

BIG PIT: AMGUEDDFA LOFAOL CYMRU

BIG PIT: NATIONAL COAL MUSEUM

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GLO

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Pwll Mawr
Big Pit



Big Pit



Eleni bydd Big Pit yn dathlu 30 mlynedd fel amgueddfa ac atyniad dwristiaid. Ers agor ym 1983, rydym ni wedi croesawu dros 3.5 miliwn o ymwelwyr. Galwch draw i ddathlu gyda ni mewn cyfres o ddigwyddiadau arbennig gydol y flwyddyn.

Clawr: Peter 'Punchy' Clarke a Wilff Jones, 1976

Big Pit



This year Big Pit celebrates its 30th Anniversary as a tourist attraction and museum. Since opening in 1983, we've welcomed over 3.5 million visitors and would like to invite you to join us in celebrating with a variety of special events throughout the year.

Cover: Peter 'Punchy' Clarke and Wilff Jones, 1976





'Yn y gawell'
Big Pit, 1976
Miners waiting
to go down
the pit, 1976

Cyflwyniad

Glofar Cwm ger Pentre'r Eglwys oedd man cychwyn fy ngyrfa fel glöwr, ac ym 1976 dechreuais weithio am y tro cyntaf gyda Ceri Thompson – Curadur Glo Amgueddfa Cymru heddiw, a golygydd y cylchgrawn hwn.

Yn ystod y dydd, roeddwn i a Ceri yn gweithio ar ffas lo 714. Roedd Ceri'n hŷn na fi, ac felly'n arfer â dweud wrthyf beth i'w wneud, ond roeddem ni hefyd yn mynychu'r ysgol nos, a'r ddau ohonom dipyn yn fwy cyfartal. Fodd bynnag, doedd gan yr un ohonom ddim clem sut i ddefnyddio cyfrifiannell!

Pan aethom ni i gyfeiriadau gwahanol maes o law, fe wnaeth Ceri radd yn Hanes Cymru tra'r arhosais i yn y byd glofaol ac ennill cymhwyster Rheolwr Glofa. Roedd gen i dipyn mwy yn fy mhen na Ceri, a gwyddwn y byddai'r diwydiant glo yn para am 300 mlynedd arall yma yng Nghymru!

Pwy fuasai'n meddwl y byddem ni'n ôl gyda'n gilydd 30 mlynedd yn ddiweddarach, yn gweithio mewn amgueddfa lofaol? Rhyfedd o fyd, ac rydym ni'n gweithio mewn lle digon rhyfedd ac anghyffredin hefyd. Mae hanes Big Pit, o fod yn bwl glo i amgueddfa annibynnol ac yna dan fantell Amgueddfa Cymru o fewn Safle Treftadaeth Byd, yn llawn uchafbwyntiau ac isafbwyntiau, ond drwy'r cyfan oll bu wastad yn lle arbennig iawn.

Gallech ddweud nad yw Big Pit yn fawr o beth ar yr olwg gyntaf. Ydy, mae ein harddangosfeydd a'r dulliau dehongli yn dda ar y cyfan, ond digon symol a chyffredin yw'r adeiladau pen pwll ac o dan y ddaear, fel y rhai ohonom sy'n gweithio yno. Does dim enwau mawr yn ein plith.

OND – rhowch y cyfan at ei gilydd, ac fe gewch chi rywbeth unigryw ac arbennig iawn. Ar ei orau, dyma le sy'n darparu profiad difyr a dirdynol i'r ymwelwyr, sy'n gallu cyffwrdd yn yr unigolyn mwyaf croengaled, a'u helpu i ddeall ychydig o'u hanes eu hunain, y diwydiant glo a'r holl gymunedau a ddeilliodd ohono.

Ond beth sydd mor wahanol am Big Pit? Mae'n gwestiwn anodd, un a fyddai angen sawl tudalen i'w ateb, a hyd yn oed wedyn, byddai'n anodd rhoi'ch bys arno'n union. Mae rhai wedi rhoi cynnig arni, "Ry'ch chi bob amser yn cael neges gyda gwên." "Mae fel sefyll ar ben mur Hadrian a siarad â Rhufeiniwr go iawn" neu'n syml "Pwll go iawn, glowyr go iawn".

Dyma'r ateb agosaf ati efallai, gan un ymwelydd, "Nid amgueddfa am ddiwydiant mo Big Pit, nac amgueddfa am ddiwydiant glo hyd yn oed. Amgueddfa am bobl yw hi."

Yn y tudalennau canlynol, fe gewch chi hanesion gan rai fu'n cloddio am lo yn Big Pit y gorffennol, a'r rhai sydd bellach yn croesawu ymwelwyr i amgueddfa Big Pit heddiw.

Darllenwch a mwynhewch.

*Peter Walker,
Ceidwad a Rheolwr y Lofa*



Introduction

I began my mining career at Cwm Colliery, near Church Village and it was here in 1976 that I first began working with Ceri Thompson, who is now the Curator of Coal for Amgueddfa Cymru and the editor of this magazine. During the day Ceri and I worked together on the 714 face. Ceri was senior to me, so used to tell me what to do but we also went to night school together where we were a bit more even. However, neither of us knew how to work a calculator!

When we eventually went our separate ways Ceri did a degree in Welsh History whereas I stayed in mining and gained my Colliery Managers papers. I was always much brighter than Ceri, I knew that the mining industry in Wales would last for another 300 years!

Who would have thought that some 30 years later we'd be back together, working in a mining museum. It's certainly a strange world and it's a pretty strange place we work in. The tale

of Big Pit's journey from a coal mine, to first an independent museum and then to a National Museum within a World Heritage Site, is a story full of up's and downs but throughout that time it's always been something of a special place.

At a first glance you could say Big Pit is nothing special. Yes, our exhibitions and general interpretation is good, but the surface buildings and underground are pretty average, as are those of us who work here. There are certainly no super stars amongst us.

BUT – mix it altogether and a strange sort of chemistry takes place. You end up with a place, that at its best, provides visitors with a uniquely enjoyable and moving experience, which can engage and touch the most hard nosed of visitors and help them learn something of their own history as well as that of the mining industry and the communities it created.

What is it about Big Pit that makes a visit here so different? It's a difficult question, one that would take several pages to answer and even then there would remain something intangible and difficult to put your finger on. Others have tried, “*You always get a message with a smile.*” “*It's like standing on Hadrian's Wall and talking to a real Roman*” or simply “*Real coal mine, real miners*”

Closest perhaps was the visitor who said that, “*Big Pit isn't a museum about industry, it isn't even a museum about mining, it's a museum about people.*”

In the pages that follow you will find stories of people who worked at Big Pit when it was a working mine and those who have visited or worked here since it's been a museum.

Enjoy the read.

*Peter Walker,
Keeper & Mine Manager*



Cyffro mawr yn y cwm

Big Pit neu'r gwaith dur. Dyna'r dewis i weithwyr Blaenafon ers talwm, ond gan fod fy nhad yn swyddog danddaear, cefais i a 'mrawd ein cynghori i ddilyn ôl ei droed. Felly, gadewais yr ysgol ym mis Awst 1936 ac ymuno â'r lofa yn 14 oed. Es i'n syth i weithio ar y sgriniau, i ddiolli'r slag o'r glo. Rwy'n credu bod tipyn mwy o lwch yn fan'ny na danddaear hyd yn oed.

Gan ein bod ni'n byw ym mhen isaf un Blaenafon, roeddem yn gorfod cerdded milltir a hanner go dda i Big Pit ym mhob tywydd. Doedd y baddondai pen pwll ddim yno bryd hynny, felly gartre' i gael bath o flaen y tân amdani. Roedd tri ohonom, fy nhad, fy mrawd a mi. Y cyntaf i gyrraedd adref fyddai'n cael y bath cyntaf, a byddai mam yn golchi'n cefnau ni. Wedyn, roedd hi'n gadael ein festiau ac ati ar y giard o flaen y tân er mwyn eu crasu erbyn y diwrnod canlynol.

Sid Broom oedd yr oferman ar y pryd, a doedd dim 'whare o gwmpas i fod gyda fe. Weithiau, pan oedd y glo yn dod i lawr y cafn llithro byddai'n mynd yn sownd, ac felly roedd rhaid i ni fynd i fyni'r sleidiau i'w wthio i lawr. Roedd yn dipyn o risg oherwydd gallai llwyth arall o lo gwympo ar eich pen. Yn y dyddiau hynny, roeddem ni'n gwisgo clocsie yn lle esgidiau – clocsie pren gyda leinin dur rownd yr ymylon a thros y sawdl, gan eu bod yn rhatach ac yn para'n hirach hefyd.

Pan oeddwn i'n gweithio ar y sgriniau ym 1936, fe ddaeth Dug Windsor (*Brenin Edward VIII*) drwy Flaenafon. Roedd 'na gyffro mawr yn y cwm pan gyrhaeddodd, ac wrth gwrs roedd rhywun ar ben y gwaith yn gweiddi "Ma'r ceir 'ma nawr, yn mynd i lawr am Frynmawr" felly aethon ni i gyd i'r brig, stopio'r sgriniau a chyrraedd yno mewn pryd i weld y ceir yn pasio a chwifio'n dwylo.

Ychydig cyn fy mhen-blwydd yn 16 oed, fe'm hanfonwyd i weithio ar y cludfeltiau yng ngwaelod y pwll – ar ôl i'r coliers orffen cloddio'r glo, byddem yn symud y beltiau ar gyfer y sifft nesaf.

Pren 'Norwy' a ddefnyddiwyd yn y dyddiau hynny. Doedd dim rhisgl arno, ac roeddech chi'n gallu gweld y pren yn hollti dan bwysau'r ffas. Wrth gwrs, roedd hyn yn arwydd i ni adael a disgwyl tan i bethau setlo, a gosod props newydd yno.

Bryd hynny, roeddech chi'n cael smygu yn y siafft hyd nes y byddech yn cyrraedd gwaelod y pwll. Yna, byddai'r dynion yn tynnu eu blychau baco bach a'u cuddio'n rhywle nes diwedd eu sifft.

Pan fyddai'r coliers yn gorffen eu gwaith yn gynnar, roedden nhw'n cael mynd adref. Ond os nad oedd gennym ganiatâd i ddychwelyd i ben y pwll am eu bod nhw'n weindio'r glo, byddem yn cerdded drwy'r gloddfa ddrifft.

Ar ôl 'molchi'n sydyn, byddwn i'n cerdded dwy i dair milltir i'r ddawns yn y Farteg, a dyna

Brynley Lewis, 1936



The talk of the valley



**Y dorf ar risiau
Neuadd y Gweithwyr
yn cyfarch Brenin
Edward VIII ym 1936**
Crowd on steps of
Workmen's Hall
greeting King Edward
VIII in 1936

In Blaenafon in those days it was either the Big Pit or the steelworks, but as my father was an official underground he advised me and my brother to go with him. So I left school in August 1936 at 14 years old and went straight into the colliery. My first job was on the screens where I was picking slag out of the coal. There was more dust there than when I worked underground I think.

I was living at the very bottom of Blaenafon and I had to walk a good mile and a half to Big Pit in all weathers. The pithead baths wasn't

built then, so we had to come home and bath in front of the fire. There were three of us, my father, my brother and me. First home would have the first bath and Mam would wash our backs. She then put our vests and things like on the guard in front of the fire to air them for the next day.

We had an overman there named Sid Broom and he wouldn't allow us to mess around. Sometimes when the coal came sliding down the shoot from the tippers it would stick so we had to go up onto the slides and just push it

Cyffro mawr yn y cwm



Golygfa o Big Pit o'r awyr pan oedd yn bwl gweithredol
Aerial view of Big Pit in its working days

ble lwyddais i fachu gwraig. Barbara oedd ei henw, a phan oeddem ni'n caru, rhybuddiodd ei thad iddi ddychwelyd adref cyn deg yr hwyr. Roeddwn i'n gorfod cerdded dwy filltir a hanner yn ôl i Flaenafon wedyn. Rydym gyda'n gilydd ers 61 mlynedd bellach ac yn fodlon ein byd.

Yn y dyddiau hynny, roeddem ni'n gorfod talu 6d o'n cyflog tuag at Neuadd y Gweithwyr a 6d arall i'r ysbyty. Os ewch chi'r ystafell snwcer a biliards yn y neuadd, fe welch chi lun ohonof ar y wal.

Byddem yn cael gwyliau fis Awst, a dyna'r unig dro pan fyddai'r lofa'n cau'n llwyr, er cawsom ni erioed dâl gwyliau. Byddai'r ceffylau'n cael eu codi o'r pwll i gael awyr iach a phorfa, ond dim ond am wythnos, cofiwch.

Pan oedd y ceffylau danddaear, roedden nhw'n bwyta o finiau bwyd mawr a oedd yn llawn llygod mawr. Roedd llygod mawr yn bla, ac rwy'n cofio un yn mynd i mewn i 'mhoced ryw dro, ond ni chefais fy mrathu diolch i'r drefn.

Roeddwn i'n perthyn i eglwys fechan o'r enw Avon Road Mission, ac os oeddech chi'n mynd

yn selog roeddech chi'n cael mynd ar drip i Ynys y Barri neu Borthcawl. A dyna'n gwyliau ni am y flwyddyn.

Yn ystod y rhyfel, rwy'n cofio gweld y chwiloleuadau yn fflachio nôl a mlaen yng Nghasnewydd a Chaerdydd, ac yn sydyn reit, cafodd bom ei ollwng nepell o'r Farteg neu Garndiffaith. Dro arall, fe welsom ni awyren ar dân yn hofran mewn cylch cyn syrthio'n glatsh yng Ngarn yr Erw. Awyren fomio Almaenig oedd hi, ac roedden nhw'n hedfan lan y cwm er mwyn ceisio bomio gwaith dur Blaenafon.

Wnaif i byth anghofio eira mawr 1947. Yn lle gweithio danddaear, roedd pob copa walltog ohonom yn gorfod gweithio ar y brig am gwpwl o wythnosau, yn rhawio'r eira er mwyn creu llwybr clir i'r tryciau.

Erbyn 1951, roeddwn i wedi danto ar weithio danddaear, ac fe es i weithio i gwmni Girling's ac yna ICI. Bues i'n gweithio ers 1936 am hanner can mlynedd tan oeddw'n i'n 64 oed, a dyna pryd benderfynais i ymddeol.

Brynley Lewis

The talk of the valley

down. This was a bit of a risk because another lot could come down on you. In those days, instead of shoes we had clogs, these clogs used to be wooden and around the rim would be a steel liner and over the heel as well and it was cheaper and hard wearing.

When I was on the screens in 1936 the Duke of Windsor (*King Edward VIII*) came through Blaenafon. It was talk of the valley that he was coming and of course there was someone on top watching and he shouted "The cars here now, going down Brynmawr" and so we all went on top, stopped the screens and got up there just to see the cars going by and wave.

When I was not quite 16 I went down the pit and I was put to work on the conveyors - after the coal had been got out by the colliers we used to move the conveyor belts on for the next shift.

The timber we had in them days was called 'Norway timbers' and it didn't have any bark on it and you could see when the weight come on the top of the face you could see the timbers splitting and of course at that time they used to get out and wait until it settled and then put new props up.

In those days you could smoke going down the shaft until you reached the pit bottom. Then the men used to take their little boxes of tobacco out and hide them somewhere ready for when they came out after their shift.

When the colliers had finished their work early they were allowed to go home but when we weren't allowed to travel up the pit because they were winding coal we used to walk out through the drift.

I would wash quick and walk about two to three miles to the Varteg to go dancing and it was there I picked up the wife. Her name was Barbara and when we were courting her father warned me to have her home before 10 o'clock and then I had to walk back to Blaenafon - another two and half miles. But we've been together for 61 years now and everything has worked out alright.

In those days we had to pay 6d out of our pay to the Workmen's Hall and 6d to the hospital. If you go to the snooker and billiard room in the Workmen's Hall you will see a picture of me on the wall.

We would have holidays in August and that was the only time the colliery ever shut down. We never got paid for it and they would let the horses up and that was the only time the horses came up to have fresh air and grazing, it was for only about a week.

When they were underground they would be feeding out of big feed bins and these bins would be full of rats. In them days we had lots of rats underground and I remember on one occasion I had one in my pocket but he didn't bite me.

I belonged to a small little church called Avon Road Mission and if you went regular you got on a trip to Barry Island or Porthcawl. That was our holiday for the year.

During the war I could see all the search lights down in Newport and Cardiff flashing back and forth and next thing a bomb was dropped not very far from the Varteg or Garndiffaith. On another occasion we could see this plane circling and on fire and then he crashed at Garn yr Erw. It was a German bomber and they used to come up the valleys because they wanted to bomb the steelworks in Blaenafon.

I can always remember in 1947 that we had a terrible snow storm and instead of working underground we all had to work on the top for a couple of weeks shovelling snow to clear the tracks for the trucks to run.

By 1951, I'd had enough of working underground and I went to work in Girling's and then ICI. I worked from 1936 for 50 years until I was 64 and that was when I retired.

Brynley Lewis

Diwedd y daith

Fe'm ganed ym 1947, yr hynaf o bump o blant. Dechreuodd fy nhad weithio fel morthwyliwr y gof ac yn gweithio yn Big Pit ar y pryd. Roeddem ni'n byw mewn tŷ rhent yn Chapel Row, o dan dip pwll glo. Pan oedd hi'n bwrw'n drwm, byddai fy rhieni'n agor y drws cefn er mwyn gadael i'r slwtsh o'r tip glo lifo drwy lawr gwaelod y tŷ a mas i'r ffrynt. Bob tro'r oedd hyn yn digwydd, roeddem ni'n gorfod byw lan lofft am gyfnodau hir. Ar ôl i'r glaw beidio, bydden nhw'n sgwrio'r llawr carreg a byddai bywyd yn mynd yn ei flaen tan y storm nesaf.

Pan oeddwn i tua 10 oed, cafodd fy nhad ei daro'n wael iawn ac fe'm hanfonwyd i fyw gyda fy modryb a'm hewythr. Pêl-droed a rhedeg traws gwlad oedd fy niléit pennaf, ond oherwydd dylanwad fy modryb a'm hewythr, fe basiais yr 'eleven plus' a mynd i Ysgol Ramadeg Dechnegol Abersychan, a gwneud yn olreit yno. Cefais gynnig dwy brentisiaeth, y naill gyda Girling's a'r llall gyda'r Bwrdd Glo. Roedd yr NCB yn cynnig dwywaith cyflog Girling's, felly ar 16 Medi 1963, es i'n brentis mecanyddol gyda'r Bwrdd Glo.

Ar ôl y chwe blynedd safonol o gwrs coleg, cefais Dystysgrif Dosbarth Un mewn Mecaneg. Yna, dechreuais gwrs dwy flynedd Peirianwyr Mecanyddol Glofa ond ar ôl llwyddo yn y flwyddyn gyntaf, methais ran o'r ail flwyddyn a gwrthodwyd y cyfle i mi ailsefyll yr arholiad. Fel mae'n digwydd, dyma'r adeg pan briodais i ac roedd hi'n gyfnod streic 1972 hefyd. Felly ym mis Mawrth 1972, ymfudodd y ddau ohonom i Awstralia trwy gynllun mordaith £10 i Sydney. Ar ôl ymgartrefu yn Sydney, bues i'n gweithio i gwmni peirianeg. Roeddwn i a 'ngwraig wedi penderfynu aros yno am dair blynedd, gweithio'n galed a chynilo cymaint ag y bo modd cyn dychwelyd adre i ddechrau teulu. Roedd hi bron yn gymaint o loes calon gadael Awstralia â phan adawon ni Flaenafon yn wreiddiol.

Trefnodd fy nhad gyfweiliad i mi gyda Glyn Morgan, rheolwr Big Pit, a Doug Roberts,

y peiriannydd mecanyddol – dau a gafodd ddylanwad cadarnhaol iawn ar fy ngyrfa, ac rwy'n ddiolchgar iddyn nhw hyd heddiw.

Ym mis Chwefror 1975, dechreuais weithio fel ffitiwr ar ffas lo G8, Big Pit. Roedd fy nhad a'm dau frawd yn gweithio ar yr un ffas hefyd, a oedd tua 600mm o uchder. Ar fy mhengliniau y bues i'n gweithio am y ddwy flynedd nesaf. Diolch i ddylanwad Terry Jones, y swyddog hyfforddi, cefais gyfle i barhau â'm haddysg. Ar ôl pasio'r arholiadau terfynol, cefais dystysgrif Peirianwyr Mecanyddol Glofa ym 1977. Cefais ddychafiad i fod ar y staff yn nes ymlaen y flwyddyn honno. Ddwy flynedd wedyn, symudais i Oakdale i fod yn ddirprwy beiriannydd, ac ym 1980 es i lofa Six Bells fel dirprwy'r uwch-swyddog.

Yn ystod streic y glowyr a barodd gydol 1984, Cymdeithas Rheolwyr Glofeydd Prydain neu'r BACM oedd yn gyfrifol am yr ochr ddiogelwch ac ni chafodd y rhan fwyaf ohonom ddim un diwrnod i ffwrdd gydol y streic. Doedd e ddim yn gyfnod braf iawn. Tra'r oedd fy nau frawd ar streic, roeddwn i'n gorfod croesi'r llinellau piced bob dydd. Roedd picedwyr Six Bells yn ddigon bodlon i ni wneud y gwaith diogelwch, ond weithiau byddai picedwyr o lofeydd eraill yn cymryd eu lle, a byddai'n rhaid i'r heddlu ein hebrwng i'r gwaith.

Wedi'r streic, fe'm hanfonwyd i lofa'r Marine, a phan gaeodd honno, dychwelais i Oakdale am yr eildro. Pan gaeodd Oakdale ym 1989, cefais fy symud i Bwll y Tŵr.

Pan gyrhaeddais yno, roedd Pwll y Tŵr yn cael ei ailwampio wrth iddyn nhw osod y ffas lo wal hir gyntaf yno. Roedd y glo'n wyth troedfedd o drwch, ond dim ond tair troedfedd o uchder oedd llwybr y talcen, ac roeddem ni'n gorfod cropian am gannoedd o fetrau mewn rhai llefydd.

Y gwaith mwyaf oedd datblygu llinellau ochrol newydd (*traffyrdd danddaear*) a 'nhasg i oedd rheoli'r tîm llif glo er mwyn atal methiannau

The last lap

I was born in 1947 the eldest of five children. My father started his working life as a blacksmith's striker and was then working at Big Pit. We lived in a rented house in Chapel Row beneath the slag tip created by the mine. When it rained heavily my parents used to open the back door so that the filthy slurry from the tip could run through the downstairs of the house and out of the front. We had to live upstairs for prolonged periods when this happened. When the rain stopped they would scrub the flagstones and life would return to normal until the next storm.

When I was about ten years of age my father was taken seriously ill and I was sent to live with my aunt and uncle. My main interests were soccer and cross country running, but because of the influence of my aunt and uncle I passed my eleven plus and went to Abersychan Grammar Technical School and I did OK. I was offered two apprenticeships, Girling's and the National Coal Board. The NCB was offering twice as much pay as Girling's so on 16th September 1963 I became a coal board mechanical apprentice.

I did the usual six years of college and got my Class One Mechanics Certificate. Then I started a two year Colliery Mechanical Engineers course but having passed the first year I failed part of the second and was refused a re-sit. This coincided with my getting married and the 1972 strike so in March 1972 we emigrated to Australia on a ten pound assisted passage to Sydney. We lived in Sydney and I worked for an engineering firm. My wife and I had decided to stay for three years, work as hard as we could and save as much as possible before coming home to start a family. It was nearly as big a wrench to leave Australia as it was when we left Blaenafon.

My father arranged an interview for me with the manager of Big Pit Glyn Morgan and the mechanical engineer Doug Roberts, two people who had a positive influence on my future career for which I am extremely grateful.



I started work at Big Pit in February 1975 as a fitter on the G8 coal face. My father and two brothers were also working on the same face, which was about 600mm high. I spent the next two years on my knees. Thanks to the influence of the training officer Terry Jones I was able to continue my education. I passed my final exams and was granted my Colliery Mechanical Engineers certificate in 1977 and later that year was promoted to the staff. Two years later I moved to Oakdale as a deputy engineer and then in 1980 moved to Six Bells as the senior deputy.

During the year long miners strike of 1984 the safety cover was provided by BACM (*British Association of Colliery Managers*) and most of us didn't get a day off for the entire length of the strike. It was not a pleasant time. I had two brothers who were on strike and I had to cross picket lines every day. The Six Bells pickets were happy for us to provide safety cover, but occasionally they were replaced with pickets from other collieries and we had to be escorted through the lines by the police.

After the strike I was sent over to Marine and when Marine closed I was sent to Oakdale for the second time and when Oakdale closed in 1989 I was sent to Tower. When I arrived at Tower Colliery it was in a transition period, it was in the process of installing its first retreat coal face; The coal was eight feet thick but the tail road was just three feet high and in areas we had to crawl for hundreds of metres.

The main concern was the development of the new laterals (*underground motorways*)

Diwedd y daith

a oedd yn gostus iawn o ran cynhyrchiant. Llwyddwyd i leihau'r oedi ar y cludfelt i gyn lleied â 5%, ac ar ôl i gontractwyr gyrraedd i wneud gwaith datblygu angenrheidiol, gwnaethom gynnydd aruthrol, gosod cludfeltiau newydd, a sicrhau llai na 1% o oedi. Roedd Pwll y Tŵr wedi hen ennill ei blwyf erbyn hyn, a chynhyrchwyd 950,000 o dunelli gwerthadwy o un ffas lo gydag elw o £20 miliwn mewn un flwyddyn ariannol – record ar gyfer de Cymru.

Ym mis Mai 1992, cefais fy mhenodi'n beiriannydd mecanyddol, ond yna penderfynodd Glo Prydain gau Pwll y Tŵr ynghyd â gweddill y diwydiant. Y bwriad oedd diswyddo'r rhan fwyaf o'r bois a chadw cnewyllyn ohonynt yn unig wrth i'r pwll gau'n raddol. Nid oedd y dynion am adael yn dawel, ond roedd Bwrdd Glo Prydain yn bygwth tynnu'r cynnig o daliadau diswyddo gwell yn ôl. Ar y diwrnod olaf, pleidleisiodd y dynion dros gau'r pwll gydag ambell un, gan gynnwys Tyrone O'Sullivan, yn gwrthod pleidleisio.

Yn y cyfarfod olaf hwnnw, dyma lwythwr gwaelod y pwll o'r enw Ricky Frampton yn gweiddi o'r llawr "os y'n nhw moyn gwerthu'n pwll ni, pam na brynwn ni fe'n hunain". Atebodd eraill yr alwad, a sefydlwyd *Tower Employees Buy Out (TEBO)* maes o law. Syfrdanwyd pawb gan benderfyniad Michael Heseltine i werthu Pwll y Tŵr i TEBO. Gorymdeithiodd y gweithlu yn ôl i'r lofa ychydig cyn Nadolig 1994, gan hoelio sylw'r wasg a'r cyfryngau, a chafodd staff rheoli Glo Prydain, a minnau yn eu plith, eu diswyddo.

Cysylltodd Des Bevan, y peiriannydd mecanyddol newydd, â fi dros y ffôn a chynnig swydd dirprwy iddo. Dychwelodd sawl cyn-reolwr arall i helpu i reoli'r lofa. Roedd pob gweithiwr cyflogedig ym Mhwll y Tŵr yn gorfod prynu 8,000 o gyfranddaliadau, ar gost o £1 y cyfranddaliad, a olygai bod pawb yn gyfartal mewn egwyddor.

Ar y dydd Llun cyntaf ym mis Ionawr 1995, roeddem yn cludo glo o'r driffi i'r brig erbyn 9 o'r gloch y bore. Yn y 12 mis cyntaf, llwyddwyd i ddyblu gwerth y cyfranddaliadau i £16,000 y cyfranddaliwr. Roedd Pwll y Tŵr yn gwneud

elw, a chynyddodd gwerth cyfranddaliadau am sawl blwyddyn. Ond roedd un ffas lo yn dipyn o fwrn. Roedd yn mynd o dan hen dalcenni glofa Glyncorrwg, a oedd yn llawn nwy methan dan bwysedd uchel. Wrth i ni gloddio o dan yr hen dalcenni, treiddiodd y methan i lawr holltau'r graig ac i Bwll y Tŵr.

Roeddem yn wynebu sefyllfa a allai droi'n ffrwydrol, a bu'n rhaid atal y gwaith cynhyrchu wrth inni ddrilio tyllau turio i fyny hen dalcenni Glyncorrwg uwch ein pennau a'u cysylltu â'r peipiau methan. Llwyddwyd i leihau'r pwysedd nwy nes bod canran y nwy methan yn llwybrau Pwll y Tŵr wedi gostwng i lefelau diogel gan ein galluogi i ailddechrau cynhyrchu eto.

Dechreuais fod yn ymgynghorydd i Big Pit ym 1997 tra'r oeddwn i'n dal i weithio ym Mhwll y Tŵr. Gadewais Bwll y Tŵr ym mis Mawrth 2001 i fod yn beiriannydd mecanyddol yn Big Pit mewn cyfnod digon diddorol ac amrywiol yn ei hanes! Aeth Big Pit i ddwylo Amgueddfeydd ac Oriolau Cenedlaethol Cymru, dechreuodd cynllun mynediad am ddim Llywodraeth y Cynulliad, caewyd giatiau'r safle dros dro oherwydd clwy'r traed a'r genau, a dechreuodd gwaith ailddatblygu gwerth £7 miliwn yno. Dyna ddechrau go gyffrous i ran olaf fy ngyrfa.

Parhaodd y gwaith ailddatblygu am sawl blwyddyn, ond llwyddwyd i gadw'r amgueddfa ar agor a phlesio'r ymwelwyr yr un pryd. Ar ôl agor Big Pit ar ei newydd wedd, fe wnaethom dorri sawl record o ran nifer yr ymwelwyr ac ennill gwobrau di-ri, gan gynnwys amgueddfa orau gwledydd Prydain.

Ar ôl 11 mlynedd yn ôl yn Big Pit, ymddeolais yn 2012. Roedd yn gyfnod prysur tu hwnt wrth i ni fynd ati i wella'r safle drwy'r amser. Er nad oes glo yn cael ei gynhyrchu yno mwyach, mae'r gwaith o gynnal a chadw'r siafft, pen y pwll a'r injan weindio, a sicrhau mynediad diogel i'r cyhoedd danddaear, yn hollbwysig. Do, fe fwynheais i'r 'rhan fwyaf' o'm gyrfa yn y pyllau glo, ond roeddwn i'n falch o orffen y cyfan yn Big Pit a helpu i wneud rhywbeth er budd cenedlaethau'r dyfodol ac i fro fy mebyd ym Mlaenafon.

Jeff White

The last lap

and my task was to run the coal flow team to help prevent the breakdowns that were costing production. We reduced the delays on the conveyor run down to just 5% and after contractors were brought in to do the development work we achieved record advances, installed new conveyors and delays dropped below 1%.. Tower was now well set up and in one financial year produced 950,000 saleable tonnes from one coal face and a profit of £20 million, a record for south Wales.

I was appointed as the mechanical engineer in May 1992 but then British Coal decided to close Tower and sell it along with the rest of the industry. Most of the men were to be made redundant and just a skeleton force kept on whilst the pit was mothballed. The men weren't going to go without a fight but there were threats from British Coal about withdrawing enhanced redundancy payments. On the final day the men voted to close the mine with only a few people, including Tyrone O Sullivan, refusing to vote.

It was during that final meeting that a pit bottom onsetter, named Ricky Frampton shouted from the floor "if they want to sell our pit, why don't we buy it ourselves", from that comment several others took up that cry and eventually Tower Employee's Buy Out (TEBO) was formed.

Michael Heseltine's eventual decision to sell Tower colliery to TEBO amazed every one. The workforce marched back into Tower colliery with the full attention of the media just before Christmas 1994 and the British Coal Management Staff at the colliery, including myself, were made redundant,

Des Bevan the new mechanical engineer contacted me by telephone and offered me the job as his deputy and several other ex-management were also taken back on to manage the mine. Every person employed at Tower had to be a shareholder at a cost of buying 8000 shares at £1.00 per share so theoretically we were all equal.

On the first Monday in January 1995 we had coal coming up the drift to the surface by

9.00a.m. In first twelve months we effectively doubled the share value to £16,000 per shareholder. Tower made profits and the share values increased for several years but one coal face in particular became a problem. It was driven under the old workings of Glyncorrwg colliery which turned out to be full of methane at high pressure. As we worked under the old workings the methane came down cracks in the strata and into Tower.

We were dealing with a potentially explosive mixture and production had to stop whilst we drilled boreholes up to the old Glyncorrwg workings above us and connected them to the methane pipe ranges. This reduced the gas pressure until the percentage methane in the Tower roadways reduced to a safe level and we were able to re-start production.

In 1997, whilst still working at Tower, I became a consultant at Big Pit and then in March 2001 I left Tower and became the mechanical engineer at Big Pit. This coincided with Big Pit being taken over by the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, the Welsh Assembly making entry to national museums free, temporary closure of the site due to Foot & Mouth and the start of a £7 Million redevelopment of the site. The last lap of my career started with a bang!

The redevelopment work took a couple of years to complete, but we managed to keep the museum open and the visitors happy and then following the redevelopment we broke all sorts of visitor records and won lots of different awards, including the best museum in Britain.

After 11 years back at Big Pit I eventually retired in 2012. It was a very busy time as we were constantly trying to improve the site and although there is no production at Big Pit the job of maintaining the shaft, headgear and winding engine etc. and providing safe access to the underground for the public is absolutely vital. I enjoyed 'most' of my career in mining but I was pleased to end it at Big Pit and help do something for future generations and for my home town of Blaenafon.

Jeff White

Nôl yn yr hen bwl

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1956 a'm magu yn Abertyleri, fy nghartref hyd heddiw. Ym 1973, pan oeddwn i'n 16 oed, sefais brawf yng nglofa Britannia a chefais gynnig lle fel prentis mecanig neu brentis trydanwr. Yr ochr drydanol oedd yn mynd â'm bryd, ond byddai hynny wedi golygu teithio i Big Pit a doedd gen i ddim cludiant o Abertyleri. Roedd y swydd mecanig, ar y llaw arall, i lawr yr hewl yng Nglyntyleri.

Yng Nglyntyleri, byddwn i'n glanhau'r stof, ei goleuo, a gwneud dishgled i bawb. Enillais gystadleuaeth ddiogelwch un tro. Roeddech chi'n gorfod sylwi ar bethau fel dim giard ar ddril ac ati, er mwyn cael cyfle i ennill £4 o wobwr. Wyddwn i ddim 'mod i wedi ennill tan i un o'r peirianwyr daflu gogls ata i. Cafodd bryd o dafod ar ôl i mi nodi nad oedd e'n gwisgo rhai, felly fi enillodd y gystadleuaeth!

Cefais hyfforddiant danddaear ac ar y ffas lo, cwblheais brentisiaeth pedair blynedd a chefais Dystysgrif Mecanig Glofa Dosbarth 2. Os oeddech chi'n ddigon da, roedd modd mynd ymlaen i wneud Tystysgrif Dosbarth 1, ond dim ond blwyddyn a hanner o'r cwrs tair blynedd wnes i cyn rhoi'r gorau iddi. Dyna'r camgymeriad mwyaf wnes i erioed. Deunaw mis arall, a byddwn i wedi cael Tystysgrif HNC a bod yn gyfrifol am bwl glo. Yna, bues i'n gweithio danddaear yng Nghwmtlyeri am wyth mlynedd, pasio'r arholiadau Dosbarth 1 a chael swydd yn gofalu am yr injan weindio ar ben y pwl. Caeodd y gwaith maes o law, felly es i weithio i lofa Rose Heyworth am dair blynedd cyn i honno gau hefyd.

Cefais swydd mewn ffatri deils am ddeng mis cyn i'r cwmni fynd i'r wal, yna ymunais â'r llinell gynhyrchu yn Yuasa Batteries; gwaith annifyr tu hwnt, gyda'r holl nwyon asid a phlwm.

Ym mis Chwefror 1988, cefais swydd ffitiwr yn Big Pit. Roedd yn hollol wahanol bryd hynny, dim i'w wneud â'r Amgueddfa Genedlaethol fel heddiw. Roeddwn i'n gweithio chwe diwrnod yr wythnos, bob wythnos, bob penwythnos heb arian ychwanegol, gan wneud pob math

o waith heblaw tywys. Yna, cynigiwyd swydd peiriannydd mecanyddol i mi a dechreuon nhw gyflwyno strwythur staffio go iawn – roedd hi'n union fel bod 'nôl yn y pwl eto.

Bues i'n gweithio yn Big Pit am 12 mlynedd cyn gadael i fod yn ffitiwr mewn gorsaf bŵer, a oedd yn cynnig gwell cyflog. Cwmni Americanaidd oedd e, a chefais fy rhoi yn yr adran gynnal a chadw. Cefais gryn dipyn o drafferth gyda bois y boeleri, a oedd yn eiddigeddus ohonof, a malodd rhywun fy locer un diwrnod. Hen le brwnt ydoedd, waeth na bod danddaear – gwaith caled dros ben. Roedd hi'n ddu fel bol buwch yno, a byddai'r peiriannau'n mynd ar dân yn rheolaidd. Caeodd y lle ar ôl deg mis, doedden nhw ddim yn rheolwyr da iawn.

Dyma fi'n ffonio Big Pit, a deall eu bod nhw'n chwilio am dywyswyr. Ar ôl addo na fyddwn i'n gadael eto, cefais fy nerbyn yn ôl. Prin bedair wythnos fues i'n dywysydd, cyn cael fy mhenodi'n Beiriannydd Cadwraeth.

Fy mhrif orchwyl yw ymdrin â pheiriannau trymion, ond rwy'n gweithio mewn ffordd wahanol na phan oeddwn i'n ffitiwr. Yn hytrach na gosod darnau newydd, rwy'n eu gwarchod yn ofalus ac yn meddwl ddwywaith cyn defnyddio morthwyl a chŷn ar rywbeth. Rwy'n cydweithio â Swyddog Cadwraeth Diwydiannol Amgueddfa Cymru - mae e'n dysgu sgiliau peirianneg gen i, ac rwyf innau'n dysgu sgiliau cadwraeth amgueddfa ganddo fe.

Rwy'n mwynhau cwrdd â'r ymwelwyr ac esbonio fy ngwaith. Mae'n debyg i deithiau danddaear, ac roeddwn i'n arfer â defnyddio'r cyfarpar rwy'n ei warchod nawr. Rwy'n annerch pob math o gynulleidfaoedd, a hyd yn oed yn gwneud cyflwyniadau mewn cynadleddau cadwraeth. Pwy fyddai'n meddwl?

Hon yw'r swydd orau o gymharu â rhai'r gorffennol, *ond dyw'r arian ddim cystal ag y dylai fod!*

Paul Meredith

Like being back in the pit

I was born in 1956 and grew up in Abertillery where I've lived there all my life. In 1973 at the age of 16 I took the test in Britannia and they offered me a place either as an apprentice mechanic or apprentice electrician. I preferred the electrician one but that would have been at Big Pit and I had no transport from Abertillery, but the mechanic post was in Glyntillery which was just down the road.

At Glyntillery I'd clean the stove, light it and make tea for everyone. I won a safety competition once. You had to pick up on things like no shield on a drill etc and there was a £4 prize. I only found out I'd won when one of the engineers threw a set of goggles at me. He'd been told off because I'd picked up on the fact he wasn't wearing them so I won!

I did my coal face and underground training, completed my four years apprenticeship and got a Class 2 Colliery Mechanic Certificate. If you were good enough you could do a Class 1 but I only did one and a half years of the three year course before I gave up. That was the worst mistake I ever made. Another eighteen months and I would have got a Higher National Certificate and would have been allowed to be in charge of a working mine.

Then I worked at Cwmtillery for eight years underground, passed my Class 1 and got a job on the surface where I looked after the winding engines. But that closed. So then I worked at Rose Heyworth Colliery for three years before that closed too. I got a job in a tile factory for ten months before they went into liquidation and then worked on the production line at Yuasa Batteries; it was horrible work with all the acid and lead fumes.

In February 1988 I became a fitter in Big Pit. It was different then, nothing to do with the National Museum. The work was six days a week, every week, every weekend for no extra money and I was doing every job except guiding. I was then offered the job as mechanical engineer and they started to get a proper staff structure - it was like being back in the pit again.

I worked at Big Pit for 12 years before jumping ship to work as a fitter in a power station where they were offering better money. It was an American company and I was put in the maintenance department. I got a lot of stick from the boys who were working on the boilers, they were jealous and someone kicked in my locker once. It was dirtier there than underground - really hard work. It was pitch black and the machines caught fire regularly. The place shut after ten months, they weren't very good managers.

I called Big Pit and they were looking for guides. I promised I wouldn't leave again and they had me back. I was only guiding for four weeks before I got the job of Conservation Engineer. I mainly deal with heavy machinery, but I look at the jobs differently from when I was a fitter, instead of just replacing parts I conserve them and have to think twice before I use a hammer and chisel on something. I work in conjunction with the National Museum's Industrial Conservation Officer, he learns engineering skills from me and I learn museum conservation from him.

I enjoy meeting the visitors and explaining what I do, it's a bit like the underground tours, I've actually used the equipment I'm now conserving. I give talks to all types of audiences and even do presentations in conservation conferences. Who'd have thought I'd be doing that!

I prefer this job to the others I've done, *but the money isn't as good as it should be!*

Paul Meredith



Paul Meredith

Dyddiau difyr

Cefais fy ngeni yn King Street, Blaenafon ym 1918. Roedd fy nhad, a oedd yn uwch halier, a'm dau frawd yn gweithio yn y pwll glo. Pan adewais i'r ysgol, fodd bynnag, es i weithio i'r Co-op yn danfon nwyddau. Ro'n i'n dwlu ar rygbi, ac roeddwn i a 'mrawd eisiau gwyllo'r gêm rhwng tîm teithiol Seland Newydd a thîm cyfunol Abertyleri a Cross Keys ym Mharc Abertyleri ym 1935. Doedd dim dime goch gennym, felly fe gerddom dros y mynydd i Barc Abertyleri a sleifio i mewn i weld y gêm. Gan fod y Co-op yn gwrthod gadael i mi gael dydd Sadwrn bant i wyllo'r gêm, rhoddais y gorau iddi, ac es i weithio yn Big Pit fel bachgen colier 16 oed.

Ym 1938, roeddwn i'n canlyn merch oedd â chwant priodi, ond doeddwn i ddim yn barod am hynny felly penderfynais ymuno â'r *Royal Artillery*. Ymrestrais ym mis Mehefin 1939, ac roeddwn i yn yr India pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel. Roeddem yn dal i ddefnyddio ceffylau i lusgo'r gynnu mawrion bryd hynny, ac roedd gen i losin gyda fi bob amser. Un diwrnod, cefais lond pen gan y sarjant oherwydd bod yna geffyl wastad yn fy nilyn i – ond dim ond losin oedd e moyn. Cefais fy anfon i ogledd Affrica yn ddiweddarach fel anelwr gynnu gyda'r *8th Army*. Brwydrais drwy Sidi Berani a Benghazi, a phan welais i erchyllterau'r rhyfel a'm llygaid fy hun, roeddwn i'n falch i mi ymuno â'r adran gynnu mawrion. Cefais fy nal yn garcharor yn Tobruk ym 1941, a'm hanfon i weithio ar fferm yn yr Eidal. Un diwrnod, gadewais y fferm ac ymuno â chriw o herwfilwyr, ac arhosais gyda nhw tan i mi gael fy rhyddhau. Dyddiau difyr iawn!

Ar ôl diwedd y rhyfel, dychwelais i weithio yn y pyllau glo. Un diwrnod, daeth rhywun heibio a sôn rhywbeth am ddosbarthiadau ffeiarman glofa. Roeddwn i a dau ffrind wedi penderfynu mynychu'r dosbarthiadau nos hyn, ond dim ond fi lwyddodd i basio'r prawf – diolch i'r addysg dda ges i'n fachgen, mwy na thebyg, yn ysgolion St Peter's a Hillside. Fe wnes i gymhwyso pan oeddwn i oddeutu 24 oed, a gofynnwyd i mi lenwi'r bwlch pan oedd y ffeiarman rheolaidd i ffwrdd.

Un diwrnod, gofynnodd yr is-reolwr Mr Gratton i mi wneud y swydd yn llawn amser, ond roeddwn i braidd yn gyndyn oherwydd 'mod i'n ennill cyflog da fel glöwr. Ond fe ddywedodd fod cyflog swyddog yn well, felly es i'n ffeiarman llawn amser.

Roedd y glowyr wastad yn meddwl 'mod i'n fachan caled, ond roedden nhw hefyd yn dweud, os oedden nhw'n gorfod gwneud gwaith ychwanegol fel aros ymlaen i glirio cwmp to, a phe bawn i'n dweud y byddan nhw'n cael tâl ychwanegol, yna bydden nhw yn ei dderbyn! Arferai'r dynion sleifio i ffwrdd yn gynnar drwy'r drifft yn hytrach nag i fyny'r siafft – ond os oeddwn i'n dal unrhyw un yn gwneud hyn, roeddwn i'n eu riportio nhw. Roeddem yn gweithio yng ngwythien yr Yard, y Meadow a'r Garw (lle'r oedd y glo ddim mwy na rhyw droedfedd o uchder). Roedd y glo ar y ffasys 200 llath yn cael ei dandorri, ac roedd gan bob un o'r ugain dyn 'stent' deg llath yr un, ac yn llenwi rhyw 3-4 troedfedd o lo bob dydd. Es i weithio fel oferman yn ddiweddarach, a dyna oedd fy swydd tan i mi ymddeol.

Roedd Big Pit yn bwl cyfeillgar. Yn y pyllau eraill, y bos oedd y bos a dyna ni, ond roeddwn i'n mynd mas i yfed gyda'r dynion. Bois Blaenafon oedd y rhan fwyaf o'r gweithwyr, er bod gyda ni ddynion o Lanelli Hill a Brynmawr hefyd. Roeddwn i'n aelod o Glwb y Ceidwadwyr er 'mod i'n Llafurwr rhonc ac erioed wedi pleidleisio i'r Torïaid yn fy mywyd! Pan ddechreuais i weithio yn Big Pit, roeddem ni'n cerdded i'r gwaith cyn dechrau dal y bws (a gorfod talu amdano!). Roedd y pwll yn llawn cymeriadau, ac roedd dipyn o hwyl a sbri i'w gael. Pan oeddem ni'n fyr o brops, byddem ni'n sleifio i ddwyn rhai o ardal arall o'r pwll – do, fe wnes i ddysgu rhywbeth mewn chwe blynedd yn y fyddin wedi'r cwbl!

Bernard Israel

An interesting life

I was born in King Street, Blaenafon in 1918. My father, who was a senior haulier, and my two brothers all worked in the colliery. However, when I left school I became a delivery boy for the Co-op. I was a big rugby fan and my brother and I wanted to watch the 1935 New Zealand touring team play a combined Abertillery and Cross Keys team at Abertillery Park. We didn't have any money so we walked over the mountain to Abertillery Park and sneaked in to watch the game. Because the Co-op wouldn't give me the Saturday off to watch the game I finished and went to work in Big Pit instead as a sixteen year old collier boy.

In 1938 I was courting a girl who wanted to get married but I wasn't ready so I decided to join the Royal Artillery. I enlisted in June 1939 and was stationed in India when the war started. We still had horses to pull the guns then and I always had sweets with me. One day a sergeant gave me a row because there was a horse following me around - but he only wanted a sweet. I was later sent to the 8th Army in North Africa as a gun layer. I fought through Sidi Berani and Benghazi and when I saw what war was like I was glad that I had joined the artillery. I was taken prisoner in Tobruk 1941 and sent to work on a farm in Italy. One day I just walked away from the farm and joined up with the partisans and stayed with them until I was released. I had an interesting life!

After the war ended I went back down the mines. One day someone came around the pit and told us about attending classes to become a colliery fireman. Two friends and myself decided to attend the night classes but I was the only one who actually passed, probably because I had got a good education when I was a school boy, first at St Peter's and then at Hillside School. I got my papers when I was about 24 years old and I used to fill in when a regular fireman was off. One day the under manager, Mr Gratton, asked me to do the job full time but I was reluctant as I was earning good money on the coal. However, he said that an official's wage was better so I became a full time fireman.

The miners used to reckon that I was a 'hard bugger' but also said that, if they had to do extra work, such as stopping on to clear a roof fall, if I said that they would get extra pay, they'd get it! The men used to be able to sneak out early through the drift then rather than go up the shaft - but if I caught anyone doing this I used to report them. We were working the Yard Vein, the Meadow Vein and the Garw seam (where the coal was only about two feet high). The coal on the 200 yard faces was undercut and each of the twenty men had a ten yard stent ?? each and filled about 3 - 4 feet of coal each day. I later became an overman and stayed in that job until I retired.

Big Pit was a friendly pit. In other collieries the boss was the boss but I used to go out drinking with men. Most of the workforce lived in Blaenafon but we also had men from Llanelly Hill and Brynmawr. I was actually a member of the Conservative Club even though I am staunch Labour and never voted Tory in my life! When I started at Big Pit we used to walk to work but later we got a bus (which we had to pay for!). There were plenty of characters in the pit and we used to have a bit of fun, when we were short of props on our face we used to sneak into another district and pinch theirs - I didn't do six years in the army for nothing!

Bernard Israel



O'r bwrdd i'r brifysgol

Cefais fy ngeni ym Mlaenafon ym 1939. Roedd fy nhad-cu yn berchen ar lofa fach ger Oakdale, ac roedd fy nhad yn gweithio fel gof ym melin deians Cwmni Blaenafon ac yna'n ddiweddarach yn y safle glo brig ym Mlaenafon. Ar ôl fy arholiadau lefel O ym 1954, es i'r swyddfa gyflogaeth i chwilio am waith. Cefais gynnig prentisiaethau â sawl cyflogwr, a phenderfynais ymuno â'r Bwrdd Glo fel syrfêwr gan ei fod yn swnio'n waith amrywiol a diddorol, ac roeddwn i'n hoffi mathemateg – felly danddaear es i.

Roedd ein swyddfa ddylunio yn rhan o ganolfan iard lo swyddfeydd Ardal Rhif 6 yr NCB, oddi ar North Street, Blaenafon. Roeddem yn ymdrin â sawl glofa gan gynnwys Big Pit a Thirpentwys. Roedd gan bob glofa ei syrfêwr dynodedig ei hun a oedd yn gyfrifol am gywirdeb y cynlluniau statudol, gwaith mesur ac alinio safonol.

Treuliais y tair wythnos gyntaf gyda'r Bwrdd Glo yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Oakdale, ac ar y diwrnod cyntaf, casglais fy sgidiau, helmed a phadiau pen-glin cyn mentro danddaear am y tro cyntaf erioed. Bob bore, roeddem yn dysgu tasgau danddaear – tasgau na wnes i orfod eu cyflawni byth wedyn, diolch i'r drefn; fel sut i godi 'paciau' (*waliau cerrig garw wedi'u llenwi â rwbwl er mwyn cynnal y to y tu ôl i'r ffas lo*), sut i 'sbragio' (*rhoi ffyn pren fel brecio yn olwynion y dramiau*) a llenwi dramiau glo, sut i dorri'r cynhalbyst pren a sut i drin cynhalbyst pren hydrolog 'Dowty', a sut i folltio'r dolenni i gynnal llwybrau'r hedins. Yn y prynhawniau wedyn, roeddem yn cael sgysiau ar faterion rheoli, dyletswyddau swyddogol a diogelwch.

Bill Miles oedd syrfêwr glofa Tirpentwys, a chefais hyfforddiant manwl a thrylwyr ganddo. Treuliodd wythnosau lawer yn gwneud yn siŵr fy mod i'n gwbl gymwys a hyddysg mewn defnyddio theodolit, lefelau a thechnegau mesur, fel y gallai ddibynnu arnaf i weithio danddaear ar y dyddiau y byddai ef yn aros ar y wyneb i smygu a hel clecs.

Mae'n siŵr ein bod ni'n treulio traean o'n

hamser danddaear, a'r gweddill yn y stafell ddylunio, yn dargopïo a diweddarau cynlluniau a chyfrifo symiau. Bob dydd Llun, byddwn i'n mynd i Goleg Technegol Crymlyn. Roedd yn ddiwrnod hir, rhwng gadael y tŷ am 6.30 y bore a dychwelyd adref am 10.30 y nos. Gan fod gen i gymwysterau Lefel O eisoes, roeddwn i'n gallu ymuno ag ail flwyddyn y cwrs *Ordinary National Certificate*. Cefais flas mawr arno, oherwydd roeddem yn astudio pynciau a oedd yn gysylltiedig â'r gwaith yr oeddem yn ei wneud am weddill yr wythnos.

Cyn hir, sylweddolwyd nad oedd glofa Tirpentwys yn talu'i ffordd gan fod y ffasis glo dair milltir a mwy o waelod y pwll, a gofynnwyd i ni gysylltu ein lefelydd â chloddfa ddrifft newydd yn Hafodyrnys. Es i a Bill ati i wneud gwaith archwilio manwl mewn cysylltiad â'r gorsafoedd Arolwg Ordnans ar y brig. Roedd milltiroedd o fesuriadau dyrys a chymhleth, ond pa mor agos fyddem yn llwyddo i gysylltu'r lefelydd â'r drifft newydd? Trwy lwc, cyfarfu'r ddwy linell o fewn tair modfedd i'w gilydd.

Erbyn hyn, roeddwn wedi pasio'r cymhwyster HNC ond yn rhy ifanc i fod yn gyfrifol am fy nglofa fy hun yn gyfreithlon. Erbyn hynny, roedd hi'n 1960 a llawer o'r pyllau'n cau beth bynnag. Roedd dau o'm cyd-fyfyrwyr yng Nghrymlyn yn ceisio am le mewn prifysgol, ac yn credu y dylwn i wneud yr un fath – a dyna wnes i! Fy mwriad oedd astudio peirianeg sifil, ond cefais fy narbwyllo i ddilyn cwrs pensaernïaeth yn hytrach. Roedd hi'n bryd i mi symud ymlaen, ond sylweddolais serch hynny fod fy nghyfnod gyda'r Bwrdd Glo yn ysgol brofiad gwerth chweil ar gyfer addysg brifysgol.

Malcolm Parry

Ar ôl gadael y Bwrdd Glo, daeth Malcolm Parry yn Bennaeth yr Ysgol Bensaernïaeth ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd a darlledwr poblogaidd ar hanes adeiladau yng Nghymru.



A good preparation for university

I was born in Blaenafon in 1939, my grandfather was a small mine owner near Oakdale and my father was a blacksmith in the tyre mills of the Blaenavon Company and later worked in the opencast coal site in Blaenafon. After my 'O' Levels in 1954 I went to the employment exchange to look for a job. They offered me apprenticeships with a number of employers but I chose the National Coal Board as surveying seemed to be interesting because it was varied and I like maths - so I went underground.

Our drawing office was a part of the coal yard complex of the NCB Area No. 6 offices just off North Street in Blaenafon. We dealt with a number of collieries including Big Pit and Tirpentwys. Each colliery had a designated surveyor responsible for the accuracy of statutory plans, routine measurement and alignment duties.

My first three weeks in the Coal Board were spent at Oakdale Training Centre where, on my first day, I collected my boots, helmet and knee pads before my first ever trip underground. Every morning we learned underground tasks that, thankfully, I was never to use again; how to construct 'packs' (*rough stone walls with rubble infill to support the roof behind the coal face*), how to 'sprag' (*put wooden brake sticks in the dram wheels*) and fill coal drams, how to cut timber roof supports and how to handle 'Dowty' hydraulic roof supports and how to bolt together the ring arch supports which held up the heading roads. In the afternoons we were given talks on management, official duties and safety.

Bill Miles was the surveyor for Tirpentwys Colliery and his training of me was exacting and thorough. He spent weeks ensuring that I was totally competent in the use of theodolites, levels and measuring techniques, so that he could rely on my work

underground on the days he stayed on the surface gossiping and smoking in the lamp room.

We probably spent a third of our time underground, the rest was spent in the drawing office, tracing and updating plans and calculating quantities. Every Monday I went to Crumlin Technical College on 'day release'. It was a long day as I had to leave the house at 6:30am and didn't get home until 10:30pm. Because I had 'O' levels it meant that I started on the second year of the Ordinary National Certificate course. Because we were studying subjects that were related to the work we were doing during the rest of the week, we really enjoyed it.

Tirpentwys Colliery was becoming uneconomic to run as the coal faces were over three miles from pit bottom and so we were to join up our workings to a new drift mine at Hafodyrynys. Bill and I undertook a massive check survey joining up with Ordinance Survey stations on the surface. There were miles of complex measurements but how closely would our headings join up with the new drift? Success! Our lines met within three inches.

By this time I had passed my HNC but was too young to be given the legal responsibility for my own colliery, in addition it was 1960 and many mines were closing. Two of my fellow students at Crumlin were applying to go to university and they thought that I should too - so I did! I intended to study civil engineering but was encouraged to study architecture instead. It was time to move on but I found that my Coal Board experience had prepared me well for a university education.

Malcolm Parry

After leaving the NCB Malcolm Parry became the Head of the School of Architecture at Cardiff University and a popular broadcaster on Welsh building history.



Procio'r cof

Fy niweddar dad yw 'nghysylltiad i â'r diwydiant glo. Roedd yn gweithio yng nglofa Penallta. Dechreuodd ei yrfa'n ifanc iawn cyn i'r Ail Ryfel Byd darfu ar bethau, pan wasanaethodd gyda'r Royal Engineers. Ar ôl ei gyfnod yn y fyddin, daeth adref i Gymru ac yn ôl i Benallta. Bu'n rhaid iddo roi'r gorau i weithio danddaear, fodd bynnag, ar ôl damwain, a chafodd waith gan yr NCB ar ben y pwll tan ei ymddeoliad yn y 1970au. Roedd yn undebwr brwd, fel llawer o'i gyd-lowyr ar y pryd.

Dyma'r trydydd ymweliad i 'ngŵr a minnau, ond y tro cyntaf i'm brawd a'i wraig. Llifodd yr atgofion yn ôl i bawb ohonom. Treuliodd fy mrawd a mi'r rhan fwyaf o'r ymweliad yn cofio am ein hymweliadau blynyddol â Galâr Glowyr yng Nghaerdydd. Dim ond oherwydd fy mod i'n gweithio fel gwas sifil y gwnes i roi'r gorau i 'orymdeithio' ym 1972, ac roedd ymuno ag unrhyw brotest neu gyfarfod gwleidyddol yn codi gwrychyn. Yn ystod yr ymweliad, cefais dipyn o sbort yn atgoffa fy mrawd o'r adeg pan aeth ar goll yng Ngerddi Soffia. Dim ond plentyn bach oedd e ar y pryd, a bu criw ohonom yn chwilio amdano ymysg y dorf, ond yn ofer. Daethpwyd o hyd iddo yn y pen draw yn sefyll ar lan afon Taf, gyda strapiau'i awenau yn un llaw a charreg yn y llall i'w thaflu i'r afon fyrlymus a pheryglus o uchel!

Yn nhŷ weindio Big Pit, mae yna lun mawr o lofa Penallta a sbardunodd atgof arall. Rwy'n cofio mam yn mynd â ni blant (fy mrawd yn ei gadair wthio) gyda chinio Sul llawn i dad a oedd yn gweithio yn nhŷ weindio Penallta ar y pryd. Alla i weld y cinio nawr. Popeth ar blât ar ben potel dŵr poeth, ac wedi'i lapio mewn haenau o bapur newydd a lleiniau sychu llestri a thyweli bach, a'i gario am ryw dair milltir. Mae'n swnio fel rhywbeth o oes Dickens erbyn hyn, ond dim ond dechrau'r 1960au oedd hi.

Cofiais y fath sioc a syndod a gefais ar ddechrau fy ngyrfa, a chanfod bod fy nghyflog cychwynnol bron yr un faint â chyflog fy

nhad ar y pryd. Sylweddolais pa mor annheg oedd bywyd; dyna lle'r oeddwn i; yn teithio i Gaerdydd am 7.30 y bore i weithio mewn swyddfa glyd a chynnes am wyth awr, a dad ar y llaw arall yn gadael ein cartref am 4.30 y bore – ym mhob tywydd – er mwyn cerdded i Benallta i weithio sifft wyth awr am yr un faint o arian, fwy neu lai.

Mae fy ngŵr a minnau wrth ein boddau gyda'r amgueddfa, ac yn gwerthfawrogi'r lle. Bu tad fy ngŵr yn löwr hefyd cyn y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, gan gloddio â llaw. Dylai pawb fynd 'lawr y pwll' unwaith o leiaf, er mwyn gweld y caledi y bu'n rhaid iddynt ei oddef er mwyn cadw'r wlad ar waith a'n haelwydydd yn gynnes.

Glenda Rich

**Ymwelwyr
Big Pit, 1983
Visitors to
Big Pit, 1983**



Jogging my memory

My connection with the coal industry comes from my late father who worked at Penallta Colliery. His career began at a young age and was only interrupted by the Second World War when he served with the Royal Engineers. When he returned to Wales from his spell in the army he went back to work at Penallta, but following an accident he was unable to go underground and the NCB found him work on top of the pit until his retirement in the late 1970s. As with most of the miners of his time he was a big union man.

This was the third visit for my husband and I but the first time for my brother and his wife. It brought back so many memories for us. My brother and I spent a lot of the visit reminiscing about our annual visits to the Miners' Gala in Cardiff. Indeed I only stopped 'marching' in

1972 because by then I was employed as a Civil Servant and it was frowned on to be involved in anything deemed a political gathering or demonstration. During the visit I took great delight in reminding my brother of the time when, as a mere toddler, he went missing down at Sophia Gardens. Many of us spent time searching for him amongst the crowds but to no avail. He was, eventually, found standing on the bank of the River Taff with the straps of his reins in one hand and a stone in the other to throw into the river which was in full flow due to high tide!

In the Big Pit winding house there is a large photo of Penallta Colliery and my memory was jogged yet again. I can remember my mother taking us two kids (brother in his pushchair) with a full Sunday roast to take to my dad while he was on shift in Penallta's winding house. I can see that dinner now. All plated up, balanced on a hot water bottle and wrapped in layers of newspaper, tea and hand towels; then it was carried on foot for about 3 miles. It all sounds terribly Dickensian but we are only talking of the early 1960s!

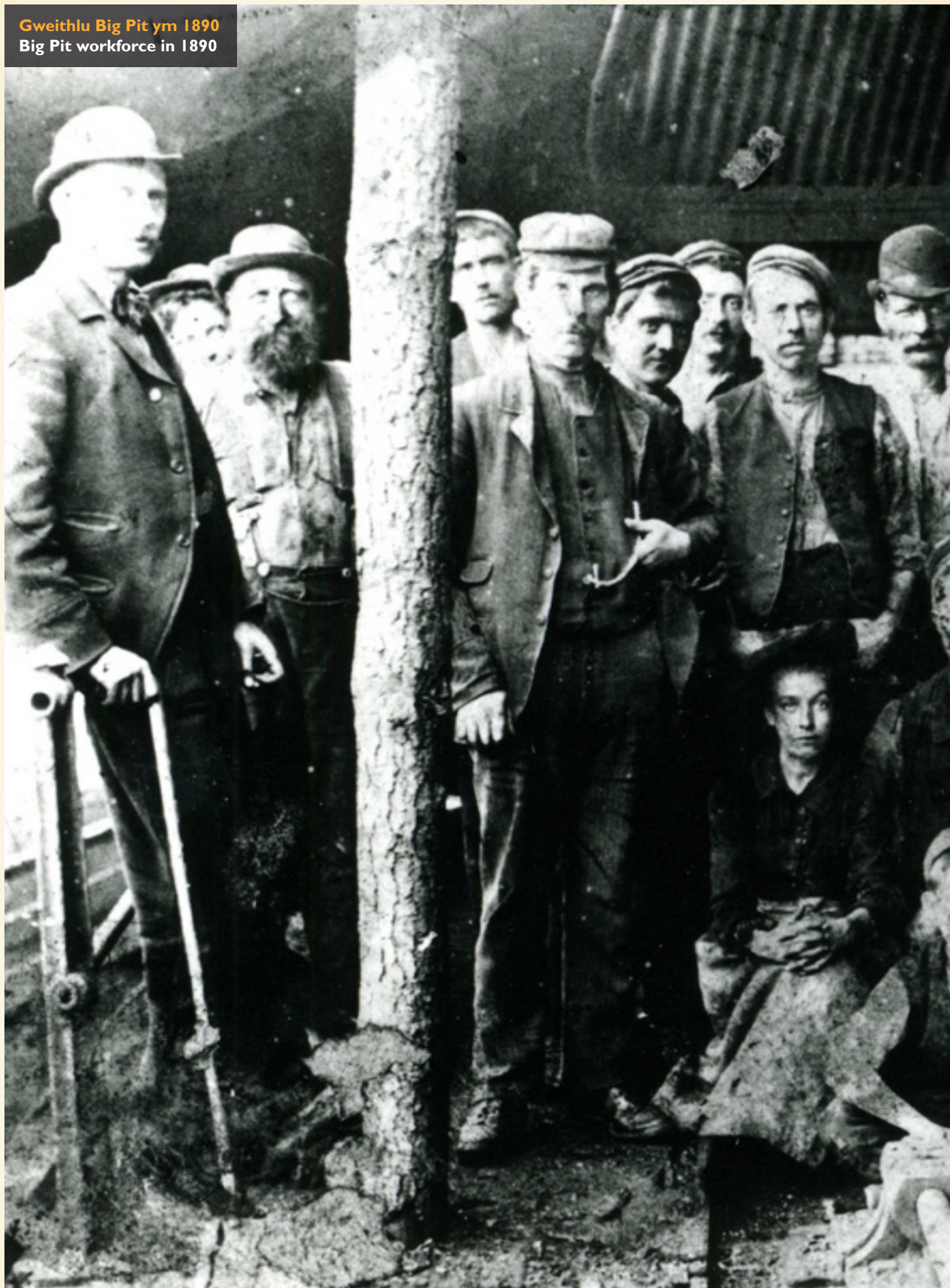
I was also reminded of the shock I felt when, on starting out on my own career I realised my starting wage was almost that of what my dad was earning at that stage of his life. It brought home the unfairness of life; here was I travelling to Cardiff at 7.30 in the morning to work in a warm office for 8 hours while my dad left our house at 4.30am – in all sorts of weather – to walk up to Penallta to do his eight hour shift for, more or less, the same money.

The museum is enjoyed and appreciated by myself and my husband – whose own father worked in the mines prior to the First World War and dug coal out by hand – that everyone should go 'down the pit' at least once just to see what had to be endured to keep the country going and homes warm.

Glenda Rich



Gweithlu Big Pit ym 1890
Big Pit workforce in 1890





Ddim mor hoff o Big Pit!

Cefais fy ngeni yng Ngarndiffaith ym mis Awst 1939. Fy swydd gyntaf ar ôl gadael yr ysgol oedd yng Ngwaith Tunplat Pont-y-pŵl. Cwta chwe mis bues i yno oherwydd dim ond £3 4s 2d o gyflog oeddwn i'n ei gael am weithio chwe diwrnod yr wythnos, ac roeddwn i eisiau rhagor. Felly, es i dderbyn hyfforddiant yng nglofa Oakdale ym Mawrth 1955, a dechrau gweithio fel colier cynorthwyol yng nglofa Tirpentwys ym mis Mehefin.

Cefais ambell anffawd yn Nhirpentwys. Unwaith, fe ddisgynnodd carreg arna i ond ches i fawr o niwed, ond y gwaethaf oedd pan oeddwn i'n defnyddio 'peiriant cog' (offer cadwyn a chlicied) i dynhau'r gadwyn gludo. Tynnais yr handlen yn ôl, ac wrth i mi dynnu'r pin mas, cwmpodd lwmp o lo o'r ffas a daeth y bocs oddi ar y bar clicied a tharo fy llaw a chefn fy mhen. Pan es i'r ysbyty, roedd y meddygon am dorri fy llaw i ffwrdd, ond pan ddaeth y bos i mewn a chlywed fi'n llefain, dywedodd "Sut allan nhw ddweud shwt beth pan nagyn nhw wedi gweld beth sy'n bod?" Cefais gadw fy llaw, felly, ac er ei bod tua'r un faint â phêl-droed nid oedd wedi torri o gwbl. Bues i bant o'r gwaith am dri mis.

Erbyn 1960, roeddwn i wedi cael llond bol ar weithio sifftiau prynhawn a'r nos, felly ffarweliais â Thirpentwys. A dweud y gwir, dwi ddim yn cofio hanner y swyddi ges i. Rwy'n credu mai chwe blynedd a hanner yw'r cyfnod hiraf i mi aros yn unman, a hynny gyda Chyngor Sir Gwent.

Er na setlais yn yr un swydd am gyfnod hir iawn, bues i'n aelod o'r Fyddin Diriogaethol am 31 mlynedd. Pan ymunais i â nhw i ddechrau, prin y gallwn ddarllen nac ysgrifennu, ond erbyn i mi orffen, roeddwn i'n sarjant. Roeddem ni'n hyfforddi ddwywaith yr wythnos ac yn mynd ar ymarferiadau ar y penwythnos. Nid 'tanco' oedd e i gyd chwaith, er bod rhywfaint o hynny – er ddim hanner digon yn fy achos i!

Ym 1968, es i weithio ar y ffas lo yn Big Pit. Roeddem ni'n tandorri'r glo yn y nos, ei danio a'i roi ar y cludfelt â llaw yn ystod y sifft dydd. Nid oedd gennym gyfarpar pŵer gan fod y wythien mor isel. Roedd hyn yn wahanol i lofa Tirpentwys a'i hoffer modern – neu dyna oedden ni'n ei dybio. Pan ddaeth swyddogion glo o'r Almaen ar ymweliad a gweld ein cyfarpar ni, dweud wnaethon nhw y byddai'n rhaid mynd i amgueddfa yn yr Almaen i weld y fath. Sôn am dynnu gwynt o'n hwyliau!

Rwy'n dod o deulu glofaol â chysylltiadau agos â Big Pit. Roedd fy mrawd yn gweithio fel gof ac yna'n ddyn pwll yno, a chafodd ei drosglwyddo i lofa'r Marine ar ôl i Big Pit gau. Gweithiodd fy nhad ar y ffas lo am y rhan fwyaf o'i oes, gan ddechrau yn Viponds yn y Farteg a gweithio yno tan i'r pwll gau, yna symud i Big Pit hyd nes ei ymddeoliad. Bu'n gweithio ar y ffas lo hyd yn oed pan oedd clefyd y llwch arno!

Enw tad fy ngwraig oedd Frederick Henry James, ac roedd ei wraig gyntaf yn hanu o'r Gogledd, ac aeth yno i weithio am sbel. Roedd e'n digwydd bod danddaear yng nglofa Gresffordd adeg y danchwa. Er na soniodd fawr ddim am ei brofiad, fe oedd un o'r ychydig rai ffodus a lwyddodd i ddianc o'r trychineb. Roedd ei wraig yn feichiog ar y pryd, esgorodd yn gynnar, a bu farw wrth roi genedigaeath.

Doeddwn i ddim yn hapus iawn yn Big Pit. Hen le anodd i fynd a dod iddo o Gwmbrân ydoedd, ac roedd y wythien lo yn isel iawn gyda dŵr yn llifo drwy'r ffas. Ar ben bob dim, roedd hi'n gas 'da fi agwedd y rheolwr a'r oferman. Dim ond oherwydd y Swyddfa Gyflogaeth yr oeddwn i yno o gwbl, a phetawn i heb fynd, ni fyddai gennyf ddigon o arian i gynnal y wraig a'r plant.

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Ken Garland

I wasn't happy at Big Pit!

I was born in Garndiffaith in August 1939. My first job after leaving school was at Pontypool Tinplate Works but I only worked there for six months because I was only getting £3 4s 2d for six days and wanted more money. So I went to Oakdale Colliery for training in March 1955 and started as a collier's helper in Tirpentwys Colliery in June.

I had a few accidents when I was in Tirpentwys. I was hit by a falling bell stone once, it didn't do much damage, but the worst one was when I was using a 'cog machine' (*a chain and ratchet device*) to tension the conveyor chain. I pulled the handle back and was pulling the pin out when a lump of coal fell from the coal face and the box came off the ratchet bar and caught my hand and the back of my head. When I went to the hospital and the doctors saw my hand they wanted to amputate it, but when their boss came in and heard me crying he said "How can they say that when they haven't seen what's wrong?" So I didn't lose my hand and, although it was about the size of a football, it wasn't actually even broken, but I was off work for three months.

I finished in Tirpentwys in 1960 as I'd had enough working afternoon and night shifts. To be honest I can't remember half the jobs I've had, the longest I stayed anywhere was the six and a half years I worked for Gwent County Council.

I didn't stay in jobs for long but I was in the Territorial Army for 31 years. When I joined I could hardly read or write but by the time I finished I had become a sergeant. We used to train twice a week and go on exercises on the weekend. It wasn't all booze, but there was some – in my case there wasn't enough!

In 1968 I went to work in Big Pit on the coal face. We used to undercut the coal by night then fire it down and fill it on to the conveyor

by hand on the day shift. We didn't have power loading equipment as the seam was so low. This was different to Tirpentwys Colliery which had what we thought was modern mining equipment. However we had a visit by a German mining delegation which took one look at our machinery and said that they would have to go to a museum if they wanted to see the same stuff in Germany, which left us feeling a bit deflated!

I come from a mining family with close connections with Big Pit. My brother was a blacksmith, and later a pitman, at the colliery until it closed and he transferred to Marine Colliery. My father worked for most of his life on the coal face, starting at Viponds in Varteg and worked there until it closed and then transferred to Big Pit where he worked until he retired. He actually worked on the coal face with silicosis!

My wife's father, Frederick Henry James, first wife was from north Wales and he went up there to work. He was actually underground in Gresford Colliery when it exploded. He never said much about it but he was one of the few who escaped from the disaster. His wife was pregnant at the time, went into early labour and died giving birth.

I wasn't very happy at Big Pit, it was difficult getting there from Cwmbran and the seam was very low with water running through the coal face and I didn't like the attitude of the manager and overman. The only reason I went there was because the Employment Exchange made me, if I hadn't gone there wouldn't have been enough money for the wife and kids.

Ken Garland

Y Gof

Fe'm ganed i deulu glofaol ym Mhont-y-pŵl ym 1946. Roedd fy nhad a dau o'm brodyr yn gweithio yn y pwll glo, felly dyna'r dewis naturiol i mi. Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed a dechrau fel prentis ffitiwr. Bues i'n gweithio ar y wyneb yng nglofa Cwmtylleri cyn symud i Six Bells, lle gadewais fy mhrentisiaeth a chael swydd fel colier cynorthwyol (*dyn sy'n gweithio yn y siafftiau*).

Yn anffodus, roedd y coliers yn gweithio sifft nos a sylweddolodd rhywun fy mod i'n rhy ifanc felly fe'm hanfonwyd i weithio i'r efail. Roeddwn i wrth fy modd â'r lle - roedd yn debyg i gynllun prentisiaeth answyddogol, a chafais brofiad fel morthwyliwr ochr yn ochr â'r gofaint. Yn y dyddiau hynny, roedd y system ddyrchafu yn golygu disgwyl i'r gofaint hŷn adael cyn bod pawb arall yn gallu symud un rheng i fyny'r ysgol yrfa, felly byddai'r uwch forthwyliwr yn symud i swydd gof iau ac ati. Bues i'n forthwyliwr am 21 mlynedd cyn cael cyfle i weithio fel gof.

Roedd angen gofaint mewn pyllau glo gan fod y cyfarpar yn gyntefig a mwy arbenigol bryd hynny. Doedd dim modd prynu bolltau a chadwyni, felly rhaid oedd eu cynhyrchu. Doedd dim diagramau penodol fel heddiw chwaith; byddem yn dylunio popeth â darn o sialc. Roeddech chi'n troi'ch llaw ar bethau eraill ac yn datblygu patrwm o weithio gyda chrefftwyr eraill, â'r hyn yr oedden nhw ei angen gennych chi.

Roeddem yn gweithio llawer gyda ffitwyr oedd angen pethau fel gardiau neu allweddi. Byddem yn derbyn mesuriadau, creu cynllun a'i ofannu'n fras cyn ei dorri i faint arbennig gyda pheiriant ffurfio. Byddem yn gwneud pethau i bobl gartref hefyd, fel proceri, cribiniau, rhawiau ar gyfer tân glo a gradelli ar gyfer pice ar y maen. Roeddem yn cynhyrchu trawstiau i ddal y nenfwd os oeddech chi'n bwrw wal i lawr. Tasgau answyddogol oedd y rhain, wrth gwrs, oherwydd byddem wedi cael y sac o gael ein dal - roeddem bob amser yn dweud ein bod wedi cael caniatâd os oedd rhywun yn holi!

Er mai gofaint oeddem ni, nid oedd gennym fawr o gysylltiad â cheffylau. Gofaint pedoli oedd yn gwneud hynny. Roedden nhw'n cadw mesuriadau pob ceffyl unigol, a phetai un ohonynt yn colli pedol, roedd angen ei wneud ar y wyneb, ei chludo i waelod y pwll a'i gosod yn oer.

Dim ond rhyw dair neu bedair blynedd ges i fel gof go iawn oherwydd fe gaeodd Six Bells ym 1988. Ar ôl cael fy niswyddo, fodd bynnag, cefais alwad ffôn gan beiriannydd o Big Pit, yn cynnig swydd i mi gan fod y gof ar fin gadael. Swydd siafftsmon oedd hi mewn gwirionedd, ond gan fod siafftsmyn a gofaint yn cydweithio'n agos ar bethau fel capio rhaffau a chludo eitemau trwm i lawr y pwll, roedd hi'n hawdd ymgymryd â'r gwaith. Bues i'n siafftsmon yn Big Pit am 22 mlynedd tan i mi ymddeol o waith llawn amser; ond rwy'n dal i weithio'n rhan-amser yn yr efail yn Big Pit.

Rwy'n hoffi dangos yr hen efail i blant, ac adrodd hanes y gwaith. Rwy'n dangos yr ordd iddyn nhw, a dweud fel roeddwn i'n gafael ynddi am 6.15am tan 10, cael tamaid i fwyta, yna ailafael yn yr ordd am 10.20 a dal i daro tan 3.15pm. Roedd popeth siang-di-fang yno, felly rwyf wedi dychwelyd yr efail yn Big Pit i'w hen ogoniant anniben fel y dylai fod. Rwy'n hoff o gynnu tan ar brydiau, ac mae'r arogl â'r mwg yn ychwanegu at naws y lle. Mae fy niddordebau hyd yn oed yn deillio o'r sgiliau a ddysgais yn y lofa. Fodd bynnag, os ydych chi'n trin metel o ddydd i ddydd, mae'n braf gweithio gyda deunyddiau eraill weithiau - felly rwy'n hoffi creu casys pren newydd ar gyfer hen glochrau mawr.

Yn fy marn i, mae'n bwysig dehongli'r hen ddiwydiant fel y gallwn bortreadu'r pethau roeddem yn eu gwneud 'slawer dydd â'r gwahaniaethau o gymharu â heddiw, a'u dangos nhw mewn gwirionedd - creu darlun byw. Mae Big Pit yn elfen allweddol o'r dasg o ddangos pa mor bwysig oedd y diwydiant glo i Gymru a'r byd.

Len Howell

The Blacksmith

I was born in 1946 in Pontypool into a mining family. My father and two of my brothers worked in the pit so it was the natural choice for me. I left school at fifteen and started as an apprentice fitter. I worked on the surface at Cwmtillery Colliery and then moved to Six Bells but I dropped out of the apprenticeship and got a job as an assistant pitman (*a man who works in the shafts*).

Unfortunately, pitmen work night shifts and someone found out that I was too young to work nights and was put to work in the blacksmiths shop instead. However, I loved it, it was like an unwritten apprenticeship scheme and I gained experience as a striker working with the blacksmiths. The promotion system was that you had to wait for the older blacksmiths to move on before everyone moved up one place in seniority, so the senior striker would move up to junior smith and so on. I spent twenty one years as a striker before getting the opportunity to move up to being a blacksmith.

Blacksmiths were needed in a working mine because the equipment then was primitive and specialised. You couldn't buy bolts and chains so they had to be made. We didn't have specific diagrams like today though; we used to draw the design with a bit of chalk. You learn to turn your hands to other things, how others work and develop a pattern of working with other trades and what they want from you.

We worked a lot with fitters who wanted stuff made like guards or keys. We took measurements, drew up a design and roughly forged it before machining it to size using a shaping machine. We would make things for people at home too, things like pokers, rakes, shovels for

the coal fire and griddles for making Welsh cakes. We made girders to hold the ceiling up if you were knocking a wall down. It was all unofficial of course as we would

have been sacked if we'd been caught – we always said that we'd had permission if asked!

Although we were blacksmiths we didn't have much to do with the horses. Shoeing was done by the shoeing smiths. They'd keep the measurements for each individual horse and, if one of them lost a shoe, it had to be made on the surface, taken down and put on cold.

I only had three or four years as a fully fledged blacksmith because Six Bells closed in 1988. However after being made redundant I received a phone call from the engineer at Big Pit, their blacksmith was finishing and would I like a job. The actual job was as a shaftsman but blacksmiths and shaftsmen work closely together on jobs such as rope capping and transporting heavy items down the pit, so it was easy to take on the job. I was the shaftsman at Big Pit for twenty two years until I retired from full time work; however I still work at Big Pit part time in the Blacksmiths.

I like to show the kids the blacksmiths' shop and tell them about what the work was like. I show them a sledgehammer and tell them how you'd pick it up at 6:15am, put it down at 10 and have some food, then pick it up again at 10:20 and sledge again until 3:15pm. A blacksmiths shop is always untidy! So I've been putting the one at Big Pit back how it should be, I like to light the fire on occasions and the smell and smoke adds to the atmosphere.

Even my hobbies come from the skills I've learnt in the colliery. However, if you work with metal day in day out it's good to work with different materials sometimes so I like making new wooden cases for old grandfather clocks. I think interpreting the industry we used to work in is important so we can portray what we used to do and the differences to now and actually show them – a picture paints a thousand words. Big Pit is a vital part in teaching how important the mining industry was to Wales and the world.

Len Howell



Len Howell



**Gweithdy ffitio
Big Pit, 1970au**
Big Pit fitting
shop, 1970s



Gwlyb siwps!

Cefais fy ngeni ym Mlaenafon ym mis Awst 1936. Roedd fy nau frawd yn gweithio yng nghloddfa ddrifft y Garn, ac aeth un ymlaen i Big Pit wedyn. Ym 1953, dechreuais fy hyfforddiant cychwynnol yng nglofa Oakdale ac ar ôl 16 wythnos, des i Big Pit fel glöwr dan hyfforddiant yn gweithio gyda cholier profiadol.

Er 'mod i'n nabod llawer o bobl yn Big Pit, gofynnais am gael symud i gloddfa ddrifft y Garn lle'r oedd rhai o'm ffrindiau eisoes yn gweithio. Dim ond deunaw oed oeddwn i, ac roeddech chi'n gorfod bod yn 21 oed cyn cael eich 'stent' (*gweithle ar y ffas lo*) eich hun a dibynnu ar y colier roeddech chi'n cydweithio ag ef i hybu'ch cyflog. Er hynny, llwyddais i ddarbwylllo'r rheolwr i roi 'stent' i mi a thalu cyflog dyn hefyd. Yn ystod y 1950au, cyflwynodd papur newydd cenedlaethol wob'r i ni am gynhyrchu'r 'dunelledd orau o lo' a chawsom daliad ychwanegol yn ein pecyn cyflog. Rwy'n cofio gaeaf caled 1963 hefyd, a ninnau'n gorfod gweithio ar y wyneb i glirio cledrau'r rheilffyrdd yn hytrach na gweithio danddaear – roedd hi'n ddigon oer i rewi brain!

Caeodd cloddfa ddrifft y Garn ddiwedd 1964, a dychwelais i Big Pit dan anogaeth Tom Thomas y rheolwr. Wrth symud o un lofa i'r llall, roeddech chi'n gorfod dechrau o'r dechrau eto, cwrdd â ffrindiau newydd a dod i ddeall ac adnabod y pwll newydd. Roeddwn i'n cerdded o gloddfa ddrifft y Garn ond roedd yna gaetsh yn Big Pit. Roedd angen cymryd gofal rhag baglu dros y sbrogiau ar lawr y gaetsh, ac yn y gaeaf, byddai'r rhaffau wedi rhewi'n gorn gan olygu reid go anghyfforddus i'r gwaelod. Roedd dynion Big Pit yn wych unwaith i chi ddod i'w hadnabod; danddaear yw'r lle gorau yn y byd i weithio. Bois lleol oedd gweithwyr Big Pit yn bennaf, gan gynnwys rhai o bwl Keys a chloddfa ddrifft y Garn, er bod dynion o Laneli Hill a Garndiffaith yno hefyd. Gan fod Big Pit mor wlyb, doedd dim gormod o lwch yno.

Ymunais â giang a oedd yn gwneud gwaith datblygu. Yr arweinydd oedd Howard Heal, ac

roedd ei frawd wedi cael damwain ddifrifol; roedd wrthi'n llenwi'r tybiau ac wedi mynd i lacio glo pan aeth ei lawes yn sownd yn y cludfelt. Cafodd ei lusgo gan y rholiwr a cholodd ei fraich. Roeddem yn datblygu llwybr newydd i wythien y Garw lle'r oedd y glo gorau, ac a gâi ei ystyried yn 'achubiaeth y pwll'. Ar y pryd, roeddwn i'n swyddog cymorth cyntaf ac yn cario 'bocs ambiwlans', ac roedd yna ddynion a oedd yn awyddus bob amser i adael y gwaith yn gynnar oherwydd mân doriadau ac ati. Eu cri nhw oedd "Cer a fi o'ma Glyn" ond ateb fi oedd "Cer i grafu!"

Wrth durio drifft newydd i wythien Garw, aethom heibio hen weithfeydd haearn llawn dŵr. Cawsom gyfle i fwrw golwg manwl ar yr hen weithfeydd, doedd dim cynhalbyst pren yn unman gan fod popeth wedi'i naddu o'r graig galed. Roedd y cyfan yn dwt a thaclus – profiad rhyfeddol ond gwlyb iawn! Un peth am weithio yn Big Pit – os oeddech chi am adael y gwaith yn gynnar, ac eisiau osgoi defnyddio'r siafft rhag cael eich dal, byddem yn defnyddio lefel River Arch, yr ail ffordd mas os oedd y siafft wedi'i blocio mewn unrhyw fodd. Os byddai rhywun wedi'n dala ni, byddem wedi cael cerydd a dirwy os nad y sac!

Ymunais â'r Gwasanaeth Achub Glofaol pan oeddwn oddeutu un ar hugain oed, a chael blas mawr arno. Roeddem yn hyfforddi unwaith yr wythnos yn Big Pit ac unwaith y mis yng Nghanolfan Achub Glofaol Crymlyn. Roedd yna 'ystafell leithder' yng Nghrymlyn, lle'r oeddech chi'n gorfod gwisgo'r gêr llawn a chropian o gwmpas; a chyda'r holl leithder roedd hi'n teimlo fel pe bai'n glawio yno. Er i mi weithio gyda'r gwasanaeth achub am rai blynnyddoedd, ni welais unrhyw ddigwyddiad difrifol diolch i'r drefn.

Tua 1972, sylweddolais fod y diwydiant glo yn dechrau mynd i'r gwellt, felly gadewais Big Pit a chael swydd yn ffatri'r Royal Ordnance, Glasgoed, cyn ymuno â'r gwasanaeth tân yn ddiweddarach.

Glyn Probert

Very Wet!

I was born in August 1936 in Blaenafon. My two brothers worked in Garn Drift and one of them later worked in Big Pit. In 1953 I started my initial mining training at Oakdale Colliery and after sixteen weeks there I came to Big Pit as a mining trainee working with an experienced collier.

Although I knew a lot of people working in Big Pit I later asked for a transfer to Garn Drift where some of my friends were already working. I was still only eighteen and you weren't supposed to get your own 'stent' (*a working place on the coal face*) until you were twenty one and had to rely on the collier you were working with to make your wages up. However, I persuaded the manager to give me a stent of my own and to pay me a man's wages to work it. During the 1950s a national newspaper gave us an award for 'best tonnage of coal' and we had extra money in our wage packets. I also remember the bad weather in the winter of 1963 when we weren't allowed to go underground but had to stop on the surface keeping the railway tracks open – it was very cold!

At the end of 1964 Garn Drift closed and I came to Big Pit after I was persuaded by the manager Tom Thomas. When you move from one colliery to another you really have to start all over again, you have to make new friends and start to understand the new pit. I was used to walking out of Garn Drift while there was a cage in Big Pit. You had to watch you didn't trip over the tub scotches on the floor of the cage and in the winter the ropes would be all iced up and you'd have a very bumpy ride down

the shaft. The men at Big Pit were great once you got to know them; the best place to work in the world is underground. The Big Pit workforce was mostly local men including those who had come from Kays Slope and Garn Drift, although there were also men from Llanelly Hill

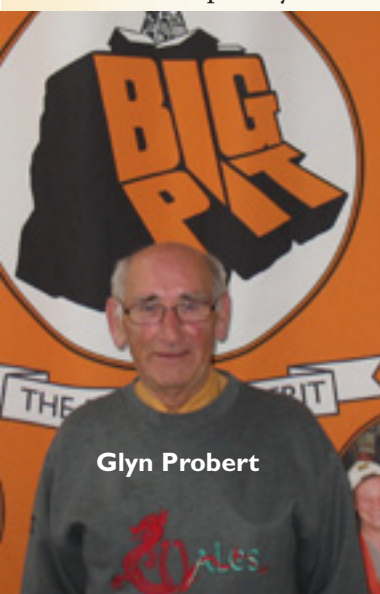
and Garndiffaith. The conditions at Big Pit were very wet so it wasn't too dusty.

I moved onto a gang doing development work. The leader was Howard Heal whose brother had a nasty accident; he was filling tubs and went to free some coal which had become trapped on a conveyor. His sleeve caught and pulled him into a roller causing him to lose an arm. We were developing a roadway down to the Garw seam where the best coal was and which was seen be 'the saviour of the pit.' At that time I was a first aider and used to carry an 'ambulance box' and there were always men with minor cuts wanting to leave work early. They'd say "Take me out Glyn" – but I used to tell them to "Bugger off!"

When we were driving the new drift into the Garw seam we went through old iron workings which were full of water. We had a good look at the old workings and there wasn't a timber support in sight, they were all cut out of the solid rock. Everything was very neatly done - it was fascinating, but very wet! One thing about working at Big Pit was that if you wanted to get out of work early, and not go up the shaft where someone might catch you, we used to use the River Arch level the second way out if the shaft was blocked in some way. If we'd been caught we would have been summonsed and fined or even sacked.

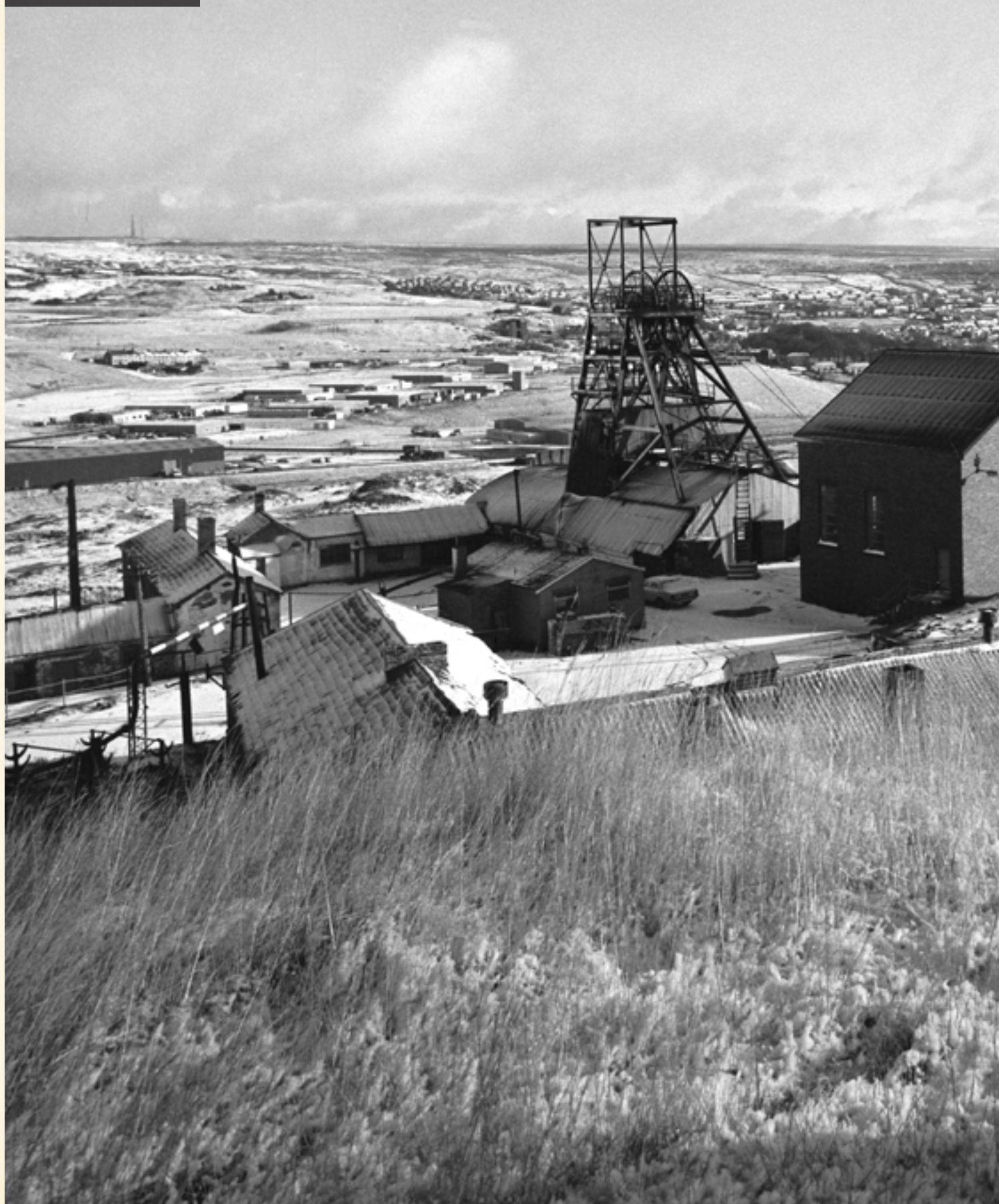
I joined the Mines Rescue Service when I was about twenty one and I really enjoyed it. We used to have training once a week in Big Pit and once a month in Crumlin Mines Rescue Centre. There was a 'humidity room' in Crumlin where you had to wear full gear and crawl around; with all the humidity it was like as if it was raining in there. Although I was in mines rescue for a few years I was lucky not to have to attend any serious incidents. In about 1972 I could see the way the coal industry was going down hill and I left Big Pit and got a job in Glascoed, the Royal Ordnance factory and later joined the fire brigade.

Glyn Probert



Glyn Probert

**Glyn Morgan,
rheolwr olaf yr NCB
yn Big Pit, 1980**
Glyn Morgan, the
last NCB manager
at Big Pit, 1980





Trueni am y ceffyl!

Cefais fy ngeni ym Mlaenafon ym mis Ebrill 1941. Roedd fy nhad a'm dau dad-cu yn gweithio yng nghloddfa ddrifft y Garn, glofa fach hyfryd a theuluol iawn – yn wir, roedd pedwar Reg Griffiths yn gweithio yno ar un adeg! Dechreuais weithio ym 1956, a minnau'n bymtheg oed. Wedi hyfforddiant cychwynnol yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Oakdale, dychwelais i weithio ar y sgriniau yn y Garn ac yno bues i am ddwy flynedd a hanner. Roedd yn lladdfa a braidd yn ddiflas hefyd. Gan mai fi oedd un o'r bechgyn mwyaf yno, fi oedd yn gorfod torri'r holl dalpiau mawr â gordd. Ar ben hynny, roedd yn lle brwnt, llychlyd, a rhynllyd o oer yn y gaeaf – a'r unig wres oedd o ffwrn fechan yn y caban lle'r oeddem ni'n bwyta.

Pan es i danddaear, roeddwn i'n gwneud gwaith adfer gyda gŵr o'r enw Nattie Rudge a oedd ar fin ymddeol. Y dasg oedd adfer hen hedins, tynnu'r cynhalbyst i lawr ac ati, gwaith bôn braich go iawn. Roedd ein ceffyl ar y pryd yn un anodd ei drin. Ar y drydedd wythnos, roeddwn i'n ei dywys pan gymrodd y goes. Roeddwn i'n gafael yn ei harnais ac yn ceisio tynnu'r wifren i stopio'r injan halio gan ei bod yn tynnu dramiau i fyny'r hedins. Yn anffodus, torrodd y ceffyl yn rhydd, methais â thynnu'r wifren mewn da bryd felly tarodd yn erbyn y dramiau a chafodd ei ladd. Daeth Owen Parson, yr is-reolwr i mewn, a dweud "Trueni am y ceffyl" – doedd e ddim yn malio amdanaf i – "Gofala dy fod ti'n arbed yr harneisiau." Codwyd yr hen geffyl i dram wag, a chafodd ei gludo i fyny'r pwll â'i goesau yn yr awyr.

Arhosais gyda'r criw adfer am naw mis. Yno y dysgais sut i beidio â rhegi – oherwydd cefais fy anfon i weithio dan hyfforddiant gyda 'nhad ar rodfa'r ffas lo. Wedyn, bu'n rhaid i mi dreulio rhai wythnosau yn hyfforddi ar y ffas lo ei hun. Roedd fy nghydweithiwr wedi torri ei fraich, felly fe wnes i weithio yn ei stent (man gweithio) yn ei le er 'mod i'n rhy ifanc mewn gwirionedd – ond roeddwn i'n ddigon hen erbyn i'r awdurdodau ddeall! Roeddwn i'n gweithio ar wythien Rhif 6 y Garw, a oedd ond yn rhyw droedfedd a deg modfedd o uchder!

Bues i'n gweithio ar y ffas lo tan iddyn nhw gau'r Garn ym 1966. Yna, es i weithio ar ffas wedi'i mecaneiddio yn Big Pit, yng ngwythien Old Coal. Roeddwn i'n defnyddio peiriant torri glo ac roedd y to wedi'i gynnal â chynhalbyst hydrolog Dowty a barrau estynedig. Ar ôl i'r torrwr dorri'r glo, byddai un dyn yn gosod y barrau estynedig i ddal y to a dyn arall yn gosod yr allwedd i ddal y bar yn ei le. Roeddem yn defnyddio 'gwithwyr' hydrolog i wthio'r cludydd cadwyn ('Panzer') drosodd ar ôl i'r torrwr fynd heibio. Roedd dau ddyn yn gofalu am bob darn 22 llath o'r ffas lo. Roedd hi'n llawer haws na gweithio yn y Garn, gan fod gwythien Old Coal tua phum troedfedd o uchder ar gyfartaledd.

Roedd yna awyrgylch dda yn Big Pit - ond roedd y Garn yn well! Fodd bynnag, gadewais Big Pit er mwyn mynd i weithio yn ffatri'r Royal Ordnance, Glasgoed, oherwydd bod y sifft bnawn yn amharu â'm gemau dartiau. Ond ar ôl sylweddoli fy mod i'n gweithio oriau hirach yn y Glasgoed i ennill yr un faint o arian ag y byddwn yn ei gael yn Big Pit, penderfynais ddychwelyd i'r lofa. Roedd fy niwrnod cyntaf yn ôl mor galed, nes 'mod i'n cael trafferth cerdded ar ddiwedd y sifft. Es ymlaen i ddatblygu hedins, a chyn hir, roeddwn i'n gweithio cymaint o oramser ag y gwnes i yn y Glasgoed.

Roeddwn i'n giamstar ar sleifio o'r pwll yn gynnar, yn enwedig ar ddydd Gwener i chwarae dartiau. Arferwn i fynd drwy'r River Arch i Forgeside, yna cerdded i'r baddondai. Os oeddech chi'n cael eich dal, yna dirwy amdani, gyda'r arian yn mynd i'r ysybyty.

Pan gaeodd Big Pit ym 1980, cefais fy symud i lofa Blaenserchan. Wrth gario peiriant turio glo un diwrnod, llithrais ar fy nghefn ac fe'm hanfonwyd i Ysbyty Neville Hall. A dyna ddiwedd ar fy ngyrfa fel glöwr. Bues i'n gweithio yn y pyllau am ryw ddeuddeg mlynedd i gyd. Er nad oedd pob diwrnod yn fêl i gyd, fe wnes i fwynhau ar y cyfan, a fyddwn i ddim yn newid fy mywyd.

Reg Griffiths

Pity about the horse!

I was born in April 1941 in Blaenafon. My father and both grandfathers all worked in Garn Drift which was a lovely little colliery, a family colliery – in fact at one time there were four Reg Griffiths working there! I started work in 1956 at fifteen years old. I did my initial training at Oakdale Training Centre and then I went back to Garn Drift to work on the screens where I stayed for two and a half years. It was slave labour on the screens and also a bit boring. Because I was one of the biggest I was the one who had to break all the big lumps with a sledge. It was also very dirty and dusty and really cold in the winter – the only heating was a small stove in the cabin where we had food.

When I went underground I was salvaging with a guy called Nattie Rudge who was coming to the end of his working days. We were salvaging old headings, pulling the roof supports out and so on, it was very heavy work. We had a horse who used to play up. On the third week I was leading him when he bolted. I had hold of his harness and was trying to pull the stop wire to stop the haulage engine because it was pulling a journey of drams up the heading. Unfortunately the horse broke free and I couldn't pull the wire in time so he ran smack into the journey and was killed. The under manager, Owen Parsons came in and said "Pity about the horse" – he wasn't worried about me – "Make sure you save the tack." The dead horse was lifted up into an empty dram with his legs sticking up in the air and sent up the pit.

I stayed with salvaging for about nine months. Then I learnt not to swear – because they put me with my father in the face driveage as his trainee. From there I had to do so many weeks training on the actual coal face. The chap I was working with broke his arm and I took over his stent (*work place*) although I was really too young to work it – but by the time they found out I was old enough! I was

working on the Garw No.6 seam which where I was working was only about one foot ten inches in height.

I worked on the coal face until Garn Drift shut down in 1966. I went to work on a mechanised face at Big Pit in the Old Coal seam. There was a coal cutting machine cutting the coal and the roof was supported by hydraulic Dowty props and extension bars. One man put on extension bars to hold the roof after the cutter had cut the coal and the other put the keys in which held the bar in place. We used hydraulic 'pushers' to push the chain conveyor ('Panzer') over after the cutter had passed by. There were two men looking after each twenty two yards of coal face. It was a lot easier than working in Garn Drift, the Old Coal seam was an average of five feet in height.

There was a good atmosphere at Big Pit – but Garn Drift was better! However I finished at Big Pit to work in the ordinance factory in Glascoed because afternoon shifts interfered with my darts. I found that I had to work longer hours in Glascoed to make up the money that I had earned in Big Pit, so I started back in Big Pit. I found the first day back so hard that I had a job to walk out at the end of the shift. I went on development headings and was soon working as much overtime as I had in Glascoed.

I was an expert at sneaking out of the pit early, especially on a Friday to play darts. I used to go through the River Arch to Forgeside then walk to the baths. If you were caught you were fined and the money given to the hospital.

When Big Pit was closing in 1980 I transferred to Blaenserchen Colliery. One day I was carrying a coal boring machine in and slipped and put my back out and I was sent to Neville Hall Hospital. Because of this I finished my mining career. I spent about twelve years in the pits, when I look back they weren't always the best days of my life but I enjoyed it overall and I wouldn't change my life.

Reg Griffiths



Reg Griffiths

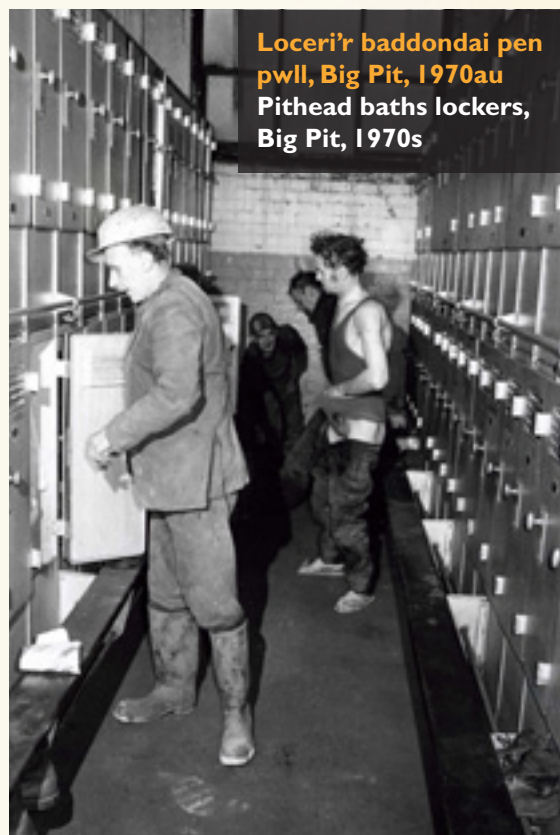
Fel gweithio dan gawod!

Fe'm ganed ym mis Gorffennaf 1942, ac rwy'n dal i fyw yn yr un tŷ ym Mlaenafon heddiw. Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed, a phan ddes i adref, cefais lythyr gan y Bwrdd Glo yn cynnig lle i mi yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Oakdale.

Roedden nhw'n dysgu'r hanfodion i ni yn Oakdale, a oedd yn cynnwys lefelydd danddaear ffug. Byddem yn gorfod creu 'paciau' i gynnal y to ac yn cael gwersi iechyd a diogelwch yn y dosbarth. Darparwyd esgidiau, padiau pengliniau a hetiau ar ein cyfer, a dangoswyd ffilmiau ac ati i ni. Cawsom ein hanfon ar 'ymweliadau pwll' i'r lofa yn Oakdale hefyd.

Wedi'r hyfforddiant cychwynnol, fe'm hanfonwyd i Big Pit a bues i'n gweithio ar y wyneb tan i mi droi'n 17 oed. Cefais sawl tasg wahanol ar y wyneb – gweithio ar y sgriniau, yn yr iard goed, llwytho'r cyflenwadau ac ati. Yna, cefais weddill yr hyfforddiant i lawr y pwll. Roedd y ffas hyfforddi yn dipyn mwy hamddenol na'r ffas cynhyrchu glo: roeddem yn dal i gynhyrchu glo, ond dim llawer – roedd hi'n cymryd pythefnos i ni glirio ffas! Byddai'r glowyr dan hyfforddiant yn cael eu goruchwyllo gan ddynion oedd heb ddigon o anadl i glirio stent.

Es i ddim i weithio ar ffas lo gynhyrchu ar ôl cwblhau hyfforddiant. Roedd y coliers yn ennill tua phum punt yr wythnos ar y ffas lo, ond roedd gwaith hedins yn talu dwywaith hynny, felly cefais waith gyda'r tîm datblygu. Dywedwyd wrthyf am ddod â dwy set o ddillad, un amdanaf a'r lleill mewn bag. Roedd yn union fel gweithio dan gawod, roeddem ni'n wlyb at ein croen drwy'r amser, ond mater o 'mewn a mas' oedd hi - clirio'r baw, gosod y dolenni ac ati, newid eich dillad a cherdded allan. Wrth ddychwelyd at eich locer yn y baddondai'r diwrnod canlynol, byddai'ch dillad yn ddigon stiff i sefyll ar eu pen eu hunain! Roedd yn waith caled; prin y gallwn i sefyll ar ôl cyrraedd adref. Cefais fedydd tân, a phenderfynais ymddiswyddo ond cynigiwyd swydd yn y storfa i mi am y tro.



Loceri'r baddondai pen pwll, Big Pit, 1970au
Pithead baths lockers, Big Pit, 1970s

Es yn ôl i'r hedins yn ddiweddarach, ond roedd yna awyrgylch fwy hamddenol yno'r tro hwn a dechreuais ddod i arfer â'r gwaith yn well. Roeddwn i'n rhan o'r tîm a oedd yn turio'r hedin o Big Pit i Kay's Slope. Pan lwyddwyd i gysylltu'r ddau bwl o'r diwedd, byddem yn cerdded allan drwy ochr Kay's Slope ac yn cerdded yn ôl i Big Pit ar y wyneb.

Un noson, torrodd y rhaff halio ac aeth un o'r dramiau drosod i. Dyna lle'r oeddwn i'n sgrechian gweiddi o dan y dram, ond fe lwyddon nhw i'm rhyddhau i, a bues i ffwrdd o'r gwaith am ddeufis. Ar ôl hynny, dychwelais danddaear i drin yr hedin ar y wyneb aredig cyntaf yn Big Pit a oedd yn beryg bywyd, a'r to yn uffernol. Un diwrnod, cwmpodd darn o'r to arnaf – roeddwn wedi cael llond bol a phenderfynais roi'r gorau iddi yn y lofa. Cefais swydd yn ffatri'r Royal Ordnance, Glasgoed, ac yno bues i am 30 mlynedd.

Denis Ford

Like working under a shower!

I was born in July 1942 in the same house in Blaenafon that I live in now. I left school at fifteen and when I got home there was a letter from the National Coal Board offering me a training place at Oakdale Training Centre. At Oakdale we were taught the basics. There was a mock up of underground workings in the training centre and we had to build packs and so on, then we had safety and first aid lessons in the classroom. We were kitted out with boots, kneepads and helmets and they showed us films and so on. We were also sent on 'pit visits' to Oakdale Colliery itself.

After the initial training I went to Big Pit and worked on the surface until I was seventeen. I did a variety of surface jobs - I worked on the screens, in the timber yard, I loaded supplies and so on. Then I did the rest of my training down the pit. The training face was worked at a slower pace than a production coal face: we still produced coal, but not much - it took us about a fortnight to clear a face! The trainees were supervised by men who hadn't got enough puff to clear a stent.

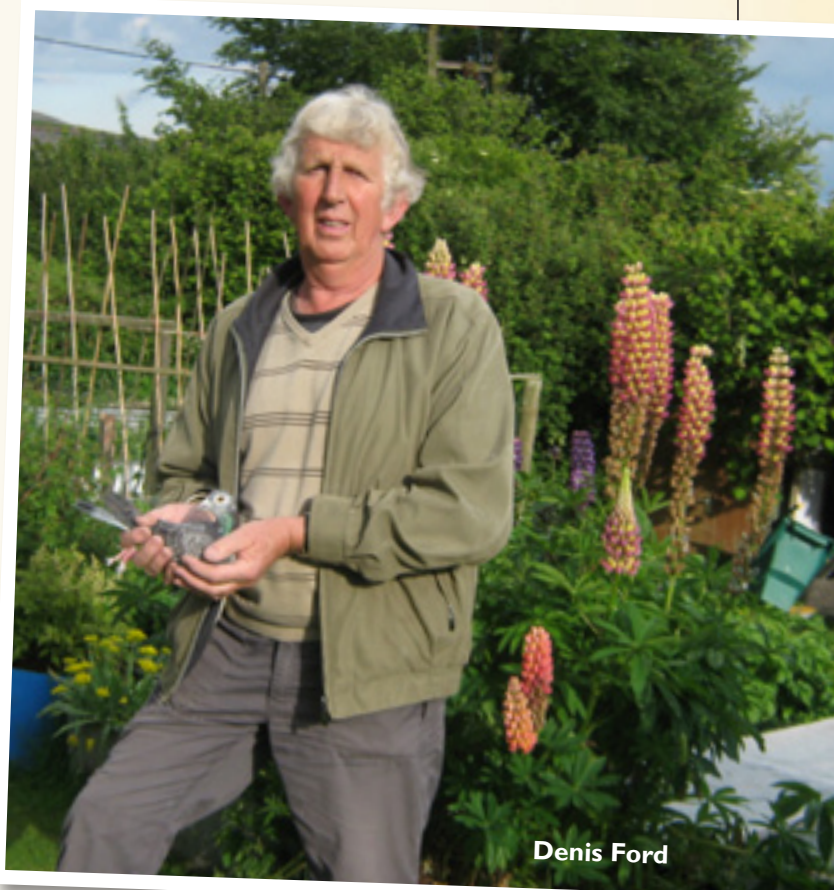
When I finished training I didn't go on to a production coal face. The colliers were getting about five pound a week on a coal face but heading work paid double that so I got a job on development. I was told to bring two sets of clothes, one on your back and one in your bag. It was like working under a shower, we were soaking all the time, but it was a 'job and out' clear the muck, put your rings up etc. then change clothes completely and walk out. When you got back to your locker in the baths next day your clothes would stand up on their own. It was hard work; I could hardly stand up when I got home. I had been thrown in at the deep end and I decided to hand in my notice but was offered a job in the stores for a while.

I later started back in the headings but it was more laid back this time and I got used to the

work a bit more. I was on the team that drove the heading from Big Pit to Kays Slope. When we eventually joined the two pits together we used to walk out through the Kays Slope side and walk back to Big Pit on the surface.

One night the haulage rope broke on the drams and a dram ended up on top of me. I was underneath the dram screaming and they got it off me but I was off work for two months. I went back underground and worked on the heading on the first plough face in Big Pit - it was a death trap, the roof was terrible. One day some of the roof came down on me and I had enough and finished in the colliery. I got a job in the Royal Ordnance Factory in Glascoed and stayed there for about thirty years.

Denis Ford



Denis Ford

Mynd fel io-io!

Cefais fy ngeni yng Nghasnewydd ym 1927 a gadewais yr ysgol ym 1941. Ymunais â chwmni Uskside Engineering ar brentisiaeth. Gwaith haearn o'r enw Uskside Foundry oedd yno'n wreiddiol, a bu John Hughes yn gweithio yno yn y 1840au cyn mynd ymlaen i sefydlu gwaith haearn a dinas o'r enw Hughesovka (*Donetsk*) yn Ukrain. Roedd cwmni Uskside yn gwneud pob math o waith peirianeg – glofaol, llongau a pheirianeg gyffredinol.

Ar ôl pum mlynedd, roeddwn i'n grefftwr. Bues i'n gwneud pob math o waith llongau, mewn gweithfeydd dur a gwaith cyffredinol yn ogystal ag injans halio glofaol, injans weindio, cludfeltiau danddaear ac ati. Roeddem ni'n cynhyrchu gynnu a darnau ar gyfer tanciau ac awyrennau yn ystod y rhyfel; roedd cannoedd yn gweithio yno, gan gynnwys merched. Dyna lle cwrddais i â'm darpar wraig, a oedd yn deipdydd llaw-fer.

Roeddwn i newydd orffen gosod injan weindio yn Midsomer Norton ym 1951, pan gawsom contract i osod injan weindio drydan yn lle'r un stêm yn Big Pit. Roedd gwely'r injan stêm wedi hollti ac yn sgrytian i'w seiliau, ac felly roedd yn gryn argyfwng. Fel arfer, byddem yn adeiladu'r injan yn ein gweithdy yng Nghasnewydd ond gan fod tipyn o frys y tro hwn, adeiladwyd yr injan ar safle Big Pit. Parhawyd i ddefnyddio'r hen injan weindio, a chafodd y tŷ weindio newydd ei godi y tu ôl iddi. Injan stêm gyda rhaff weindio fflat oedd yr hen injan - yr olaf o'i bath yn y wlad, mwy na thebyg. Rhaff gron oedd yr un newydd, gan ei bod yn rhy ddrud i osod rhaff fflat newydd. Roeddech chi'n gallu stopio'r hen injan weindio stêm drwy ei rhoi yn y gêr ôl, ond doedd dim modd gwneud hynny gydag injan drydan, felly roedd yn wahanol iawn. Roedd dynion weindio Big Pit yn weddol oeddrannus a heb arfer â defnyddio injan weindio drydan, felly cawsant eu disodli gan yrwyr injans halio danddaear a oedd yn gyfarwydd ag injans trydan.

Pan ddechreuodd y gwaith, sylweddolais mai U814 oedd rhif yr injan ac rwy'n cofio dweud

ei fod yn arwydd drwg gan ei fod yn creu cyfanswm o dri ar ddeg. A wir i chi, cawsom drafferthion di-ri gyda'r injan newydd wedyn yn enwedig y system frecio. Ar ôl i ni orffen gosod yr injan, cefais fy ngalw draw i Big Pit un noson i ail-leinio'r brecio gan fod y leinin wedi rhwygo'n llwyr. Mewn gwirionedd, cawsom fwy o ffwdan gyda'r injan honno nag unrhyw un arall a osodwyd gennym.

Roedd y tywydd ym Mlaenafon yn ofnadwy bob amser. Ces fy nal gan yr eira un noson! Y broblem oedd ein bod ni wedi gorfod rhoi'r injan at ei gilydd yn Big Pit, yn hytrach nag yn y gweithdy ac felly heb gael amser i brofi'r holl ddarnau'n iawn. Problem arall oedd y ffaith fod y dynion yn credu bod rhaffau fflat yr hen injan weindio yn saffach a bod y rhaff gron newydd yn debyg i gortyn – *“Those Uskside engineers have built us an engine which is like a yo-yo!”*

Wrth i ni adeiladu'r injan, rwy'n cofio Mr Edmunds, peiriannydd grŵp yr NCB yn dod i roi cerydd os oeddem ni ar ei hôl hi. Doedd e byth yn gwenu, ond rwy'n cofio'i edmygu fe am fod mor surbwch. Dywedodd ei fod eisiau i'r gardiau fod yn ddigon uchel er mwyn sicrhau na fyddai hyd yn oed y dyn mwyaf dwl yn gallu'i chyrraedd. Da o beth oedd hynny gyda chymaint o gryts ar y safle! Mae'n beth rhyfedd, ond bues i hefyd yn gosod yr injan weindio siafft aer yng nglofa Lewis Merthyr, sydd bellach yn amgueddfa lofaol. Tan heddiw, mae'n siŵr mai 1953 oedd y tro diwethaf i mi weld Big Pit ac rwyf wrth fy modd fod yr injan yn dal ar waith.

Tony Westwood

Tony Westwood a Peter Richings, llywiwr injan weindio Big Pit, 2012
Tony Westwood and Big Pit winding engine driver Peter Richings, Big Pit, 2012



Like a yo-yo!

I was born in April 1927 in Newport and left school in 1941. I went to Uskside Engineering to serve an apprenticeship. Uskside began originally as an ironworks called Uskside Foundry and was where John Hughes worked in the 1840s before founding an ironworks and city in the Ukraine called Hughesovka (Donetsk). Uskside did all sorts of engineering - mining, shipping and general.

After five years I became a tradesman and worked on all sorts of shipping work, in steelworks and general work as well as on colliery haulage engines, winding engines, underground conveyors and so on. During the war we made guns, tank and aeroplane parts; there were hundreds of people working there including girls. I met my future wife working as a shorthand typist.

I had just finished installing a winding engine in Midsomer Norton in 1951 when we had the contract to replace the steam winding engine at Big Pit with a new electric one. The old machine had a cracked engine bed and was 'shaking itself to bits' so it was an emergency. Our usual practice was to build an engine in our workshops in Newport but, because it was an emergency we built it on site at Big Pit. The old winding engine was kept in use and a new winding house was built behind it. The old winding engine was a steam one with a flat winding rope - which was probably the last of its type in the country. The new rope was to be a round one as replacing a flat rope was

expensive. With a steam winding engine you can stop the engine by putting it in reverse but you couldn't do that with an electric engine, so it was very different, the winding men at Big Pit were quite elderly and not used to electric winding so they were replaced by underground haulage engine drivers who were used to electric engines.

When the job started I noticed that the engine number was U814 and I remember saying that it was a bad omen as it added up to thirteen. Sure enough we had a lot of trouble with the new engine especially with the braking system. After the engine was put in I was called out one night to go to Big Pit to re-line the brakes as the lining had been completely ripped off. In fact we had more trouble with that winding engine than any other that we put in.

The weather in Blaenafon was always terrible, one night I got snowed in! The problem with the engine was because it had been built on site rather than in the workshop and we didn't have the time to test all the parts properly. Another problem was that the men thought that the old flat winding rope was safer and the new round rope was like being wound up by string - "Those Uskside engineers have built us an engine which is like a yo-yo!"

When we were building the engine I remember Mr Edmunds the NCB group engineer coming in to give us a row if the work went behind, he never used to smile but I used to admire him for his gruffness. He told us that he wanted the guards to be high because "I want to make sure that even the most stupid man can't get into it." That was good for these days when they have so many kids on site! It's a funny thing but I was also on the installation of the downcast winding engine at Lewis Merthyr Colliery which is now also a mining museum. Until today, the last time I saw Big Pit was probably in 1953 and I'm delighted that the engine is still going strong.

Tony Westwood



Y mae'r Arglwydd gyda mi!

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1940 yn Wayne Street, Blaenafon, cartref fy nhad a 'nhad-cu. Mae fy mrawd Brian yn dal i fyw yno heddiw. Gof yn Big Pit oedd Israel Jones fy nhad-cu. Roedd fy nhad, Evan Jones, yn gwthio'r tybiau glo ar hyd y llwybrau danddaear cyn ei ben-blwydd yn 13 oed, cyn mynd ymlaen i fod yn halier yn Big Pit a glofa ddrifft y Garn. Bu'n rhaid iddo weithio ar y sgriniau wedyn, ar ôl colli un llygad wedi i ddarn o rwd fynd iddi. Daliodd ati tan ei fod yn 67 oed, pan gafodd ei orfodi i roi'r gorau iddi ar ôl i ni losgi ei ddillad gwaith!

Dechreuais weithio ar y sgriniau yn y Garn ym 1955, ac ym 1956, cefais hyfforddiant yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Oakdale ac Ysgol Dechnegol Abertyleri. Roeddwn i'n gweithio danddaear yn y Garn gyda Herbert Webley ('Our Dob'), yn helpu i ehangu ffordd aer. Roedd yn foi undeb mawr, ac mewn cyfarfodydd o hyd ac o hyd. Pan gafodd Herbert swydd yn ôl ar y ffas lo, cefais swydd atgyweirio gyda William Cornfield a gollodd ran o'i droed mewn damwain gyda thorrrwr glo. Gan na allai gropian i fyny'r ffasys glo mwyach, cafodd waith yn trwsio a newid ategion dolenni dur ar ffyrdd coed. 'Buller roads' oedd enw'r ffyrdd hyn yn y Garn, gan mai dyma lle'r oedd y coed a'r pren yn cael eu tynnu i mewn.

Roeddwn i'n gweithio ym mhen pella'r llwybr gyda'r bachan hwn un diwrnod, a dywedais wrtho y byddai'n well i ni osod postyn pren arall, ond atebodd "Na, mae'r Arglwydd gyda mi", ond pan dynnodd yr hen ddolenni fe gwmpodd y to cyfan. Buon ni'n rhawio baw am wythnos wedyn – Haydn Southcott, Apostolwr pybyr, oedd e.

Bues i'n atgyweirio nes troi'n un ar hugain, yna cefais hyfforddiant ar y ffas lo gyda dyn o'r enw 'Sis' Rowell. Yna, bu'n rhaid i mi fynd i weithio'n symud cludfeltiau'r ffas lo ymlaen am ryw bum mlynedd, yn y prynhawn a'r nos

yn bennaf. Y sifft nos oedd orau, oherwydd fy niddordeb mewn colomennod, yr wyf wedi'u cadw ers yn 7 oed. Roedd gan y Bwrdd Glo dlws arbennig ar gyfer colomennod, a'r North Road Federation, fy nghlwb i, oedd yr enillydd cyntaf ym 1958.

Symudais i Big Pit tua 1963 i weithio ar y ffasys glo 'llwytho â phŵer', lle y defnyddiwyd torrwr disg i dorri'r glo. Roeddwn i'n gwthio'r cludfelt ac yn cynnal y to â barrau dur 'Schlom' wedi'u cynnal â physt hydrolog Dowty. Ni oedd un o'r pyllau cyntaf i dorri glo fesul tair sifft, ac roeddwn i'n gosod barrau a chynhalbyst ar hyd 66 llath o'r ffas. Er hynny, dim ond cyflog labrwr oeddwn i'n ei gael gan nad oeddem yn torri digon o lo. Cael ein talu yn ôl faint o lo a gynhyrchwyd oedden ni, waeth pa mor galed oeddech chi'n gweithio. Felly, penderfynais roi'r gorau iddi ym 1966.

Es i weithio i gwmni Semtex (*ffatri ym Mryn-mawr a oedd yn cynhyrchu teils asbestos feinyll*), ond mater o neidio o'r ffrimpan i'r tân oedd hi, oherwydd mae gennyf greithiau ar fy ysgyfaint byth ers hynny, diolch i'r asbestos. Dychwelais i Big Pit ar ôl i Semtex gau ym 1982.

Roedden nhw wrthi'n troi Big Pit yn amgueddfa, ac roeddwn i a Ray Palmer wedi ein cyflogi i baratoi'r lefelydd danddaear ar gyfer yr ymwelwyr. Rhaid oedd symud popeth gyda berfa, ac roeddwn i'n mwynhau'r gwaith; arferwn fynd ag ymwelwyr am dro ar y wyneb hefyd cyn i'r amgueddfa gael ei hagog yn swyddogol.

Ar ôl cael ein diswyddo ym 1987, es i weithio i Croxton a Cory am ychydig flynyddoedd cyn gorfod cael llawdriniaeth oherwydd y creithiau ar fy ysgyfaint. Symudwyd fi i wneud gwaith ysgafnach wedyn, cyn ymddeol oherwydd gwaeledd ym 1995.

David John Jones

The Lord is with me!

I was born in 1940 in Wayne Street, Blaenafon, where my grandfather and father lived and my brother Brian still lives. My grandfather was Israel Jones, a blacksmith at Big Pit. My father, Evan Jones, started at Big Pit just before his thirteenth birthday pushing tubs around the roadways underground and later become a haulier at both Big Pit and Garn Drift. He finished up working on the screens after losing his eye when a piece of rust went into it. He worked on the screens until he was sixty seven – and he only stopped then because we burned his working clothes!

I started work in Garn Drift in 1955 on the screens and, in 1956, went down to Oakdale training centre and Abertillery Technical School for mining training. I worked underground at Garn drift with Herbert Webley ('Our Dob') enlarging an airway. He was a union man and always in meetings. When Herbert got a job back on the coal face I got a job repairing with William Cornfield who had had an accident with a coal cutter and had lost part of his foot. Because he couldn't crawl up coal faces any more he went repairing (*changing steel 'ring' supports*) in a timber road. In Garn Drift timber roads were known as 'buller roads' because the timber was 'pulled in'.

I worked with a chap on a back holt and one day I said to him that we had better put another timber in and he said "No, the Lord is with me" but when we pulled the old rings out the whole

roof came down and we were shifting muck for a week – he was Haydn Southcott a big Apostolic.

I was repairing until I was twenty one then did my face training with a chap called 'Sis' Rowell. I then had to go 'flitting' (*moving face conveyors forward*) for about five years mostly on nights and afternoons. I preferred night shifts because of my pigeons which I have kept since I was about seven. The National Coal Board actually had a trophy for pigeons and my club, the North Road Federation, were the first to win it in 1958.

I came to Big Pit in about 1963 to work on 'power loading' coal faces where the coal was cut with a disc cutter. I was on pushing the conveyor and propping the roof with 'Schlom' steel bars held up with Dowty hydraulic props. We were one of the first pits to cut coal on three shifts and I was propping and barring sixty six yards of face, but only being paid labouring wages as we weren't cutting enough coal and we were only being paid for the coal produced no matter how hard you actually worked - so I finished in 1966.

I then went to work in Semtex (*a factory in Brynmawr which made vinyl asbestos tiles*) but it was out of the frying pan into the fire because I have scarring on my lungs from the asbestos, which I still suffer from. Semtex closed in 1982 and I came back again to Big Pit.

They were making Big Pit into a museum and Ray Palmer and I were employed to prepare the underground workings for visitors. Everything had to be moved by wheelbarrow, I enjoyed the work; I even used to take visitors around on a surface tour before it became officially opened as a museum.

We were laid off in 1987 and I went to work for Croxton and Cory for a few years until I had to have an operation for scarring of the lungs after which they gave me a light job until I retired on ill health in 1995.

David John Jones



Dai Jones

Glöwr fel fy nhad

Cefais fy ngeni yn Abertyleri ym mis Hydref 1946. Bu farw fy mam pan oeddwn i'n flwydd oed, a gan fy mod i'n un o bedwar o blant, es i fyw at fy modryb yn Llanelli Hill hyd nes y priodais a symud i Forgeside lle'r wy'n dal i fyw hyd heddiw.

Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed, ac es i weithio yng nghloddfa ddrifft y Garn Drift/Kay's Slope lle cefais hyfforddiant sylfaenol ar ôl 16 wythnos yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Oakdale. Roeddwn i'n brentis colier ar y ffas lo yn y Garn. Roedd gennym stent (*man gweithio*) deg llath o lo ac roeddwn i'n helpu'r colier i lwytho'r glo ar gludfelt 'jiger'. Nid oedd yn swnllyd iawn pan oedd yn llawn glo, ond pan oedd yn wag, roedd yn ddigon i godi ofn ar fachgen ifanc!

Ar ôl i gloddfa ddrifft y Garn gau ym 1963, cefais fy nhrosglwyddo i Big Pit. Er fy mod i'n golier profiadol erbyn hynny, roeddwn i'n dal i orfod llenwi'r bwlch pan oedd rhywun yn absennol hyd nes y cefais fy stent fy hun yn ugain oed. Ffas 'gonfensiynol' oedd hi bryd hynny (*heb ei mecaneiddio'n llawn*) ac unwaith eto, roedd fy stent tua deg llath o hyd, a oedd yn gyffredin yng ngwythïen Garw, a dim ond dwy droedfedd tair modfedd o uchder. Roeddech chi'n gorfod tynnu'ch belt i ffwrdd a'i daflu i'r ffas o'ch blaen wrth i chi gropian. Fodd bynnag, roedd hynny fymryn yn uwch na'r Garn.

Dechreuais weithio fel taniwr ym 1972, ac ym 1976, cafodd hanner gweithlu Big Pit a minnau yn ein plith, ein trosglwyddo i Flaenserchan a glofeydd eraill – a'r gweithlu cyfan wedyn pan gaeodd Big Pit ym 1980. Roedd Blaenserchan yn ddieithr iawn i mi i ddechrau, ond wedi ychydig fisoedd, roeddwn i'n gyfarwydd â'r dynion ac wedi dod i arfer â'r lle. Bues i yno tan 1986, ac yna rhoi'r gorau i'r pyllau am flwyddyn neu ddwy. Yna, ym 1989, cynigiais am swydd dirprwy yng nghloddfa ddrifft Blaentyleri lle'r oeddwn i'n gweithio fel tasgmon ond yn cyflawni dyletswyddau diogelwch y dirprwy hefyd. Hen le peryglus, llychlyd a gwlyb oedd Blaentyleri, felly yn 2001 cynigiais am swydd yn Big Pit – ac rwy'n dywysydd yno byth

ers hynny. Er i mi ymddeol yn 2011, rwy'n dal i weithio'n rhan-amser ac felly'n rhan o'r diwydiant ers hanner canrif.

Bod yn löwr fel fy nhad oedd fy mryd pan oeddwn i yn yr ysgol. Roedd gennyf barchedig ofn tuag ato pan ddoi adref o'r pwll yn ddu i gyd, a dwi'n difaru dim. Mae Big Pit yn fy nhref i, ac roeddwn i'n adnabod y dynion yn y gwaith, yn cymdeithasu â nhw, chwarae dartiau a chefnogi'r tîm rygbi lleol. Roeddwn i'n byw bum munud o'r pwll.

Y tro cyntaf y defnyddiais i faddondai Big Pit, es i'r pen pellaf a gweld stôl bren yn un o'r ciwbiclau. Deallais wedyn ei bod yno er mwyn i bobl a oedd wedi colli'u coesau gael cawod – anabl neu beidio, byddai'r NCB yn siŵr o ffeindio gwaith i chi. Rwy'n cofio un rheolwr arbennig yn Big Pit oedd yn codi ofn ar bawb. Pan adawodd e, roedd pawb yn falch tu hwnt, ond pan gawsom ein trosglwyddo i Flaenserchan, daeth i'r fei yn fan'ny hefyd! Cofiwch chi, os oedd unrhyw beth yn eich poeni, byddai bob amser yn iawn gyda chi.

Rwy'n cofio 'nhad yn colli'i swydd mewn pwll preifat a gwneud cais i weithio yn Big Pit. Dechreuodd ym 1969 neu 1970, a gan ein bod ni'n brin o ddynion, cafodd stent ar y ffas lo. Roeddwn i'n pryderu y byddai'r gwaith yn ormod iddo, ac eisiau ei helpu. Serch hynny, dywedodd y dirprwy wrthyf "Paid â becco, ma' dy dad wedi cwpla'i stent eisoes". Roedd e dros ei hanner cant ar y pryd, ac yn llawer mwy profiadol na mi. Doedd e ddim yn hoffi gwythïen Garw, serch hynny, gan fod y nenfwd isel yn ddrwg i'w bengliniau.

Pan gaeodd Big Pit, fe gaeodd y dref hefyd, a chafodd y siopau eu bordio fesul tipyn. Y peth gorau ddigwyddodd oedd ailagor Big Pit fel amgueddfa ym 1983. Ddeng mlynedd ar hugain yn ddiweddarach, maen bleser gweld y siopau ar agor eto nid yn unig oherwydd yr amgueddfa ond hefyd yn sgil y diddordeb yn Safle Treftadaeth y Byd.

John Perrett

A miner like my dad

I was born in Abertillery in April 1946. Due to the fact that my father died when I was one year old and I was one of four children, I went to live with my aunty in Llanelly Hill where I lived until I married and moved to my present home in Forgeside.

I left school at fifteen and got a job at the Garn Drift/Kay Slope complex where I did my basic training following sixteen weeks at Oakdale Training Centre. In Garn Drift I went to work as a collier's apprentice on the coal face. We had a *stent* (*working place*) of ten yards of coal and I helped the collier load coal onto a 'jigger' conveyor. It wasn't very noisy when it was full of coal but when it was empty it was noisy enough to frighten a young boy!

Garn Drift closed in 1963 and I transferred to Big Pit. By then I was a fully fledged collier but I had to go 'floating' (*filling in when someone was missing*) until I was twenty when I got my own stent. The face was still a 'conventional one' (*not fully mechanised*) and my stent was again ten yards long, which was usual in the Garw Seam, but the height was about two foot three and you had to take your belt off and throw it up the face in front of you as you crawled up the face. However, that was still higher than it had been in Garn Drift.

I became a shotsman in 1972 and in 1976 half of the Big Pit workforce, including myself, transferred to Blaenserchen and other collieries - followed in 1980 by the entire workforce

when Big Pit shut down. Blaenserchen was very alien to me at first but after a couple of months I got to know the chaps and I got used to it. I stopped in Blaenserchen until 1986 and finished in the pits for a year or two, then, in 1989 I applied for a job in Blaentillery Drift Mine as a 'working deputy' where I was a workman

but carrying out a deputy's safety duties as well. Blaentillery was dangerous, dusty and wet, so in 2001 I applied for a job in Big Pit and have been a guide here since then. Although I retired in 2011 I'm still 'on the pool' (working part time) so I've been in the industry for fifty years.

When I was in school I wanted to be a miner like my dad, I was always in awe of him coming home all black, and I don't regret a minute of my life. Big Pit is in my town and I knew the men I worked with, I socialised with them, played darts with them and followed the local rugby team. I only lived five minutes from the pit.

When I first used the baths at Big Pit I went down the bottom of the baths and saw a wooden stool in one of the cubicles. I discovered that it was so amputees could have a shower - even if you were disabled the NCB would find you work. I remember a manager at Big Pit who everyone was frightened to death of. When he left Big Pit we all thought "Hip, hip, hooray", but when we transferred to Blaenserchen he turned up there! However, if you had a real problem he'd always be OK with you.

I remember my father losing his job in a private mine and applying for a job in Big Pit. He started in 1969 or 1970 and because we were short of men he got a stent on the coal face. I was very concerned that the work would be too much for him and wanted to give him a hand. However, the deputy told me "Don't worry, your dad has already finished his stent", he was fifty odd then but he had much more experience than me. He didn't like the Garw seam though as the low height was bad for his knees.

When Big Pit shut the town shut, things changed, shops were boarded up. The best thing was when Big Pit re-opened as a museum in 1983. Thirty years later it's a pleasure to see shops opened up again not only because of the museum but also because of the interest in the World Heritage Site.

John Perrett



John Perrett

Byddi di'n joio

Ganwyd fi yn Forgeside ym mis Mehefin 1946, ond bu fy nhad-cu'n byw yn Big Pit ei hun – ym Mythynnod Tomen Coety tu ôl i'r baddondai pen pwll. Pan adewais i'r ysgol ym 1962, es i weithio fel prentis mecanig ceir mewn garej, ond yn anffodus aeth y busnes i'r wal, felly fe ddes i Big Pit. Dechreuais trwy weithio ar y wyneb, yn llwytho cyflenwadau i fynd i lawr y pwll, a phan oeddwn i'n 18 oed, cefais fynd danddaear i weithio ar y ffas lo gyda cholier o'r enw Trevor Jones. Bues i'n was colier am dri mis, ac yna'n cyflenwi dros bobl eraill hyd nes y cefais fy 'stent' fy hun. Roedd yn mesur naw llathen wrth bedair troedfedd, a fi oedd yn gyfrifol am glirio'r glo a gosod y pyst i ddal y to.

Felly buodd hi tan 1966, pan ddechreuwyd defnyddio peiriant torri glo yn Big Pit a gosod torrwr disg yng ngwythïen Old Coal. Bues i yno am ryw naw mis cyn mynd i weithio i wythïen Garw lle'r oedd ganddyn nhw aradr lo, a'r to wedi'i gynnal gan farrau 'Scholm' a chynhalbyst hydrolig 'Dowty'. Roedd yn llawer haws gweithio ar y ffas lo fecaneiddiedig nag ar y ffasy glo hŷn 'confensiynol', gan eich bod bellach yn rhan o dîm yn hytrach na gweithio ar eich liwt eich hun mewn 'stent'.

Bues i'n gweithio ar y ffas aradr tan 1977, pan es i ar gwrs Dirprwy i fod yn swyddog glofa. Gallwn weld dyfodol gwell fel Dirprwy, a mwy o sicrwydd i'm teulu. Roedd misoedd cynta'r cwrs yn ddwys iawn, ond dechreuais fwynhau ar ôl dod i arfer ag ef. Treuliais dair wythnos yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Britannia, yn dysgu am reoliadau tanio ffrwydro a mwyngloddio, ac yna chwe mis ar gwrs Dirprwy yng Ngholeg Cross Keys. Wedyn, cefais dair wythnos o hyfforddiant ymarferol yng nglofa Roseheyworth cyn dychwelyd i Big Pit fel Dirprwy tan i'r pwll gau ym 1980. Es i lofa Blaenserchan wedyn tan 1985, a glofa'r Marine tan iddi gau ym 1989.

Pan gaeodd y Marine, gadewais y diwydiant glo'n gyfan gwbl a mynd i weithio mewn swyddfa yng nghanolfan ddosbarthu Tesco.

Ar ôl tair blynedd ar ddeg yno, dychwelais i Big Pit yn 2004. Roeddwn i wedi clywed bod swydd ar gael, a dywedodd Graham Gratton, peiriannydd Big Pit, wrtha i, 'Byddi di'n joio'. Er bod hynny'n golygu llai o gyflog, roedd yr oriau gwaith yn dda a dim gwaith teithio. Rwy'n mwynhau gweithio yn Big Pit, rydych chi'n cael sgwrsio gyda'r cyhoedd, yn rhoi gwybodaeth iddyn nhw, adrodd eich hanes chi a hanes y diwydiant glo. Rwyf wedi gwneud sawl swydd yma ers hynny, fel cynnal a chadw, dirprwy, bancsmon a thywys ymwelwyr ar ben y pwll a danddaear.

Roedd Graham yn llygad ei le. Rwy'n joio mas draw!

John Scandrett



John Scandrett

You'll enjoy it

I was born in Forgeside in June 1946 but my grandfather had actually lived at Big Pit in the old Coity Pit Cottages behind the Pit Head Baths. When I left school in 1962 I went to work in a garage as an apprentice motor mechanic, but unfortunately the garage went bust and I came to work in Big Pit instead. I worked on the surface first, loading supplies to go down the pit until I went underground at 18 to work with a collier called Trevor Jones on the coal face. I worked as a collier's boy for three months and then as a 'floater' filling in for people who were off work until I got my own 'stent' (*working place on the coal face*). The stent was nine yards by four feet and I was responsible for clearing the coal and putting the posts up to hold the roof.

I did this until 1966 when they started mechanising coal cutting at Big Pit and installed a disc cutter in the Old Coal seam. I was there

about nine months and then went to work in the Garw seam where they had coal ploughs and the roof was supported by 'Schlom' bars held up by hydraulic 'Dowty' roof supports. It was a lot easier working on a mechanised coal face than in the older 'conventional' coal faces, whereas you were on your own in a 'stent' you were now part of a team.

I worked on the plough face until 1977 when I went on a Deputy's course to become a colliery official. I could see a better future as a Deputy, there would be more security for my family. The course was hard going for the first month as it was very intense but after I got in the groove and enjoyed it. I spent three weeks in Britannia Training Centre to learn shotfiring and mining regulations and then six months in Cross Keys College for the Deputy's course. I then did three weeks in Roseheyworth Colliery for the practical training and then back to Big Pit as a Deputy until the pit closed in 1980. I then went to Blaenserchen Colliery until 1985 and then to Marine Colliery until it closed in 1989.

When Marine closed I got out of the coal industry and went to work in the office at a Tesco distribution centre where I worked for thirteen years until 2004 when I came back to Big Pit. I heard of a job and Graham Gratton, the engineer at Big Pit, told me 'You'll enjoy it'. It was a drop in wages but no travelling and good hours. I like working at Big Pit, you get to talk to the public, give them information, tell them your history and the history of the mining industry. I've done a few jobs since I've been here such as on maintenance, deputy, banksman and guiding on the surface and underground.

Graham was right, I do enjoy it!

John Scandrett



Ma' nhw'n griw gwyach

Cefais fy ngeni yn Edgware, Llundain ym 1943, yn fab i Gymraes a Sais a oedd yn y frigâd dân. Symudodd y teulu i bentref Six Bells adeg y rhyfel, oherwydd y bomio.

Ar ôl gadael ysgol ym 1959, dechreuais weithio fel gwas colier yng nglofa Six Bells gyda glöwr o'r enw Bert Goodway. Digwyddodd ffrwydrad 1961 yn ystod y sifft ddydd, ac roeddem ni ar y sifft brynhawn. Yr hyn sy'n eironig yw ein bod wedi cael problemau ar y ffas y dydd Llun hwnnw, a heb lwyddo i lenwi digon o lo, felly awgrymwyd y byddai'n rhaid i ni ddychwelyd ar y sifft ddydd i glirio'r glo. Doedd dim rhaid i ni wneud hynny wedi'r cwbl, a dyna pam rwy'n dal ar dir y byw heddiw.

Des i'r gwaith ar fy meic modur, a chlywais fod y trawsnewidydd wedi ffrwydro ym mhwl Rhif 5. Es i ben y pwll a siarad â Tudor Morgan, fy oferman. Doedd dim golwg o neb arall ar y pryd. Dywedodd Tudor wrthyf am fynd i nôl Bert Goodway gan fod problem ddifrifol danddaear. Dyna wnes i felly, a'i gludo yn ôl i Six Bells ar fy meic. Erbyn hyn, roedd yr heddlu wedi cyrraedd, roedd Byddin yr Iachawdwriaeth yno a'r holl ddynion yn dychwelyd i'r brig. Clywais eu bod nhw wedi darganfod bachgen 17 oed o'r enw Denis Lane, a oedd yn byw yn yr un stryd â mi. Fel llanc 16 oed, roeddwn i'n rhy ifanc i helpu danddaear, felly arhosais ar ben y pwll yn gwylio'r criw achub wrthi hyd nes y cefais orchymyn i fynd adref. Pan ddychwelais i'r gwaith dridiau'n ddiweddarach, cafodd y bois eu hanfon i weithio ym mhwl Rhif 4 gan fod ein ffas lo ni wedi'i difrodi'n sylweddol yn y ffrwydrad a bu'n rhaid rhoi'r gorau i'w gweithio a'i chau. Roedd pawb dan y felan, ac roedd mam am i mi roi'r gorau iddi, ond aros wnes i. Bu gorymdaith angladdol enfawr, a chafodd y rhan fwyaf o'r dynion eu claddu ym mynwent Brynithel. Yn ddiweddarach, cefais fy holi gan y cwest ac atebais gwestiynau am y gweithdrefnau tanio – mae fy enw yn yr adroddiad.

Treuliais dair blynedd ar ffas lo 'gonfensiynol' (llenwi â llaw) ac yna ar ffas lo bŵer a gweithredwr peiriant torri glo tan 1970. Roedd

y rheolwr, Mr Arthur Lewis, wedi gofyn i mi fod yn ddirprwy, felly dilynaais gwrs yng Ngholeg Cross Keys a gwneud tair wythnos o brofiad ymarferol yng nglofa Celynen North. Dychwelais i Six Bells wedyn fel taniwr, ac yna oferman tan 1979, pan wnes gais i fynd i weithio ym mhyllau glo Awstralia.

Ffarwelwyd â Chymru ym 1979, a chefais waith mewn pwll glo o'r enw Delta No.1 yn Hunter Valley, New South Wales. Doedd dim peiriannau, yn hytrach defnyddiwyd ffrwydron i gael y glo i lawr, ac roedd bolltau'n dal y to. Roedd safon byw yn uchel iawn o gymharu â Chymru; gadewais y cymoedd yn ennill £5,000 y flwyddyn, a chefais gyflog o £20,000 yn fy mlwyddyn gyntaf yn Awstralia. Roedd gennym fyngalo ac roedd popeth yn dda tan fis Mawrth 1983 pan gaeodd chwe phwll glo yn Awstralia, a Delta yn eu plith – roeddwn i'n ddi-waith am y tro cyntaf yn fy mywyd.

Doedd dim sôn am waith mewn pwll arall, felly ffoniais Jack Waters, rheolwr Six Bells, i ofyn am swydd nôl yng Nghymru. Er na allai addo dim i mi, dychwelais adref ym mis Gorffennaf beth bynnag ac ymuno â chontractwyr glofaol 'Cementation' yng nglofa Celynen North. Yna, cwrddais â rheolwr cynhyrchu'r NCB a holi a oedd unrhyw siawns am waith, felly ffoniodd reolwr Celynen North i ofyn a oedd yn chwilio am ddirprwy arall. Bues i'n gweithio yn Celynen North tan ar ôl streic 1984/85, a chefais fy nhrosglwyddo i lofa Oakdale tan iddi gau ym 1989.



A great bunch of boys

I was born in Edgware, London in 1943, my mother was Welsh and my father was English and in the fire brigade. The family came to Six Bells village during the war, because of the bombing.

I left school in 1959 and started in Six Bells Colliery as a boy with a collier called Bert Goodway. The explosion of 1961 happened on the day shift and we were working on the afternoon shift. The ironic thing was that on the Monday we had problems on the face and hadn't got enough coal filled so we were told that we would probably have to come back on the day shift to clear the coal. We didn't have to in the end which is why I'm here today.

I came to work on my motor bike and I heard that a transformer had blown up in No. 5 Pit. I went to the top of the mine and spoke to Tudor Morgan who was my overman. There was no one else to be seen on top of the pit at that time. Tudor told me to get Bert Goodway as there was a serious problem underground. So I went to fetch him and brought him back to Six Bells on my bike. When we got back to the pit the police were there, the Salvation Army was there and all the men were coming up the mine. I heard the news that they had found a seventeen year old boy called Dennis Lane who lived in the same street as me. At sixteen yearsoldIwastooyoungtohelpoutunderground so I stayed on top of the mine watching the rescue men and so on until I was told to go home.

gloomy and my mother wanted me to finish but I carried on. The funeral procession was huge and most of the men were buried in Brynithel Cemetery. I was later interviewed during the enquiry and asked questions about the shotfiring procedures – my name is mentioned in the report.

I worked for three years on a 'conventional' (*hand filled*) coal face and then in the stable end of a power loading face and as a coal cutting machine operator until 1970. The manager, Mr Arthur Lewis asked me to become a deputy so I took the course in Cross Keys College and did my three weeks practical in Celynen North Colliery. I then went back to Six Bells as a shot firer, a deputy, and then an overman until 1979 when I applied to work in Australia in the coal mines.

We left Wales in February 1979 to work in Hunter Valley, New South Wales, in a mine called Delta No.1. There was no machine cutting in Delta, all the coal was brought down by explosives and the roof held up by roof bolting. The standard of living was very high compared to Wales; I left Wales earning £5,000 a year and earned £20,000 the first year I worked in Australia. We had a bungalow and everything was fine until March 1983 when six mines closed down in Australia, one of them being Delta - for the first time in my life I was unemployed.

I couldn't get another job in the mines so I phoned Jack Waters the Manager of Six Bells asking for a job back in Wales. He couldn't promise me anything but I came back in July anyway and started in Celynen North Colliery with Cementation the mining contractors. Then I bumped into the NCB production manager and asked him if there was there was any chance of a job and he called the Celynen North manager if he needed another deputy – he said yes. I worked in Celynen North until after the 1984/85 strike and then transferred to Oakdale Colliery until the mine closed in 1989.

When I started back three days later all the boys were sent to work in No.4 Pit because our coal face had been badly damaged in the explosion and had to be abandoned and sealed off. The mood in the pit was very



Ma' nhw'n griw gwych

Wedi hynny, bues i'n gweithio i gontractwyr yng nglofeydd Deep Navigation a Taff Merthyr ac yna cloddfa ddrifft Trelewis. Pan gaeodd honno, holais Mike Read, dirprwy Big Pit, am swydd. Yr unig anfantais oedd nad oedd yn ystod y gaeaf, ond roeddwn i'n gweithio i'r gwasanaeth pryd ar glud yr adeg honno. Yna ym 1992, gofynnodd rheolwr Big Pit a oeddwn i eisiau swydd lawn amser ac adnewyddu fy nhystysgrif Dirprwy felly penderfynais dderbyn y cynnig.

Rwy'n hoffi cwrdd â phobl, ac yn mwynhau gweithio yn Big Pit gan fod criw gwych yn gweithio yma. Rwy'n credu fy mod i wedi dysgu llawer mwy yma nag y gwnes i yn y glofeydd erioed – rwyf wedi gweithio yn y siafft ac ati, ac mae'n llawer mwy amrywiol na bod mewn glofa weithredol. Roedd y cyflog yn ofnadwy pan ddechreuais yma, ond mae pethau wedi gwella lot ers hynny.

Bill Richings

A great bunch of boys

After Oakdale I worked for contractors in Deep Navigation, in Taff Merthyr and then in Trelwis Drift. When Trelewis Drift closed, I asked Mike Read, the Big Pit deputy, about getting a job. The only drawback was that we were laid off in the winter but I used to work for 'Meals on Wheels' during this time. Then in 1992 the Big Pit Manager asked me if I wanted a full time job and was I interested in renewing my Deputy's certificate which I did.

I like meeting people and I enjoy working in Big Pit as there's a great bunch of boys here. I think that I have learnt more about all types of pit work than I did in the collieries – I've worked in the shaft and so on and it's more varied than in a working colliery. The money was terrible when I came here first but it's a lot better now.

Bill Richings



**Glowyr yn aros i fynd i
lawr i'r pwll, 1976**
Miners waiting to go
down the pit, 1976



Perthyn i'r oes o'r blaen

Cefais fy ngeni ym Medlinog ym 1969. Mae'r diwydiant glo yn ein gwaed ni fel teulu. Fy hen hen dad-cu oedd 'Bill the Hitcher' yn hen byllau Bedlinog. Roedd hanner fy nheulu yn hanu o'r Gelli Gandryll a'r hanner arall o Gymru. Bu fy nhad, fy nheidiau a'm hen ewythrod yn gweithio yng nglofa Taff Merthyr.

Roedd ein cwmni teuluol, S. Williams & Sons, yn berchen ar Lefel Blaencyffin, felly dechreuais weithio ar y wyneb ym 1985, yn sgrinio'r glo a'i dddoli ar gyfer y gwerthwyr glo. Ond roeddwn i wedi rhoi help llaw danddaear ers yn 12 oed. Arferwn gael £5 am gynorthwyo ar y wyneb, ond roeddwn yn rhawio a gwthio dramiau yn y dyfnderoedd – yn hollol anghyfreithlon wrth gwrs – a rhois gynnig ar danio ffrwydron hefyd! Roedd pawb yn cymryd yn ganiataol mai danddaear fyddwn i'n mynd, ac roedd fy nhad-cu wastad yn dweud fy mod i'n perthyn i'r oes o'r blaen, ac y dylwn i fod wedi 'ngeni yn y 1880au.

Es i weithio danddaear pan oeddwn i'n 17 oed, gyda Les Corrigan, un o'r glowyr gorau yn y pwll. Fe'm hanfonwyd i ganolfan hyfforddi'r NCB, ac roedd y bechgyn eraill naill ai o lofa Cynheidre neu byllau preifat. Erbyn hynny, roeddwn i'n gallu rhicio cynhalbyst pren a thorri glo gyda thyllwr niwmatig neu 'siafft' torri glo (*caib â llafnau cyfnewidiadwy* – 'box mandrel').

Yn y prif lwybrau, roedd y to wedi'i gynnal gan breniau rhiciog fetr oddi wrth ei gilydd – wedi'u torri â bwyell o'r enw 'Tŷ Gwyn' yn wreiddiol, ond wedi'u llifio'n ddiweddarach. Cynhalbyst pren yn dal preniau fflat yn erbyn y to oedd yn y ffas lo. Chi oedd yn gwneud popeth mewn pwll preifat. Er bod ambell fan yn wlyb danddaear, roedd yr amodau'n weddol sych ar y cyfan a ddim mor llychlyd â phyllau'r NCB gan nad oedd gennym beiriannau torri glo i godi llwch. Roedd hi'n dawelach yno heb y peiriannau hefyd. Roeddem yn defnyddio rhawiau sgwâr â'r handlenni wedi'u torri i ryw wyth modfedd gan fod y to rhwng dwy droedfedd chwe modfedd a phedair troedfedd o uchder.

Ym Mlaencyffin, roeddem i bob pwrpas yn cloddio'r hen bileri glo a adawyd i gynnal y to yn y gorffennol. Byddem yn llenwi rhwng tair a phedair dram tunnell y dydd, a hyd at ddeg dram pan oeddem ni'n cloddio'r haen uchaf a oedd yn haws i'w thorri. Roedd gennym enw i bob dram – 'Big Bertha', 'Baby Dram' a 'Bastard Dram' (oherwydd ei bod wastad yn llithro oddi ar y cledrau).

Roedd yr amodau gwaith yn perthyn i oes yr arth a'r blaidd o gymharu â phyllau'r Bwrdd Glo, a'r injans halio oedd yr unig beiriannau yno. Daeth y gwaith i ben ym 1995, gan fod prisiau glo mor isel. Es i weithio i ladd-dy Sun Valley Foods yn y Fenni am ryw dair blynedd, ac ymunodd fy nhad i â phwll arall. Pan benderfynodd ailagor Blaencyffin, gadewais y ffatri i weithio gyda 'nhad ac Elwyn Davies. Roedd yr Arolygwr Glo yn mynnu bod un ohonom yn hyfforddi fel swyddog achub glofaol, felly fe'm hanfonwyd i Orsaf Achub Glofaol Dinas, ond roedd pris glo yn gostwng eto a phrisiau deunyddiau ac yswiriant yn codi, felly doedd pethau ddim yn addawol iawn.

Yna, es i weithio fel swyddog achub glofaol llanw yn Coombe Down, Caerfaddon, a hefyd fel glöwr yn ail-ategu'r hen fwyngloddiau carreg ar gyrion y ddinas. Roeddem yn llenwi'r hen weithfeydd a choncrid mandyllog. Roeddem yn gweithio ochr yn ochr ag archaeolegwyr ac yn darganfod hen gyfarpar a darluniau gan y glowyr gynt. Yna, gofynnwyd i mi hyfforddi glowyr eraill i ddefnyddio offer hunan achub, a dod yn hyfforddwr diogelwch i bob pwrpas.

Yn y cyfamser, dechreuodd tân losgi mewn hen bwll a ddefnyddiwyd i storio cyflenwadau milwrol ger Colesham. Gan ein bod ni'n dîm achub glofaol ag offer anadlu, aethom yno i helpu. Aeth criw o bump i mewn i'r pwll. Er nad oedd modd gweld dim, gallem glywed y tân a sŵn tanio a ffrwydro mawr yn y pellter, ac roedd pethau mor ddrwg nes i ni orfod gadael. Anfonwyd robot danddaear, ond ni allai fynd heibio'r

Andrew Williams



A throwback

I was born in 1969 and lived in Bedlinog. My family were all miners from way back. My great, great, grandfather was 'Bill the Hitcher' in the old Bedlinog Pits. Half my family came from Hay on Wye and the other half from Wales. My father, grandfathers and great uncles all worked in Taff Merthyr Colliery.

Blaencuffin Level was owned by my family, S. Williams & Sons and I started work on the surface in 1985 screening coal and sorting it out for the coal merchants, but I had been underground from the age of twelve as I used to help out. I used to get £5 to help out on the surface but I also used to go shovelling underground and pushing drams, all illegal of course – I even had a go at shotfiring! It was taken for granted that I'd go underground and my grandfather used to say that I was a throwback who should have been born in the 1800s.

I went underground when I was seventeen and was put to work with Les Corrigan who was the finest collier in the mine. I was sent to the NCB training centre, the other boys were either from Cynheidre Colliery or from private mines. But, by that time, I could notch timber roof supports and cut coal with both a pneumatic puncher pick or a coal cutting 'shaft' (*a pick with interchangeable blades – a box mandrel*).

In the main roadways the roof was supported by notched timbers a metre apart – originally all cut with a hatchet known as a 'Ty Gwyn' but later sawn. Coal face support was all wooden

posts holding up timber 'flats' against the roof. You did everything in a private mine. Conditions underground were wet in some places but mostly dry and not so dusty as NCB mines because we didn't have coal cutting machines raising the dust. It was also

quieter without the machines. We always used square nosed shovels with the handles cut down to about eight inches because the roof was between two feet six inches to about four feet high.

In Blaencuffin we were basically working coal pillars left to support the roof during previous mining operations. We used to fill between three and four one-ton drams a day but it could be up to ten when we worked the top coal as it was easier to cut. All the drams were named – 'Big Bertha', 'Baby Dram' and 'Bastard Dram' (so called because it was always the one that jumped the rails).

It was all pretty primitive compared to the Coal Board mines and the only machines used were haulage engines. I worked there until 1995 when the mine stopped because the price of coal was low. I went to work at Sun Valley Foods in Abergavenny as a slaughter man for about three years and my father went to work at another mine. When he decided to re-open Blaencuffin I left the factory to work with him and Elwyn Davies. The Inspector of Mines said that one of us had to be trained as a mine rescue man so I was sent away to Dinas Mines Rescue Station, but the price of coal was dropping again and the price of materials and insurance was rising so things weren't looking too good.

I then went to Coombe Down in Bath as mines rescue cover and a miner re-supporting the old stone mines under the edge of the city. We were filling up the old workings with foam concrete. We were working alongside archaeologists and finding old tools and drawings by the old miners. Then I was asked to train the other miners in the use of self-rescuers and became basically a safety instructor.

While we were there, there was a fire in an old mine adapted for storing military supplies near Colesham and, because we had two mines rescue teams with breathing apparatus, we turned out for the incident. A team of five entered the mine and found the visibility zero but we could



Perthyn i'r oes o'r blaen

holl falurion, felly penderfynodd yr arolygwr selio'r holl fynedfeydd heblaw un, a phwmpio nitrogen i mewn i ddiffodd y tân. Cawsom ein galw'n ôl gydag offer anadlu ymhen deuddydd, er mwyn gwirio'r lefelau nitrogen yn y pwll.

Daeth project Caerfaddon i ben yn 2009, felly gwnes gais am swydd yn Big Pit. Ac eithrio

dau brentis, fi yw'r dyn ieuengaf sy'n gweithio yno. Rwy'n aelod o'r tîm achub glofaol o hyd, gan fod Big Pit yn dal i gael ei hystyried yn lofa gynhyrchiol, a bues i'n rhan o'r criw achub yn namwain glofa'r Gleision yn 2011.

Andrew Williams

Eisiau perthyn

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1952 a'm magu yn yr un tŷ ble'r wy'n byw ynddo heddiw. Glowyr oedd pawb o deulu fy mam. Roedd tad fy nhad yn gweithio yng nglofa ddrifft y Garn a Big Pit fel fforman y wyneb, ac roedd fy nhad yn forthwylwr y gof yn Big Pit, er iddo weithio yn Kay's Slope a glofa Milfraen hefyd. Aeth fy nhad a fi i Milfraen tua 1963, ychydig cyn iddi gael ei dymchwel, a chefais daith fer yn y caetsh!

Ym 1916, cafodd fy nhad-cu 16 oed ei ddal mewn cwymp danddaear, a chafodd ei gludo ar ddrws yn ôl adref. Er nad oedd disgwyl iddo weithio byth eto, dychwelyd wnaeth e, ond bu'n rhaid iddo weithio ym mhen y pwll. Ym 1956, cafodd ei wasgu yn y sgriniau a bu mewn pabell ocsigen yn Ysbyty Brenhinol Gwent. Er bod pethau'n ymddangos yn ddu iawn, daeth ato'i hun, ac er gwaetha'r anafiadau difrifol i'w frest, dychwelodd i'r lofa. Ym 1963, collodd ei fawd yn offer tipio'r dram, ac o'r diwedd, penderfynodd roi'r gorau iddi.

Cafodd fy nhad Kenvin Thomas ei eni ym 1927. Nid oedd ei fam eisiau iddo fynd i'r pwll glo gan fod ei dad wedi cael damwain ddrwg, ond doedd dim llawer o waith arall ar gael. Dechreuodd weithio fel morthwylwr y gof ac yna'n siafftsmon. Helpodd i adeiladu'r ffordd sy'n mynd o amgylch y pwll i'r baddondai, ac arferai yrru'r bws a oedd yn cludo'r dynion o'r baddondai i'r gloddfa ddrifft newydd a agorodd ym 1972, cyn dechrau ei waith bob dydd. Dros

y Sul wedyn, byddai'n gyrru'r bws i gwmni Rees's Transport – gan fynd ag ymwelwyr i bob cwr o'r wlad.

Rwy'n cofio chwarae ar y wyneb yn Big Pit, gan obeithio na fyddai neb yn dweud wrth fy nhad a'm tad-cu, a byddem ni'n casglu'r weiers y tu allan i'r storfa ffrwydron. Pan oeddwn i'n fach, rwy'n cofio mynd lan i Mile Pond am dro, plygu o dan y beipen aer fawr, a sgwrsio gyda thrigolion bythynnod Fan House sydd wedi'u dymchwel bellach. Roeddwn i'n casáu tripiâu'r glowyr i'r Barri am nad oeddwn i'n cael caniatâd i fynd, oherwydd bod fy nhad yn gweithio ar yr ochr fecanyddol ac felly'n mynd ar eu gwibdeithiau eu hunain. Fodd bynnag, roedd fy ffrindiau i gyd yn mynd ar drip y glowyr.



A throwback

hear the fire in the distance banging and crashing, it was so bad we were told to come out. A robot was sent underground but couldn't get past the debris, so the inspector decided to seal all the exits except one and pumped in nitrogen to kill the fire. We were recalled after two days to go back into the mine with breathing apparatus to check on the oxygen levels.

In 2009 the Bath project finished and I applied for a job in Big Pit. Apart from the two apprentices, I'm the youngest man working here. I'm still in mines rescue as Big Pit is still regarded as a working mine and took part in the Gleision Mine incident in 2011.

Andrew Williams

I wanted to be part of it

I was born in 1952 and brought up in the same house I'm living in now. My mother's family were all in mining. My dad's father worked in Garn Drift and Big Pit as a surface foreman and, my father was a blacksmith's striker at Big Pit, but he also worked at Kay's Slope and Milfraen Colliery. My father took me up to Milfraen in about 1963, just before it was demolished, and I had a ride in the cage – only a short distance though!

In 1916, my grandfather went under a roof fall underground when he was sixteen and they carried him home on a door. They didn't think that he would work again but he did although he had to work on the surface. In 1956 he was crushed in the screens and was in an oxygen tent in the Royal Gwent Hospital and again

they didn't think that he'd make it, but he did and, although his chest had been badly crushed he came back to work. In 1963 he lost his thumb in the dram tippler and finally that was it – he finished.

My father Kenvin Thomas was born in 1927. His Mam didn't want him to work in the pit because his father had had a bad accident but there wasn't much other work about. He started as a blacksmith's striker and later became a shaftsman. He helped to build the road which runs around the pit to the baths and used to drive the bus taking the men from the baths to the new drift after it opened in 1972 and then do his normal work. On the weekends he used to drive trips for Rees's Transport – he used to go all over the country.

I used to play on the surface at Big Pit, hoping that no one would tell my father or grandfather that I was up here, and I remember that we used to collect wires from outside the powder magazine (*explosives store*). When I was little I remember going up to the Mile Pond behind the pit and ducking under the big blast (*compressed air*) pipe to talk with the people living in the Fan House Cottages which have now been demolished. I used to hate the miners' trips to Barry because I wasn't allowed to go because my father was on the mechanical side and they had their own trip. However all my friends went on the mining one.



Dianne Smith

Eisiau perthyn

Pan gaeodd Big Pit ym 1980, cafodd fy nhad ei drosglwyddo i lofa Blaenserchan, cyn dychwelyd yn ddiweddarach i baratoi'r siafft ar gyfer ymwelwyr yr amgueddfa. Ym 1986, anafodd ei gefn wrth gario hytrawst danddaear, a bu'n rhaid iddo ymddeol.

Roedd Blaenafon yn llawn bwrlwm pan oedd y lofa ar agor, a byddai'r menywod yn dod lan i swyddfeydd y pwll ar ddydd Gwener i godi cyflog eu gŵyr er mwyn mynd i siopa. Roedd siopau sgidie, haearnwerthwr, popeth ym Mlaenafon – gallech brynu unrhyw beth yn y dref. Newidiodd pethau yn yr 1980au wrth i'r siopau gau yn raddol, nes bod dim ar ôl. Mae'r sefyllfa wedi gwella rhywfaint nawr, ac er mai siopau llyfrau a chrefftau ydynt yn bennaf, mae'n well na siopau gweigion.

Dechreuais weithio yn Hillside Stores fel cynorthwy-ydd siop, a gorffen yno pan anwyd fy mab. Yna, bues i'n gweithio yng ngarej Gulf a chlwb y Constitutional – felly roeddwn i'n gwerthu galwyni yn y dydd a pheintiau fin nos, i'r un bobl yn aml! Yna, cefais swydd yn Spar cyn ymuno â Big Pit fel rheolwraig arlwyro dros dro ym mis Mawrth 1985 ac yna'n rheolwraig ym 1989.

Roeddwn i eisiau gweithio yn Big Pit erioed, fel fy nhad-cu a 'nhad o'm blaen i. Roedd dad mor falch pan ddywedais wrtho fy mod i wedi teithio drwy'r siafft yn yr offer weindio argyfwng, ac yntau ond wedi gwneud hynny unwaith neu ddwy erioed.

Roedd pethau'n anodd iawn yma i ddechrau. Doedd dim gwres yn y ffretur, a byddem yn segur rhwng mis Tachwedd a Chwefror bob tro, ond mae'r amodau gwaith ganmil gwell nawr. Mae'n braf cwrdd â phobl wahanol o bedwar ban byd, ac rwy'n hapus iawn. Dwi wedi bod yn gweithio yn Big Pit am fwy o amser na neb arall erbyn hyn. Mae 'na gymeriadau a hanner ymhlith y gweithlu, ac mae'n drueni meddwl y bydd hwyl, hiwmor ac agosatrwydd arbennig y gymuned lofaol yn diflannu ryw ddydd.

Dianne Smith



Roedden nhw'n hen fois da

Cefais fy ngeni wrth yr orsaf drenau yn Waunafon ym mis Medi 1928. Roedd fy nhad – Charlie Harris – wedi'i ladd yn Kay's Slope ym mis Mawrth yr un flwyddyn. Dechreuais weithio yn Lefel Blaendare, Abertyleri fel gwas colier gyda f'ewythr Tom, yn ennill £1.16s 8d. Arferai roi pymtheg ceiniog o arian poced i mi ond os gwnawn i rywbeth o'i le, byddai'n fy nharo â'i gap! Symudais i Lefel Cwmtlyeri ac yna i Celyn North tua 1949, lle'r oedd Billy Cleaver, y canolwr rygbi rhyngwladol, yn Rheolwr.

Erbyn hynny, roeddwn yn mynd i'r ysgol nos er mwyn dod yn swyddog glofa a symudais eto i fod yn daniwr yn Big Pit lle bues i'n gweithio am sawl blwyddyn. Pan ddechreuais yn Big Pit, roedd ganddyn nhw lampau bach carbeid ond yn nes ymlaen, fe gawsom lampau cap trydanol ar ein helmedau a phadiau pen-glin wedi'u gwneud o gludfeltiau.

Roedd gen i lawer o berthnasau yn Big Pit. Roedd f'ewythr Tom yn arolygwr pen pwll ac fe gâi ei alw'n 'hwter' am eich bod yn gallu'i glywed

I wanted to be part of it

When Big Pit closed in 1980 my father was transferred to Blaenserchen Colliery but was sent back later to get the shaft ready for museum visitors. In 1986 he hurt his back taking a girder underground and had to retire.



Kenvin Thomas
(chwith) tad Dianne,
yn gweithio yn y siafft
Dianne's father Kenvin
Thomas (left) working
in the shaft

When the pit was open Blaenafon was busy, the women used to come up to the pit offices on a Friday to pick up their husbands' pay to go shopping. Blaenafon had shoe shops, ironmongers – you could get anything in the town. This changed in the 1980s as shops started to close down and eventually everything went. It's a bit better now even though they're mainly craft and book shops but at least they're not boarded up.

I started working in Hillside Stores as a

shop assistant and finished when my son was born and then worked in both the Gulf Garage and the Constitutional Club – so I used to sell gallons in the day and pints in the night, often to the same people! I then worked in the Spar and from there came to Big Pit where I was taken on as a part-time catering manageress in March 1985 and became manageress in 1989.

I wanted to work in Big Pit because my grandfather and father had worked here and I wanted to be part of it. My father was very impressed in 1998 when I told him I'd ridden through the shaft in the emergency winder, he'd only ever done that a couple of times himself.

It was hard here at first, we never had heating in the canteen and were laid off between November and February, but conditions are much better now. It's nice meeting different people from different countries and I'm quite happy. I'm now the longest serving member of staff at Big Pit. There have been some real characters amongst the work force here and it's a shame to think that that special mining camaraderie and sense of humour will disappear one day.

Dianne Smith

They were a good set of boys

I was born by the railway station in Waunavon in September in 1928. My father, also Charlie Harris, had been killed in Kays Slope in March of the same year. I started work in Blaendare Level, Abertillery as a collier's boy with my Uncle Tom earning £1.16s 8d. He used to give me fifteen pence pocket money but if I did anything wrong he used to hit me with his cap! I moved to Cwmtilerry Level and then to Celyn North around 1949, where Billy Cleaver, the international rugby centre, was Manager.

By then I was going to night school to become a colliery official and moved again to be a shotfirer in Big Pit where I worked for many years. When I started in Big Pit they had little carbide lamps but later we had electric cap lamps on our helmets as well as knee pads made out of conveyor belting.

I had a lot of relations in Big Pit, my uncle Tom was a banksman – they used to call him 'hooter' because you could hear him shouting at pit bottom! While I was working in Hoskin's

Roedden nhw'n hen fois da

yn gweiddi o waelod y pwll! Pan oeddwn i'n gweithio yn ardal Hoskins, lle'r oedd criw o lowyr ifanc yn gweithio ar gludfelt Eickoff, arferwn drefnu swîp yn ystod y tymor pêldroed a byddem yn mynd am drip diwrnod i Abertawe gyda'r arian. Am mai fi oedd yn trefnu'r tripiâu, rhoddodd y bois daniwr sigarêts i mi â'u henwau wedi'u crafu arno – Bert, Russ, Smiler, Decca, Lanie, Ballas, Derrick, Cuttum, Lias a Poppy. Roedden nhw'n hen fois da.

Yn Hoskins, lle'r oeddem yn gweithio ar wythïen Garw, roedd yna stentiau (*mannau gweithio*) naw llathen o hyd a pheiriant yn tandorri pedair troedfedd bob sifft. Dim ond ar gefn y peiriant yr oedd yna chwistrell ddŵr felly roedd hi'n llychlyd iawn a dim ond tua dwy fodfedd ar hugain oedd yr uchder. Ar wahân i Gwmtyleri, lle'r oedd yn bum troedfedd o uchder, roeddwn i bob amser yn gweithio mewn gwythiennau isel. Roedd craig uchaf a chraig waelod dda yng ngwythïen Garw a llawer o ddŵr o wythïen Meadow – fe fydden nhw'n arfer suddo pyllau i roi'r pypmpiau i mewn – ac roedd tua saith neu wyth pwmp yn gweithio yno. Roedd Big Pit yn llawer oerach na'r pyllau eraill dyfnach lle bues i'n gweithio am ei fod mor fas a gwlyb.

Mewn blynyddoedd diweddarach, Johnny Moxham oedd y Rheolwr a byddem yn ceisio gadael yn fuan, ond os caech eich dal, byddai arian yn cael ei dynnu o'ch cyflog chi a'i roi i Sefydliad y Gweithwyr ym Mlaenafon.

Pan oedd gennym geffylau bach i lusgo'r trolïau pren i mewn, câi'r ceffylau eu gosod ar ochr y llwybrau er mwyn gwrthio'r dramïau heibio iddyn nhw. Roedden ni'n arfer hongian ein cotiau lle byddai'r ceffylau'n sefyll ac fe fydden nhw'n busnesa yn ein pocedi ni i weld beth oedd yno.

Roedd Big Pit yn lle da i weithio ynddo fe, gydag arian da bryd hynny, ac yn llawn cymeriadau. Undebwr oedd Tommy Legg ac os na allech fynd i'r gwaith, fe fyddai'n ffonio'r pwll i ddweud wrthyn nhw fod y dynion i gyd wedi dod i lle byddai'r bws yn eu codi, ond bod y bws heb ddod, felly fe gaem i gyd ddiwrnod bant. Ffeiarman oedd wedi bod yn y fyddin

oedd Billy Israel. Os oedd y cludfelt yn dod i stop, byddai'n adrodd straeon am y fyddin – rwy'n cofio un dyn yn dweud wrtho: “*Diolch byth dy fod di ac Errol Flynn ar ein hochr ni, neu fydden ni byth wedi ennill y rhyfel*”.

Gofalwr y baddondai pen pwll oedd Billy Morgan ac os nad oedd gennych dywel i'ch gorchuddio, byddai'n fflicio tywel yn erbyn eich coesau a dweud, “*So Mrs Cook moyn gweld hwnna!*” Hi oedd rheolwraig y cantin ac roedd hi'n hen wraig bryd hynny, ond yn gogyddes dda. Roedd rhai o'r hen halwyr yn gymeriadau hefyd. Un diwrnod, daeth Gratton, yr is-reolwr i lawr at lle roedden nhw i gyd yn eistedd ar y partin, ac fe ddwedodd wrth un halier, oedd â cheffyl dim mwy na chi Alsatian, “*Wyt ti'n credu y galli di'i yrru fe lawr ar gyfer y sifft brynhawn?*”. Credai'r halier fod disgwyl iddo redeg o gwmpas mwy nag oedd yn rhesymol, ac fe ddwedodd, “*Odyh chi'n gweld cefn y ceffyl 'ma? Blew yw hwnna, nid plu!*”.

Fe wnes i dipyn o bopeth: gweithio gyda cheffylau, ar y ffas lo, tanio. Pan ymwelais ag amgueddfa Big Pit gyda fy nheulu, erbyn y diwedd, roeddwn i'n gwneud gwaith y tywysydd drosto, ac yn dweud y cyfan wrth weddill y grŵp!

Charlie Harris



Charlie Harris a'r teulu yn Ynys y Barri
Charlie Harris and family in Barry Island

They were a good set of boys

District, where there was a pile of young miners working an Eickoff conveyor, I used to run a 'sweep' during the football season and we used to go on a day trip to Swansea out of the money. Because I used to organise the trips the boys gave me a lighter with their names engraved on it - Bert, Russ, Smiler, Decca, Lanie, Ballas, Derrick, Cuttum, Lias and Poppy. They were a good set of boys.

In Hoskins, where we worked the Garw seam, there were nine yard stents (*working places*) with a four feet undercut by machine each shift. There was only a water spray at the back of the machine so it was very dusty and the height was only about twenty two inches. Apart from when I worked in Cwmtillery where it was five feet high, I always worked in low seams. There was good top and bottom rock in the Garw seam and a lot of water from the Meadow Vein - they used to sink pits to put the pumps in, there were about seven or eight pumps working there. Big Pit was a lot cooler than the other deeper pits I worked in because it was so shallow and wet..



In later years Johnny Moxham was the Manager and we used to try and get out early, but if you were caught 'pinching out' you would have money deducted from your pay and given to the Workman's Institute in Blaenafon.

When we had small horses to drag the timber trolleys in they used to put the horses on the side of the roadways when they pushed the drams past them. We used to hang our coats up where the horses used to stand and they would be in your pockets after anything that was in them.

Big Pit was a good place to work in with good money for those days and full of characters. Tommy Legg was a union man and if you couldn't get to work he used to phone up the pit and tell them that the men had all presented themselves on the bus stop but the bus didn't turn up so we all got the day off. Billy Israel was a fireman who had been in the army. If the belt conveyor went on stop he'd tell you stories about the army - I remember one man said to him "*Good job we had you and Errol Flynn on our side or we would never have won the war*".

Billy Morgan was the pithead baths attendant and if you didn't have a towel covering you he used to flick a towel against your legs and say "*Mrs Cook doesn't want to see that!*" She was the canteen manageress and was an old lady then but a good cook. Some of the old hauliers were also characters. One day Gratton, the under manager came down and they were all sitting on the parting and he said to one haulier, whose horse was only about the size of an Alsatian dog, "*Do you think that you could drive down for the afternoon shift?*" The haulier thought that he was being asked to rush around more than was reasonable and said "*See this horse's back? That's hair not feathers!*"

I did a bit of everything, working with horses, on the coal face, shotfiring. When I visited Big Pit museum with my family I ended up taking over from the guide and telling the rest of the group all about it!

Charlie Harris

Rhan o'n treftadaeth

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1970 ond dim ond am bythefnos fues i'n byw ym Mlaenafon cyn symud i Ben-coed lle'r oedd fy nhad yn darlithio yng nghanolfan hyfforddi'r Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol yn Nhon-du. Fe fuom yn byw ym Mhen-coed nes oeddwn i'n bedair oed pan symudom yn ôl i Flaenafon. Rwy'n dod o deulu glofaol, ac roedd fy nhad-cu a 'nhad yn gweithio yn Big Pit, fel tad fy mam hefyd. Mae'n debyg fod tad fy nhad-cu wedi marw danddaear wedi iddo gael trawiad ar y galon yn y stablau tanddaearol.

Dechreuodd fy nhad, Graham Gratton, weithio yn Big Pit pan oedd yn bymtheg oed a gweithiodd fel trydanwr nes 1970, yna fel darlithydd mewn peirianeg drydanol yn Nhon-du cyn dod yn beiriannydd trydanol

glofa Blaenserchan. Wedyn, gweithiodd yng nglofa Six Bells cyn gorffen gyda'r Bwrdd Glo ym 1986. Gweithiodd yn ffatri goncrid Barcell's wedi hynny cyn dychwelyd i Big Pit ym 1991 lle treuliodd bymtheg mlynedd yn beiriannydd trydanol tan iddo ymddeol yn 2005. Roedd tad fy nhad, Frank Gratton, yn is-reolwr yn Big Pit am flynyddoedd lawer. Roedd yn hanner cant pan gafodd fy nhad ei eni, felly pan oedd fy nhad yn dechrau gweithio, roedd ei dad yn ymddeol.

Er i mi gael fy magu ym Mlaenafon, ni chefais lawer o gysylltiad â Big Pit ar y cychwyn am fod fy nhad yn gweithio mewn glofeydd eraill erbyn i mi gael fy ngeni. Roeddwn yn dair ar ddeg oed pan gafodd Big Pit ei droi'n amgueddfa. Dechreuais weithio i SWALEC yng

Nghaerdydd yn un ar bymtheg oed a bues i'n gweithio yno nes i fy mab, Dominic, gael ei eni. Yna, cefais waith yn y siop yn Big Pit ym mis Mai 2003 – llawer gwell na gweithio i SWALEC!

Mae'n braf gweithio yn Big Pit am fy mod i'n dod o Flaenafon ac mae'n rhan o'n treftadaeth. Mae fy mab yn arbennig o falch o'i gysylltiadau â'r pwll a bod lluniau o'i dad-cu a'i hen dad-cu yn yr arddangosfa. Rwy'n credu ei bod hi'n gwneud lles i'r dref fod llawer o bobl o bedwar ban byd wedi clywed am Big Pit ac am Flaenafon.

Heather Williams



Dominic Williams

Part of our heritage

I was born in 1970 but only lived in Blaenafon for two weeks before moving to Pencoed where my father was lecturing in The National Coal Board's training centre in Tondy. We lived in Pencoed until I was four years old when we moved back to Blaenafon. I come from a mining family, my grandfather and father worked in Big Pit as did my mother's father. My grandfather's father apparently died underground when he had a heart attack in the underground stables.

My father, Graham Gratton, started work at Big Pit at fifteen years old and worked as an electrician until 1970, then as a lecturer in electrical engineering at Tondy before becoming the electrical engineer in Blaenserchen Colliery. He later worked in Six Bells Colliery before finishing with the Coal Board in 1986. He worked in Barcell's concrete factory until he came back to Big Pit in 1991 where he spent fifteen years as the electrical Engineer until he retired in 2005. My father's father, Frank Gratton, was undermanager at Big Pit for many years. He was fifty years old when my father was born, so when my father started work his father was retiring.

Although I was brought up in Blaenafon I didn't have much to do with Big Pit to begin with as my father was working in other collieries by the time I was born. I was thirteen years old when Big Pit became a museum. I started work at sixteen for SWALEC in Cardiff where I worked for fifteen years until I had my son Dominic. I then got a job as shop assistant in Big Pit in May 2003 – much better than working for SWALEC!

It's good working in Big Pit because I'm from Blaenafon and its part of our heritage. My son is especially proud of his connections with the pit and that his grandfather and great grandfather are featured in the displays. I think that it's good for the town that a lot of people from all around the world have heard of both Big Pit and Blaenafon.

Heather Williams





Blaenavon Colliery





Cysylltiadau

Ytro cyntaf i mi ymweld â Big Pit oedd pan gefais fy anfon yno, ac i gloddfa ddrifft gyfagos Kay's a Garn, fel aelod o Dîm Mecaneiddio Ardal Rhif 6 y Bwrdd Glo i arddangos y defnydd o gynhalbyst ffrithiant a hydroleg danddaear. Yn nes ymlaen, fel cadeirydd Grŵp 1 Cymdeithas Rheolwyr Glofeydd Prydain (BACM), roeddwn i'n adnabod Glyn Morgan, rheolwr olaf yr NCB yn Big Pit, nid yn unig fel aelod o'r Gymdeithas, ond hefyd fel cyfaill a chymydog gan ein bod ein dau'n byw yn Nhrecelyn. Pan oeddwn i'n rheolwr glofa Six Bells rhwng 1966 a 1973, des i adnabod Denis Puddle, cadeirydd Undeb Cenedlaethol y Glowyr yn Big Pit, pan oeddem ein dau'n aelodau o Bwyllgor Cynhyrchu Ardal Rhif 6 yr NCB a'r Pwyllgor Iechyd a Diogelwch. Hefyd, rheolwr cyntaf amgueddfa Big Pit oedd Jack Davies, a arferai fod yn Gynllunydd Grŵp i'r NCB a fu'n gweithio gyda mi yn Six Bells ac a oedd hefyd yn gyfaill a chydweithiwr.

Pan drodd Big Pit yn amgueddfa, roeddwn i'n uwch-ddarlithydd mwyngloddio yng Ngholeg Polytechnig Cymru ac fe es i â'r teulu draw i weld Big Pit. Yn ystod ein taith danddaear, rhoddodd y tywysydd, a fu'n ddirprwy'r lofa oddi tanaf yn Six Bells, ei lamp fflam ddiogelwch i fy wyres i'w dal ac fe ddwedodd wrthi, "Os oes gen ti unrhyw gwestiynau, gofyn i dy dad-cu, mae e'n gwybod mwy am gloddio nag ydw i!". Rwy'n cofio gweld ceffyl siglo yn un o'r stablau o dan y ddaear; roedd y tywyswyr wedi'i alw'n 'Shergar' ar ôl y ceffyl rasio a herwgipiwyd, ac na chafodd ei weld byth wedyn.

Ar ôl cau glofa Britannia, a fu'n fan hyfforddi ar gyfer myfyrwyr tîrfesur yng Ngholeg Polytechnig Cymru, gofynnwyd i mi fynd gyda Lewin Morgan, Pennaeth yr Adran Mwyngloddio yn y Coleg Polytechnig, i Big Pit i'w ystyried fel lleoliad amgen. Erbyn hynny, rheolwr yr amgueddfa oedd George Parr, cyn-aelod o Dîm Mecaneiddio Ardal Dwyrain Cymru. Roeddwn yn ei adnabod ers fy nyddiau fel rheolwr ar sawl un o byllau'r NCB. Pan gyflwynon ni'n hunain i ysgrifenyddes George Parr, clywsom ei fod yn brysur gydag aelodau o Arolygiaeth Mwynfeydd Ei Mawrhydi. Wedi

i mi bwyso arni i roi gwybod i Mr Parr ein bod ni yno, daeth George o'i swyddfa i'n cyfarch, a gofynnodd i mi ei helpu yn ei gyfarfod gyda'r arolygwyr.

Wrth fynd i mewn i'w swyddfa, dywedais "Helo Albert" wrth y Prif Arolygydd Mwynfeydd a oedd wedi dod â'i staff o arolygwyr cloddio, trydanol a mecanyddol i geisio cael Big Pit i weithio fel glofa weithredol. "Wyt ti wedi dod â dy holl staff am drip i Flaenafon?" holais iddo wedyn. Roeddwn i wedi treulio amser gyda bron bob un o'r arolygwyr yn ystod fy nyddiau gyda'r NCB ac roedd y cyfarfod yn wresog a defnyddiol.

Yn fwy diweddar, daeth Tony Upcott, a fu'n gweithio yn Six Bells pan oeddwn i'n rheolwr, yn Beiriannydd Trydanol yn Big Pit ac roedd y rheolwr presennol, Peter Walker, yn gyn-fyfyriwr i mi yng Ngholeg Polytechnig Cymru. Hefyd, cefais lawer o gysylltiad â'r curadur Ceri Thompson, fel cyd-hanesydd a chyfaill – mae fy mlwch cymorth cyntaf bellach yn rhan o'r casgliad glofaol yn Amgueddfa Cymru. Big Pit hefyd oedd lle cefais fy nghyfweld gan Melvyn Bragg ynglŷn â chloddio glo yn y 1930au a'm bywyd yn ddiweddarach fel gwirfoddolwr gyda British Executive Services Overseas a chael OBE. Mae'n dda gweld bod y cysylltiad agos â'r diwydiant glo wedi gwneud Big Pit yn amgueddfa o safon fyd-eang fel y mae heddiw.

Arthur Lewis OBE



Connections

I first visited Big Pit as a member of the Mechanisation Team for the Number 6 Area of the National Coal Board when I was sent there, and the adjoining Kays and Garn Drift Mine, to demonstrate the use of friction and hydraulic roof supports underground. Later as chairman of Group 1 BACM (British Association of Colliery Managers), I knew Glyn Morgan, the last NCB manager of Big Pit, not only as a member of the Association, but also as a friend and neighbour as we both lived in Newbridge. When I was the manager of Six Bells Colliery between 1966 and 1973, I became acquainted with Denis Puddle, the National Union of Mineworkers chairman at Big Pit, when we both served on the Number 6 Area, NCB Production Committee and the Health and Safety Committee. In addition, the first manager of Big Pit museum was Jack Davies, previously an NCB Group Planner, who had worked with me at Six Bells and was a friend as well as a colleague.

When Big Pit became a museum I had become a senior mining lecturer at the Polytechnic of Wales and took my family on a visit to Big Pit.

During our tour underground the guide, who had been a mine deputy under me at Six Bells, gave my grand daughter his flame safety lamp to hold and told her "Any questions ask your grandfather, he knows more about mining than I do!" I remember seeing a rocking horse in one of the underground stables down there; the guides had named it 'Shergar' after a famous

racehorse which had been kidnapped and never seen again.

With the closure of Britannia Colliery, which had been the training place for students studying surveying at the Polytechnic of Wales, I was asked to accompany Lewin Morgan, the Head of the Polytechnic's Mining Department, to visit Big Pit as an alternative. By then the museum manager was George Parr, a former member of the East Wales Area Mechanisation Team, who I knew personally from my time as a manager of several NCB pits. When we presented ourselves to George Parr's secretary we were told that he was engaged with members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Mines. My insistence that she acquainted Mr Parr with our presence resulted in George coming out of his office to greet us, and an appeal to me to assist him in his meeting with the inspectors.

On entering the office I said "Hello Albert" to the Chief Mines Inspector who had brought his staff of inspectors, mining, electrical and mechanical, to require Big Pit museum to operate as a working coal mine, "Have you brought all your staff out for a lunch and day out in Blaenafon?" I had experienced time with almost all the inspectors in my NCB days and the meeting was both cordial and useful.

In more recent years Tony Upcott, who had been in Six Bells when I was manager, was Electrical Engineer at Big Pit and the present manager, Peter Walker, was a former student of mine at the Polytechnic of Wales. In addition I have had much contact with the curator, Ceri Thompson, as both a fellow historian and friend - my first aid box is now a part of the coal mine collection of the National Museum Wales. Big Pit was also the place where I was interviewed by Melvyn Bragg about coal mining in the 1930s and my later life as a volunteer with the British Executive Service Overseas and being awarded an OBE. It is good to see that the close connection with the mining industry has made Big Pit the world class museum it is today.

Arthur Lewis OBE





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Ar agor – pob dydd
Chwefror – Tachwedd
9.30am – 5pm
Teithiau tanddaearol
10am – 3.30pm
Ffoniwch am amserau agor
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