer â'r broses. Ar ôl ychydig flynyddoedd yng Nglofa'r Bers wedyn, cytunais i gael fy niswyddo ym mis Tachwedd 1979. Wedi 47 mlynedd o weithio danddaear yn niwydiant glo'r Gogledd, cefais lamp arall. Y tro hwn, lamp yn sefyll ar y dresel yn fy nghartref yn hytrach na siglo yn nhywyllwch dudew'r pwll.

Pe bawn i'n cael cyfle i fyw fy mywyd eto, ni fyddwn yn newid unrhyw beth. Cofiwch chi, fyddwn i ddim wedi hoffi gweld fy mhlant na'r wyrion yn mynd i'r pyllau glo, ond i mi, roedd yn fywyd caled ond hapus dros ben.

Jack Read



“Where's the cat this morning?”

On leaving school at fourteen, my father instructed me on how to impress the manager of Hafod Colliery, Mr John Jones – “Don't lean against the office wall, keep your hands out of your pockets, take your cap off and call the manager sir.” I passed the test and in July 1932 I was given a small piece of paper stamped ‘Please give bearer a lamp’. This was my passport to a mining life, how proud and important I felt to join my father and brother in the pit.

At home there were always pit clothes hung on the fire guard around the open coal fire and stockings hanging from a wire fixed under the mantelpiece, the water boiler and tin bath were in constant use. Bacon fat was kept in a tin and an old paint brush was used to grease our working boots and clogs with it. When not in use our tin water bottles were hung on a nail on the outside yard wall with a little water and some soda crystals in them to stop the insides rusting.

Women worked hard as all cooking, baking and boiling water were done on one fireplace. If a woman was seen out in the street in the early morning as the men were going to work it was seen as a bad omen and men would return home.

My first job was as a powder monkey and I carried the shot firing battery and cable, and the 'powder' (explosives) around the district for the fireman. I was also expected to pass water as required to make the clay stemming that held the explosives in the shot holes. I later became a haulage hand working with horses and my wages rose to 11/6 a week. At that time the colliery owned over 200 horses and thought more of their health and safety than they did for the men – horses had to be paid for while men were readily available in the dole queues. Hafod Colliery in 1932 was a hard, unforgiving place with little or no facilities for the men. The mine didn't have a pithead baths until 1938 and my father and five brothers and I had to walk home covered in black grime before we could wash in a tin bath. The work was hard, very hard, and dangerous. Miners were more like slaves than workers.

I was walking home from Hafod Colliery one day, black and tired, when I saw a commotion in Johnstown and was told that there had been an explosion in Gresford. I had a brother, Lloyd, who worked there but I thought that he was all right as he was supposed to be working the afternoon shift. When I got home I told my father there had been an explosion and my mother heard the news and the house was turmoil. There wasn't a street that wasn't affected. My mother walked with the other women in a semi-conscious state to the colliery to join the mass of humanity that was watching and waiting for news. But there was none. The rescuers went down, some even lost their own lives, but only ten bodies were ever recovered. Another of my brothers, Bobby, lost a leg when he was hit by a runaway wagon underground and a cousin was killed under a roof fall. I remember his body being brought home, still black from work, in a horse drawn cart.

The conditions were strenuous and the work hard, heavy and dangerous, yet comradeship and humour lightened the load. Nicknames were commonplace – you felt naked without one – Manny Cabbage, Harold Grapes, Hughie Carrots, Willie Book, Will Waistcoat, just to mention a few. Ben Pritchard, the under manager, was the 'Supreme Command'. The password at 5:15 every morning was "Where's the cat this morning?" If it sat on the table in his cabin all was well, if not we knew that we were in trouble as the cat always vanished if Ben banged the table in a bad mood.

Canolfan Cymdeithasol Glofa'r Hafod
Hafod Colliery Social Centre

Before Nationalisation we often only worked when coal was needed. The colliery hooter would sound at 6pm to tell us that there was no work the next day. One miner, Llew Ezekial Phillips, would shout to his wife, on hearing the hooter, that Handel had never composed sweeter music! In 1939 we enjoyed our first annual holiday with pay. During the build up to the great day (when the holiday started) the whole atmosphere of the pit changed. Colliers would count the yards of coal left to clear, haulage lads would count the number of tubs to fill. Steps lightened and smiles broadened, then the Great Day dawned and for the whole village it was 'Colliers' Holidays'. Every man would carry his sack home filled with his pit clothes (as we now had pithead baths) and mothers and wives would welcome home their men folk. Then off with their holiday pay to the sea side.

In 1950 I became involved in my local (trade union) lodge and was privileged to hold the position of lodge secretary. In 1968 I stood on the stage in the Miners' Institute with my committee behind me, and told a thousand miners that our old colliery would close on March 9th. There was a hush in the hall I'll never forget. It was the end of all they had ever known, as mining is a way of life. There was no panic but the darkness of the future fell heavy on all.

Among others I was transferred to Gresford Colliery. That closed in November 1973 and, as lodge secretary, I was deeply involved in the closure. Then, after some years in Bersham Colliery, I took redundancy in November 1979. After 47 years underground in the mining industry of north Wales I was again given a lamp. This time it stands on the dresser at home, not swinging in the darkness of the pit.

If I had my time all over again I wouldn't change anything. I wouldn't have liked my children or grandchildren to go down the mines, but for me it's been a hard but happy life.

Jack Read



Sownd yn y siafft

Rwy'n cofio'r gawell yn mynd yn sownd yn y siafft sawl gwaith, yn enwedig pan ddigwyddodd hynny yng Nglofa'r Bers ym 1975. Roedden nhw wedi newid y ffan awyru am un a ddaeth o Lofa Gresffordd. Ffan Sirocco oedd hi, ac roedd yn tynnu llawer mwy o aer na'r hen un. Roedd hi mor bwerus nes y dechreuodd rhai o'r brics yn y siafft ddod yn rhydd. Rwy'n cofio teithio i fyny'r gawell un diwrnod, pan aeth yn sownd yn y siafft oherwydd bod un o'r brics wedi symud.

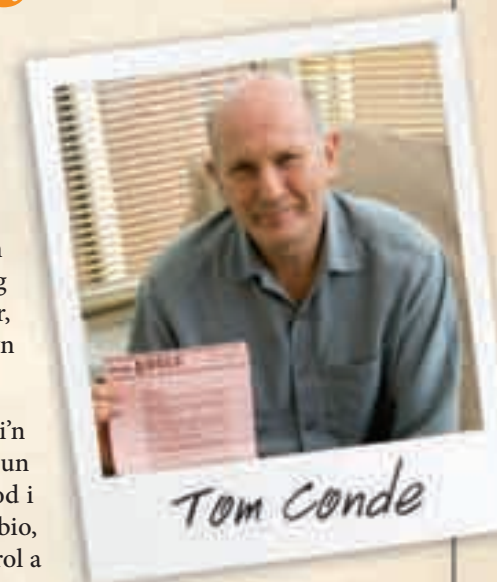
Daeth y gawell i stop, a dyma'r dyn weindio yn ei gollwng am ychydig droedfeddi a'i thynnu i fyny a'i gollwng eto er mwyn ei rhyddhau. Doedd dim offer cyfathrebu yn y gawell, ac felly roedd yn deimlad eithaf brawychus bod ar eich pen eich hun heb wybod beth oedd yn digwydd. Doeddwn i ddim yn bell iawn o ben y pwll, a olygai y gallwn i blymio tri chant a hanner o droedfeddi i'r gwaelod pe bai rhywbeth yn mynd o chwith.

Dro arall, rwy'n cofio teithio mewn siafft yn y Bers un gaeaf. Er mwyn cadw rhew allan o'r siafft, roedd ganddyn nhw ryw fath o le tân wrth fynedfa'r siafft yn llosgi golosg. Ar ôl tanio'r golosg, byddai'r

sugnedd naturiol yn sugno'r gwres i lawr y siafft ac yn cadw'r rhew allan o'r siafft. Pe bai rhew yn y siafft, gallai'r rhaffau llywio sy'n dal y gawell yn saff a sefydlog wrth fynd i fyny ac i lawr, rewi'n llwyr a mynd yn sownd.

Un nos Sul, roedden ni'n mynd i lawr y siafft mewn un cawell, a chawell arall yn dod i fyny. Wrth i'r llall fynd heibio, dyma sŵn sgrechian byddarol a rhew yn disgyn am ben y gawell – llwythi ohono! Roedd yn brofiad dychrynlyd oherwydd doeddech chi ddim yn gwybod beth oedd yn digwydd. Ond roedd hyn yn broblem fawr mewn pwll mor wlyb ac oer a'r Bers. Byddai'n drychinebus pe bai trwch o rew yn casglu ar y rhaffau a'r cadwyni a oedd yn cysylltu'r gawell â'r rhaff yn troi yn floc mawr o rew.

Tom Conde



Stuck in the shaft

There were a couple of times I remember the cage getting stuck in the shaft but I especially remember the time it happened in Bersham in 1975. They had changed the ventilation fan for one that came from Gresford Colliery. It was a Sirocco fan and it had great increase of air pull over the previous fan. It was so strong that it had started to loosen the bricks in the shaft. I remember coming up in the cage one day and it got stuck in the shaft because of one of these bricks coming out.

The cage came to a stop and then, to try and free it, the winding man lowered it down a few feet and then pulled it back up again and then lowered it down again. As there was no communication equipment in the cage, it was quite frightening when you're by yourself and you don't know what's going on. I wasn't too far from the top of the pit but it was scary enough because I knew there was about three hundred and fifty feet underneath me to go down if something went wrong.

I always remember another time travelling in the shaft at Bersham during the winter. They had to try and keep the pit free of ice so they used to put a type of hearth by the entrance of the downcast shaft and put coke in it. They'd light the coke and then the natural suction would suck the heat down and hopefully keep the shaft free of ice. The worst case scenario is that the four guide ropes, that hold the cage steady as it travels up and down the shaft, don't get clogged up with ice and jam completely.

One Sunday night we were going down the shaft in one cage and the other cage was coming up and as it went past us we heard all this screaming. There was all this ice falling on top of the cage – loads of it! It was quite frightening as you don't know exactly what was happening. But that was a big problem at Bersham with such a wet and cold pit. The worst thing that could happen would be a massive build up of ice on the ropes and the chains that were holding the cage onto the rope would just be a massive block of ice.

Tom Conde



Rosemarie Williams



Y gweithiwr olaf ym mhyllau'r gogledd

Mae Swyddfa'r Glowyr wedi bod yn Wrecsam am gan mlynedd a mwy. Mrs Rosemarie Williams oedd ysgrifenyddes y swyddfa am 53 o'r blynnyddedd hynny.

Dechreuodd Rosemarie ar ei gyrfa pan oedd yn bymtheg oed. Edward Jones oedd Asiant y Glowyr yn y Gogledd ar y pryd, yn ogystal ag Is-lywydd Undeb yr NUM. Er bod oes aur maes glo'r Gogledd wedi hen ddiflannu, roedd 10,000 o lowyr yn dal i weithio mewn chwe glofa.

Gwelodd Rosemarie ddigwyddiadau a newidiadau mawr a dirdynol wrth i'r maes glo ddirywio. Pan gaeodd pwll ola'r Gogledd ym 1996, gadawodd ei farc fel ym mhob ardal lofaol arall – fel y cannoedd o ddynion hyn â phroblemau iechyd niferus ar ôl gweithio danddaear, a llu o weddwon hefyd a gollodd eu gwŷr trwy salwch diwydiannol. Rosemarie fu'n gyfrifol am ofalu am y bobl hyn a mwy.

Yr hyn sydd mor arbennig am Rosemarie yw ei bod yn gofalu am Swyddfa'r Glowyr ar ei phen ei hun dros y blynnyddedd diwethaf. Hefyd, fe wnaeth lawer o'r gwaith heb unrhyw dâl am ran helaeth o'r amser hwnnw. Ar yr un pryd, roedd hi'n gofalu am ei gŵr a oedd yn gaeth i'r tŷ oherwydd salwch. Mae'n haeddu pob cydnabyddiaeth am ei hymroddiad i gyn-lowyr a gweddwon maes glo'r Gogledd.

Rosemarie oedd asgwrn cefn Swyddfa'r Glowyr am dros hanner canrif, yn ogystal â chalon ac enaid y lle. Dylwn i wybod yn well na neb, oherwydd cefais y fraint o gydweithio â hi am ddeuddeg mlynedd.

Fyddai Rosemarie byth am gael sylw, ond roedd hi yno yn y cefndir yn ddi-ffael. Rwy'n pendroni weithiau beth fyddai wedi digwydd ym mlynnyddedd cythryblus olaf y diwydiant heb ei geiriau rhesymol, tawel, hi. Rosemarie yw ein gweithiwr glo olaf, a bydd teuluoedd glowyr y Gogledd i gyd yn fythol ddiolchgar iddi am ei hymroddiad.

Ted McKay

The last mineworker in north Wales

There has been a Miner's Office in Wrexham for over a hundred years. For fifty three of those years the office secretary has been Mrs Rosemarie Williams.

When Rosemarie started her career she was a young girl of fifteen years old. Edward Jones was the Miners' Agent for North Wales as well as being the Vice President of the National Union of Mineworkers. At that time the north Wales coalfield was a shadow of its former self but there were still 10,000 miners working in six collieries.

During Rosemarie's working life she witnessed all the trauma and upheaval of a coal field in decline. When the last pit in north Wales closed in 1996, the legacy left behind was the same as in every other coalfield. There were hundreds of older men with a multitude of health problems relating to working underground. There were also the widows of miners, many of whom had died from industrial diseases. Rosemarie looked after all of these people and more.

What makes Rosemarie special is that, for the past few years, she has been running the Miners' Office single handed. In addition, for a considerable part of that time, she has carried out the work without pay. At the same time she has been caring for her husband who was house bound due to a medical condition. Her dedication to the old miners and widows of the north Wales coalfield is worthy of recognition.

For over half a century Rosemarie was not only the backbone of the Miners' Office, she was also its heart and soul. I should know better than most as I had the privilege of working beside her for about twelve years.

Rosemarie has never sought to be in the limelight, but was always there in the background and I wonder what would have happened during the last turbulent years of the industry without her quiet words of reason. Rosemarie is our last mineworker and, by her dedication, has won the eternal gratitude of all the mining families of north Wales.

Ted McKay

Arch ar yr aelwyd

Ym mis Medi 1819, cafwyd llifogydd yng Nglofa Pentrefron (neu 'Pentrefram'). Cafodd 23 o ddynion eu dal yn gaeth o dan y ddaear, ond fe achubwyd pawb ond tri ohonynt. Credwyd bod dau o'r tri wedi goroesi ac un arall, John Evans 26 oed, wedi boddi. Am saith niwrnod wedyn, bu peiriannau'n pwmpio dŵr allan cyn i'r tîm achub fentro i waelod y pwll. Buont yn chwilio ar hyd a lled y talcenni glo am ychydig ddyddiau cyn darganfod dau gorff. Ond doedd dim golwg o John Evans. Roedd pawb yn credu ei fod wedi'i gladdu dan y rwbel. Tra'r oedd ei wraig yn dal i aros a gobeithio ar ben y pwll, paratowyd arch â'i enw arni.

Ar y trydydd diwrnod ar ddeg, daeth y tîm achub o hyd i siaced John Evans a chlywed sŵn griddfan isel o'r tywyllwch. John Evans ydoedd - yn wan iawn ond

yn dal yn fyw, ac wedi eistedd yng nghrombil tywyll y pwll am ddeuddeg dydd a nos. Goroesodd trwy fwyta canhwylau ac yfed dŵr a oedd yn diferu o'r to. Wrth iddo gael ei gludo o'r pwll, roedd pobl ar eu pengliniau yn gweddio ar hyd y ffordd wrth iddo basio. Cludwyd yr arch i'w gartref wedyn, a'i defnyddio fel cwpwrdd. Bu John Evans fyw i gyrraedd ei saithdegau, ond ni weithiodd danddaear byth eto. Casglodd ei gyd-lowyr ddigon o arian iddo brynu merlen a chert iddo'i hun, a gwnaeth ei fywoliaeth wedyn trwy gludo pobl i'r farchnad.

Crëwyd llun dyfrlliw o John Evans ar y pryd, ac mae bellach yn rhan o gasgliadau Big Pit: Amgueddfa Lofaol Cymru.

A watercolour of John Evans was produced at the time and is now in the collections of Big Pit: National Coal Museum.



A Coffin and Winding Sheet

In September 1819, Pentrefron (or 'Pentrefram') Colliery suffered an inundation of water. Twenty three men were underground at the time but all were rescued apart from three who were trapped by the flooding. It was believed that two of the men had survived and one, 26 year old John Evans, had drowned. For seven days engines were used to pump out the water before a rescue party was sent down the pit. They searched the workings for a few days until two bodies were discovered leaving only John Evans to be found. It was thought that his body was buried under debris so his wife kept vigil on the surface while a coffin was made and inscribed with his name.

On the thirteenth day the rescue team found John Evan's jacket and heard a faint call in the darkness. It was John Evans who was very weak but still alive and sitting in the dark where he had waited for twelve days and nights. He had survived by eating candles and drinking the water which dripped from the roof. As he was carried from the pit people knelt and prayed at the roadside as he passed. The coffin was later taken to his home where it was used it as a cupboard. John Evans lived into his seventies but never again worked underground as his fellow miners collected enough money to buy him a pony and trap which he used make a living by taking people to market.

Alan, gŵr Margaret
Margaret's husband Alan



Alan a Margaret Jones
Alan and Margaret Jones

Newid byd

Ar ôl syrthio mewn cariad gydag Alan ar wyliau yn Blackpool, ac ar ôl iddo ofyn i mi deirgwaith i'w briodi, gadewais Swydd Derby a chyrraedd Wrecsam o'r diwedd i gyfarfod â'm darpar fam-yng-nghyfraith cyn inni ddyweddio'n swyddogol. Ar ôl y siwrnai ar y trên i Wrecsam, synnais wrth weld goleuadau nwy ar y strydoedd o'r orsaf, gan fod goleuadau trydan wedi'u gosod yn fy mhentref genedigol i ers blynnyddoedd. Cyrhaeddais dŷ teras glöwr a oedd fel pin mewn papur yn Rhos-ddu, ac wrth sgwrsio, sylweddolais mai dim ond un pwynt trydan oedd yn y tŷ i gyd a'i fod yn cael ei ddefnyddio ar gyfer y teledu. Mae'n debyg mai tegell trydan oedd y peth cyntaf a brynwyd ar ôl cael pwynt trydan yn y tŷ, ond eu bod nhw wedi mynd â'r tegell yn ôl i'r siop gan feddwl ei fod wedi torri am fod goleuadau'r tŷ wedi ffiwsio - mae'n rhaid eu bod wedi

bod yn siomedig dros ben - doedden nhw ddim wedi sylweddoli mai dim ond soced pump amp ydoedd!

Doedd dim peiriant golchi nac oergell yno, ac roedd rhaid rhoi plwg yr hwfyr yn y soced golau. Roedden nhw'n defnyddio boeler nwy, sinc mawr a nerth bôn braich i olchi dillad, a lle tân agored yn y gegin oedd yn cynhesu'r tŷ i gyd. Sôn am sioc i'r system. Roedd yn hollol wahanol i'r tŷ cyngor newydd sbon gyda thrydan ym mhobman, yr oeddwn wedi'i adael ar ôl. Yno, roedd gennym ystafell molchi i fyny'r grisiau a dau doiled, ond yma, roedd yr unig doiled yng ngwaelod yr iard a bath tun yn crogi ar hoelen y tu allan. Er gwaethaf hyn i gyd, doedd unman arall tebyg i'r ysbryd cymunedol arbennig a oedd yn nhŷ'r colier yn Rhos-ddu.

Margaret Jones

Culture Shock

After a holiday romance in Blackpool and three proposals later, I finally came to Wrexham from Derbyshire to meet my future mother in law before Alan and I became officially engaged. Following the train journey to Wrexham I was amazed to see gas lights in the street as I came out of the station as they had been replaced by electric ones years before in the small village that I came from. I found myself in a spotless terraced colliery house in Rhosddu and, during the course of conversation, I found out that there was only one electric power point in the house and this was used for the TV. Apparently an electric kettle had been the very first purchase when the socket was put in but was taken back to the shop as faulty as it had fused all the lights - how disappointing it must that have been, they didn't realise that the socket was only five amps!

There was no washing machine or fridge and the vacuum cleaner had to be plugged into the light socket. The washing was all done with the aid of a gas boiler, big sink and elbow grease and the heating came from a black open range oven. Talk about a culture shock, it was totally unlike the brand spanking new council house with electricity throughout that I had left behind. There we had an upstairs bathroom as well as two toilets while here was a house where the only toilet was at the bottom of the yard and the tin bath was hanging on a nail outside. Despite all this I would never again come across the community spirit that there was in the colliery house in Rhosddu.

Margaret Jones



Ceffyl y lofa'n cael hyfforddiant yn y Parlwr Du
Colliery horse in training at Point of Ayr Colliery

Pam y dechreuais i ddysgu Cymraeg

Bues i'n gweithio yn y Parlwr Du o 1952 tan 1992. Roeddwn i'n bymtheg oed pan ddechreuais i, ond roedd rhaid i chi fod yn 16 oed cyn cael mynd danddaear. Felly, bues i'n gweithio ar ben y pwll am 8 mis, cyn mynd ymlaen i Lofa Gresffordd i gael hyfforddiant danddaear. Treuliais ddeufis yn y coleg, a deufis yn y lofa ei hun.

Yn y coleg, roedden nhw'n gofyn a oeddech chi am fod yn brentis trydanol, prentis ffitiwr neu löwr cyffredin. Penderfynais fynd yn löwr cyffredin, gan fod prentisiaeth yn para pum mlynedd, ac roedd arian yn brin ar yr aelwyd. Gorau po gyntaf y gallwn ddechrau gweithio er mwyn cyfrannu at y teulu, meddyliais. A dyna wnes i.

Pan oeddech chi'n mynd danddaear am y tro cyntaf, byddech fel arfer yn cael eich paru gyda rhywun o'r un pentref â chi. Roeddech chi'n treulio rhyw bythefnos i dair wythnos yn ei gwmni er mwyn dod i arfer â bod danddaear. Roeddwn i'n byw ym mhentref Gronant, rhyw dair milltir o'r Parlwr Du, ac felly fe es i weithio gyda dyn o'r pentref o'r enw George Hayes. Ar ôl tair wythnos, dyma nhw'n dweud "Heddiw, fe gei di ferlen y pwll".

Turpin oedd enw fy ngheffyl i. Roedd ceffylau eraill yno hefyd, Churchill, Atley a Bevin. Cafodd fy ngheffyl

i ei enwi ar ôl Randolph Turpin, y paffiwr, a oedd yn hyfforddi yng Nghastell Gwrych, Abergele. Ar fy more cyntaf gyda'r ceffyl, dyma fi'n dweud "Gee up horse", ond ni symudodd yr un cam, "Gee up horse" eto, ond dim lwc. Cefais air o gyngor gan hen golier, "Glyn, waeth i ti heb, tydyn nhw ddim yn dallt Saesneg. Rhaid i chdi ddysgu Cymraeg, a siarad Cymraeg efo nhw". Felly dyna pam y dechreuais i ddysgu Cymraeg, er mwyn cyfathrebu â merlod y pwll.

Doedd dim Cymraeg o gwbl yn yr ysgol, ac er bod fy rhieni yn Gymry Cymraeg, doedden ni byth yn ei siarad ar yr aelwyd, felly dysgais Gymraeg yn y Parlwr Du! Bydden i'n dweud bod 99% o'r gweithwyr yn siarad Cymraeg pan oeddwn i yno. Roedd un neu ddau Sais, ac ambell Almaenwr – roedden nhw wedi aros yma ar ôl y rhyfel a phriodi merched lleol, ond Cymraeg oedd iaith y pwll.

Pan ddechreuais i weithio yno, roedd 35 o ferlod yn gweithio danddaear a phump ar ben y pwll. Y Parlwr Du oedd un o'r pyllau olaf i droi'n fecanyddol, a dyna pam yr oedd merlod yno o hyd. Doedd dim posib mynd â pheiriannau i bob twll a chornel o'r pwll, felly roedd y merlod yn amhrisiadwy.

Glyn Hughes

Why I started learning Welsh

I worked at Point of Ayr Colliery from 1952 to 1992. I started at 15 years old but you had to be 16 before you went underground so I worked on the surface for eight months, before going to Gresford Colliery to do my underground training. I was two months in the college, and two months in the colliery itself.

In the college they asked you if you wanted to go as an electrical apprentice, an apprentice fitter or just an ordinary miner. I chose to go as an ordinary miner as the apprenticeship then lasted five years and money was quite tight at home. I thought that the sooner I could start earning money to fetch home the better so that's what I did.

When you went underground for the first time, you were usually put with someone you knew from your own village. You went with him for about a fortnight to three weeks to get you used to being underground. My village was Gronant, about three miles from Point of Ayr, so I went with a chap from the village called George Hayes. After three weeks they told me "Today you'll be given a pit pony".

My horse's name was Turpin. There was also a Churchill, an Atley and there was a Bevin. My horse was actually named after Randolph Turpin, the boxer,

who was doing his training at Gwrych Castle in Abergele. On my first morning with the horse, I went "Gee up horse", but he wouldn't move, "Gee up horse" but he still wouldn't move. An old collier said to me "Glyn, it's no good, they don't understand English. You'll have to learn Welsh and speak Welsh to them." So that's why I started learning Welsh, to be able to speak to the pit ponies.

We had no Welsh in school and although my parents were both Welsh speaking we never spoke it at home, so I learnt my Welsh in Point of Ayr! I'd say 99% of the workforce was Welsh speaking when I was there. We had one or two English chaps, one or two Germans – after the war, they stayed around here and married local girls, but the language of the pit was Welsh.

When I started, there were 35 pit ponies underground and five on the surface. Point of Ayr was one of the last pits to get mechanised so that's the reason the pit ponies were still down there. There were a lot of places where you couldn't take machines so this was where the pit ponies came in handy.

Glyn Hughes



Ceffyl y lofa yn ei ymddeoliad, Sir Fôn, tua 1960
Colliery horse in retirement on Anglesey, c.1960



Cymorth a chefnogaeth

Ym 1979, symudais o Lerpwl i Wersyllt gyda fy ngŵr, fy mab a'm dwy ferch. Roedd fy ngŵr yn gweithio yng Nglofa'r Bers, ac ymunodd fy mab Michael yn 16 oed. Fel mam, doeddwn i byth yn mynd i unman heb fy mhlant, a'm cartref oedd fy myd. Yn y gymuned hon, nid oedd gwagedd y glowyr fel petaen nhw'n adnabod ei gilydd gystal – neu felly'r oeddwn i'n ei gweld hi beth bynnag.

Yna, dechreuodd Streic y Glowyr ym mis Mawrth 1984, ac wrth wyllo'r newyddion teledu, cefais fraw o weld beth oedd yn digwydd mewn ardaloedd glofaol ym mhob cwr o'r wlad. Penderfynais yn y fan a'r lle fy mod am wneud rhywbeth i helpu – ond sut a beth? Aeth Keith a minnau i gyfarfod cyhoeddus yn Wrecsam o blaid y glowyr. Roedd pob math o bobl yno, undebwyr llafur, aelodau o bleidiau gwleidyddol, myfyrwyr. Dyna'r man cychwyn i mi, oherwydd roedden nhw'n codi arian a chasglu bwyd i helpu teuluoedd y streicwyr ar hyd a lled y wlad, ac roeddwn i'n teimlo bod rhaid ymuno â'r ymgyrch a chyfrannu ati. Roedd y Trades Council yn Lerpwl wedi cynnig cymorth inni, ac felly es i draw i gyfarfod â nhw. Ar ôl hynny, fe wnes i gynnig cymorth gydol y streic, gan gynnwys mynychu ralïau a chyfarfodydd niferus ledled y wlad. Y profiad mwyaf brawychus i mi oedd rali enfawr gyda miloedd yn bresennol yn y Pier Head yn nocio Lerpwl. Er i mi geisio cuddio, cefais fy annog i siarad ar y llwyfan mawr yno.

Roeddwn i'n rhannu llwyfan hefo Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Derek Hatton a llu o arweinwyr undebau llafur. Wrth gydio yn y meicroffon, meddyliais am fy nhad a oedd yn aelod brwd o'r undeb llafur gydol ei oes. Roeddwn i'n gwybod y byddai wedi bod yn falch iawn ohonof yn cytuno i siarad gerbron y dyrfa fawr. Cyn cloi, hoffwn ddiolch o galon i bawb a'n cefnogodd ni drwy'r dyddiau duon hynny.

Anne Hett



Providing support

In 1979 I moved from Liverpool to Gwersyllt with my husband Keith, my son and two daughters. My husband worked in Bersham Colliery and was joined by my son Michael, when he became sixteen. As a mother I never went anywhere without my kids and I spent most of my time at home. In this mining community the miners' wives didn't seem to know each other, at least this was certainly the case for me.

Then, in March 1984, the miners' strike started and, watching the news on TV, I was shocked at what was happening in the mining communities around the country. I suddenly felt the need to help but I didn't know how. There was a public meeting held in Wrexham to support the miners and Keith and I went along. There were all sorts of people there, trade unionists, people from political parties and students. This was the starting point for me because they were raising money and food aid to help striking families around the country and I just had to get involved and joined the campaign. The Trades Council in Liverpool offered us help and I went along to meet them. After that, throughout the period of the strike I offered all the help I could, including attending rallies and meetings all over the country that we were invited to. The most frightening one for me was a massive rally on the Pier head in Liverpool attended by thousands. I tried to hide away but was persuaded to get up on the platform to speak.

On the platform with me was, Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Derek Hatton and many trade union leaders. As I was handed the microphone I thought of my dad who had been a very keen trade unionist all his life. I knew that he would have been proud of me speaking in front of all those people. Finally I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who supported us through those very difficult days.

Anne Hett

“Dyna ddigon!”

Ar ôl gadael y fyddin, roedd rhaid chwilio am waith. Yn anfodus, nid oedd llawer o swyddi ar gael, a doeddwn i ddim eisiau mynd i'r gwaith glo ar ôl colli 'nhad yn ffrwydrad 1934. Ond ar ôl chwilio a chwilio, Glofa Gresfordd oedd yr unig ddewis. Felly, dechreuais weithio yng Ngresfordd, ac roedd hi'n anodd gorfod cerdded heibio lleoliad y drychineb wrth waelod y pwll, a oedd bellach wedi selio gydag arwyddion ar y wal yn nodi bod 266 o gyrff yn gorwedd ar yr ochr arall.

Roeddwn i'n gwybod bod 'nhad ymhlith y meirw y tu ôl i'r wal honno, ac roedd hi'n anodd pasio heibio bob tro. Ar ôl gweithio yno am wyth mis, roeddwn i'n cydgerdded â bachgen a ddaeth allan o'r gawell yr un pryd â mi. Dywedodd wrthyf, “Hei, beth am fynd i mewn a chloddio fan hyn, maen nhw i gyd wedi marw hefo'u cyflogau yn eu pocedi. Allwn ni wneud ffortiwn!” Gwylltais, a'i daro yn y fan a'r lle.

Ar ôl gorffen fy shift a dychwelyd i'r ystafell lampau, roedd nodyn ar fy machyn lamp yn dweud y dylwn fynd i weld rheolwr y pwll. Es ato, a dyma fo'n dweud “Dwi wedi clywed dy hanes di – dyna ddigon, dos o 'ma, does dim ymladd i fod danddaear!” Ac fe ges i'r sac, heb gael cyfle i esbonio pam y gwnes i daro'r bachgen. Dywedodd ei fod yn gwybod y cyfan, ac nad oedd eisiau clywed fy ochr i o'r stori, mai meddwl am fy nhad oeddwn i. Ond ni wrandawodd yr un gair, dim ond dweud “Dyna ddigon – dos o 'ma”.

Bill Crump

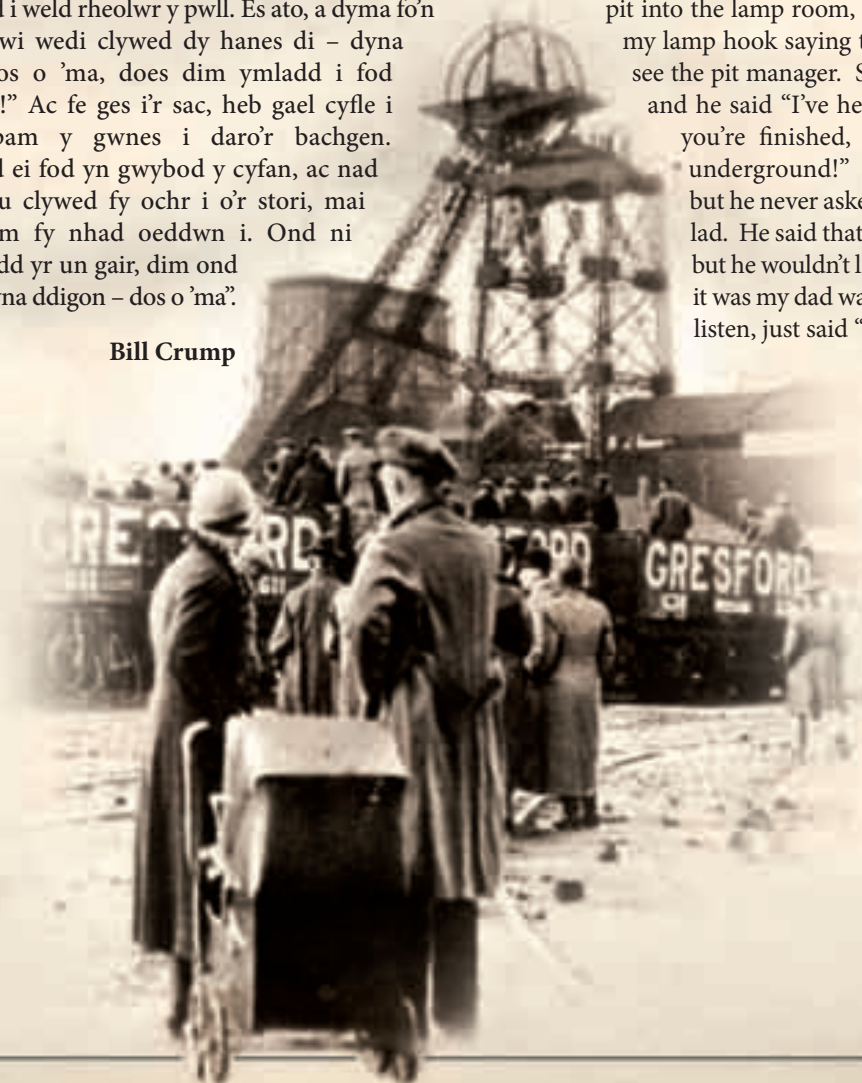
“You're finished!”

When I got out of the forces and looking for work there was not a lot about apart from the colliery and I didn't want to go down the pit because I'd lost my father in the 1934 explosion. However, after looking around the only work I could get was Gresford Colliery. So I started work in Gresford and it was quite difficult going past the place near pit bottom where the disaster had happened and was now sealed off with signs on the wall reading that there were 266 victims of the disaster behind that wall.

I knew that my father was behind that wall and it was really very difficult passing that point. After about eight months down the pit I was walking along with this lad who had got out of the cage at the same time as I had. He said to me “Hey, let's go in and dig here, they've all died in there with their wages on them. We'll make some money!” I took offence at this and I hit the boy.

I finished my shift and, when I came up the pit into the lamp room, there was a note on my lamp hook saying that I was to go and see the pit manager. So I went to see him and he said “I've heard all about you – you're finished, there's no fighting underground!” And he sacked me, but he never asked me why I'd hit the lad. He said that he knew all about it but he wouldn't listen to my side, that it was my dad wasn't it? But he didn't listen, just said “You're finished!”

Bill Crump



Newyddion radio'r BBC 1934: 'Terrible happenings at Gresford...'

Ydiwydiant glo oedd diwydiant sylfaenol Prydain yn y 1930au, gan gyflogi dros dri-chwarter miliwn o ddynion yn uniongyrchol. Roedd deunaw pwll glo yn Sir Ddinbych bryd hynny, a'r mwyaf oedd Glofa Llai a gyflogai bron i 3,000 o ddynion. Roedd 2,200 o ddynion yn gweithio gerllaw yng Nglofa Gresfordd am ryw 7 swllt (35c) y dydd.

Ym 1934, roedd Albert Rowlands yn 14 oed ac yn gweithio fel 'bachgen lamp' yn glanhau a dosbarthu lampau diogelwch Davey i lowyr Gresfordd, gan gynnwys ei dad. "Roedd fy nhad yn gweithio dan amodau difrifol o wael", cofia Rowlands, "roedd hi mor boeth, nes ei fod yn gweithio mewn pâr o nicers ail law fy mam, dyna'r unig beth oedd amdano." Roedd Robert Edwards yn gweithio fel peiriannydd danddaear: "Yn y tridegau, roedd hi mor boeth, eithriadol o boeth... ond roedd y gwaith yn talu, ac allech chi ddim dweud dim gan fod gwaith mor brin".

Roedd Gilbert Tarran yn esgy mun oherwydd ei waith fel ysgrifennydd undeb llafur, ac ni allai gael gwaith yn agos i'w gartref ym Mwcle. Roedd yn teithio am oriau bob dydd i'w waith ym mhwl Gresfordd. Meddai Tarran: "Dywedais wrth mam, wn i ddim pa mor hir alla i barhau, mae'r amodau gwaith mor ddifrifol. Mi fydd yna ddamwain yno rhyw ddiwrnod."

Yn ystod y degawd cyn yr Ail Ryfel Byd, byddai pedwar dyn yn cael ei ladd bob dydd a 450 yn cael eu hanafu ar gyfartaledd ym mhyllau glo gwledydd Prydain. Meddai Albert Rowlands: "Roedd y ceffylau ambiwlans yn cludo dynion wedi'u hanafu i'r ysbyty yn Wrecsam rownd y ril."

Am 2.20 o'r gloch fore Sadwrn, 22 Medi, 1934, bu ffrwydrad danddaear ym mwll Gresfordd. "Trodd y fforman ataf a gofyn i mi 'nôl yr ambiwlans' dywedodd Albert Rowlands. "Felly, fe neidiais ar fy meic. Pan gyrhaeddais, fe agorodd y ffenestr a gofyn beth oeddwn i eisiau. Y cyfan allwn i ei ddweud oedd: "Maen nhw dy eisiau di yn y pwll."

Gilbert Tarran: "Roedd criw o bobl yn sefyll yn y glaw, yn crefu'n ofer am unrhyw wybodaeth." Daeth glowyr o lofa Llai i helpu'r tîm achub yng Ngresfordd.

Harold Bent: "Roedden ni'n gorfod mynd i lawr at y tân, ond doedd dim modd mynd heibio na diffodd y fflamau."

Albert Rowlands: "Rwy'n eu cofio nhw'n dod â'r stretsiers i'r wyneb. Roedd hi'n amlwg eu bod nhw wedi marw, gan eu bod wedi'u gorchuddio â blanced ac yn cael eu cludo i ffrwydd."

Harold Bent: "Pan oedden ni'n dychwelyd i'r gwaelodion, roedd pobl yn gafael ynom ac yn dweud pethau fel 'Mae fy mab i' lawr fan'na' ac ati. Yn erfyn arnon ni, â dagrau yn eu llygaid. Doedd gynnon ni ddim syniad."

Gilbert Tarran: "Roeddwn i'n hwyr i'r gwaith, tua hanner awr wedi naw. Es i at y bos a dweud 'Sori, syr, roedd fy nhad yn gweithio ym mhwl Gresfordd ac mae yna ddamwain ddifrifol wedi digwydd. Mae'n debyg bod pawb wedi'u lladd'. Ar cyfan ddywedodd wrthyf oedd 'Mae'n ddrwg gen i glywed. Rwan, dos i weithio.'"

Er gwaetha'r ffaith iddynt glywed sŵn dau ffrwydrad danddaear, fe barhaodd y glowyr gwirfoddol i geisio achub eu cydweithwyr tan hwyr brynhawn Sul, pan roddwyd y gorau i chwilio. Roedd tadau Albert Rowlands a Gilbert Tarran ymhlith y rhai a gladdwyd danddaear.

Penodwyd Comisiwn cwbl Seisnig i ymchwilio i drychineb mawr Gresfordd. Methwyd â chanfod achos y ffrwydrad. Er hynny, dywedodd y Comisiwn fod rheolwyr y pwll wedi torri rheolau diogelwch wrth ffrwydro o'r blaen, a'u bod wedi dweud celwyddau ynglŷn â faint o nwy gwenwynig oedd yno, ac wedi gwneud i'r dynion weithio y tu hwnt i'r oriau a ganiatawyd yn ôl y gyfraith. Ym mis Mawrth 1937, dros ddwy flynedd ar ôl y drychineb, cafwyd cwmni United Westminster and Wrexham Collieries Cyf. yn euog o dorri wyth rheol diogelwch a chawsant ddirwy o £140.

Cafodd 266 o ddynion eu lladd yn ffrwydrad Gresfordd.

Mae rhagor o fanylion am y drychineb yn llyfr Stanley Williamson, *Gresford: The Anatomy of a Disaster*, Gwasg Prifysgol Lerpwl, (1999); ac yn ffilm Martin Smith *The Terrible Price: Gresford 1934* (2004), dosbarthwyr www.panamint.co.uk

Martin Smith

BBC Radio news 1934: 'Terrible happenings at Gresford...'

Coal mining was Britain's basic industry in the 1930s and directly employed more than three-quarters of a million men. Denbighshire in north Wales, was home to eighteen collieries, the largest, Llay Main, employed almost 3,000 men. The nearby Gresford Colliery provided 2,200 jobs on pay rates of about 7 shillings (35 pence) a day.

In 1934, Albert Rowlands was fourteen years old and worked as 'lamp boy' cleaning and handing out Davey safety lamps to Gresford's miners – among them his father. "The conditions my father worked in were shocking", remembers Rowlands, "it was so hot that most of the time he worked in a pair of my mother's second-hand knickers, that's all he wore." Robert Edwards was an underground engineer: "In the thirties it was hot, blinking hot... but it was a job, and you couldn't say anything about it because there were no other jobs."

Gilbert Tarran's father was black-listed for his work as a trade union secretary and couldn't get work close to his home in Buckley. He travelled several hours each day to and from the Gresford pit. Says Tarran: "He told my mother, I don't know how long I can stick it, the conditions are so bad. One of these days there'll be an accident."

In the decade before the Second World War an average of four men were killed and 450 injured every working day in Britain's coal mines. Albert Rowlands: "The horse drawn ambulance was always backwards and forward with injuries to the hospital at Wrexham."

At 2.20am on the morning of Saturday, September 22nd, 1934 there was an underground explosion in the Gresford pit. "The foreman turned to me and said go get the ambulance" reported Albert Rowlands. "So I got on my bike. When I got there, he shoved up the window and asked what I wanted. All I could say was: "You're wanted at the pit."

Gilbert Tarran: "There were crowds of people huddling in the pouring rain, trying to find any information but nobody could tell them anything." Miners from neighbouring Llay colliery joined their comrades at Gresford in the rescue attempts. Harold Bent: "We had to go to where the fire was, but you couldn't get beyond it and we couldn't douse it."

Albert Rowlands: "I remember them bringing stretchers up. They had to be dead as they had a blanket covering them and they were just taken away." Harold Bent: "When we went to go down again people was grabbing us 'My son's down there' and this like. Begging, tears in their eyes. We didn't know."

Gilbert Tarran: "I got into work late, about half-past nine. I went to the boss and said I'm very sorry sir. My Dad's been working in Gresford pit and there's been a nasty accident, and it looks as if everyone down the pit has been killed. And all he said to me was 'I'm very sorry to hear it. Go and get your work.'"

Despite hearing two explosions deep in the mine, volunteer miners continued their attempts to reach the trapped men until late on Sunday afternoon, when rescue efforts were abandoned. Among the entombed miners were the fathers of Albert Rowlands and Gilbert Tarran.

An all-English Commission was appointed to inquire into the Welsh disaster. It failed to pin-point the cause of the explosion. But it did report that the mine's managers had previously flouted safety rules about shot-blasting (controlled explosions), had concocted their measurements about the presence of poisonous gas, and had worked men beyond the hours permitted by law. In March 1937, more than two years after the tragedy, the mine's owners, United Westminster and Wrexham Collieries Ltd., were convicted of eight safety offences and fined £140.

The Gresford explosion had claimed the lives of 266 men.

Further details about the tragedy can be found in Stanley Williamson's book, *Gresford: The Anatomy of a Disaster*, Liverpool University Press, (1999); Martin Smith's film *The Terrible Price: Gresford 1934* (2004), distributors www.panamint.co.uk

Martin Smith



Tim Achub Glofa Gresfordd
Gresford Colliery Mines Rescue team

Bachgen y lampprwm

Roeddwn i'n 14 oed ac yn gweithio yn ystafell y lampau yng Nglofa Gresffordd ar 21 Medi 1934. Roedd fy nhad, John, cyn-aelod o'r Gwarchodlu Brenhinol Cymreig a enillodd Fedal Filwrol, yn llywio'r peiriant torri glo ar y talcen glo. Roedd bechgyn yr ystafell lampau'n gorfod bod yno cyn gynted ag y byddai'r dynion yn dechrau cyrraedd y gwaith. Roedden ni'n mynd ar ein beiciau i'r gwaith gyda 'nhad. Dywedodd wrthon ni am frysio a mynd o'i flaen neu fe fydden ni'n hwyr. Cododd ei lamp yn ffenestr arall yr ystafell, felly welais i mohono cyn iddo fynd i lawr y pwll.

Roedd pobl yn dweud bod ffrwydrad anferthol wedi digwydd, a'r ddaear yn crynu, ond nid felly'r oedd hi. Y cyfan ddigwyddodd oedd y ffôn yn canu a'r taniwr yn dweud: "Maen nhw i gyd yn dod i fyny". Pan ddechreuodd y glowyr gyrraedd, roedd braw ar eu hwynebau. Dyma ni'n derbyn y lampau ac yn rhoi'r tocynnau yn ôl i'r glowyr, cyn i bobman fynd yn dawel. Roedd dynion yn dal i gyrraedd o'r gwaelodion, yn ysgwyd eu pennau. Fe'u gwelais nhw'n cario cyrff i fyny wedi'u gorchuddio â blancedi, prin ddeg ar y mwyaf. Erbyn dydd Sul, roedden nhw wedi rhoi'r gorau iddi.

Wrth gasglu'r lampau, roeddwn i'n gobeithio gweld fy nhad. Roedd yn hawdd ei adnabod yng nghanol yr holl lowyr eraill, hyd yn oed pan fyddent yn llwch drostynt, oherwydd ei wên fawr a'i dannedd gwyn hyfryd. Ond ddaeth e byth yn ôl i ddychwelyd ei lamp, ac yno roedd ei docyn, yn dal i hongian ar y bachyn.

Albert Rowlands (g.1920)



The lamp room boy

I was a 14-year-old boy working in the lamp room at Gresford Colliery on the 21st September 1934. My father, John, a former Royal Welch Fusilier who had won the Military Medal was a coal-cutting machine operator at the coal face. The boys in the lamp room had to be there as soon as the men started arriving for work. We were cycling to work with my dad and he told us to get on or we'd be late so we went on ahead. He picked up his lamp at the other window in the lamp room so I never saw him before he went down.

People have said there was a huge explosion and the ground shook but that's not true. All that happened was that a telephone rang and the fireman said: "They're all coming up." When the miners appeared they seemed to be panicked. We were getting their lamps in and handing back their tallies and then it all went quiet. Men were coming back up the pit and just shaking their heads. I saw them bringing some bodies up all covered in blankets but there were only ten of them. By Sunday, they had given up.

All the time I was collecting the lamps in I was hoping to see my dad. You could always tell him from the other men, even when they were all covered in coal dust, because he always had a big grin and lovely white teeth. But he never did come back to hand his lamp in and his tally was left there just hanging on its hook.

Albert Rowlands (b.1920)

Llun papur newydd

Cefais lun arbennig gan rywun pan oeddwn i'n ifanc. Dwi ddim yn cofio gan bwy'n union, ond llun papur newydd o 1934 ydoedd, yn dangos teulu ifanc a gollodd eu tad yn nhrychineb pwll glo Gresffordd - fy nheulu i.

Fi yw'r ail fachgen o'r chwith. Roedd mam yn gorfod cynnal teulu o bump ar ddim ond £1 7s 6d yr wythnos. Pan oeddwn i'n bump oed, roedd gen i bedair swydd wahanol - gweithio i'r pobydd, cigydd, siop papur newydd a cludo batris ar gyfer setiau radio hen bobl. Roedd hi'n fain iawn arnom ni.

Saith deg pum mlynedd yn ddiweddarach, gwelais yr hen lun hwn mewn archifau yn Llundain. Hyd y gwn i, dyma'r unig lun a dynnwyd yn Wrecsam o deulu a effeithiwyd gan y drychineb. Cafodd ei dynnu y tu allan i'n tŷ ni ar 29 Medi 1934, wythnos

ar ôl y drychineb, ar gyfer Thomson's Weekly News o'r Alban. Rwyf wedi meddwl sawl tro pam mai'r papur hwnnw'n unig a gyhoeddodd y llun.

Un diwrnod, pan oeddwn i'n hanner cant oed, roeddwn i'n mynd â Sam y ci am dro o gwmpas Wrecsam. Dyma fi'n digwydd edrych i lawr, a gweld hen lun papur newydd o dan y clawdd - llun o 'nhad! Aeth ias i lawr fy nghefn, ac nid oeddwn yn gallu credu'r hyn a welais. Wedi'r holl flynyddoedd, roedd rhagluniaeth wedi trefnu fy mod yn dod o hyd i'r llun hwn.

Yn ddiweddar, llwyddodd Glen, fy mab-yng-nghyfraith, i uno'r ddau lun at ei gilydd. Felly, mewn ffordd ryfedd, mae'r teulu cyfan wedi dod ynghyd am y tro cyntaf mewn saith deg pum mlynedd.

Cyril Crump

The newspaper cutting

I was given a photograph when I was young. I can't remember who gave it to me but it was a cutting from a newspaper in 1934 showing a young family whose father had been taken in the Gresford mining disaster - it was a photograph of my family.

I'm the boy second from the left. There were five of us and my mother only got £1 7s 6d a week to live on. At the age of five I had four different jobs to do, working for a baker, a butcher and a newsagent as well as delivering batteries for old people's radios. Times were very tight.

Seventy five years later I found this old clipping again in the archives in London. It was the only photograph taken in Wrexham of a family involved in the disaster as far as I know. It was taken in our house on the 29th September 1934, a week after the disaster.

It was taken for a Scottish newspaper called Thomson's Weekly News and I've often wondered why it was the only newspaper that it appeared in.

One day, when I was fifty, I was walking my dog Sam near Wrexham. Sam stopped and, as I looked down, I saw an old newspaper clipping under a hedge with my father's photograph on it. It was eerie, I couldn't believe what I'd found. After all these years I assumed that this cutting was meant for me to find, it was fate.

Just recently, using computer software, my son-in-law Glen has joined the two clippings together. So, in a strange way, all the family has been brought together for the first time in 75 years.

Cyril Crump





Sister nyrsio Glofa'r Parlwr Du
Point of Ayr Colliery nursing sister

Tynnu lluniau o'r Parlwr Du - Hydref 1996

Roeddwn i wedi gosod nod arbennig i fi fy hun – sef creu cofnod ffotograffig o holl lofeydd y DU cyn iddynt gael eu dymchwel – tasg eithaf amhosibl yn oes Thatcher, gan fod un pwll ar ôl y llall yn cau'n gyflym! Ychydig iawn o byllau glo oedd yn dal i weithio ym 1996, a phan gyhoeddwyd y byddai Glofa'r Parlwr Du yn cau, fe wnes i'r siwrnai faith o Hampshire.

Roedd maes glo Gogledd Cymru yn ddieithr iawn i mi, a dim ond y Parlwr Du oedd ar ôl ers i Lofa'r Bers gau ddeng mlynedd ynghynt. Cefais ganiatâd swyddogol i dynnu lluniau o ben y pwll (doeddwn i ddim yn cael mynd danddaear ar y pryd) ac felly arhosais yn yr ardal am noson, gan dynnu lluniau yn y nos ac ar doriad gwawr, er mwyn cael effeithiau arbennig ac anarferol.

Roedd y Parlwr Du yn dra gwahanol i byllau De Cymru, gan ei fod yn agos i lan y môr ar aber afon Dyfrdwy, ac ar arfordir gwastad gyda digonedd o le

o gymharu â chymoedd cul y De. Mae dwy elfen arbennig yn aros yn y cof. Yn gyntaf, olion yr hen ddoc llongau gerllaw'r pwll a ddefnyddiwyd i lwytho'r glo yn syth i'r llongau, ac yn ail, y defnydd o'r hen wagenni glo fel morglawdd ar y traeth.

Roedd y Parlwr Du yn unigryw iawn, gydag un banc Ferro concriid a dau fanc llai o ddur; a phwerdy *art deco* go anghyffredin gyda tho fel tonnau. Os cofiaf yn iawn, gorsaf bŵer Fiddlers Ferry yn Warrington oedd prif farchnad glo'r Parlwr Du.

Fel arfer, bu pobl yn ddigon cwrtais wrth fy nhywys o gwmpas, a llwyddais i dynnu set lawn o luniau, gan gynnwys rhai o'r ganolfan feddygol. Erbyn haf 1997, roedd y lofa wedi'i dymchwel yn llwyr.

Steve Grudgings

Photographing Point of Ayr Colliery - October 1996

I had made it my mission to take a proper photographic record of all the UK's collieries before they were demolished – an impossible task in the Thatcher era as the pace of closure was faster than I could keep up with! By 1996 there were very few pits left working and so when the closure of Point of Ayr Colliery in north Wales was announced I was able to find the time to make the long journey from Hampshire.

The North Wales Coalfield was a complete unknown to me and Point of Ayr had been the solitary survivor for over 10 years after the closure of Bersham. I had official permission to photograph the surface (couldn't get it for underground this time) and so I stayed locally overnight, taking photos at night and at daybreak, times when you get unusual effects.

Point of Ayr was unlike any of the south Wales pits, being situated on the seaside by the Dee estuary on the wide and flat coastal plain without any of the

space restrictions of the South Wales valleys. Two particular points about the location stick in my mind, firstly the remains of the shipping dock beside the pit from which coal used to be loaded directly into boats and secondly the use of derelict pit tubs as breakwaters on the beach.

Point of Ayr had a quite distinct look, with a single Ferro concrete headgear and two smaller steel ones; it also had an unusual '*art deco*' powerhouse with a 'wavy roof'. If I recall correctly the main market for its coal was Fiddlers Ferry power station near Warrington.

As ever, on my photographic intrusions, I was courteously received and shown around and managed to take a full set of photos, including some of the medical centre. By the summer of 1997, the colliery had been completely demolished.

Steve Grudgings

Am Olwg!

Ar ôl priodi glöwr, dy'ch chi ddim wir yn gwybod beth sy'n ei wynebu bob dydd i ddechrau. Arferai Keith y gŵr weithio yng Nglofa'r Parlwr Du, ac roedd yn cael pas bob dydd i'r gwaith gan un o'i ffrindiau. Un dydd, fodd bynnag, daeth adref ar y bws, a gwelais fy merch yn crïo wrth edrych drwy'r ffenestr a dweud "Mae dad yn cerdded yn rhyfedd." Rhedais allan ato, a dywedodd yntau "Paid â chyffwrdd! Fe ges i 'nghladdu heddiw."

Daeth i mewn i'r tŷ, ac fe'i helpais i dynnu ei got a'i gryst-t. Roedd yn gytiâu o'r top i'r gwaelod, ac roedd ei gefn yn goch-uw ac yn gwaedu ar ôl i nyrs y lofa sgwrio llwch y glo oddi arno. Anfonais ef i'r bath, a'r diwrnod wedyn, cafodd rhyw bowdwr gwyn gan y meddyg er mwyn helpu i wella'r clwyfau. Drannoeth, sylwais fod ei gefn wedi dechrau gwella dros y powdwr gwyn, er bod drwg yn dal yn y cytiâu ar ei gefn.

Miner Injuries

When you first become a miner's wife you're not really aware of what he's going to face every day. My husband Keith used to work in Point of Ayr Colliery and usually got a lift in every day from his friends and back home again. One day. However, he caught the bus home and I saw my daughter looking through the window crying and then she said "Dad's walking funny." So I ran out to see him and he said "Don't touch me, I got buried today."

He came inside and I helped him take his coat and t-shirt off. I found that he was cut from top to bottom and his back was red and bleeding from being scrubbed by the colliery nurse to get the coal dust from out of the cuts. I sent him up to have a bath and the next day he went to the doctors where he was given some white powder which was to help the cuts heal. The following day I noticed that his back had started to heal over the white powder with all the badness still in the cuts on his back.

My mum had told me how to make a bread poultice, an old way used to clear infection. So for the next three days after a bath I would pour boiling water over slices of bread in a dish, get him to lie in front of the fire naked with my foot on his bum to hold him down and, after a few minutes, drop the hot bread

Roedd fy mam wedi fy nysgu sut i wneud powltis bara, sef hen ffordd o glirio haint. Felly, am y tri diwrnod nesaf ar ôl amser bath, byddwn i'n tywallt dŵr berwedig dros dafelli o fara mewn dysgl. Yna, dweud wrth fy ngŵr am orwedd yn noeth ar ei fol o flaen y tân, a'm troed ar ei ben ôl i'w ddal i lawr, a dechrau tywallt y powltis bara poeth yn araf ar ei gefn. Gallwch chi ddychmygu'r holl wingo a diawlio ar y llawr! Ar ôl i'r bara oeri, byddwn i'n ei dynnu'n araf ac yn rhoi tywel gwyn ar ei gefn am ddeg munud i'w sychu. Dri diwrnod yn ddiweddarach, byddwn i'n defnyddio'r powdwr eto i wella ei gefn. Ar y pryd, roeddwn i'n poeni'n arw amdano, ond erbyn heddiw rwy'n gallu edrych yn ôl a chwerthin wrth feddwl – "Am ffasiwn olwg oedd arnat ti, Keith!"

Jenny Evans

poultice on his back from a few feet up. You can imagine him struggling and the language he used! After the bread had cooled, I would remove it and put a white towel on his back for ten minutes to dry him. Three days later I used the powder again to heal his back. At the time I was very worried about him, but I look back now and laugh to myself and think – "What on earth did you look like, Keith?"

Jenny Evans



Jenny Evans a'i mam Olive a'i mab
Danny ar wibdaith i Lanberis
Jenny Evans with her mother Olive and
son Danny on a trip to Llanberis

The day I'll never forget

*It's Tuesday afternoon and I'm feeling quite sick
The Holiday Weekend has gone so quick.
The weather is so hot, so dry and so fine
It's not the sort of day to spend down a mine.
I've been shouting at the kids and poor old Mag,
Afternoon shifts are just a drag.
The pit bus comes to take me to work
I must go now, I can't afford to shirk.
The lads see my face and they all take the mickey
Getting me back for my wit and my trickery
Which usually is aimed at all of them
But it cheers us up as we work through our 'Stem'.*

*Once in my orange pit clothes I forget my rage
And start larking about as we go down in the cage.
As we ride in on the man-train I still can't behave
And I 'moither' Les, Andy and Dave.
Twenty minutes later it's a different role –
"Fingers out Lads, let's cut out some Coal!"
Brian's on the machine and he's doing so well
He cuts quickly – Les and I shovel like Hell.
We've cut out for two, let's get the steel set
Carry on like this and our target will be met.
I've a steel bar on my shoulder and Les is at the back
All I felt and heard was an almighty CRACK !!!!!*

*When I came to my senses, I tried to move but
There were two massive stones trapping my foot.
They rushed over to me, Les, Chris and Brian,
But could not move the stones, although they were trying.
At the second attempt they moved them at last
As more stones threatened to fall on their backs.
They moved me one-side, took my boot off, then sock
When I looked down it gave me a hell of a shock.
The first thing I thought of when I saw the mess
Was the kids now won't go to Butlins, Skegness.
Being stretchered, my eyes filled up with tears of pride
For my mates that carried me on either side.*

*An hour and half later I was on my way
To Ysbyty Glan Clwyd for a bit of a stay.
Although on the 'Happy Gas', it was plain to see
I was in good hands at Glan Clwyd A & E.
Many are the times I have been told
That nurses are worth their weight in gold*

*For the value of the work that they have done
Each nurse should weigh at least TWO TON!
They cleaned up my wounds and gave me a jab
The way they soothed me was really quite fab.
Off to X-Ray for quite a long while
Whist they photograph my body – am I supposed to smile?
When finished in X-Ray I was taken to see
The wonderful staff upstairs in Ward 3.*

*A sister named Margaret was the first I did see
Her caring manner relaxed and calmed me.
On to my bed I went for the first time
Then two more nurses tried to wash off my grime.
They scrubbed and wiped as hard as they could*

*But if you saw me you'd probably say that I would
Be perfect starring in a minstrel show
But to a different theatre I was due to go.
They wheeled me down to Theatre Six
And told me "Your foot we will try and fix."
Although in pain, I tried to be brave
I prayed to the Lord that my foot they would save.
A nurse put a needle into my hand
And sent me straight off into deep slumber land.*

*The next faces I saw were Chris and Sue
"It's all over John, how are you?"
I opened my eyes and lifted the clothes
And was delighted to find I still had my toes.
A grin lit my face as bright as the sun,
I said "Please thank them for all they have done."
My foot is still there, it's all like a dream,
And all due to Mr. Lewis and his magnificent team.
I thank them all for their surgical skill
Making me better when I was quite ill.
My shattered foot they miraculously set
Something that I will never forget.
Whenever I'm near I give them a call
"THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, GOD BLESS YOU ALL"*

John Wiltshire,
Point of Ayr Colliery



Pyllau Glo'r Gogledd ym 1918

SIR DDINBYCH

Parc Du, Y Waun
Y Bers, Wrecsam
Lôn Ddu, Wrecsam
Bryncunallt, Y Waun
Brynmally Rhifau 1 a 3, Wrecsam
Cefn-y-bedd, Wrecsam
Delph, Rhiwabon
Gatewen, Wrecsam
Glascoed, Y Waun
Gresfordd, Wrecsam
Gwersyllt, Wrecsam
Hafod Rhif 1, Rhiwabon
Hafod Rhif 2, Rhiwabon
Llai Bank, Y Waun
Llai Hall, Y Waun
Llai Main, Wrecsam
Plas Kynaston, Rhiwabon
Plas Power, Wrecsam
Smelt, Wrecsam
Vauxhall, Rhiwabon
Y Fron, Wrecsam
Westminster Rhifau 1 a 3, Wrecsam
Westminster Rhif 5, Wrecsam
Wrecsam Rhif 1, Wrecsam
Wrecsam Rhif 2, Wrecsam
Wynnstay Rhifau 1 a 2, Rhiwabon

SIR Y FFLINT

Alyn Bank, Yr Wyddgrug
Bettisfield Rhifau 1 a 2, Bagillt
Cae Nanny, Yr Wyddgrug
Celyn, Coed-llai
Coed Talon, Yr Wyddgrug
Dingle Hill, Pontblyddyn
Drury, Bwcle
Elm No.1, Bwcle
Elm No.3, Bwcle
Englefield, Treffynnon
Laurels, Yr Wyddrug
Maes y Graig, Bwcle
Mount Pleasant Rhifau 1 a 2, Bwcle
Mountain, Bwcle
North End, Coed-llai
Plasymhowys, Coed Talon
Y Parlwr Du Rhifau 1a 2, Mostyn
Treuddyn Lodge, Yr Wyddgrug
Wood, Yr Wyddgrug
West Buckley Rhifau 1 a 2, Yr Wyddgrug



Glofa Gatewen
Gatwen Colliery

Pyllau Glo'r Gogledd 1978

SIR DDINBYCH

Bers, Wrecsam
Gresfordd, Wrecsam

SIR Y FFLINT

Parlwr Du, Mostyn

North Wales Collieries in 1918

DENBIGH

Black Park, Chirk
Bersham, Wrexham
Black Lane, Wrexham
Brynkinallt, Chirk
Brynmally Nos. 1&3, Wrexham
Cefnybedd, Wrexham
Delph, Ruabon
Gatwen, Wrexham
Glascoed, Chirk
Gresford, Wrexham
Gwersyllt, Wrexham
Hafod No.1, Ruabon
Hafod No.2, Ruabon
Llay Bank, Chirk
Llay Hall, Chirk
Llay Main, Wrexham
Plaskynaston, Ruabon
Plaspower, Wrexham
Smelt, Wrexham
Vauxhall, Ruabon
Vron, Wrexham
Westminster Nos. 1&3, Wrexham
Westminster No. 5, Wrexham
Wrexham No.1, Wrexham
Wrexham No.2, Wrexham
Wynnstay Nos.1&2, Ruabon

FLINT

Alyn Bank, Mold
Bettisfield Nos. 1&2, Bagillt
Cae Nanny, Mold
Celyn, Leeswood
Coed Talon, Mold
Dingle Hill, Pontblyddyn
Drury, Buckley
Elm No.1, Buckley
Elm No.3, Buckley
Englefield, Hoywell
Laurels, Mold
Maes y Graig, Buckley
Mount Pleasant Nos. 1&2, Buckley
Mountain, Buckley
North End, Leeswood
Plasymhowys, Coed Talon
Point of Ayr Nos. 1&2, Mostyn
Tryddyn Lodge, Mold
Wood, Mold
West Buckley Nos. 1&2, Mold

Glofa Wrexham & Acton
Wrexham and Acton Colliery



North Wales Collieries in 1978

DENBIGH

Bersham, Wrexham
Gresford, Wrexham

FLINT

Point of Ayr, Mostyn



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10am – 3.30pm
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