

BIG PIT AMGUEDDFA LOFAOL CYMRU

BIG PIT NATIONAL COAL MUSEUM

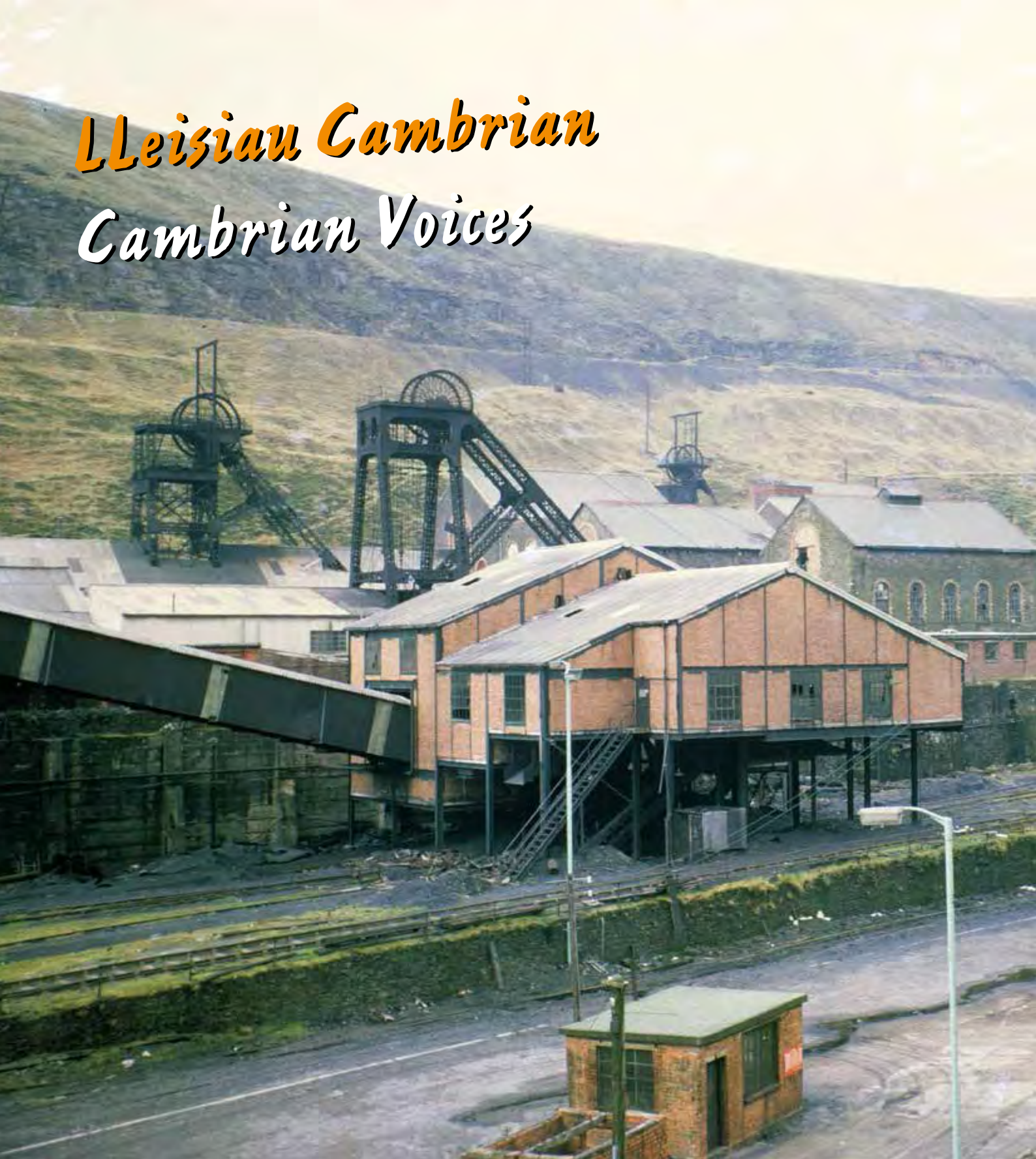
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GLO

COAL

Lleisiau Cambrian *Cambrian Voices*



Cyflwyniad

Yn 2014, â hithau'n hanner canrif ers trychineb glofa'r Cambrian ar 17 Mai 1965, cysylltodd Ceri Thompson, Curadur Big Pit Amgueddfa Lofaol Cymru, Blaenafon â fi i drafod y mater. Gofynnodd i fi awgrymu enwau cyn-weithwyr a swyddogion y Cambrian a fyddai'n hoffi rhannu eu straeon a'u profiadau, i'w cyhoeddi mewn rhifyn o Glo. Roeddwn i'n falch o allu helpu, ac wrth fy modd y byddai cenhedlaeth newydd, chwilfrydig yn cael cyfle i ddarllen am yr atgofion hynny, portreadau o waith a ffordd o fyw unigryw fyddai fel arall yn angof wedi marw'r adroddwyr. Yn anffodus, digwyddiadau mis Mai 1965 sy'n aros yn y cof. Ni allwn beidio meddwl y byddai'r 31 fu farw y diwrnod hwnnw, oni bai am y ffrwydrad, wedi cyfrannu at y cyhoeddiad hwn hefyd.

Roedd gan lawer o'r rhai a holwyd sawl dyletswydd wrth weithio danddaear, a chryn dipyn yn gweithio mewn glofeydd eraill hefyd. Yn eu plith, Blaenclydach [Gorci], Cilely, Lewis Merthyr, Tymawr, Coedely, Cwm, Lady Windsor a Nantgarw, ond bydd y rhan fwyaf yn cytuno mai'r Cambrian oedd y pwll gorau i weithio ynddo, am resymau niferus na all yr awdur mwyaf huawdl eu disgrifio. Yn ystod pedair blynedd ar ddeg o weithio yno, rhwng pymtheg a naw ar hugain oed, profiais awyrgylch cwbl unigryw yng nghwmni dynion heb eu tebyg. Yno y tyfais i'n ddyn, a chael fy nghyfoethogi gan y cymeriadau a gwrddais a'r profiadau a gefais. Ni all yr un gair, brawddeg, paragraff, tudalen neu lyfr wneud cyfiawnder â'r amseroedd arbennig hynny.

Ym Mharc Coffa'r Cambrian, mae gwirfoddolwyr y Cambrian Memorial Society yn gweithio'n galed i gadw'r atgofion yn fyw am rai a gollodd eu bywydau neu eu hiechyd wrth drin y glo yng Nghwm Clydach. Rydym yn gwneud hyn trwy gynnal seremoni goffa flynyddol ond hefyd trwy gadw ardal y Parc a'i gwella trwy dorri tir newydd, ei throï'n lle o ddiddordeb a harddwch arbennig, yn rhywle y gall tad-cu fynd â'i wyrion am dro a dangos yr olwyn pen pwll lle'r arferai weithio 'slawer dydd. Mae hefyd yn fan cyfarfod, lle daw hen fois y Cambrian ynghyd, ar ôl degawdau o absenoldeb, i hel atgofion a gweld hen wyneb - y cyfarwydd yn anghyfarwydd drwy henaint hanner canrif!

Fe ddônt o bob cwr o Gymru a thu hwnt, gyda chwilfrydedd i weld pa welliannau a fu ar hyd y blynyddoedd ond yn bennaf i dalu teyrnged i'r rhai a dalodd y pris eithaf. Mae rhai'n gallu datgan mai trwy lwc yn unig y llwyddon nhw i ddianc, tra bo'r rhubanau glas ar ddwylo ac wynebau eraill yn dyst i greithiau'r gorffennol. Olion eu brwydrau danddaear, lle'r oedden nhw'n gyfarwydd â gallu glo i ddwyn bywydau, rhai'n frawychus o sydyn trwy ddamwain, eraill yn greulon o araf trwy glefyd y llwch. Syndod yw clywed cynifer felly, er gwaetha'u profiadau, yn datan yn gadarn - *'Difaru dim, petai modd troi'r cloc yn ôl, byddwn i'n gwneud y cyfan eto!'*

Bill Richards, Cambrian 1953-66

Introduction

In 2014, Ceri Thompson, Curator of Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenafon, contacted me concerning the fiftieth anniversary of the Cambrian Colliery disaster of May 17th, 1965. He asked if I could nominate former Cambrian workmen and officials who might like to relate their work experiences, to be published as an edition of 'Glo / Coal', a bi-lingual magazine published by National Museum Wales. I was pleased to be able to help and delighted that in doing so, the curious of succeeding generations would be able to access those reminiscences, portraits of a very special way of work and life, ones which would be eternally lost if they died with the interviewee. Sadly, those memories are dominated by the happenings on that day in May 1965 and it is an unavoidable thought that if the explosion had not occurred, some of the thirty-one who lost their lives might also have contributed to this publication.

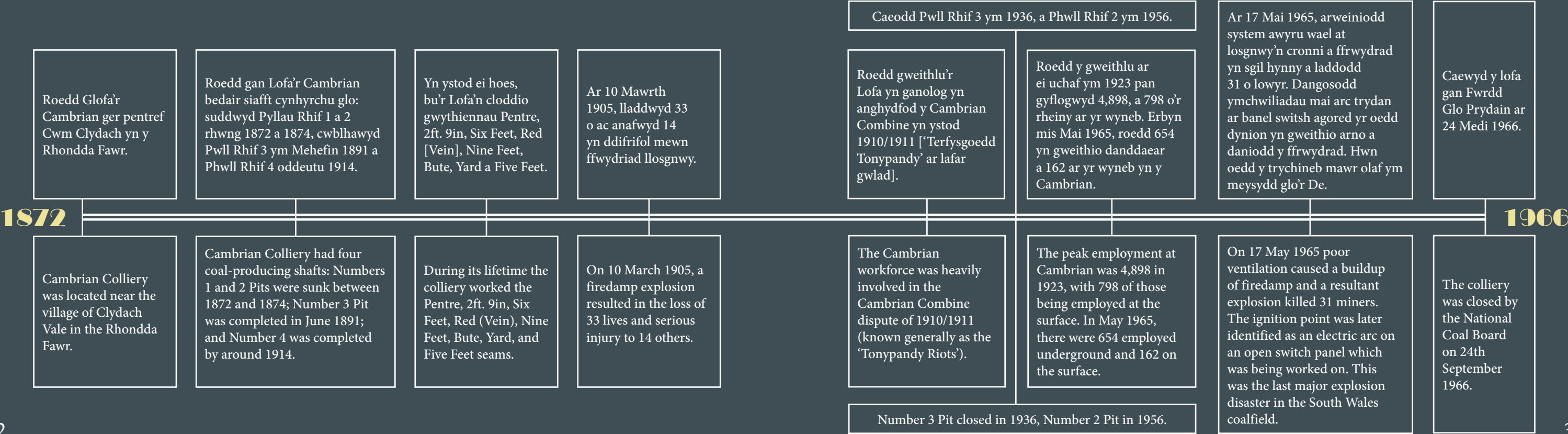
Many of those interviewed fulfilled more than one job during their times underground, and from their disclosures it can also be seen that many also worked at other collieries; Blaenclydach (Gorci), Cilely, Lewis Merthyr, Tymawr, Coedely, Cwm, Lady Windsor and Nantgarw are just some, but most will agree that Cambrian was the best pit which they worked in for a multitude of reasons that defy even the most eloquent writer. My fourteen years there between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine, exposed me to an environment and a calibre of men that can only be described as unique. There, I grew from a boy to a man, and left enriched by those associations and shared experiences. No one word, sentence, paragraph, page or book can properly capture or define those times.

At Cambrian Memorial Park the volunteers in the Cambrian Memorial Society strive to perpetuate the memories of those who lost lives or health in the production of coal in the Clydach Valley. We pursue that worthy aim not only by holding an annual remembrance ceremony, but by maintaining the Park area and enhancing it by innovation, making it a place of interest and beauty, a place where Tadcu (Grandad) can take his grand-children and show them, amongst other things the pit-top obelisk(s) below which he worked. It is a meeting place too, where sometimes after decades of absence, old, Cambrian men attend and have to announce themselves, their once unmistakable images unrecognised, transformed by the passage of half a century!

They come from many parts of Wales and even beyond our borders, partly prompted by a curiosity to witness the improvements that have taken place but mainly impelled by a desire to pay tribute to those who paid the ultimate price. Some able to pronounce that it was only by chance that they were not taken as well. Some are heavily be-medalled with blue ribbons incised into hands and faces. This is testament to their battles below ground where they were familiar with coal's capacity to take lives, some instantly by violence and others slowly choking with dust. How strange then, despite those experiences, that in conversation most gravitate to the same conclusion — *'No, no regrets, if the clock could be turned back I'd do it all again!'*

Bill Richards, Cambrian 1953-66

Glofa'r Cambrian / Cambrian Colliery



Lle diogel i weithio

Cefais fy ngeni ar 6 Ionawr 1914 yn Cambrian Terrace, Llwyn-y-pia. Symudon ni i Gwm Clydach pan oeddwn i'n bedair ar ddeg a dechreuais weithio ym Mhwl Rhif 1 Glofa'r Cambrian [Ardal Tydu] yn fuan wedyn. Cefais fy rhoi yng ngofal bachan am ddeuddydd er mwyn dysgu sut i drin injan halio chwyth fach [aer cywasgedig]. Ar ôl hynny, bues i'n gweithio ar ben fy hun yn tynnu dramiau gwag i mewn a mynd â'r rhai llawn yn ôl mas. Gweithiais ym Mhyllau Rhif 1, 3 a 4 yn y Cambrian, gan wneud pob math o dasgau, hyd yn oed ar y ffas lo am sbel.

Roedd Glofa'r Cambrian yn lle da, diogel i weithio, a dynion y Cambrian yn rhai da i weithio gyda nhw. Roedd y rhan fwyaf ohonyn nhw'n byw yn ardal Cwm Clydach, ond ambell un yn cerdded dwy filltir dros y mynydd o Gilfach-goch. Bu 'nhad yn gweithio fel 'gaffer halier' tan oedd yn 72 oed, a doedd e ddim eisiau gorffen wedyn! Ar un adeg, roedd pedwar ohonom yn gweithio danddaear yr un pryd, fy nhad, fy mrawd Jack a oedd yn reidiwr, fy mrawd hyn George a oedd yn fforman cludfelt, a fi. Cyn dyddiau'r baddondai pen pwll, roedd hi'n draed moch amser bath yn tŷ ni!

Collais fys ar ôl mynd yn sownd rhwng dwy dram ym 1938, a chollais lygad ym 1946 pan dorrodd uniad ar chwythbeipen. Pan gollais fy llygad, cefais fy rhoi ar fws ar fy mhen fy hun i fynd at y meddyg. Pan ailddechreuais i weithio wedyn, cynigiwyd dwy swydd i fi ar ben y pwll – naill ai ar y tip neu'r rhidyllfa. Dywedodd y rheolwr wrthyf am wrthod y rhain, a derbyn gwaith ar waelod pwll Rhif 1 yn lle hynny, a dweud "Ddoi lawr am unarddeg i weld os wyt ti'n iawn." Ac fe gadwodd at ei air. Roeddwn i'n mwynhau'r gwaith, yn gyrru injan halio drydan fach 50hp. Yn ddiweddarach, pan es i hawlio iawndal am golli bys, dywedon nhw na chawn ni'r un geiniog achos 'mod i'n gweithio'n anghyfreithlon ac na ddylwn i fod wedi bod yng ngwaelod y pwll yn y lle cyntaf gydag un llygad!

Roeddwn i ar shift y prynhawn pan ddigwyddodd y ddamwain ar 17 Mai 1965. Ffrwydrodd y lle am 1 o'r gloch, a minnau ar yr wyneb yn barod i fynd i lawr. Tua 2 o'r gloch, gofynnwyd i fi fynd i lawr i'r pwll i helpu i gludo'r cyrff mewn dramiau o grombil y pwll.

Pan gaeodd y Cambrian ym 1966, es i weithio fel labrwr cyffredin yn RAF Sain Tathan am saith mis, cyn mynd i ffatri Porth Textiles am saith mlynedd tan i fi ymddeol. Roedd Cwm Clydach yn lle hapusach pan oedd y lofa ar agor, gyda siopau o bob math, a doedd dim angen mynd i Donypandy hyd yn oed i nôl unrhyw beth. Mae'n dawel fel y bedd erbyn hyn, heblaw am feiciau cwad. Mae hyd yn oed ein clwb [Clwb y Gweithwyr Cwm Clydach neu'r 'Top Club' ar lafar gwlad] wedi cau a llosgi i'r llawr erbyn hyn. Mae'r rhai â swydd yn gorfod gadael y cwm i fynd i'r gwaith, ac mae llawer o ddieithriaid wedi symud yma. Roeddech chi'n gallu gadael eich drws ar agor ers talwm, ond petai chi'n gwneud hynny heddiw, byddan nhw'n dwyn y siwgr o'ch te chi!

Dw i'n naw deg naw oed, a bues i'n briod â Bessie Lehavre Ward am 75 mlynedd tan iddi farw dair blynedd yn ôl. Mae gen i ddwy ferch a mab, saith wyri ac wyres,

wyth gorwyr a dau or-or-wyrion. Dw i'n dal i gerdded lan y mynydd bob dydd, yn mynd i'r bingo yn y Monkey [roedd mwnci y tu ôl i'r bar yn ôl y sôn, ond y 'Mid-Rhondda Workingmen's Club' yn swyddogol] bob wythnos, a mas i ddawnsio yng Nghlwb y Gweithwyr Tonyrefail bob nos Sadwrn.

Trevor Ward



Trevor Ward a'i gor wyres Megan
Trevor Ward and his great granddaughter Megan

A safe place to work

I was born on the 6th January, 1914 in Cambrian Terrace, Llwynypia. When I was fourteen we moved to Clydach Vale and shortly after I started work in Cambrian Colliery Number 1 Pit (Tydu's District). I was put with chap for two days to train me to work on a small blast (compressed air) haulage engine. After that

I worked on my own bringing in journeys of empty drams and taking out the full ones. During my time underground I worked in Cambrian Number 1, Number 3 and Number 4 Pits and did a lot of different jobs, I even worked on the coal face for a while.

Cambrian Colliery was a good, safe, place to work and the Cambrian men were good to work with. Most of them lived in the Clydach Vale area but some used to walk the two miles over the mountain from Gilfach Goch. My father worked as a 'gaffer haulier' until he was seventy two and he didn't want to finish then! At one time there were four of us working underground at the same time, my father, my brother Jack who was a rider, my other brother George who was a face conveyor charge-man, and me. Before we had pithead baths and had to bath in the house it was chaos!

I lost a finger in 1938 when I caught it

between two drams and an eye in 1946 when a joint on the blast pipe broke. When I lost my eye I was put on a bus on my own to go down to the doctors. When I started back to work after losing my eye I was offered jobs above ground, either working on the tip or on the screens. The manager said not to take either job but to go take a job at Number 1 pit bottom, "I'll be down to see if you're OK at 11 o'clock". True to his word he came to see me at exactly that time. I enjoyed it at pit bottom where I was driving a small 50hp electric haulage engine. Later, when I went to claim compensation for the loss of my finger I was told that I wouldn't get anything because I was working illegally as I shouldn't have been down the pit with only one eye!

When the explosion happened at Cambrian on the 27th May 1965 I was working afternoon shift. The explosion happened about 1 o'clock and I was on the surface ready to go down. At about 2 o'clock I was asked to go down the pit to help bring the bodies out which were brought out in a journey of drams back to pit bottom.

When Cambrian shut in 1966 I went to work as a civilian labourer in RAF St Athans for seven months and then went to work in Porth Textiles for seven years until I retired. Clydach Vale was a happier place when the colliery was open, there were lots of shops here and you didn't even have to go as far as Tonypandy if you wanted anything. It's very quiet here now, apart from the quad bikes, even our club (Clydach Vale Workingmen's Club known locally as the 'Top Club') has closed down and is now burnt out. Those that have jobs have to go out of the valley for them and a lot of strangers have moved in. At one time you could leave your door open but if you tried that now they would have the sugar out of your tea!

I am ninety nine years old and I was married to Bessie Lehavre Ward for seventy five years until she died three years ago. I have two daughters and a son, seven grandchildren, eight great grandchildren and two great, great grandchildren. I still walk up the mountain every day, go to Bingo in the 'Monkey' (Apparently known as that because a monkey used to be kept in the bar – officially it was the Mid-Rhondda Workingmen's Club) every week and go dancing in Tonyrefail Workingmen's Club every Saturday night.

Trevor Ward



Y Dyn Achub

Roeddwn i'n swyddog shift nos yng Nglofa Lewis Merthyr ac yn ddyn achub rhan-amser. Ar 17 Mai 1965, cefais alwad i Orsaf Achub Dinas a'm cludo mewn cerbyd i Lofa'r Cambrian. Ar ôl cyrraedd yno, cawsom offer anadlu a'n hanfon danddaear ar unwaith fel rhan o dîm o chwech. Aethom i P26 District Gate Road a chyrraedd y ffordd gyflenwi trwy geuddrws yn llawr y Gate Road. Ein man archwilio dynodedig oedd o'r ceuddrws i gyffordd y Supply Road ac yna ymlaen i'r ffas lo i chwilio am oroeswyr. Ar y ffas lo, daethom wyneb yn wyneb â'r tîm achub arall.

Yna, cerddom yn ôl ar hyd y Ffordd Gyflenwi gan gyfri'r cylchoedd [cynhalbyst dur tua metr ar wahân] a gwneud nodyn mewn llyfr nodiadau, gan ddefnyddio 'ffigurau matsis' i ddangos y breichiau a'r coesau ac ati a lle'r oedd lleoliad y cyrff. Yna, byddem yn nodi rhif lamp y glöwr oddi ar becyn batri'r lamp. Buon ni yn yr ardal honno am ryw awr a hanner. Daethom yn ôl i'r brig a rhoi'r wybodaeth a gasglwyd i'r swyddog ar y wyneb. Aeth â'r wybodaeth i'r lamprwm wedyn, lle byddai swyddog y lampau'n cyfateb rhifau'r lampau ag enwau'r dynion fel eu bod nhw'n gwybod yn union lle'r oedd pawb. Yn y diwedd, aethom yn ôl i'r orsaf achub wedyn.

Roy Hamer

The Rescue Man

I was an official on nights in Lewis Merthyr Colliery and a part time rescue brigade man. On the 17th May 1965 I was called out to Dinas Rescue Station, put in a transport vehicle and taken to Cambrian Colliery. On arrival we put on our breathing apparatus and were sent straight underground as part of a team of six men. We went into the P26 District gate road and entered the supply road through a trap door in the air bridge. Our duty was to walk from the junction of the supply road to the junction of the Maendy Level to look for any survivors. Our destination was the coal face where we met the other team coming down towards us.

We then walked back counting the rings (*steel roof supports about a metre apart*) and noting in a note book, using 'matchstick figures' to show the position a body was found in, where the bodies were. We would then note down the man's lamp number from his lamp battery pack. We were in the district about an hour and a half. We came back up the pit and gave the information we had collected to an official on the surface. He would then take the information to the lamp room where the lamp man would match up the lamp numbers with the men's names so that they knew exactly where everyone was. After a while we went back to the rescue station.

Roy Hamer

Y pwll gorau

Cefais fy ngeni yn y Gilfach-goch ym 1931. Gadewais yr ysgol ym 1946 a dechrau gweithio fel gwas colier yng nglofa Trane. Pan oeddwn i'n ddeunaw, es i weithio yng nglofa Britannic Merthyr a chael fy 'stent' [*man gweithio ar y ffas lo*] fy hun yng ngwythien Bute. Hen le ofnadwy i weithio oedd hwnnw, gyda 'thop meddal' [*to brau*] a 'gwaelod meddal' [*amodau tebyg i glai dan draed*] ac roeddem ni'n cloddio stentiau chwe llathen wrth bedair troedfedd - roedd hi'n waith caled crafu'r glo gyda'r 'puncher pick' [*ffon niwmatig*] a'i rawio ar y cludfelt newydd. Pan wnes i waith tebyg yng nglofa'r Cambrian yn ddiweddarach, fe lwyddais i roi'r gaib reit drwy fy nhroed fy hun!

Ar ôl i'r Britannic gau ym mis Ionawr 1960, cefais fy nhrosglwyddo i lofa Cwm, Beddau. Er 'mod i'n nabod tipyn o fois y Gilfach-goch yno, roedd yn gas gen i'r Cwm. Roedd yn lle peryglus llawn nwy, a gyda finnau wedi symud i Gwm Glydach erbyn hynny roedd e'n rhy bell, felly symudais i lofa'r Cambrian - y pwll gorau i fi weithio ynddo erioed.

Roedd yna draddodiad od yn y Cambrian, pan oedd rhywun newydd yn dechrau ar y 'barry' [*sef y ffas lo i lowyr y Cambrian*], byddai'r coliers eraill yn swatio at ei gilydd mewn cylch i drafod a fyddan nhw'n barod i weithio gyda chi. Trwy lwc, dyma nhw'n fy nerbyn i! Roedd glo'n cael ei dorri yn ystod shiftiau'r dydd a'r prynhawn, a'r cludfelt yn cael ei 'droi' [*symud ymlaen i safle newydd*] ar y shift nos. Roedd y 'barry boss' [*capten y tîm*], ar ôl trafod gyda'r rheolwr, yn trefnu system gronni lle'r oedd pob glöwr yn cael yr un faint o gyflog waeth faint o lo oedden nhw'n ei gynhyrchu. Tric arall oedd y system rota, lle gallai dau golier ar shift brynhawn gofnodi 'damwain' ddychmygol a gadael y 'barry' yn gynnar os oedden nhw wedi llwyddo i glirio'u stent.

Ym Mhwll Rhif 4 oeddwn i fel arfer, ond fe dreuliais i ambell ddiwrnod yn Ffas P26 ym Mhwll Rhif 1 lle digwyddodd y ffrwydrad. Gorffennais i yn y Cambrian ym 1965, fis neu ddau wedi'r trychineb. Roeddwn i wedi gweithio ar y ffas ers yn 14 oed. Ar ôl y Cambrian, bues i'n gweithio yn Porth Textiles [*addurniadau Nadolig*], Beatus [*cartonau cardbord*] a'r Bathdy Brenhinol, oedd yn ddiflas ofnadwy!

Walter Davies

The best pit

I was born in Gilfach Goch in 1931. I left school in 1946 and started as a collier's boy in Trane Colliery. When I was eighteen I went to work in Britannic Merthyr Colliery and got my own stent (*working place on a coal face*) in the Bute Seam. The Bute was a terrible seam to work, it had a 'soft top' (*friable roof condition*) and a 'soft bottom' (*clay like conditions underfoot*) and we were working stents of six yards long by four feet deep - it was hard work getting the coal off with a 'puncher pick' (*pneumatic pick*) and filling it onto the conveyor by shovel. Later, when I was doing similar work in Cambrian Colliery I actually managed to put a puncher pick straight through my foot!

After Britannic finished in January 1960, I was transferred to Cwm Colliery, Beddau. Although there were a lot of men I knew from Gilfach Goch working there, I didn't like Cwm at all. I thought that it was a dangerous, gassy, pit and, because I had moved to live in Clydach Vale by then and it was a long journey to and from the Cwm, so I transferred to Cambrian Colliery - the best pit I ever worked in.

There was a strange custom at Cambrian, when someone new started on a 'barry' (*as a coal face was known in Cambrian Colliery*) the other colliers would huddle together in a circle to discuss whether they would be willing to work with you. Luckily I was accepted! Coal was cut on day and afternoon shifts and the conveyor was 'turned' (*moved forward into a new position*) on nights. The 'barry boss' (*team captain*), in negotiation with the manager, organised a pooling system where all the colliers got equal wages whether they had produced the same amount of coal or not. Another trick was a rota where two colliers on afternoon shift could report an imaginary 'accident' and leave the 'barry' early if they had cleared their stent.

I normally worked in Number 4 Pit but I had worked for a couple of days in P26 Face in Number 1 Pit where the explosion later occurred. I finished at Cambrian in 1965, a couple of months before the explosion. I had worked on the coal face since I was fourteen years old. After Cambrian I worked in Porth Textiles (*Christmas decorations*), Beatus (*cardboard cartons*), and the Royal Mint which I found very boring!

Walter Davies



Diolch i Bill Richards
Courtesy Bill Richards



Roy Hamer

Gwaith llaw

Cefais fy ngeni yng Nghwm Clydach ym mis Mai 1932. Roedd fy nhad yn ffitiwr yn y lofa a dad-cu'n golier ac yn aelod o'r Gwarchodlu Cymreig yn ystod y Rhyfel Mawr – a'r ddau'n gweithio yng nglofa'r Cambrian. Es i Ysgol Ramadeg Tonypandy, ond bu farw fy nhad, a bu'n rhaid i fi adael cyn 'mod i'n bymtheg gan na allai mam fforddio 'nghadw i yn yr ysgol. Ffitiwr glofa oeddwn i am fod, ond pan ddechreuais i gyda'r NCB, dyma nhw'n fy anfon i weithio yn y rhidyllfa yn didol'r cerrig o'r glo. Ar ôl chwe mis, cefais swydd yn gyrru injan halio fach a dyna fues i'n ei wneud nes cyrraedd un ar hugain oed pan gefais ddewis – naill ai gweithio danddaear neu ymuno â'r Fyddin. Penderfynais fynd danddaear, a gweithio fel ffitiwr pibelli ym Mhwl Rhif 4, o leiaf roedd e'n waith llaw a sbaner!

Yn nes ymlaen, bues i'n trin peiriant oedd yn chwythu rwbel a malurion wedi'i olchi i'r gwagle y tu ôl i'r talcen ar ôl cloddio am lo. Ond ffitiwr cynnal a chadw oeddwn i am fod, a byddwn i'n plagio Vince Jenkins, swyddog yr NUM, a arferai gynnal cyfarfodydd yn y Clwb Marcsaidd, Blaenclydach, tan iddo lwyddo i fy enwebu i ar gyfer cwrs undydd yr wythnos yn Ysgol Hyfforddi Britannia. O fan'ny wedyn, cefais swydd fel ffitiwr cynnal a chadw o'r diwedd – roeddwn i'n wyth ar hugain oed, ac wedi cyrraedd!

Tua 1.30 o'r gloch y bore ar 17 Mai 1965, roeddwn i'n gweithio ym Mhwl Rhif 4 pan ddywedodd yr oferman fod rhywbeth wedi digwydd ym Mhwl Rhif 1 a bod rhaid cael y dynion i gyd yn ôl i fyny. Es i lan y pwll gyda'r ddau ffitiwr arall, Brian Carpenter a Hayden Curnel, a Fred Banner y reidiwr [oedd yn gyfrifol am draffig danddaear]. Aethon ni i'r lamprwm, heb fod ddim callach beth oedd wedi digwydd, a gweld nodyn ar ein lampau yn dweud wrthym am fynd i swyddfa'r rheolwr. Yn y swyddfa wedyn, dyma nhw'n dweud "Wy' moyn i chi fynd lawr i Bwll Rhif 1 i fi. Nid gorchymyn ydw i, ond gofyn, fydda i ddim yn dal dig os ydych chi'n gwrthod."

Felly, aethon ni yn ôl i'r lamprwm i gael lampau newydd, i lawr i Bwll Rhif 1 a cherdded i ffas lo P26. Ar ôl cyrraedd yno, dyma ni'n cyfarfod Idris 'Digger' Davies a Mel Harcombe, dau oferman Pwll Rhif 4 – a theimlo rhywfaint o ryddhad o'u gweld nhw. Dywedodd Mel, "Braf gweld fy mois i yma. Dw i moyn i chi fynd i'r ffas gyda Les Tittle [y dirprwy], fe wnaiff e ddweud wrthydd chi beth i'w wneud."

Wnai fyth anghofio'r olygfa yn y ffas. Roedd cyrff ym mhob man. Buon nhw farw yn y fan a'r lle yn sgil y nwy (carbon monocsid), yn sefyll, yn plygu neu'n cyrcydu wrth eu gwaith. Roedd un dyn yn dal i afael yn dynn mewn gordd. Roedd yr aer yn drewi o flew a gwallt wedi llosgi, ac roedd eu breichiau a'u gwalltau'n frown golau. Meddai Les, "Mae'r stretsieri ar eu ffordd, symudwn ni'r cyrff yn nes at y cludfelt gadwyn". Gan fod y to mor isel, roedd rhaid i ni sythu'r cyrff trwy afael am eu canol a'u plygu, ac wedyn gwneud hyn gyda'u breichiau a choesau. Pan gyrhaeddodd y stretsieri, dyma symud y cyrff fesul un, gan wthio a llusgo pob stretsier yn ôl i ffordd y cludfelt, rhoi'r corff ar y cludfelt, ei orchuddio â lliain bradish, a dychwelyd i'r ffas

Spanner work

I was born in Clydach Vale in May 1932. My father was a colliery fitter and my grandfather was a collier who had been in the Welsh Guards during the Great War. They both worked in Cambrian Colliery. I went to Tonypandy Grammar School but my father died and I had to leave before I was fifteen as my mother couldn't afford to keep me in school. I wanted to be a colliery fitter but when I started with the NCB I was sent to work on the screens sorting the stone from the coal. After six months I was given a job driving a small haulage engine which I did until I was twenty one when I either had to work underground or join the Army. I chose underground and worked as pipe fitter in Number 4 Pit, at least it was spanner work!

Later I worked on the 'stowing machine' which blew

washed debris into the empty space behind the coal face after the coal had been extracted. However I still wanted to be maintenance fitter and used to badger Vince Jenkins an NUM official who used to hold meetings in the Marxian Club, Blaenclydach, until he successfully nominated me for a day a week course at Britannia Training School. From there I got a job as a maintenance fitter at long last – I was now twenty eight years old and I'd arrived!

At about 1:30 am on the 17th May, 1965 I was working in Number 4 Pit when the overman said that something had happened in Number 1 Pit and he had to get all the men up. I went up the pit with two other fitters, Brian Carpenter and Hayden Curnel, and Fred Banner a rider (*person in charge of traffic under ground*). We went over to the lamp room, still not knowing what had happened,

and saw notes on our lamps to go to the manager's office. In the office we were told "I want you chaps to go down Number 1 Pit for me. I'm not ordering, I'm requesting, if you refuse I won't hold it against you."

So we went back to the lamp room for fresh lamps and descended Number 1 Pit and walked in to P26 coal face. On arriving at the face we met two Number 4 Pit overmen, Idris 'Digger' Davies and Mel Harcombe, seeing them relieved our tension a bit. Mel said "Nice to see my boys here. I want you to go into the face with Les Tittle (*deputy*) and he'll tell you what to do."

In the face was a scene I'll never forget, there were bodies everywhere. They had died from the gas (*carbon monoxide*) in the positions they had been working, standing up, kneeling or bending. One man still had a sledge gripped in his hands. There was a strong smell of singed hair and their arms and hair was alight brown colour. Les said "There are stretchers coming in, we'll move the bodies closer to the chain conveyor". Because of the low height we had to straighten the bodies by holding them around the middle and bending them, we also had to do this with their arms and legs. When the stretchers arrived we placed each one on a stretcher. We then pushed and dragged each stretcher back to the belt conveyor road, put the body onto the conveyor, covered it with brattice cloth, and went back into the face for the next one. I believe we got fourteen bodies out. After the bodies had been taken out on the conveyor they were placed into drams and taken to pit bottom.



John Benbow

lo am y nesaf. Dw i'n credu i ni gludo pedwar corff ar ddeg allan i gyd. Ar ôl i'r cyrff fynd ar y cludfelt, dyma'u rhoi nhw mewn dramiau a'u cludo i waelod y pwll.

Ymhellach i fyny'r ffas, yn nes at y ffrwydrad, roedd tasg erchyll gan y dynion oedd yn gweithio gyda'r dyn ambiwlans, Joe Dickman – arwr y dydd i mi'n bersonol; roedd y dynion druan wedi'u dal yng nghanol y gwres, a dim modd eu hadnabod. Roedd un o'r glowyr wedi bod i ffwrdd o'r gwaith am dri mis ar ôl hollti'i benglog mewn damwain beic modur, ond newydd ddychwelyd i'r gwaith y bore hwnnw. Aeth e' byth adre. Cafodd rhai ddihangfa lwcus, roedd un dyn wedi gadael y ffas i nôl ei botel ddŵr a dau arall wedi gadael i drafod gêm ddartiau'r noson gynt.

Un o'r dynion a anfonwyd o Bwll Rhif 4 i gasglu'r cyrff ym Mhwll Rhif 1 oedd Jack 'Bwnging' Thomas. Roedd Jack yn helpu gweddill y bois yn y ffas i gludo'r dioddefwyr allan, ac yn dal un gornel o'r stretsier oedd yn cludo'r cyrff. Wn i ddim a sylweddolodd Jack taw corff ei frawd Bill oedd ar y stretsier hwnnw.

Fe ddechreuon ni am hanner awr wedi un, a dychwelyd i'r wyneb tua saith. Wrth gyrraedd y brig, rwy'n cofio'r camerâu teledu yno a hefyd aelodau o Fyddin yr Iachawdwriaeth yn rhannu diodydd poeth, brechdanau a sigarennau. Er nad ydw i'n grefyddol, anffyddiwr ydw i, bydda i wastad yn rhoi arian i Fyddin yr Iachawdwriaeth. Fe gerddon ni draw i'r baddondai lle'r oedd miloedd o

bobl o amgylch y lofa yn disgwyl am newydd. Collodd 31 o ddynion dewr eu bywydau'r diwrnod hwnnw.

Roedd yr angladd yn anferthol; ymgasglodd pawb ger y New Inn, neu'r Top Club heddiw, a cherdded i fynwent Trealaw dan arweiniad John Gregory – 'Jack Greg' – glöwr a gweinidog yng Nghapel Bush. Roedd miloedd yn llenwi'r pafinau a'r Rhondda i gyd mewn galar. Fuodd pethau byth yr un fath yn y lolfâ wedi'r ffrwydrad. Roedd rhai o'r dynion yn teimlo mor isel nes penderfynu rhoi'r gorau iddi, yn enwedig ar ôl colli ffrindiau yn y ffrwydrad. Flwyddyn yn ddiweddarach roedd glofa'r Cambrian wedi cau.

Gorffennais i gyda'r diwydiant glo pan gaeodd y Cambrian. Cefais swydd fel ffitiwr gyda Worcester Ceramics, Tonyrefail. Doedd e ddim yr un fath â gweithio danddaear, mae criw gwahanol yn gweithio mewn ffatri, a dyw'r un agosatrwydd a chyfeillgarwch ddim yno. Roe'n i hefyd yn teimlo allan o'n nyfnder, ac fe dŕiais i am swydd gyda York Trailers. Od fe ges i gynnig swydd mewn adran wahanol o'r ffatri. Bellach, roeddwn i'n gweithio gyda deugain o fenywod, yn was bach iddyn nhw yn cadw'r peiriannau i droi, ond dechreuais i fwynhau gweithio yn y ffatri. Arhosais i yn Worcester Ceramics tan i'r ffatri gau.

John Benbow

Bywyd garw

Cefais fy ngeni ym mhentref Dinas ym mis Rhagfyr 1939, a gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed ym mis Rhagfyr 1955. Roedd fy nhad yn löwr yng nglofa Ely, Pen-y-graig, ac wedyn yng nglofa Cilely a glofa Wern Tarw ger Pen-coed. Roedd fy mam yn daer yn erbyn i fi fynd i'r pwll, ond roedd hi'n dal yn adeg consgripsiwn, ac roedd yna aelwyd hapus iawn yn Dinas a doeddwn i ddim ar frys i adael. Y dewis oedd naill ai'r pwll neu'r fyddin, a'r pwll aeth â hi gan nad oeddwn i eisiau mynd i'r fyddin.

Es i lofa Wattstown am hyfforddiant danddaear ymarferol ac yna Crawshay Villa am yr hyfforddiant theori lle buo ni'n dysgu am gymorth cyntaf a diogelwch. Roeddwn i fod i fynd i lofa Lewis Merthyr yn wreiddiol, ond gyda fy nhad a'n ewythr yng nglofa Wern Tarw, yna fues i o 1956 tan 1959. Ar ôl gorffen hyfforddi, es i'n swyddog hedins, yn drilio tyllau tanio, tanio, rhawio oddi ar fat dur i'r dramiau a gosod cylchau [*cyndalbyst to bwaog*]. Roedd bwcedi peiriant EIMCO yn bethau prin y dyddiau 'ny, felly gwaith caib a rhaw oedd e'!

Roedd Wern Tarw yn lle eitha da i weithio ynddo. Roeddech chi'n gweithio'n galed, ac roedd digon o gymeriadau o lefydd fel Heol-y-cyw, Pen-coed a Llanharan yno. I fachan ifanc, roedd yn antur. Un cymeriad sy'n aros yn y cof yw'r dyn Pentecostaidd rhonc hyn. Un diwrnod, gofynnodd rhywun i Wyddel yn y criw "Shwt ddiwrnod ges ti Jim?" ac atebodd e, "Ddim yn ddrwg, wy' di llenwi chwe dram," ac ychwanegodd y boi Pentecostaidd, "Nage

ti lanwodd y dramiau, ond Duw!" ac meddai Jim, "Wel, dyna beth od, achos sa' i di weld e drwy'r dydd!" Tan iddyn nhw adeiladu'r baddondai yn y 1950au, mynd adre'n frwnt fydden ni. Bath tun o flaen tân oedd hi cyn hynny. Roedd y fenyw oedd yn casglu'r rhent wastad yn galw pan fydden ni'n ymolchi, nid bod taten o ots gan dad, ond roeddwn i bob amser yn cwato o dan y dŵr.

Roedd Wern Tarw yn bwl 'teuluol' lleol. Ym 1956, holodd cyfrinfâr undeb a fydden nhw'n barod i dderbyn ffoaduriaid o Hwngari yn y pwll. Er i ni anfon cyfraniad atyn nhw, pleidleisio yn erbyn y syniad

Further up the face, nearer the explosion, the men working with ambulance man, Joe Dickman, who I regard as the hero of the day, had a more gruesome task; the poor chaps there had caught the full blast and were unrecognisable. One of the miners had been off work for three months with a fractured skull due to a motor cycle accident but had returned to work that morning. He never returned home. Some had a lucky escape, one man had left the face to drink from his water bottle and another two had left the face to discuss the previous evening's dart match.

Amongst the men sent from Number 4 pit to retrieve the bodies in Number 1 pit was a Jack 'Bwnging' Thomas. Jack worked with the rest of the boys in the face getting the victims out and at one point was at one corner of a stretcher as it was carried. I don't know if Jack was aware that on that stretcher was the body of his brother Bill.

We had gone down the pit about half past one and went back up about seven. On coming back to the surface I remember the television cameras being there but I also remember the Salvation Army giving out hot drinks, sandwiches and cigarettes. Although I'm not religiously inclined, I'm an atheist; I'll always give money to the Salvation Army. We walked over to the baths and there were thousands of people around the colliery waiting for news. Thirty one brave men lost their lives that day.

The funeral was huge; we assembled by the New Inn, now called 'The Top Club', and walked to Trealaw Cemetery led by John Gregory – 'Jack Greg' – a miner who was also the pastor of Bush Chapel. Thousands lined the pavements; it was a tragic day for the Rhondda. After the explosion things weren't right in the pit. Some men were so depressed that they finished, especially if they had lost friends in the explosion. A year after the explosion Cambrian Colliery closed.

I finished in the coal industry when Cambrian closed. I got a job in Worcester Ceramics in Tonyrefail as a fitter. It wasn't the same as being underground, there are a different set of people working in a factory, not much comradeship. I was also out of my depth a bit and tried for a job in York Trailers. However, I was offered a job in a different section of the factory. I was now working with forty girls and at their beck and call to keep their machines going, but I started to enjoy factory work. I stayed at Worcester Ceramics until it closed.

John Benbow

It was a rough road

I was born in Dinas in December 1939 and left school in December 1955. I was fifteen years old. My father was a miner in Ely Colliery, Penygraig, then Cilely Colliery and then in Wern Tarw Colliery, near Pencoed. My mother was dead against me working in the pit but conscription was still in and we had a happy house in Dinas so I was in no hurry to leave it. The choice was either the pit or the army and I chose the pit because I didn't want to go into the army.

I went to Wattstown Colliery for practical underground training and Crawshay Villa for the theory where we learned first aid and safety aspects. I was directed to go to Lewis Merthyr Colliery but my father and uncle were in Wern Tarw Colliery so I worked there from 1956 to about 1959. After completing my training I became a heading man, drilling shot holes, firing, shovelling off a steel mat into drums and hanging rings (*arched roof supports*) up. EIMCO mechanical bucket loaders were in short supply then – so it was filling straight off the mat!

As pits go, Wern Tarw was a pretty good place to work. You worked hard and there were plenty of characters there from places such as Heol y Cyw, Pencoed and Llanharan. To a young boy it was a kind of adventure. One character that stands out was a staunch Pentecostal. One day someone asked an Irishman who was working there "What kind of day have you had, Jim?" and he replied "Not bad, I've filled six drams", and the Pentecostal broke in and said "It wasn't you that filled those drams, it was God", and Jim said "Well. That's funny, I haven't seen him near the place all day!" We came home dirty until the 1950s when they built the baths, it was a tin bath in front of the fire. The rent woman always seemed to call in when we were bathing, my father didn't care but I always ducked down under the water.



Gareth Hutchings

wnaethon ni. Dw i'n credu bod glofeydd Tŷ Mawr a'r Cwm wedi'u derbyn. Yn ddiweddarach, fe sylwais eu bod nhw [gweithwyr o ddwyrain Ewrop yn gyffredinol] yn yffarn o weithiwr da ond ddim yn cydymffurfio â'n safonau diogelwch ni bob amser ac yn gwneud pethau dwl. Mae'n siŵr eu bod nhw mewn picil ac eisiau'r arian.

Roeddwn i'n gweithio gyda'r 'trowyr' cludfeltiau [y dynion oedd yn symud y cludfeltiau ymlaen ar ôl tynnu'r glo oddi arnynt], ac fel arfer, byddai'r gadwyn yn cael ei thorri ac yn rhedeg i lawr cafnau'r cludfeltiau i'r dram yn yr hedin. Yna, byddai'r cafnau'n cael eu 'troi' [eu datgymalu a'u symud ymlaen]. Y drafferth oedd y byddai'r dynion yn gweithio yn yr hedin ôl, ac weithiau byddai cerrig yn disgyn i'r cafnau, ac yn hedfan i lawr y ffas heb y 'flights' i'w rhwystro. Un diwrnod, ychydig cyn gwyliau'r glowyr, dyma garreg yn hyrddio i lawr a tharo fy arddwrn. Erbyn deall, nid garddwrn poenus oedd yr unig beth oedd gen i, roedd gen i lid y pendics hefyd! Pan ddes i allan o'r ysbyty, sylwais fod fy nhad yn benisel, a dywedodd fod un o'r cerrig hynny wedi taro 'Shamo' fy hen byti ar gefn ei ben, a'i ladd.

Pan oeddwn i yng ngwaelodion Wern Tarw, aeth y lle ar dân [Awst 1964]. Dywedodd un dyn ei fod yn gallu arogl rhywbeth yn llogi, ond allwn i ddim, felly dywedais wrtho am beidio siarad dwli. Roeddwn i'n crash pacio [dymchwel y to er mwyn llenwi'r ardal wastraff y tu ôl i'r ffas] fel rhan o'r shifft nos, roedd hi'n gynnes iawn ac roeddwn i wedi gwneud popeth gallwn ni, felly es i gysgu am awr fach. Deffrais yn sydyn wedyn, a gweld golau'n symud a neidio o gwmpas, a meddwl "Mae rhywun wedi cael damwain" yna fe waeddodd rhwun "Dere, glou, ma' na dân gob" [tân disymwth yng nghanol y gwastraff tu ôl i'r ffas]. Credwch chi fi, es i oddi yno fel mellten! Roedd yn dynion eraill am adael ar y 'spake' [trên cludo dynion], ond roeddwn i'n nabod Wern Tarw fel cefn fy llaw erbyn hynny, ac fe ddilynais i lwybr llygad i'r ffordd ddychwelyd [lle'r oedd yr awel awyru'n cael ei chyfeirio i fyny'r siafft ar ôl mynd drwy'r lefelau]. Pan gyrhaeddais i'r ffordd dyma fi'n sylweddoli "Dw i mewn simnai, ac i ble mae mwg yn mynd?" Felly, dyma fi'n rhedeg nerth fy nhraed, a fi oedd un o'r cyntaf ar y wyneb. Dychwelais i'r pwll drannoeth, gweld yr holl fwg a meddwl, "roeddwn i'n rhedeg lan y pwll 'na saith awr yn ôl!" Fe gaeon nhw'r pwll ar unwaith am nad oedd modd rheoli'r fflamau – efallai ei fod e'n dal i losgi heddiw. Chafodd neb niwed, diolch i Dduw. Dim ond dwy farwolaeth dwi'n eu cofio yn Wern Tarw.

Cefais jobyn labro ym Margam am gyfnod wedyn. Daeth y swydd honno i ben, a bues i'n chwilio am waith wedyn. Yn niffyg popeth arall, dechreuais i weithio ym Mhwll Rhif 4, glofa'r Cambrian, ym mis Medi 1965, ychydig wedi'r ffrwydrad. Roedd y pwll dan gwmwl, a phawb yn drist gan fod cymaint o ddynion wedi'u lladd.

Roeddwn i'n creu pont aer ym Mhwll Rhif 4 ddechrau 1966. Roeddwn i'n gallu gweld eu bod nhw'n mynd ati'r ffordd anghywir, ond dyma fi'n cau mhen gan fy mod i mewn pwll gwahanol nawr a ddim am i neb feddwl mod i'n rhy fawr i'n sgidie. Dyna pryd gwrddais i â Bill Richards, a oedd yn ddirprwy. Doedd hi'n fawr o ffrae, er mod i braidd yn grac. Roedd gwely o graig yng nghanol y bont aer, ond roedd hi'n nos Wener a finnau'n ysu i fynd i glwb yr NUM. Roeddwn i wedi cloddio twll neu ddau yn y graig ac eisiau 'pop' bach o ffrwydrion i'w llacio a'i thorri rywfaint.

Byddai hynny'n iawn mewn pwll bach fel Wern Tarw, ond yn y Cambrian, roedd diogelwch yn hollbwysig yn sgil yr hyn oedd wedi digwydd yno. Gwrthododd adael i fi danio ffrwydrion ac, er mod i'n gallu deall ei bwynt, roeddwn i'n ei ddiawlio dan fy anadl wrth i fi orfod chwalu'r graig â gorrdd.

Un diwrnod, roeddwn i'n dymchwel y gob [y gwastraff y tu ôl i'r ffas ar ôl cloddio'r glo oddi yno] yn 912 [y ffas lo] er mwyn lleihau'r pwysau ar y ffas. Roeddwn i'n brysur yn torri un o brif gynhalbyst pren y to gyda'r fwyell, pan deimlais i law ar fy ysgwydd, ac edrychais i fyny i weld clochfaen cymaint â Big Ben [haearnfaen yn y strata uwchben y wythïen lo ac sy'n dueddol o gwympto ar ôl cloddio glo oddi tano]. Oni bai am Jack Farr [nai Tommy Farr y bocsiwr] byddwn i'n ddim mwy na ffosil yng nghrombil y Cambrian. Yn ffodus, ges i byth godwm cas, sawl ddihangfa lwcus ond dim byd mawr.

Roedd y Cambrian yn bwl mwy na Wern Tarw, ac roedd gweithio ar y ffas lo'n galetach. Yn Wern Tarw, roedd rhediad neu oledf y wythïen yn ei gwneud hi'n haws i chi glirio'ch stent [man gweithio] gan fod y glo'n dueddol o ddisgyn ar y cludfelt, ond roeddech chi'n gorfod rhawio bob owns yn y Cambrian. Er hynny, roedd yr hwyl a'r ysbryd gystal yn y Cambrian. Pan gaeodd y pwll hwnnw, symudais i lofa'r Cwm.

Roedd yr awyrgylch yn wahanol eto yng nglofa'r Cwm, lle'r oedd y ffas lo wedi'i mecaneiddio'n llawn o gymharu â ffasy confensiynol [llenwi â llaw] y Cambrian. Doedd dim cymaint o bwyslais ar ddiogelwch yn y Cwm, fodd bynnag. Un o'r pethau cyntaf welais i oedd dau Bwyliad yn reidio i lawr cludfelt y ffas gyda dolen cynhalbost ar eu hysgwyddau – hynny yn y Diamond District. Roeddwn i'n gwneud gwaith trwsio [cynnal a chadw'r ffrydd], ond yn mynd o le i le yn hytrach nag aros mewn man penodol. Dim ond ychydig wythnosau y bues i yno, gan nad oeddwn i eisiau gweithio'r shifft nos yn rheolaidd. A dweud y gwir, roeddwn i wedi edrych ymlaen at fynd i'r Cwm, gallen i fod wedi cael un o dai'r NCB yng Nghae Fadde [Pentre'r Eglwys] ganddyn nhw pe tawn i wedi aros yno. Fe setlodd llawer o fois y Cam [Cambrian] yn yr ardal, a byddwn i wedi croesawu'r cyfle i adael y cwm a byw mewn ardal brafiach, ond roeddwn i'n gorfod gweithio'r shifft nos yn gyson!

Es i weld Mac [Mr MacDonald, rheolwr y Cwm] i drafod gweithio'r prynhawniau yn lle hynny, ond y dewis oedd naill ai'r shifft nos neu gwplau llwyr. Roedd Mac yn gymeriad, roedd ganddo Alsatian yn ei swyddfa, dwi'n credu ei fod yn defnyddio'r ci i'w warchod gan nad oedd e'n dal iawn. Er i fi bledio'n daer i gael gweithio'n rheolaidd yn y pnawniau, doedd dim yn tycio. Roedd rhaid i'r reparwyr weithio'r nos, felly penderfynais roi'r gorau iddi.

Ffarweliais â'r glofeydd, a mynd ar gwrs hyfforddi'r llywodraeth mewn weldio, a chael hwyl arni. Weldiwr fues i am weddiill fy oes wedyn. Ar y cyfan, roedd yn fywyd caled. Gweithio'n galed, chwarae'n galed. Fyddwn i'n dychwelyd danddaear eto? Yn syml: NA!

Gareth Hutchings

Wern Tarw was a local 'family' pit. In 1956 the union lodge was asked if they would accept Hungarian refugees into the pit. We gave a donation to them but voted against accepting them. I think that Ty Mawr and Cwm (collieries) did accept them. I later found them (eastern European workers in general) damn good workers but they didn't always comply with our safety standards and did silly things. I suppose they were desperate and wanted the money.

I worked with the conveyor 'turners' (the men that moved the conveyor forward after the coal had been removed) and the practice was that the chain would be broken and run down the conveyor troughs into a dram in the gate heading. Then the troughs would be 'turned' (dismantled and moved forward). The trouble was that men would be working in the tail end heading and stones would sometimes fall onto the troughs and, without the flights to stop them, would come flying down the face. One day, just before the 'miners' (miners' holidays) a stone came flying down and caught me on the wrist. It turned out that not only did I have a bad wrist but they found out that I had appendicitis as well! When I came out of hospital I saw my father looking a bit down and he told me that my old butt 'Shamo' had been hit on the back of the head by one of those stones and killed.

When I was down Wern Tarw it caught fire (August 1964). One man had said that he could smell burning but I couldn't and told him to shut up and not say things like that. I was 'crash packing' (dropping the roof to fill the waste area behind the coal face) on the night shift, it was very warm and I'd done all I could so I got my head down for an hour. Something woke me up and I saw lights moving and jumping about and I thought "Someone's had a bump" then I heard someone shout "Shift your arse, there's a gob fire" (a spontaneous combustion in the waste behind the coal face). Believe me, I shifted! The other men were going out to ride the spake (man riding train) out but I knew Wern Tarw very well by then and decided to take a short cut into the return road (where the ventilation current was directed up the pit after going through the workings). When I got into the road I thought "I'm in a chimney and where does smoke go?" So I put a spurt on and was one of the first up the pit. I came back to the pit the next day and saw the smoke bellowing out of the pit and thought "Seven hours ago I was running up that pit!" They closed the pit straight away as they couldn't control the fire – it's probably still burning today. No one was hurt, thank God. I only remember two fatalities while I was in Wern Tarw,

I got a job labouring in Margam for a while. The job came to an end and I was looking for a job. Then, in desperation, I started in Number 4 Pit, Cambrian Colliery in September 1965, just after the explosion. The pit had a downcast feel, there was a sad feeling there as so many men had been killed.

I was making an air bridge in Number 4 Pit in early 1966. As far as I could see they were doing it the wrong way, but I thought I'd better keep my trap shut as I was in a different pit now and I didn't want to be regarded as a whippersnapper. That's when I first met Bill Richards who was a shots man. It wasn't exactly a row although I was a bit aireated. There was a bed of rock in the middle of the

air bridge and it was a Friday night and I wanted to go to the NUM club. I'd bored a couple of holes in the rock and wanted a small 'pop' of explosives to 'pulse' it (break it up) a bit. In a small pit like Wern Tarw it would have been OK but in Cambrian, after what they'd just been through, they were red hot on safety. He refused to give me a 'pop' and, although I can understand his viewpoint, I did curse him a bit because it meant that I had to lay into the rock with a sledge.

One day I was 'retracting' (collapsing the 'gob', the waste area left behind the coal face after the coal had been removed) in 912 (coal face) to relieve the pressure on the face. I was busy cutting a 'key post' (a main wooden roof support) out with my hatchet when I felt someone tap on my shoulder and I looked up to see a 'bell stone' (iron stone found in the strata above a coal seam and liable to drop out when the coal was removed from beneath them) as big as Big Ben. If it hadn't been for Jack Farr (a nephew of Tommy Farr the boxer) I would have ended up as a fossil down Cambrian. I was lucky not to have had any nasty bumps, I had some narrow shaves but nothing to speak of.

Cambrian was a bigger pit than Wern Tarw and I found working on the face harder. In Wern Tarw the pitch of the seam made it easier to clear your stent (working place) as the coal tended to fall onto the conveyor, while in Cambrian you had to shovel every ounce. However, the camaraderie in Cambrian was just as good. When Cambrian closed I transferred to Cwm Colliery.

Cwm Colliery had a different atmosphere to Cam, the faces were 'power loaded' (fully mechanised) while Cambrian had conventional (hand filled) faces. However, I found safety was wanting in Cwm, one of the first things I saw was two Poles riding down the face conveyor with a roof support ring on their shoulders – that was in the Diamond District. I was repairing (maintaining the roadways) but I was allocated here and there rather than in a regular place. I only stuck it a couple of weeks as I didn't want to work nights regular. To be honest, I had been looking forward to going to Cwm, they could have got me a NCB house in Cae Fardre (Church Village) if I had stuck it out. A lot of Cam (Cambrian) men did settle down in the area and, as a twenty six year old, I would have welcomed the chance to get out of the valley and into nicer surroundings but they had me on nights regular!

I went to see Mac (the manager of Cwm, Mr MacDonald) about going afternoons instead but he gave me the choice of nights or finish altogether. Mac was a character, he used to have his Alsatian in the office with him, I think he used the dog as a body guard as he wasn't very tall. I pleaded with him to put me afternoons regular but he wouldn't budge, repairers had to work nights regular – so I finished.

I came out of the collieries and put in for a government training course in welding and I did all right. I was a welder for the rest of my working life. All in all it was a rough road. I worked hard and I played hard. Would I go back underground again? One short word – NO!

Gareth Hutchings

O was tyrbin i yrrwr bysiau

Cefais fy ngeni ym Mlaenclydach ym 1935. Roedd fy nhad yn swyddog yng nghloddfa ddrifft Gorki ac wedyn yng nglofa'r Cambrian. Gorfod iddo fe orffen yn y lofa cyn i fi ddechrau ar ôl dal clefyd y llwch, ac aeth i weithio yn y bag factory yn Dinas wedyn. Es i'n syth i'r lofa ar ôl gadael ysgol yn 14 oed. Dechreuais yn ysgol hyfforddi Wattstown ac yna 'mlaen i'r ffas hyfforddi yn y Cambrian. Doedd bod yn löwr ddim yn apelio, felly gofynnais i'r swyddog hyfforddi a allwn i wneud rhywbeth arall. Felly, ar ôl gorffen hyfforddi, des i'n 'was tyrbin' yn gofalu am gludfeltiau'r ffas yng ngwythien Yard, Pwll Rhif 4. *[Modur cludfelt aer cywasgedig ar y ffas oedd tyrbin. Tasg gofalu'r tyrbin oedd cadw llygad ar uniadau gwael yn y belt, a glanhau o dan y pen blaen lle'r oedd yn tipio ar y cludfelt.]*

Pan gaeodd y ffas honno, es i lan i'r Deep Seven yn Ardal '91 lle'r oeddwn i ar shifftiau dydd a phrynhawn yn trwsio 'tyllwyr' [ceibiau niwmatig] i'r glowyr a hongian pibelli dŵr ac aer cywasgedig ac ati. Roeddech chi'n ôl ag ymlaen i fynyr ffas yn gwneud hyn a'r llall i'r glowyr drwy'r dydd, ac yn dod i nabod pawb. Bu pawb yn gweithio gyda'n gilydd am ryw wyth mlynedd yn Ardal 91, os nad mwy. Weithiau, byddai pawb yn dod â swllt er mwyn cael parti yn y 'Monkey' *[Clwb y Gweithwyr Rhondda Ganol]*. Bydden ni'n cynnal cystadleuaeth griced yn yr haf yn erbyn y ffasys glo ar Gae'r Welfare – roedd pawb yn 'nabod ei gilydd. Roedd y coliers eraill yn gweithio fesul llathen *[yn cael eu talu yn ôl faint o lo a dorwyd]* tra mai 'dyn cwmni' oeddwn i, yn derbyn cyflog sefydlog.

Pan orffennodd Ardal 91, es i ar shifft nos yn llwytho siâl i'r gobs [gwagle y tu ôl i'r ffas ar ôl tynnu'r glo allan] er mwyn cynnal y to agored. Roedd y ffas oddeutu 14 troedfedd o uchder, ac fe geision nhw dynnu'r glo fesul haen, gan roi cynnig ar sawl ffordd wahanol, gan gyrraedd yr haen isaf maes o law. Bydden ni'n adeiladu bocs trwy hoelio bradish ar y cynhalbyst pren a chwythu'r siâl iddo nes ei fod yn galed fel craig. Roedd yn waith ofnadw'. Roedd tri mewn tîm yn defnyddio 'bwced' – ffroenell fetel hanner cylch ar flaen peipiau chwe modfedd. Roeddech chi'n gorfod eistedd ar y peipiau a dal dolenni'r 'bwced' i lywio'r siâl i'w le. Bydden ni'n defnyddio darnau o bren i amddiffyn ein dwylo gan y byddai'r bwced yn chwythu'n ôl ac yn bachu'ch llaw. Hen jobyn swnllyd, oer. A dyna 'ngwaith i tan i fi orffen yn y Cambrian.

Fe wnes i fwynhau fy amser yn y lofa – gwaith caled ond llawer o sbort. Roedden ni'n chwarae triciau o hyd. Wrth reidio i lawr y cludfeltiau, byddai rhywun wastad yn tynnu'r 'rhwystrau llwch' i lawr *[byrddau wedi'u gorchuddio â llwch cerrig a fyddai'n cael eu siglo gan ffrwydrad gan lenwi'r aer â llwch anadweithiol i rwystro tân]* gan orchuddio'r dynion y tu ôl â llwch carreg gwyn. Roedd un bachan yn gweithio ar ei ben ei hun, yn glanhau'r beltiau, a bydden ni'n tynnu'i goes e'n ddidrugaredd. Y tric oedd neidio ar y belt gyda'n goleuadau i ffwrdd, a neidio i ffwrdd ar i bwys gan godi llond twll o ofn arno fe. Roedd pawb yn casáu un peth, sef

mynd lan Pwll Rhif 3, y pwll dianc. Byddech chi'n wlyb diferu wrth basio'r drifft ffan ac roedd hi wastad yn wlyb a gwyntog. Stêm odd yn gyrru injan weindio Rhif 3 a phan fyddech chi'n stopio ar landin yn y pwll, byddech chi'n bownsio ar y rhaff am sbel fach.

Roedd yn rhaid cael profion pelydr X rheolaidd ar yr ysgyfaint, a chafodd tri o'r tîm llwytho lythyrau'n cadarnhau olion cynnar clefyd y llwch. Doedd e ddim yn ddigon gwael i hawlio iawndal, ond penderfynodd y tri ohonon ni adael y pwll a mynd i weithio gyda'n gilydd yn Rosedale Plastics, ffatri ar ystâd Nantgarw. Roedd e'n newid byd a dechreuais i amau a wnes i'r peth iawn. Os oeddech chi angen help yn y lofa, roedd y dynion yna i chi, ond yn ffatri, doedd dim taten o ots ganddyn nhw. Treuliais i dair blynedd ar ddeg yno cyn cael swydd yn gyrru bysiau i gwmnïau National Welsh, Rhondda Transport, a Stagecoach. Ro'n i'n mwynhau gyrru.

Roeddwn i'n gweithio yn y ffatri pan glywais i am ffrwydrad y Cambrian. Roedd llawer o'r bois gafodd eu lladd wedi dechre yna gyda fi, a phob un yn byw yn lleol. Roedd tristwch mawr ym mhobman, a phawb yn nabod rhywun oedd wedi marw, roedd hi'n gymuned glos iawn. Fe es i'r angladdau, gyda phawb yn gorymdeithio'r holl ffordd i fynwent Trealaw. Pan gaeodd y pwll, flwyddyn wedi'r trychineb, roedd pethau'n dawelach yng Nghwm Clydach, gyda'r rhan fwyaf o'r dynion yn cael eu trosglwyddo i byllau eraill fel Lewis Merthyr, Cwm a Lady Windsor. Yn wir, pan ddechreuais i ar y bysys bydden i'n cludo llawer ohonyn nhw i'r gwaith.

Fe ges i broblem ar y frest wedyn, a gweld bod gen i gysgod ar yr ysgyfaint. Roedden nhw'n credu taw canser oedd gen i, ond ar ôl cael biopsi yn Ysbyty Brenhinol Morgannwg, dywedodd y meddyg taw clefyd y llwch oedd e. Er i fi wneud cais am iawndal, cafodd ei wrthod. Dyma fi'n apelio, a chlywed bod gen i 5% o lwch, felly cefais ganpunt neu ddau. Dw i wedi ymddeol erbyn hyn, ac yn ofalwr llawn amser i 'ngwraig sydd â chlefyd Alzheimer.

Gordon Latham

From turbine boy to bus driver

I was born in 1935 in Blaenclydach. My father worked as an official in Gorki Drift and later Cambrian Colliery. He had to finish in the colliery before I started after contracting 'dust' and went to work in the 'bag factory' in Dinas. I left school at fourteen and went straight into the colliery. I started in Wattstown training school and then onto the training face at Cambrian Colliery. I didn't fancy being a collier so I asked the training officer if I could do anything else. So, when I finished my training I became a 'turbine boy' looking after the face conveyor belts in the Yard seam of Number 4 Pit. *(A turbine was a compressed air face conveyor belt motor. The work of a turbine attendant job entailed keeping an eye out for bad joints in the belting and cleaning out under the head where it tipped on to the gate conveyor).*

When that face closed I went up to the Deep Seven in 91 District where I worked day and afternoon shifts fixing 'punchers' *(pneumatic picks)* up for the colliers and hanging up compressed air and water pipes etc. You were back and fro up the face sorting out stuff for the colliers all day so you got to know everybody. On 91s we were all working together for about eight years, if not longer. Sometimes everybody would bring a shilling in we'd have a function in the 'Monkey'. In the summer we used to hold knock out cricket competitions between the coal faces on the Welfare Field – everyone knew each other. The colliers were all on 'yardage' *(paid for the amount of coal they cut)* while I was a 'company man' and got a fixed wage.

When 91s finished I went nights on 'stowing' which meant blowing shale into the gobs (area behind the coal face after the coal had been removed) to pack the exposed roof. The face was about fourteen feet high and they tried to take the coal off in layers, trying different ways. Eventually they were taking the bottom layer. We used to build a box by nailing 'brattice cloth' up on timber supports and blow the shale into it until it went as hard as rock. It was a horrible job. There were three of us in a team and we had a 'bucket', a half round metal nozzle, on the

end of 6" pipes. You had to sit on the pipes and hold the handle on the 'bucket' to direct the shale into place. We used bits of wood as shields to guard your hands as the bucket would blow back and catch your hands. A noisy, cold job. I was on stowing until I finished in Cambrian.

I enjoyed my time in the colliery, it was hard work but fun. We used to play hell with each other. When we were riding out on the conveyor belts someone used to pull down the 'dust barriers' *(boards covered with stone dust which would be knocked down by an explosion and fill the air with inert dust to contain a fire)* so that the men riding behind would be white with stone dust. One chap used to work on his own cleaning the belts and we used to play hell with him. We used to jump on the belt with our lights out and jump off either side of him and frighten the life out of him. One thing we used to hate was going up the Number 3 Pit, the up cast escape pit. You got soaking as you passed the fan drift and it was always wet and windy. The Number 3 winding engine was run by steam and when you stopped at a landing in the pit you were left bouncing on the rope for a while.

We had to have regular chest X Rays and we were sent letters telling us that we had the beginnings of 'dust'. We didn't have enough to claim compensation but the three of us decided to get out of the pit. The three of us went to work in Rosedale Plastics, a factory on the Nantgarw Estate. It was a big difference from the colliery and I wondered if I'd made the right decision. If you needed help in the colliery, the men would be there for you but, in the factory, they couldn't care less. I did thirteen years in in the plastics factory and then got a job driving buses for National Welsh and Rhondda Transport and, in the end, Stagecoach. I really enjoyed driving.

I was working in the factory when I heard that there had been an explosion in Cambrian. A lot of the boys who were killed had started with me and all of them lived around me. The feeling was very gloomy, everybody knew someone who had been killed, it was a very close community. I went to the funerals, we marched all the way over to the cemetery in Trealaw. When the pit closed, a year after the disaster, Clydach Vale became a bit quieter, most of the men transferred to other pits, like Lewis Merthyr, Cwm and Lady Windsor. In fact I used to drive a lot of them to work when I was on the buses.

I later had a problem with my chest and they found that I had a shadow on my lung. They thought I had cancer but I had a biopsy in the Royal Glamorgan and the doctor said that it was actually coal dust. I put a claim in but was turned down. So I appealed and was told that I actually had 5% 'dust' so I got a couple of hundred quid. I am now retired and a full-time carer for my wife who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Gordon Latham



Gordon Latham

Roedd Cambrian yn berffaith

Cefais fy ngeni yn Llwynypia ym mis Rhagfyr 1935. Ar ôl gadael yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed, bues i'n was cigydd yn y Co-op am dair blynedd. Yna, gwirfoddolais gyda'r fyddin a dod yn weithiwr lladd-dy gyda Chorfflu Gwasanaeth Brenhinol y Fyddin ac yna'n gigydd catrawd y Gordon Highlanders. Gwasanaethais am ddwy flynedd a hanner ym Malaya, ac er bod y tywydd yn hyfryd, roedd y wlad ei hun braidd yn glawststoffbig. Bues i'n aelod o'r fyddin am dair blynedd, gan ddiweddu'n sarjant. Gofynnwyd i fi ddychwelyd fel hyfforddwr, ond doedd hynny ddim yn apelio, felly dechreuais yn y lofa ym mis Gorffennaf 1957.

Es i Ganolfan Hyfforddi Wattstown am dair wythnos cyn treulio tri mis ar ffas hyfforddi glofa'r Cambrian. Ar ôl hynny, bues i'n gweithio gydag Alf Gill, a ddysgodd sut i ricio pren, yna gyda Howell Evans a oedd yn reparwr ar y 'Mains' [y prifffyrdd danddaear]. Ar ôl cael profiad o waith danddaear, es i weithio ar yr 'hedins caled' yn datblygu ffordd newydd '900' am ddwy flynedd ac yna ymlaen i'r '901' am ryw dair blynedd. Roedd y cyflog yn dda, ond y gwaith yn galed iawn. Roedd pethau'n gweithio'n berffaith, dim cwympiadau, dim ond gwaith cyson ar yr hedins.

Daeth y gwaith ffordd i ben ar ôl taro ffawt. Aethom i'r '912' i weithio ar y ffawt. Roedd yn waith oedd yn gofyn am fwy o ofal, gan fod y glo'n hollti'n ddau. Roeddech chi'n defnyddio'ch sgiliau i'r eithaf, ac yn gorfod meddwl drwy'r amser gan fod y ddaear yn fregus. 'Glamorgan don't take prisoners!' Yna, fe aethon ni i 'E District' oedd yn cael ei fecaneiddio, a doedd neb arall eisiau'r job. Cawson ni ein hanfon yn ôl i West Bute wedyn – y lle gwaethaf erioed i fi weithio ynddo. Roedd angen 13 twll ffrwydrion i chwalu'r graig, o gymharu â 5 twll yn y Nine Feet. Am dalcen caled, roedden ni'n gleisiau i gyd a'n hewinedd yn ddu. Ar ôl hynny, anfonwyd fi i wneud gwaith datblygu yn '912' lle'r oedd 13 troedfedd o lo – yn llawer haws i'w drin na charreg.

Roedd y Cambrian yn lle delfrydol, pwll teuluol go iawn, pawb yn nabod pawb, pwll cymunedol.

Ar 17 Mai 1965, roeddwn i'n gweithio ym Mhwl Rhif 4. Wydden ni ddim bod unrhyw beth wedi digwydd tan i ni gyrraedd gwaelod y pwll ar ddiwedd y shift, tua chwarter i ddau, a'r arolygwr yn dweud "Ewch yn syth lan, mae 'na broblem yn Rhif 1." Aethon ni lan y pwll a gweld dynion ag offer anadlu. Doedd dim syniad gyda ni am y ffrwydrad tan i ni gyrraedd y baddondai. Felly, gadawon ni'r baddondai a sefyllian i weld a oedden angen help. Roedd popeth dan reolaeth, medden nhw, a chawson ni ein hanfon adref. Nôl â ni'r bore canlynol, cyn cael ein hel gartref eto. Roedd y lofa ar gau am wythnos tan ar ôl yr angladd olaf.

Roedd yn sioc anferthol. Daeth pethau'n ôl i drefn yn raddol, er bod pawb yn poeni am ddiogelwch. Ond roedd si hefyd y byddai'r lle'n cau gan nad oedden ni'n cynhyrchu digon. Tua'r un pryd, roedd gwaith dur Port Talbot yn ehangu ac aeth dynion yno i chwilio am waith,

a chrebachodd y gweithlu o dipyn i beth. Ddeunaw mis wedi'r ffrwydrad, caeodd y Cambrian a symudais i Ynys-y-bwl [Glofa Lady Windsor].

Doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi'r Lady Windsor, roedd yn wahanol i bwl cymunedol fel y Cambrian, ac roedd dynion o Durham, Fforest y Ddena a Gwlad Pwyl yno. Roeddem ni'n griw agos yn y Cambrian, ond unigolion oedd pawb yn y Lady Windsor. Gadewais ar ôl chwe mis, a chanolbwyntio ar y byd adeiladu – gwaith toi, gosod drysau a gwaith cyffredinol felly – roedd y wraig yn blës dros ben! Yna, cwmpais o ben to pan oeddwn i hanner cant oed, a gorfod cofrestru i gael budd-dal salwch.

Petai'r 'Cam' heb gau, byddwn i wedi aros yn y diwydiant nes ymddeol. Roedd yn bwl hapus iawn, a phawb yn mynd i'r dafarn gyda'i gilydd. Prin yw'r llefydd sy'n gwneud i chi godi'r bore ac eisiau mynd i'r gwaith.

Derek Lavis

Derek Lavis a Don Wilkins
Derek Lavis and Don Wilkins



Cambrian was perfect

I was born in Llwynypia in December 1935. I left school at fifteen and worked as a butcher's boy in the Co-op for three years. I then volunteered for the army and became a slaughterhouse man in the Royal Army Service Corps and later became a regimental butcher in the Gordon Highlanders. I served two and a half years in Malaya, the weather was lovely but the country was a bit claustrophobic. I was in the army for three years and I ended up as a sergeant. They wanted me to come back as an instructor but I didn't fancy that so, in July 1957, I started in the colliery.

I was training in Wattstown for three weeks then went on the training face at Cambrian for three months. After that I worked with Alf Gill, who taught me how to notch timber, then with Howell Evans who was a repairer on the 'Mains' (the main underground roadways). After I got experienced in underground work, I went on the 'hard headings' (Developing new roadways) developing '900' roadway for two years then on to '901' for about three years. We earned good money but had to work really hard. The work went perfectly, no falls, just good steady heading work.

The road finished after hitting a fault. We went into '912' to work on a fault. This was a bit more 'delicate' as the coal was split in two. That's where your skills came in and you were

thinking all the time as it was very disturbed ground and 'Glamorgan don't take prisoners!' Then we went into the 'E District' which they were mechanising and nobody else wanted it. We were then sent back into the West Bute – the worst place I ever worked in. It took thirteen (shot) holes to blow stone down whereas, in the Nine Feet it took 5 holes. Terrifically hard place, we had black nails, bruising etc. it was a really hard time. After that I was put on development work in '912' where there was thirteen feet of coal – a lot easier to work than stone.

Cambrian was perfect, a real family pit, everyone knew everyone, a community pit.

On the 17th May 1965 I was working in Number 4 Pit. We didn't know anything had happened until we got to pit bottom at the end of the shift, at about quarter to two, and the banksman said "Go straight up there's been a problem in Number 1." We got up the pit and saw people in BAS (breathing apparatus) on top of the pit. It wasn't until we got into the baths that we were told that there had been an explosion. So, we got out of the baths and hung about to see if we would be needed. We were told that everything was under control and we were sent home. We went back the following morning and were told to go home again. The colliery closed for a week until all the funerals were over.

It was a huge shock. It got back to normal slowly, there was worries about safety, but it carried on as normal. However, there was talk about closure because we weren't producing enough. Around that time Port Talbot Steelworks were opening up (expanding) and men went down there looking for work outside the colliery so manpower was dwindling. Eighteen months after the explosion Cambrian closed and I went to Ynysybwll (Lady Windsor Colliery).

I didn't like Lady Windsor, it was different from a community pit like Cambrian, and there were men from Durham, Forest of Dean and Poles. In Cambrian we were all together but in Lady Windsor they were all individuals. After six months I came out and went on the buildings – roofing, fitting doors and general work – my missus was happy! Then I fell off a roof when I was about fifty and had to go on the sick.

If the 'Cam' hadn't shut I would have stayed in the industry until I retired. It was a happy pit, we all used to go to the pubs together. Not many places that you get up in the morning and want to go to work.

Derek Lavis

Eneidiau hoff cytûn

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1937. Gadewais yr ysgol yn bymtheg oed a bues i'n cynhyrchu beics yn ffatri Bounds am ddwy flynedd a hanner wedyn. Caodd y ffatri ym mis Rhagfyr, a fyddwn i ddim yn ddeunaw tan fis Chwefror. Roedd yn gyfnod consgripsiwn, a byddwn i'n gorfod aros am ychydig fisoedd, felly es i at y Bwrdd Glo gyda'm ffrind Eddie Bishop. Cefais i hyfforddiant yn Wattstown a mynd i'r Cambrian wedyn. Bues i'n gweithio gyda syrffwr am ddwy flynedd fel leinsmon, yn cario cyfarpar i sicrhau bod y ffyrdd yn syth, roedd e'n iawn. Yna, ces i fy anfon i'r ffas lo fel gwas colier, yna i'r hedins caled gyda Derek [Derek Lavis] a oedd yn well gan ein bod ni'n dod mlân yn dda, a wastad yn gweithio gyda'n gilydd – eneidiau hoff cytûn. Ni'n ffrindie hyd heddiw.

Gorffennais weithio yn y lofa ym mis Tachwedd 1964, chwe mis cyn y ffrwydrad. Ym 1965, roeddwn i'n byw yn Park Street ger y lofa ac yn dosbarthu paraffin gyda 'nhad. Roeddwn i wedi gorffen fy nghinio y dydd Llun hwnnw ac wedi dychwelyd i'r fan pan welais i feic modur yr heddlu'n gwneud rhyw gant a deugain. Toc wedyn, fe glywais am y ffrwydrad a gweld ambiwlansys yn dod o bobman.

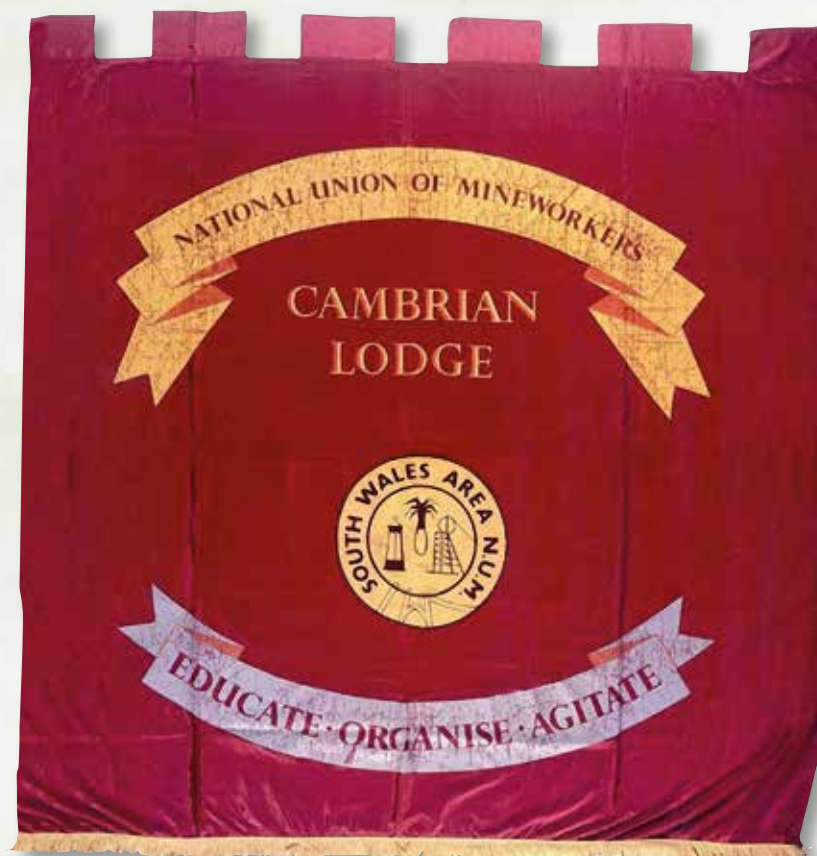
Don Wilkins

Like two peas in a pod

I was born in 1937, left school at fifteen and worked in Bounds cycle factory making push bikes for two and a half years. The factory closed in the December and I wasn't eighteen until February. It was conscription and I'd have to hang about for a couple of months so, with my friend Eddie Bishop, I went into the NCB. I did my training in Wattstown and was allocated to Cambrian. I worked with the surveyors for two years as a lines man, carrying equipment to put the roads straight, it was all right. Then I went onto the coal face as a boy collier, and then went into the hard headings with Derek (Derek Lavis) which was better as we got on and always worked together – like two peas in a pod! We're still friends today.

I finished in the colliery in November 1964, six months before the explosion. In 1965 I was living in Park Street near the colliery and delivering paraffin with my father. I'd had my dinner that Monday and got back into the van to do my deliveries when I saw a police motor cycle doing about a hundred and forty. A short while after I heard that there had been an explosion and saw ambulances coming from everywhere.

Don Wilkins



Diolch i Llyfrgell Glowyr De Cymru
Courtesy South Wales Miners' Library

Es i ddim ar gyfyl y pwll wedyn

Cefais fy ngeni ar noswyl Nadolig 1933, yn Forest House sydd wedi'i ddymchwel bellach. Roedd fy nhad yn löwr yn y Cambrian, a bu tad fy mam yn gweithio yno hefyd cyn iddo farw o straen yn wyth ar hugain oed. Gadewais Ysgol Dechnegol y Rhondda yn bedair ar ddeg oed, gyda'r bwriad o fod yn saer coed. Roedd wncwl gen i'n ymgymwrwr yn y Gelli, a dywedodd y gallwn i fynd i weithio gydag e, ond erbyn i fi adael yr ysgol roedd ganddo gynorthwy-ydd yn barod, a doedd gen i ddim syniad beth i'w wneud. Felly, bues i'n ddosbarthwr i'r groser yn y Porth ac yna'n ddyn llaeth gyda Jones Dairy yn Sgwâr Tonypany.

Wrth droi'n ddeunaw, roedd gen i ddau ddewis – naill ai'r pwll neu'r fyddin. Roedd mam yn dibynnu arna' i, ac roedd fy mrawd eisoes wedi ymuno â'r lluoedd, felly i lofa'r Cambrian es i. Ces fy anfon Ganolfan Hyfforddi Wattstown yn gyntaf ac yna i'r ffas hyfforddi yn y Cambrian. Fy swydd gyntaf oedd bancio'r gobyn ar y shift nos. Roedd braidd yn frawychus edrych i mewn i'r gob lle mae'r to yn disgyn ar ôl tynnu'r cynhalbyst oddi yno. Pan oedd cwmp go hegar, roeddech chi'n edrych i fyny ac yn methu gweld y top a oedd cyn uchod â dau dŷ. Roedd hi'n llychlyd iawn yno, weithiau'n wlyb, ond ddim mor wlyb â llefydd eraill. Roedd ffasys eithaf sych ym Mhwll Rhif 4.

Bues i'n gweithio ar y glo yn Dip 7 y rhan fwyaf o'r amser. Bydden ni'n defnyddio 'puncher picks' i dynnu'r glo i lawr cyn llenwi'r cludfelt. Roedd ein 'stentiau' [mannau gweithio] tua deuddeg troedfedd wrth bum troedfedd. Roedd yn waith caled, achos roeddwn i'n eithaf bach ar y pryd, yn pwyso llai na deg stôn. Cynhalbyst pren oedd gyda ni i ddechrau cyn newid i rai dur yn ddiweddarach. Er bod y pyst dur yn dueddol o sboncio o'u lle o bryd i'w gilydd, roedd y to yn weddol sefydlog a chynnal ei hun yn eithaf pell uwchben y gob. Un diwrnod, roeddwn i'n cael bwyd yn y gob pan lamodd postyn o'i le a chlatsio 'mhen-glin i. Sôn am ddolur. Ces i niwed i 'nghefn hefyd, ac rwy'n dal i ddioddef hyd heddiw.

Bu cwmp mawr yn Dip 7, a bu'n rhaid ei gau a'n trosglwyddo ni i ran arall o'r pwll nes bod y problem wedi'i datrys. Roedd miloedd o dunelli o gerrig wedi dod i lawr, ac aethon ni ddim yn ôl yno am fisoedd.

Ymhen amser, dechreuodd y ffas newid – mewn rhai llefydd, roedden ni'n gosod pren unarddeg troedfedd a chosn bren tair troedfedd ar ben hwnnw, ac mewn mannau eraill, doeddech chi ddim yn gallu dal eich rhaw i fyny er mwyn mesur postyn gan fod y nenfwd mor isel yno – gwallgo!

Roedd y Cambrian yn bwl hynod gyfeillgar, a dros 90% o'r dynion yn byw'n lleol – dwi'n credu taw o Drealaw y daeth y gweithiwr pellaf. Roedd yn bwl gweddol ddiogel hefyd er y cafwyd ambell ddamwain yn y gorffennol gydag unigolion yn cael eu lladd.

Dechreuais i weithio yn Ffas P26 tua 1964. Roedd e'n lle eitha modern, gyda chynhalbyst hydrolig, cludfelt cadwyn a pheiriant torri glo 'aradr' a thrwythiad dŵr i

dynnu'r glo i lawr. Roedd gweithwyr yn bancio'r gob fin nos, ac yn cloddio'r glo ar y ddwy shift arall. Roedd yn ffas eithaf llyfn heb gwympiadau o bwys.

Yn Ffas P26 oedden ni fore Llun 17 Mai 1965. Roedd problemau trydanol yn golygu taw stop, start oedd hi drwy'r bore. Ychydig iawn o lo oedd yn dod mas, ac roedd y rheolwr wedi mynd lan y ffas at y bocsys pŵer. Tua hanner awr wedi deuddeg, daeth y cludfelt i stop eto. Roeddwn i'n gweithio yn y 'stabl' sef y stent cyntaf ar y ffas. Yn yr ail stent oeddwn i'n wreiddiol, ond gan fod fy ffrind Gwilym Davies yn straffaglu gyda'r cynhalbyst trwm o'r enw 'Schlom bars', dyma ni'n newid lle. Ar y bore hwnnw, roedd Gwilym Davies yn cael diwrnod o seibiant tra'r oedd Gwilym arall, Gwilym Thomas, yn gweithio'n ei le.

Oherwydd yr holl oedi, gofynnwyd i ni weithio awr ychwanegol i glirio'r ffas unwaith y dechreuodd y cludfelt. Felly, roedd y ffas yn segur a finnau yn y stent cyntaf, felly camais i'r ffordd i sgwrsio â Viv Gregory, gweithredwr y cludfelt, a Tom Davies y ffeiarman. Trafod Bingo'r noson gynt oedden ni. Roedd e'n fwy o glep na bang, wedyn daeth y gwynt i lawr y ffas a nhaflu i'r llawr, gan daro'r helmed oddi ar fy mhen a gadael crafiadau ar fy wyneb. Yn lle aer ffres yn dod lan y ffas, roedd mwg brown trwchus yn dod i lawr.

Roedd y ffas yn drwch o fwg brown, a gwaeddais i fyny'r ffas at y stent nesaf, ond ches i ddim ateb. Mae'n rhaid bod yr oferman neu'r ffeiarman wedi llwyddo i gael neges i'r wyneb, a dyma ni'n cael gorchymyn i adael a mynd i waelod y pwll – dyna'r cwbl allen ni ei wneud gan fod y mwg yn dal i ddod i lawr a doedd dim ateb o'r ffas o hyd. Aethon ni lan y pwll, cael cawod, a chael ein hanfon adref. Ces i dipyn o ysgytwad, ond ches i ddim cynnig triniaeth ôl-drawma na dim byd felly. Ces i gan punt o iawndal.

Es i byth danddaear wedyn. Cafodd rhai o'n ffrindiau eu trostglwyddo i lofa'r Cwm pan gaedd y Cambrian, ac roedden nhw'n ennill arian da. Byddai'r arian wedi bod yn braf ond doeddwn i ddim eisiau mynd i lawr y pwll byth eto.

Flwyddyn neu ddwy cyn y ffrwydrad, ro'n i am fynd i weithio at ffrind i ddysgu crefft saer coed, ond fe gafodd ddamwain beic modur cyn i fi ddechrau arni, a doedd e ddim yn y gwaith am fisoedd felly aeth y syniad hwnnw i'r gwellt. Pan orffennais i yn y lofa, fe weithies i am gwpl o wythnosau ar yr ysgol newydd yn Nhonyrefail a phan orffennodd y gwaith hwnnw tua 1967, es i lan i Ben-rhys i weithio ar y stad newydd. Yn ddiweddarach, bues i'n gweithio ar bontydd, yn codi tai newydd ac adfer hen rai. Un o'r jobsys gorau ges i oedd ar fferm, yn addasu hen sgubor yn Rhiwfelen ger Beddau. Roeddwn i'n mwynhau'r grefft, a bues i'n saer coed tan i fi ymddeol yn 72 oed.

Saer oeddwn i am fod ar ôl gadael yr ysgol, ac anlwc pur rwystrodd fi bryd hynny. Fe ddes i'n saer coed yn y pen draw, ond ddim dan amgylchiade braf.

Myrddin Pritchard

I never went down the pit again

I was born on Christmas Eve 1933 in Forest House which have now been pulled down. My father was a miner in Cambrian and my mother's father had worked in the colliery but had died of strain aged twenty eight. I left Rhondda Technical School at fourteen and wanted to be a carpenter. One of my uncles was an undertaker in Gelli and said that I could go and work with him, but when I left school I found out that he already had an assistant so I didn't know what to do. I went as a grocers round boy in Porth and after as a milk round man with Jones Dairy in 'Pandy Square.

When I was eighteen I had to either go into the colliery or into the forces. My mother depended on me and my brother was already in the forces so I went to Cambrian Colliery. First off I was sent to Wattstown Training Centre and the on to Cambrian on the training face. My first job was on nights packing. It was a bit scary looking into the gob where the roof falls in after the roof supports had been taken out. When there was a heavy roof fall you looked up and couldn't see the top as high as two houses above you. It was very dusty and occasionally wet, but not as wet as other places, Number 4 Pit had pretty dry faces.

I worked in Dip 7 for most of my time on the coal. We used puncher picks to bring the coal down then filled it out on the belt conveyor. Our stents (working places) were about twelve feet long by five feet in depth. It was hard as I was quite small then, less than ten stone. At first we used timber supports then changed to steel later. The steel posts used to occasionally spring out but the roof was reasonably stable and used to hold up for quite a long way above the gob. One day I was having food in the gob and a post sprang out and smacked me on the knee, very painful. I also did my back in which is what I'm still suffering from today.

There was a big fall in Dip 7 and they had to close it and we were transferred to another part of the pit until they sorted it out. Thousands of tons of stone had come down and it was months before we came back there.

After a while the face got very different, in some places we were standing eleven foot timbers with a three foot wooden cog on top of that, while, in other places, you couldn't stand your shovel up to measure for a post because it was so low – crazy!

Cambrian was a very friendly pit, about 90% of the men lived locally, and I think that the furthest away was probably Trealaw. It was also a fairly safe pit although there had been a few accidents in the past with individuals being killed.

I started in the P26 Face in about 1964. It was quite modern, we had hydraulic roof supports, a chain conveyor and a 'plough' coal cutting machine and water infusion to bring down the coal. Packing the gob was done on night shift with coaling on the two other shifts. It was a pretty even face with no real falls.

I was working in P26 on Monday morning the 17th May 1965. We'd had electrical problems and it was stop, start, stop, start all morning. Very little coal was coming out and the manager had gone up the face to where the power boxes were. Around half past twelve the conveyor was on stop again. I was working in the 'stable' which was the first stent on the coal face. I was originally working in the second stent but because my mate Gwilym Davies had difficulty handling the heavy roof supports known as 'Schlom bars', we changed places. On that morning Gwilym Davies had a rest day and was replaced by another Gwilym, Gwilym Thomas.

Because of all the stoppages we had been asked to work on an hour to clear the face once the conveyor started. So the face was on stop and I was in the first stent so I stepped out into the roadway to talk to Viv Gregory the conveyor operator and Tom Davies the fireman. I was talking about the Bingo the night before and then it happened. It was a thud rather than a bang and then the wind came down the face and knocked me on the floor, hit my helmet off my head and caused some scrapes on my face. Instead of the ventilation going up the face a thick brown smoke was coming down the face.

There was all this brown smoke coming down the face and I went to shout up the face to the next stent but got no answer. The overman or the fireman must have got the information up to the surface and we were told to leave and get back to pit bottom – it was really all we could do as the smoke was still coming down and there was no answer from the face. We went up the pit had a shower and were sent home. I was very shook up but there wasn't any post-traumatic stress treatment offered. I was awarded £100 compensation.

I never went underground again. Some of my mates were transferred to Cwm Colliery when Cambrian closed and were earning terrific money but, although the money would have been nice, I didn't want to go down the pit again.

A couple of years before the explosion I was going to work with a mate to pick up carpentry but before I could do it he had an accident on his motor bike and was off work for months so that idea went by the board. When I finished in the colliery I had a couple of weeks working on the new school in Tonyrefail and when that finished in about 1967 went up to Penrhys on the new estate. I later worked on bridges, building new houses and doing up old houses. One of the nicest jobs was on a farm doing a barn conversion in Rhiwfelen near Beddau. I enjoyed carpentry and stayed a carpenter until I retired when I was seventy two.

I'd rather have been a carpenter straight from school, it was sheer bad luck that I didn't. I became a carpenter eventually, but it was in a way I'd rather hadn't happened.

Myrddin Pritchard

Myrddin Pritchard



Ysgol brofiad peirianeg

Ganwyd fi yng Nghwm Clydach ym mis Gorffennaf 1924. Glöwr oedd fy nhad, a ddaeth o Fryste'n wreiddiol. Buon ni'n byw mewn sawl lle gwahanol yng Nghwm Clydach, gan ddechrau mewn tŷ lojins. Dwi wedi byw yn fy nhŷ presennol ers 1946, pan briodais â ngwraig Margaret. Roedd fy nhad yn gweithio ar y ffas lo yn y Cambrian ac es innau i lawr y pwll i'w weld pan oeddwn i'n ffitiwr. Roedd e'n grac pan welodd e fi oherwydd ei amodau gwaith, ac roedd cymaint o lwch yno nes ei bod yn amhosib gweld y lamp a oedd yn hongian ar bostyn tua llathen oddi wrth ei wyneb. Bu farw o glefyd y llwch yn drigain oed. Roedd wedi gadael y lofa rhyw wyth neu naw mlynedd cyn marw, a chael swydd yn gosod teils, ond roedd yn fyr ei wynt bob amser – roedd ei ysgyfaint mor wael, gallech chi daeru bod cath fach yn canu grwndi yn yr ystafell.

Gadewais i'r ysgol ym 1938 yn bedair ar ddeg. Es i i'r Swyddfa Gyflogi a'm bryd ar fod yn drydanwr. Dyma nhw'n fy hala i St Albans i weithio mewn ffatri cynhyrchu newyddion. Roedd cryn dipyn o bobl ifanc o Gymru a thu hwnt yn gweithio yn yr ardal, llafur rhad mwy na thebyg. Pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel, roedd mam eisïau i fi ddod adref. Dyna wnes i, ac ysgrifennodd dad at reolwr cyffredinol 'PDs' [Cwmni Glo Powell Duffryn] yn gofyn am swydd i fi gan ddweud wrtha i am fynd i weld Mr Percy Griffiths, Prif Beiriannydd Ardal Powell Duffryn. Ar y pryd, os oeddech chi eisïau swydd yn un o'r gweithdai ffittio ar yr wyneb roedd yn rhaid i chi adnabod mecanig y lofa naill ai drwy'i gapel neu ei deulu. Roedd gan fecanig y Cambrian ddau frawd-yng-nghyfraith, nai a ffrind a brawd-yng-nghyfraith ei nai yn gweithio yno. Roedd hi'n siop gaeedig, felly pan es i weld peirianwyr y grŵp, dyma ddweud wrtha i am weld Jack 'Butch' Evans, a oedd yn fab i gigydd.

Es draw ar y dydd Sadwrn i'w weld e, gan ddweud mod i wedi cael fy anfon i holi am waith yn y gweithdy ffittio. Dywedodd wrtha i am ddychwelyd drannoeth. Fe ddes i 'nôl i'r pwerdy'r diwrnod canlynol, a gadawodd fi'n sefyll tu fas am awr gyfan cyn dod mas a dweud "Ti'n cychwyn bore fory, chwarter i saith, yn y gweithdy ffittio". Roedd e wedi pwdu braidd gan taw dim fe'n bersonol benododd fi, ac am flwyddyn neu ddwy wedyn bydde fe'n aml yn gweld bai arna i. Ond buodd e'n dda iawn i fi tua diwedd fy amser yna, yn ceisio cael swyddi gwell i fi achos mod i yn yr ysgol yn astudio peirianeg. Doedd gen i fawr o arian i brynu llyfrau, felly roeddwn i'n mynd i Lyfrgell y Glowyr yng Nghwm Clydach a defnyddio'r llyfrau yna i astudio.

Gwas ffitiwr oeddwn i yn y gweithdy, yn helpu'r ffitiwyr, cadw'r gweithdy'n ddaclus a chynnau tân – roeddwn i'n mynd draw i ben y pwll i nôl glo o'r dramiau. Tua hanner awr wedi un, roedd yn rhaid casglu dwy gasgen dwy alwyn o olew o'r storfeydd a'u cario'n ôl i oelio'r injans. Mlaen wedyn at y 'peirian sgrïwio' a oedd yn creu edau ar gyfer bolltau, ac wedyn at y dril radial enfawr, y turniwr a'r peiriant siapio. Ni oedd yn trwsio pob peiriant danddaear oedd wedi torri – cludfeltiau, injans halio ac ati,

ac unrhyw beiriannau ar yr wyneb fel yr injans weindio a'r locomotifau. Roedd 'ffitwyr rhidyllu' [lle'r oedd glo'n cael ei ddioli o'r cerrig] yn y pwll, ond bydden ni'n eu helpu weithiau yn ogystal ag yn yr olchfa ac ar y tipiau'n cynhyrchu fframiau ar gyfer cludfeltiau.

Roedd gyrrwr injan halio ar y tip wedi mynd yn rhy bell un diwrnod, ac wedi llwyddo i chwalu'r strwythur a thorri'r olwyn ddychwely. Felly bu'n rhaid i ni gerdded a chario'n twls i fyny'r tip o siâl rhydd ar ongl o 45 gradd, un prynhawn o aeaf. Fe weithion ni drwy'r prynhawn yn datgysylltu popeth a chludo geriach i lawr y tip ac i'r gweithdy er mwyn drilio trawstiau newydd. Yna, mynd â nhw'n ôl i fyny'r tip i'w gosod yn lle'r strwythur oedd wedi torri. Buon ni wrthi drwy'r nos er mwyn cael popeth i weithio erbyn y bore canlynol. Gan ein bod mewn lle mor uchel roedd hi'n wyntog iawn, ac erbyn y diwedd roedd eich dwylo wedi rhewi gymaint nes ei bod hi'n amhosib teimlo'r hecsagon ar ben blaen y nytau. Roeddem ni hefyd mewn cotiau oel gan ei bod hi'n bwrw glaw. Erbyn y bore, roedd ein hwynebau wedi rhewi.

Tasg arall oedd cynhyrchu strwythurau ar gyfer adeiladau newydd a helpu i'w gosod, yn ogystal â chreu cafnau llithro ar gyfer cludfeltiau danddaear. Anfonwyd fi am chwe wythnos i weithdy'r gof, tra'r oedd y morthwylwr yn sâl. Er bod y gwaith yn galed iawn, fe wnes i fwynhau, ac roedd yn sylfaen dda ym maes peirianeg. Roedd tipyn o sbort i'w gael yn y gweithdy ffittio, ond roedd yn hen le digon oer, yn adeilad deg llath ar hugain ag un tân glo bach, a'r drysau wastad ar agor er mwyn cael y peiriannau i mewn – roedd y gwynt yn fain ac yn chwythu fel corwynt.

Yn ystod y rhyfel, pan oedd cyrch awyr, un o'n tasgau ni oedd cadw llygad am barasiwtwyr. Roedd ganddyn nhw hen diwb boeler tua phedair troedfedd o led a deg troedfedd o uchder, gyda thyllau wedi'u torri rownd yr ochr. Wedi ei suddo i'r ddaear, roedd e'n debyg i 'pill box' milwrol gyda drws bychan i gropian drwyddo. Os fydden ni'n gweld parasiwtiwr, bydden ni wedi gorfod gadael y 'pill box' oherwydd bod yr unig ffôn yn y pwerdy. Roeddech chi'n gorfod aros yno nes clywed yr 'all clear' – y ffitiwyr ifanc oedd yn gorfod gwneud hyn fel arfer. Fe glywson ni'r bomiau'n disgyn ar Gwm-parc a Thŷ Glyncornel.

Llwyddais i gael diwrnod bant i fynychu'r School of Mines yn Nhreforest, ond roedd yn rhaid i fi weithio shiftt ddwbl neu weithio ar ddydd Sadwrn i wneud yn iawn am hynny. Roedd hynny achos 'mod i'n astudio peirianeg fecanyddol, tra bod y bechgyn oedd yn astudio mwyngloddio yn cael cyflog am y sifft. Y syniad oedd y gallen nhw golli peirianwyr mecanyddol i ddiwydiannau eraill, felly roedd y bois yn cael eu talu, eu hannog i astudio mwyngloddio.

Fe gollais i flaen bys yn un ar hugain oed, wrth ddadlwytho offer o'r dram. Roedden ni wedi jacio'r cyfarpar lan, ac wedi gosod dwy reilen yn erbyn y dram i'w sleidio oddi arni. Roedd gen i far er mwyn dechrau sleidio'r

A good grounding in engineering



Gweithio ar y tiplwr, Glofa Cambrian 1947 (Hugh Baker 2il or dde)

Working on the tiplwr, Cambrian Colliery 1947 (Hugh Baker 2nd from right)

I was born in Clydach Vale in July 1924. My father was a miner who had come originally from Bristol. We lived in various places in Clydach Vale starting with 'rooms' (lodgings). I've been in my present house since 1946 when I married my wife Margaret. My father worked on the coal face in Cambrian and I went down the pit to see him when I was a fitter. He was annoyed when he saw me because of the conditions he was working in as it was so bad with dust that he couldn't see the lamp that was hanging off a post a yard from his face. He died from 'dust' (silicosis) at sixty years old. He had left the colliery eight or nine years before he died and got a job tile laying but he was always gasping for breath – his lungs were so bad that you could swear there was a kitten purring in the room.

I left school in 1938 at fourteen years old. I went to the Employment Exchange as I wanted to be an electrician. They sent me to St Albans to work in a factory making transformers. There were a lot of youngsters from Wales and elsewhere, probably because we were cheap labour, working in the area. Then war broke out and my mother

wanted me home. I came home and my father wrote to the general manager of 'PDs' (Powell Duffryn Coal Company) asking for a job for me and he said to see Mr Percy Griffiths the Area Chief Engineer of Powell Duffryn. At that time if you wanted a job in the surface (fitting) shops you had to know the colliery mechanic either through his chapel or his family. The Cambrian mechanic had two brothers in law, a nephew, his nephew's friend and a brother in law working there. It was a closed shop, so when I went to the group engineers I was told to see the mechanic Jack 'Butch' Evans, he was called that because his father was a butcher.

I went on the Saturday to see him and said that I had been sent to see about starting in the fitting shop. He said to come back next morning. I came back to the power house next day and he kept me waiting for an hour outside before he came out and said "Start tomorrow, quarter to seven in the fitting shop". He was quite put out because he hadn't personally appointed me and used to find faults with me for a couple of years. Towards the end of my time there he was very good to me and tried to get me better

cyfarpar, a dywedodd y fforman "Dal 'e gyda dy law a tynn 'e". Aeth ei ben e'n sownd tra symudodd fy un i, llithro i lawr a thorri blaen fy mys bant. Ches i ddim iawndal, dim ond chwe wythnos o'r gwaith. Roedd rhaid i fi fynd at feddyg y Bwrdd Glo, Dr Jack Mathews y chwaraewr rygbi rhyngwladol, a ddwedodd 'mod i'n holliach i weithio. Fe ddwedais i bod llawfeddyg Ysbyty'r Porth wedi dweud 'mod i angen pythefnos arall o'r gwaith achos 'mod i'n gwneud gwaith trwm, ond ateb Dr Mathews oedd "Wy'n nabod dynion danddaear sydd wedi colli blaen bys a gweithio tan ddiwedd y shift!" Ond fe ges i bythefnos arall bant.

Roedd ffitiwr arall yn newid gyriant belt ar beiriant turnio, ac wedi tynnu'r gorchudd oddi ar y beryn. Roedd e'n sychu'r peiriant gyda chlwtyn tra'i fod e'n dal i droi, ac aeth e braidd yn agos a tynnwyd ei law i mewn i'r gyriant. Oherwydd mai gyriant belt fflat oedd e, roedd yn hongian drosodd ychydig ar un ochr, a stopiodd pan aeth ei fysedd yn sownd. Aeth i'r swyddfa cymorth cyntaf, a thorwyd ei fys bach i ffwrdd, ond roedd e'n lwcus i beidio colli ei law.

Roedd ffitiwr arall yn gweithio yn yr olchfa, a doedd y cludfelt heb ei osod yn syth felly roedd y belt uchaf yn gollwng glo i'r belt isaf. Roedd yn defnyddio brws bach i sgubor glo o'r belt isaf pan aeth y brws i fyny'r drwm a llusgo'i fraich hefyd. Cafodd ei dynnu i mewn, ac aeth ei fraich o amgylch y drwm. Fe gollodd e'i fraich. Roedd y switsh ar y landin nesaf, ac roedd rhaid i rywun redeg i fyny'r grisiau i'w ddiffodd.

Damwain arall yn y felin lifio oedd pan lithrodd dyn a cholli'i fysedd wrth wthio darn o bren i'r llif. Roedd gweithio ar wyneb y pwll cyn berycled â gweithio danddaear.

Bues i'n gweithio yn y Cambrian o 1939 tan 1951. Ar ôl gadael y diwydiant, fe weithiais i am ychydig flynyddoedd i'r Weinyddiaeth Gyflenwi yn archwilio barilau gynnu ac arfau a chyfarpar arall gan gynnwys taflegrau tywys

Bristol Bulldog. Wedyn, des i'n ddarlithydd peirianeg fecanyddol yng Ngholeg Technegol Llwynypia. Ddiwedd y 1950au, roedden ni'n derbyn tua 90 o brentisiaid y Bwrdd Glo bob blwyddyn. Arhosais i yna tan 1986, cyn ymddeol fel pennaeth dros dro peirianeg fecanyddol a glofaol.

Darlithio yn y coleg oeddwn i'n 1965 pan glywais am y ffrwydrad. Pan mae rhywbeth yn digwydd yn y lofa i atal llif y glo, mae pawb o'r rheolwr i lawr yn torchi llewys i ailddechrau popeth cyn gynted â phosibl. Beth gewch chi'n gyntaf yw'r dirprwy, yna'r oferman a'r is-reolwr ac wedyn rheolwr y lofa yn annog pawb i ailddechrau'r gwaith, a dyna pryd ma' camgymeriadau'n digwydd. Pan mae pawb ar eich cefn chi, rydych chi'n dechrau cynhyrfu, a dyna beth ddigwyddodd yn y Cambrian.

Hugh Charles Baker



posts as I was going to school studying engineering. I didn't have much money for books so I used to go to the Miners' Library in Clydach Vale and use the ones there for my studies.

I worked in the shop as a fitter's boy, helping the fitters, keeping the shop clean and making the fire - I used to go down to the top of the pit to get coal off the drams. About half past one you had to get two two-gallon drums of oil from the stores and carry them back for oiling the engines. From there you progressed to the 'screwing machine' which made threads for bolts, and, from there, onto the large radial driller, the lathe and the shaping machine. We repaired all underground machines which had been damaged - conveyors, haulage engines etc. and any surface machinery like the winding engines and locomotives. We had screens' (*where the coal was separated from the stone*) fitters but we used to help them sometimes as well as in the washery and on the tips manufacturing staging for conveyor belts.

The haulage engine driver on the tip went too far one day and smashed the structure and busted the return wheel so we had to walk up the tip at a forty five degree angle on loose shale carrying our tools in the winter on afternoon shift. We worked all the afternoon dismantling and getting the stuff down the tip to take to up the shop to drill new girders. Then take them back up to replace the damaged structure. We worked all night to get it going for the following morning. The wind was blowing as we were high up and, in the end, your hands were so frozen you couldn't feel the hexagons on the end of the nuts. We were also in oilskins as it was raining. By the money our faces were frozen.

We also did structures for new buildings and helped to assemble them and we made conveyor chutes for underground. I was sent into the blacksmiths' shop as a striker for six weeks when the striker was ill. It was a lot of heavy work, but I enjoyed it as it gave me a good grounding in engineering. We had a bit of fun in the fitting shop but it was cold as it was a building about thirty yards long and only had a small coal fire and the main doors were always open to get machines in - the cold used to blow through like a gale.

During the war, when there was an air raid on, one of our jobs was watching for parachutists. They had an old tube from a boiler about four feet wide and ten feet high, sealed at the top and slots cut around the perimeter. When it was sunk in the ground it was like a 'pill box' with a small door just sufficient to crawl through. If we had seen parachutists we'd have had to leave the pill box as the only telephone was in the colliery power house. You had to stay in there until the 'all clear' went - it was usually the younger fitters who had to do this. We heard the bombs when they bombed Cwmparc and Glyn cornel House.

I managed to get a day off to attend the School of Mines in Trefforest but I either had to work a double shift or work a Saturday to make up the time. That's because I was studying mechanical engineering, the boys studying mining used to have their shifts paid for. The idea was that they could lose mechanical engineers to other industries but this wasn't the case for the mining boys so they were encouraged by paying them.

I lost the top of my finger when I was twenty one. What happened was that we were unloading equipment off a dram. We had jacked the equipment up and put two rails against the dram to slide it off. I had a bar to start it sliding and the foreman fitter said "Catch hold of it with your hand and pull it". His end stuck and mine moved and it came down and took the top of my finger off. No compensation but I had six weeks off work. I had to go to the Coal Board doctor, who was Dr Jack Mathews the Rugby international, who said I was fit for work. I said that the surgeon in Porth Hospital had said that I needed another fortnight off because I was doing heavy work but Dr Mathews said "I've known men underground who've had their fingers off and worked to the end of the shift"! However I did have another fortnight off. The operation was a good job, I remember another boy having his finger off and they'd left a nerve at the top.

Another fitter was changing a belt drive on a lathe and had taken the cover off the bearing. He had a rag and was wiping the machine while it was working and got a bit close and it pulled his hand into the gearing. Because it was a flat belt drive it was a bit over on one side and jammed when his fingers got caught. He was taken to the First Aid and his little finger was amputated but he was lucky he didn't lose his whole hand.

One of the fitters was working in the washery and the conveyor belt hadn't been squared up properly so the top belt was spilling coal onto the bottom belt. He was using a small brush to sweep the coal off the bottom belt when the brush went into the drum and took his arm with it. He was pulled in and his arm went around the drum and he lost his arm. The off-switch was on the next landing and they had to run up the steps to knock it off.

Another accident was in the saw mill when a man slipped and had his fingers off while pushing timber onto the saw. Working on the surface was as dangerous as working underground.

I worked in Cambrian from 1939 to 1951. After I left the industry I worked for the Ministry of Supply for a few years inspecting gun barrels and other armaments and equipment including the Bristol Bulldog guided missiles. Later I became a lecturer in mechanical engineering in Llwynypia Technical College. In the late 1950s we had an intake of around ninety NCB apprentices every year. I was there until 1986 when I retired as acting head of mining and mechanical engineering.

In 1965 I was lecturing in the college when I heard about the explosion. When something happens in the colliery which stops the flow of coal everyone from the manager down pushes to get it started as soon as possible. What you get is first the deputy then the overman then the under manager then the colliery manager all urging you to get it going and that's when mistakes happen. When everyone is rushing you, you get flustered and that's what happened in Cambrian.

Hugh Charles Baker

Pawb yn gefn i'w gilydd

Cefais fy ngeni ym mis Rhagfyr 1924. Roedd fy nhad a'm brodyr hŷn yn lowyr yn y Gorki Drift. 'Gaffer halier' oedd fy nhad, yn gyfrifol am y ceffylau. Pan adewais i'r ysgol ym mis Rhagfyr 1939, dechreuais weithio fel gwas fan ar gyfer becws cyn cael swydd yn y becws ei hun wedyn. Cafodd fy nhad ddamwain ddifrifol danddaear gan dorri'i ddwy goes, ac yn dechrau gwella pan es i chwilio am waith yn y Gorki. Doedd e ddim am i fi fynd danddaear. Mynd wnes i, fodd bynnag, fel gwas colier yn yr 'hedin a'r talcen' gyda bocs cwrlo mewn gwythïen dwy droedfedd naw modfedd o uchder. Roedd yn waith caled, a chefais y llysenw 'Titch'.

Roeddwn i'n gyrru injan halio yn y Gorki ym 1941 pan aeth y sbêc [*math o drên bach yn cludo glowyr o gwmpas y pwll*] allan o reolaeth a lladd chwe llanc yn eu harddegau, gweithiwr hŷn ac anafu 53 arall. Roeddwn i ar shift brynhawn y diwrnod hwnnw a chafodd fy ffrind, Ken Francis, oedd yn dreifio'r un injan ar y shift ddydd, ei ladd. Pa bawn i ar y shift ddydd yr wythnos honno, efallai taw fi fyddai wedi marw.

Pan gaeodd y Gorki ym 1947, ces i fy nhrosglwyddo i lofa'r Cambrian yn gyrru injan halio ar waelod Pwll Rhif 4. Arhosais yno tan i fi gael diagnosis o ddermatitis a achoswyd gan olew injan, a rhwystrodd hyn fi rhag gweithio danddaear. Yna, bues i'n gweithio ar wyneb y Cambrian yn gyrru injan halio ar y tip sbwriel. Roedd yr awyrgylch yn y Cambrian yn wahanol i'r Gorki. Roedd y Gorki yn fwy o bwl teuluol a phawb yn nabod ei gilydd. Dim ond rhyw 400 oedd yn gweithio yno yn f'amser i, tra'r oedd y Cambrian yn dipyn mwy o faint gydag 800 o ddynion – roedd oddeutu 4,000 o weithwyr yno ar un cyfnod.

Roeddwn i'n mwynhau gweithio ar y tip – fyddwn i byth am weithio mewn ffatri gyda pobl yn bigitan ac yn siarad yng nghefnau'i gilydd, yn enwedig os oedden nhw'n chwilio am swydd â mwy o gyflog. Bu 'ngwraig yn gweithio mewn ffatri cynhyrchu ffiteri olew am flynyddoedd, hi oedd un o'r hoelion wyth, a bu yno am bedair mlynedd a deugain. Gweithiais i ar y tip tan 1953 pan adeiladwyd rhaffordd awyr yno. Yna, bues i'n gweithio ar yr hoist yn tipio glo i'r byncar a chael fy medyddio'n Glyn 'Hoist'. Gorffennais fel arolygwr pen pwll ym Mhwll Rhif 1.

Pan ffrwydrodd y pwll, roeddwn i yno'r rhan fwyaf o'r diwrnod yn agor drysau'r caets oedd yn cludo'r gweithwyr druan a gollodd eu bywydau. Roeddwn i'n nabod llawer iawn ohonyn nhw. Y tro cyntaf i fi glywed bod rhywbeth wedi digwydd, oedd pan ddaeth y mecanig ata i a dweud wrthyf aros ym Mhwll Rhif 1 am y tro. Gwelais faniau Tim Achub y Pyllau Glo a meddwl mai ymarfer oedden nhw, ond yna cyrhaeddodd Byddin yr Iachawdwriaeth. Holais beth oedd wedi digwydd, a deall bod ffrwydrad wedi digwydd yn Ffas Lo P26 a bod dynion wedi'u lladd gan gynnwys y rheolwr a'r is-reolwr. Dechreuon nhw gludo'r cyrff allan tua phedwar o'r gloch y pnawn. Roedd torf wedi ymgasglu o gwmpas y lofa. Cyrhaeddais adref tua 11.30 pan ddaeth yr hersiau i gludo'r bois druan ymaith. Roedd

llu o bobl yn sefyll o flaen eu tai, rhai'n llefain, eraill eisiau gwybod beth oedd wedi digwydd, ond allwn ni mo'u hateb nhw – dwi'n galon feddal iawn.

Roedd rhaid i ni fynd i'r gwaith y bore canlynol. Roedd pawb yn dawel, dim chwerthin yn y baddondai. Cawsom ein hanfon adref gan nad oedden nhw'n cynhyrchu glo. Roedd miloedd yn yr angladdau, ond pan oedden ni'n cerdded lawr Wern Street, y cwbl glywech chi oedd clip clopian traed – roedd hyd yn oed yr adar yn fud. Pan aeth yr hers gyntaf trwy giatiau'r fynwent yn Nhrealaw, roedd yr olaf o'r galarwyr yn dal yn Nhonypandy. Roedd e'n deimlad ofnadwy, fel pe bai popeth wedi dod i stop.

Pan ddechreuodd bywyd fynd yn ei flaen eto, es i'n ôl ar yr hoist, a chymryd lle'r arolygwr pen pwll pan oedd e'n absennol, tan i'r lofa gau y flwyddyn ganlynol.

Ces i fy nhrosglwyddo i dîm symudol yr NCB, yn trwsio seidins glofeydd tan 1980 pan ddaeth y tîm i ben. Roedd gosod platiau'n gallu bod yn waith caled iawn – roedd wyth yn y gang, a bydden i weithiau yn trin cledrau trigain troedfedd oedd yn dipyn o straen ar yr ysgwyddau. Dyma fi'n rhoi'r gorau iddi pan ddywedon nhw 'mod i'n rhy hen i gael fy nhrosglwyddo, ond a dweud y gwir, dw i'n credu ei bod hi'n rhatach iddyn nhw ddirwyn y tîm i ben er eu bod nhw'n brin o bobl i osod platiau. Roeddwn i'n rhy hen i weithio y tu allan i'r diwydiant – os oeddech chi'n rhy hen, doedden nhw ddim eisiau'ch nabod chi!

Mwynheais fy nyddiau yn y lofa, roedd yn gyfeillgar a phawb yn un – os oedd unrhyw broblem, roedd pawb yn gefn i'w gilydd.

Wrth i'r blynyddoedd fynd heibio, dyma ffurfio pwyllgor cymuned Cwm Clydach er mwyn prynu swyddfa'r heddlu i'w thro'i'n ganolfan gymunedol. Fe gymrodd dair blynedd i gael cofeb ar safle'r Cambrian, ac un arall ar gyfer trychineb Gorki. Fi oedd y trysorydd, ac aethon ni lan i Glwb Llafur Pen-y-graig i dderbyn siec gan y clwb a siec o £400 gan y Bwrdd Glo. Fe wnaeth un boi o'r Labour Club daflu deg ceiniog ar y llwyfan a dweud "Sdim un NCB yn mynd i ddweud eu bod nhw wedi talu'r un faint â ni!" Yn y diwedd, dyma ni'n cydweithio â'r cyngor a ddywedodd y bydden nhw'n cyfrannu ac yn cadw llygad ar y gofeb. Chwarae teg, mae'r grŵp gwirfoddol wedi gwneud gwaith da yn y lofa, yn trwsio'r wal, plannu ac ati er mwyn ei gwneud yn lle brafiach i bobl, pan ddôn nhw i dalu teyrnged i'r rhai a fu farw dros y garreg lo.

Bydda i'n darllen rhestr y rhai fu farw yn nhrychineb Gorki 1941, fis Mai nesaf, hanner canrif ers ffrwydrad y Cambrian, gan taw fi yw un o weithwyr olaf y Gorki sy'n fyw o hyd. Dw i'n un o'r rhai lwcus.

Glyn Davies

We all stuck together

I was born on December the twenty third, 1924. My father and oldest brother were miners in Gorki Drift. My father was a 'gaffer haulier' in charge of the horses. When I left school in December 1939 I started as a van boy for a bakery then worked in the bake house itself. My father had a serious accident underground and was laid up with two broken legs when I sought work in the Gorki and he didn't want me to work underground. But I went anyway as a collier boy in 'heading and stall work' with a curling box in two feet nine of height. It was hard work and they used to call me 'Titch'.

I was driving a haulage engine in Gorki in 1941 when the 'spake' (man riding train) ran away and killed six teenagers and an older workman, and injured fifty three others. I was working afternoon shift that day and my butty, Ken Francis, who was driving the same engine on day shift was killed. If I had been day shift that week it might have been me that was killed.

When Gorci closed in 1947 I transferred to Cambrian Colliery driving a haulage engine on pit bottom in Number 4 Pit. I stayed there until I was certified with dermatitis caused by the engine oil and was stopped working underground. I then worked on the surface at Cambrian driving a haulage on the rubbish tip. There was a different atmosphere at Cambrian from the Gorci. Gorci was more of a family pit and everyone knew each other. There was only about four hundred working there during my time, Cambrian was a lot bigger with eight hundred men – at one time there had been about four thousand working there.

I enjoyed tip work – I'd never work in a factory where there was back biting and people would split on each other, especially if they were looking for a higher paid job. My wife worked in a factory for years making oil filters for cars, she was a leading hand and did forty four years there. I worked on the tip until 1953 when they introduced an aerial ropeway. Then I worked on the hoist tipping coal in the bunker and became known as Glyn 'Hoist'. I ended up as a banksman on top of Number 1 Pit.

When the pit exploded I was there most of the day opening the cage doors to bring the poor workmen up who had lost their lives. I knew a lot of those. I first heard that something had happened when the mechanic came on to me and said to stay at Number 1 Pit until further notice. I saw the Mines Rescue vans and thought that they were there practice, but then I saw the Salvation Army.

I asked what had happened and was told that there had been an explosion in P26 Coal Face and men had been killed including the manager and under manager. It was about 4pm when they started to bring the bodies out. There were lots of people around the colliery. I came home about half past eleven when the hearses had come to take the poor lads away. There were lots of people out in front of their houses, some of them crying, wanting to know what had happened but I couldn't answer them – I'm very soft hearted.

We had to go to work the following morning. Everything was subdued, there was no laughter in the baths. As they weren't producing coal we were sent home. There were thousands in the funerals but when we walked down Wern Street all you could hear was the clip, clop of the feet – you couldn't even hear a bird singing. When the first hearse went through the cemetery gates in Trealaw, the rear of the marchers was still in Tonypandy. A very bad feeling as if everything had come to a standstill on that day.

When things came back to normal I went back on the hoist, and replaced the banksman if he had time off, until the colliery closed the following year.

I was transferred to the NCB Mobile Gang repairing colliery sidings until 1980 when the gang folded up. Plate laying could be heavy work – there were eight of us in a gang and we used to handle sixty foot rails on some occasions, it could be very hard on the shoulders. I finished then because they said I was too old to be transferred, but really I think that it was cheaper to finish us even though they were short of plate layers. I was too old to work outside the industry – if you were too old they didn't want to know you!

I enjoyed my time in the colliery, it was very friendly and we were all together – if there were any problems we all stuck together.

As time went on we formed a Clydach Vale community committee and held concerts to purchase the police station to turn it into a community center. It took three years to get a monument put on the Cambrian site and one for the Gorci disaster. I was the treasurer and we went up to Penygraig Labour Club where we received a cheque from that club and a cheque for £400 from the National Coal Board. One chap from the Labour Club threw ten pence onto the stage and said that "No NCB is going to say that they paid the same as us!" Eventually we worked with the council who said that they would give a donation and keep an eye on the memorial. Fair play, the volunteer group have been doing a good job at the colliery, repairing the wall, re-turfing, planting and other things to make it a better place for people, when they come to pay respect to those who died for coal.

I'm reading the casualty list for those who died in the 1941 Gorci disaster, next May on the fiftieth anniversary of the Cambrian disaster as I'm one of the last Gorci workmen left alive. I'm one of the lucky ones.

Glyn Davies



Dyddiau da

Cefais fy ngeni ym mis Hydref 1934 yn Oak Street, Cwm Clydach. Roedd fy nhad yn gweithio ar wyneb glofa'r Cambrian, yn mynd â wagenni i'r rhidyllfa. Gadewais yr ysgol yn 14 oed, a mynd i weithio yn rhidyllfa'r Cambrian yn pigo baw o'r glo. Doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi bod ar y rhidyllau, hen le brwnt ac oer. Bues i yno am ryw ddeunaw mis cyn cael swydd gyrru injan halio ar y tip. Ces i wythnos o hyfforddiant ar sut i'w defnyddio, a bues i wrthi am bum mlynedd.

Yna, es i lan y tip ar injan halio McClaren yn gollwng baw o'r dramiau llawn a mynd â'r dramiau gwag yn ôl i lawr yr inclein. Yn ddiweddarach, bues i'n gweithio danddaear o amgylch gwaelod Pwll Rhif 4 ac, os oedd yr hitsiwr ar goll, roeddwn i'n gwneud hynny yn ei le. Fe wnes i hynny tan i'r lofa gau. Danddaear neu ar yr wyneb, doedd dim ots gen i. Roedd yna awyrgylch hyfryd yn y Cambrian, gwell na gweithio mewn ffatri – er 'mod i erioed wedi gwneud hynny chwaith.

Roeddwn i ar shift brynhawn yng ngwaelod Pwll Rhif 4 pan fu'r ffrwydrad. Dyma ni'n cael ein hanfon lan y pwll, i'r lamprwm, i nôl lamp arall a disgen wedi'i rhifo i roi am ein gyddfau. Yna, roedd rhaid i ni ddychwelyd i lawr pwll Rhif 1 a mynd i ffas lo P26, criw o bedwar, yn gorfod cerdded i mewn i'r ffas o'r Gate End. Roedden nhw wedi'u lapio'n barod i'w cludo mas, a bu'n rhaid i ni gerdded i lawr y cludfelt gyda'r stretsieri a rhoi'r cyrff yn y dramiau, yna esgyn i fyny'r pwll gyda nhw.

Arbenypwll, roeddaelodau o Fyddin yr Iachawdwriaeth yn rhannu te, ac fe welson ni newyddiadurwyr – ond wedon ni ddim gair wrthyn nhw. Roedd pobl wedi amgylchynu'r baddondai. Roedd timau ar yr wyneb yn derbyn y cyrff. Roeddwn i'n teimlo'n uffernol – dw i ddim yn trafod y peth rhyw lawer. Gofynnodd yr oferman, Arthur Parker, i ni fynd yn ôl i mewn, ond doedden ni ddim eisiau gwneud hynny eto. Roeddwn i'n adnabod cryn dipyn o'r rhai a laddwyd. Cafodd fy nghefnider Viv Nicholas ei ladd, a Henry Lee bum drws i ffwrdd. Roedd hi'n gymuned glos, ac roedd yr awyrgylch yn ofnadwy. Cerddodd pawb i fynwent Treallaw ar gyfer yr angladd. Ar ôl mynd i un angladd, roedden ni'n paratoi am y nesaf.

Es i'n ôl lawr i Bwll Rhif 4 drannoeth y ffrwydrad. Ac yno y bues i'n gweithio tan i'r pwll gau.

Ar ôl i'r Cambrian gau, es i lofa'r Cwm. Caeodd y 'Cam' ar y dydd Gwener a dechreuais weithio yn y Cwm ar y dydd Llun. Aeth llawer o fois y 'Cam' i'r Cwm, roedd hi'n rhyfedd gorfod dal y bws ar ôl cerdded i'r gwaith gyhyd. Yn ystod fy nghyfnod yn y Cwm, bues i'n gyplwr, yn reidiwr, yn gweithio ar bâr o 'tens', yn yrrwr disel, hitsiwr, arolygwr pen pwll wrth gefn - popeth! Roeddwn i'n hoffi'r Cwm, roedd yn fwy o bwll na'r 'Cam', gyda chaetsys mwy, a sgip weindio. Y peth gorau oedd y dynion yn canu wrth ddychwelyd i fyny'r pwll - yn enwedig adeg y Nadolig - a'r sŵn yn atsain drwy'r siafft. Gorffennais weithio yn y Cwm ym 1985, ychydig cyn iddo gau.

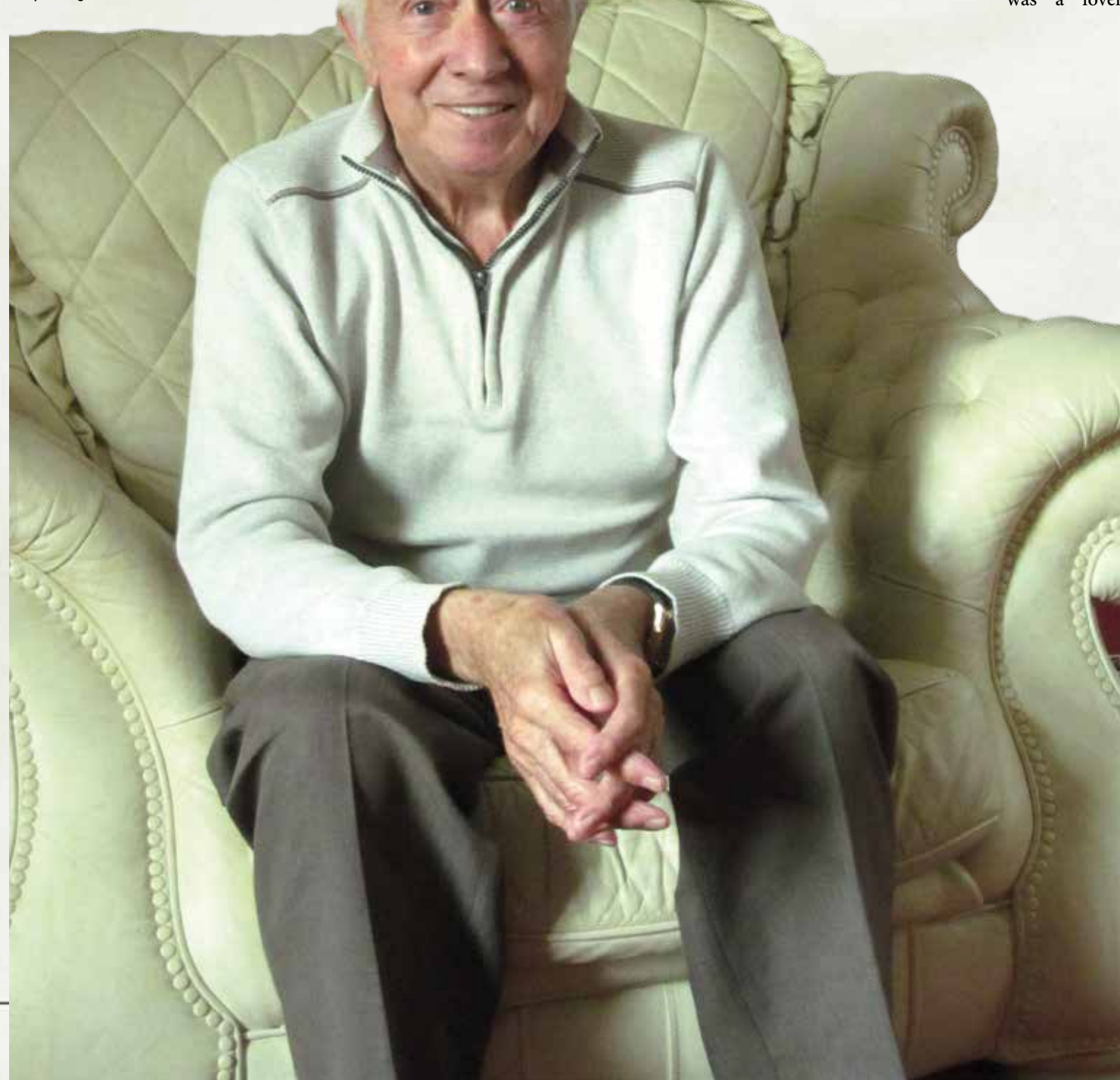
Ar ôl i'r Cambrian gau, aeth Cwm Clydach yn dawel fel y bedd, doedd dim gwaith i'w gael heblaw am swyddfeydd y cyngor, ac aeth llawer o bobl i fyw ym mhentrefi Beddau neu Pentre'r Eglwys, ger glofa'r Cwm.

Roeddwn i'n hapus gyda 'ngyrfa – amser gorau fy mywyd i. Mae'n dawel nawr, dw i'n mynd lawr i gerdded ger y llyn yn y bore a mynd a chi fy wyres am dro pan mae hi yn y gwaith – bywyd o hamddena.

Dw i'n mynd i'r gwasanaeth coffa bob blwyddyn. Dw i'n gweld llawer o'r bois, ac mae'r hen atgofion yn llifo'n ôl. Maen nhw'n rhoi hen gaets glofa ar y safle coffa – gofynnais i oedden nhw moyn arolygwr pen pwll!

Merfyn Madge

Merfyn Madge



The best time of my life

I was born in October 1934 in Oak Street, Clydach Vale. My father worked on the surface at Cambrian Colliery taking wagons to the screens. I left school at fourteen and worked on the screens at Cambrian picking muck from the coal. I didn't like working on the screens, it was dirty and cold. I was there for about eighteen months and then got a job driving a 'pair of tens' haulage engine on the tip. I had a week's training to learn how to use it and was there for five years.

I then went up the tip on the McClaren haulage engine tipping muck from the full drams and running the empties back down the incline. I later went underground to work around the Number 4 pit bottom and, if the hitcher was missing I used to do the job instead of him. I did that until the colliery closed. I didn't mind whether I was underground or on the surface. There was a lovely

atmosphere at Cambrian, better than working in a factory – although I've never actually worked in one.

I was working afternoons on Number 4 pit bottom when the explosion happened. We were told to go up the pit to the lamp room to get a fresh lamp and a numbered disk to put around our necks. We had to go back down Number 1 pit and go into the P26 coal face. There were four of us and we had to walk into the face from the Gate End. They were wrapped up ready to be brought out and we had to walk down the conveyor belt with the stretchers and put the bodies in drams, then we went up the pit with them.

On top of the pit there was the Salvation Army giving out tea and we saw reporters – but we didn't talk to them. The surface was full of people around the baths. There were teams on the surface who took the bodies from us. I felt terrible – I don't talk much about it. The overman, Arthur Parker, asked us to go in again but we didn't want to do it again. I knew the biggest part of the men killed. My cousin Viv Nicholas was killed, Henry Lee five doors down was killed. It was a close community and the atmosphere was awful. We all walked to Treallaw cemetery for the funerals, once we had been to one funeral we got ready for the next.

I went back down Number 4 Pit the day after the explosion. I worked down Number 4 until the colliery shut.

When Cambrian closed I went to Cwm Colliery. 'Cam' closed on the Friday and I started in Cwm on the Monday. A lot of 'Cam' men to Cwm to work, it was strange catching the bus after always walking to work. During my time in Cwm I was a shackler, a rider, on a pair of tens, a diesel driver, hitcher, spare hand banksman – everything! I liked Cwm, it was bigger than 'Cam', bigger cages, and it had skip winding. The best thing I remember was the men singing coming up the pit – especially at Christmas – the sound used to reverberate through the shaft. I finished in Cwm in 1985, just before it closed.

After Cambrian closed Clydach Vale went quiet, no work apart from the council offices and a lot of people went to live in Beddau or Church Village near the Cwm.

I was happy with my career – the best time of my life. It's quiet now, I have a walk down the lake in the morning and I walk my granddaughter's dog when she's in work - a life of leisure.

I go to the memorial service every year. I see a lot of the boys and it brings back memories. They're putting an old colliery cage on the memorial site – I asked them if they needed a banksman!

Merfyn Madge

Mynd â lamp mas

Cefais fy ngeni ym mis Mehefin 1933 yn Nhrealaw. Doedd fy nhad, Henry Lee, ddim yn löwr ar y pryd ond yn gweithio mewn pwll tywod yn Surrey a pan oeddwn i'n fabi symudodd y teulu i gyd i Redhill. Aeth i Ganada pan oedd e'n bedair ar ddeg oed, i weithio ar y rheilffyrdd ac fel coediwr. Yna, ymunodd â'r fyddin fel cogydd i'r sarjants, yn yr Aifft yn bennaf – roedd e'n dweud iddo ladd mwy o ddynion na'r Almaenwyr! Pan adawodd y fyddin, aeth i Bwll Rhif 1 yn y Cambrian i weithio fel dyn ffordd. Dyn clyfar a defnyddiol iawn oedd 'nhad!

Gadewais yr ysgol ym 1948 a mynd i weithio gydag adeiladwr am ychydig fisoedd cyn ymuno â Jobie Lewis y pobydd yn dosbarthu gyda'r faniau. Roeddwn i'n arfer gwneud cacennau ar nos Sadwrn, ac yn rhoi eisin ar gacennau i ferched y stryd pan oedden nhw'n priodi.

Es i'r lofa pan oeddwn i'n ddeunaw oed. Ar ôl hyfforddi yn Wattstown, dechreuais i weithio fel gwas colier yn y Cambrian, yn rhawio glo ar y cludfelt yn Ardal E. Bues i'n gwneud hynny am ddwy flynedd, ac roedd e'n wahanol iawn i'r becws. Fe ddysgais i ricio cynhalbyst pren gyda bwyell a dod yn reit dda a defnyddiol. Roedd gen i 'stent' [*man gweithio*] fy hun erbyn i fi fod yn ugain oed ac, ar yr un pryd, roeddwn wedi dechrau astudio i fod yn swyddog pwll yn Clydach Court a Crawshay Villa. Roedd yr NCB yn talu am fy niwrnodau yn yr ysgol. Ro'n i'n mwynhau hynny, oherwydd yn Clydach Court fe wnaeth athro mathemateg gamgymeriad, a finnau'n sylwi. Ar ôl dadlau am ychydig, dyma fe'n cytuno taw fi oedd yn iawn. Ro'n i'n eitha da am fathemateg. Dyma fi'n pasio a mynd â lamp mas [*dod yn swyddog*] yn un ar hugain oed. Fy ardal gyntaf oedd y Dip 7 ar yr ochr orllewinol, ac roeddwn yn ceisio trin y dynion mor deg â phosibl bob amser, ond dyna oedd fy ngwaith wedi'r cwbl.

Es i'n aelod rhan-amser o'r frigâd achub. Dechreuodd y diddordeb pan gollais i nwcwl yn ffrwydrad Senghennydd. Bues i wrthi am ddeng mlynedd, gan gynorthwyo yn nhrychinebau Lewis Merthyr a Six Bells. Doeddwn i ddim yn hoffi gweithio mewn offer anadlu, ond fe ddes i arfer. Roedd yr hyfforddiant achub glofaol yn wych. Roeddwn i'n rhan o'r tîm fu'n tirlfesur ardal y ffrwydrad yn Lewis Merthyr pan sylwais ar rywbeth tebyg i faneg ar y llawr – cyn sylweddoli taw croen dyn oedd e.

Yn y cyfamser, tra ar wyliau ym Mhorthcawl, llwyddais i achub pedwar o bobl a aeth i drafferthion ar y môr.

Roeddwn i'n byw yn Williamstown ym 1964 ac yn cadw'r glo un diwrnod pan ddywedodd fy ngwraig bod ffrwydrad wedi digwydd yn y Cambrian. Gadewais iddi orffen cadw gweddill y glo ac es i lan i'r pwll. Er 'mod i'n ddyn achub rhan-amser, gwrthodon nhw adael i fi na'm brawd Johnnie fynd i lawr y pwll. Roed yn rhaid iddyn nhw'i ddal 'e nôl a dweud y gwir. Felly, dyma ni'n aros ar ben y pwll a gweld y cyrff yn dod i'r wyneb. Roedden nhw'n gwrthod gadael i ni fynd danddaear achos roedden nhw'n gwybod bod fy nhad wedi'i ladd. Fe oedd y pellaf o'r ffrwydrad, a'r dyn hynaf a laddwyd. Roedd yn erchyll, fe deimlais y peth i'r byw.

Bues i'n ddirprwy am tua un flwyddyn ar bymtheg. Ar ôl y ffrwydrad, es i weithio yng nglofa'r Cwm am ryw ddwy flynedd. Es i weld swyddog y gyfrinfa [*undeb llafur*] a dweud wrtho mod i eisiau rhoi'r ffidil yn y to. Es ymlaen i ffatri rwber Homerton yn Nhrefforest fel peiriannwr, ond pan glywon nhw am fy mhrofiadau fel rhan o dim achub glofaol, fe ges i 'mhenodi'n swyddog tân a gorfod mynd i Fanceinion unwaith y mis i gyfarfod y bwrdd Deddf Iechyd a Diogelwch yn y Gwaith. Gadewais y ffatri ar ôl 11 mlynedd. Yna, es ymlaen i Sain Tathan [*gorsaf yr awyrlu*] i weithio fel ysgubwr. Cefais swydd fforman yno ar ôl iddyn nhw ddeall bod gen i brofiad rheoli, ac o fewn chwe mis, roeddwn i'n rheolwr adran. A dyna wnes i am dair blynedd ar ddeg cyn ymddeol yn drigain oed oherwydd gwaeledd.

Mae gen i lu o ddiddordebau – peintio, crochenwaith, gwaith saer, cyfrifiaduron. Dw i'n rhoi cynnig ar unrhyw beth, yn dysgu sut i'w wneud, ac yn mynd ymlaen i'r peth nesaf. Bues i'n aelod o Grochenwyr De Cymru am flynyddoedd. Dw i'n debyg i 'nhad felly, oedd yn arfer gwneud pramiau dol o hen focsys caws a sgwteri i'r bechgyn. Collais fy ngwraig o ddiabetes dair blynedd ar ddeg yn ôl, a dw i wedi cael canser deirgwaith, yn ogystal â dwy glun artiffisial a diabetes – dw i'n hapus i ddeffro yn y bore erbyn hyn! Er gwaethaf hyn i gyd, dw i wedi cael bywyd bendigedig ac wedi gwneud popeth roeddwn i am ei wneud, a llwyddo i ryw raddau.

Brian Lee

Brian Lee

Taking a lamp out

I was born in June 1933 in Trealaw. My father, Henry Lee, wasn't a miner at that time but had got a job in a sand pit in Surrey and we all went to live in Redhill when I was a baby. He went to Canada when he was fourteen and worked on the railways and as a lumberjack. Later he joined the army as a staff sergeant cook, mainly in Egypt – he reckoned that he killed more men than the Germans! When he came out of the army he went into Number 1 pit in Cambrian as a roadman. A very clever man my father, very handy.

I left school in 1948 and worked with a builder for a couple of months then went with Jobie Lewis the baker as a rounds man on the vans. I used to make cakes on a Saturday night and used to ice cakes for the girls in the street when they got married.

I went into the colliery when I was eighteen. After training in Wattstown I started as a collier's boy in Cambrian shovelling coal onto the conveyor in E District. I did that for two years and it was a lot different from the bakery. I learned to 'notch timber' (*cut wooden roof supports with a hatchet*) and became quite useful. I had a 'stent' (*working place*) of my own at twenty and, at

the same time, started to study to become a mine official at Clydach Court and Crawshay Villa. The NCB paid for my day in school. I enjoyed that because when I was in Clydach Court there was a maths teacher who made an error and I noticed it was wrong. He argued a bit but eventually agreed that I was right. I was good at maths. I qualified and 'took a lamp out' (*became an official*) at twenty one. My first district was the Dip 7 on the west side and I always tried to treat the men as fairly as I could, but it was my job after all.

I started as a part time rescue brigade man as my uncle was killed in the

Senghennydd explosion which made me interested in doing it. I did ten years and was involved in both the Lewis Merthyr and Six Bells disasters. I didn't like working in a BA (*breathing apparatus*) but I got used to it. The mines rescue training was excellent. I was part of a team charting the explosion area in Lewis Merthyr when I noticed what I thought was a glove lying on the ground only to find that it was human skin.

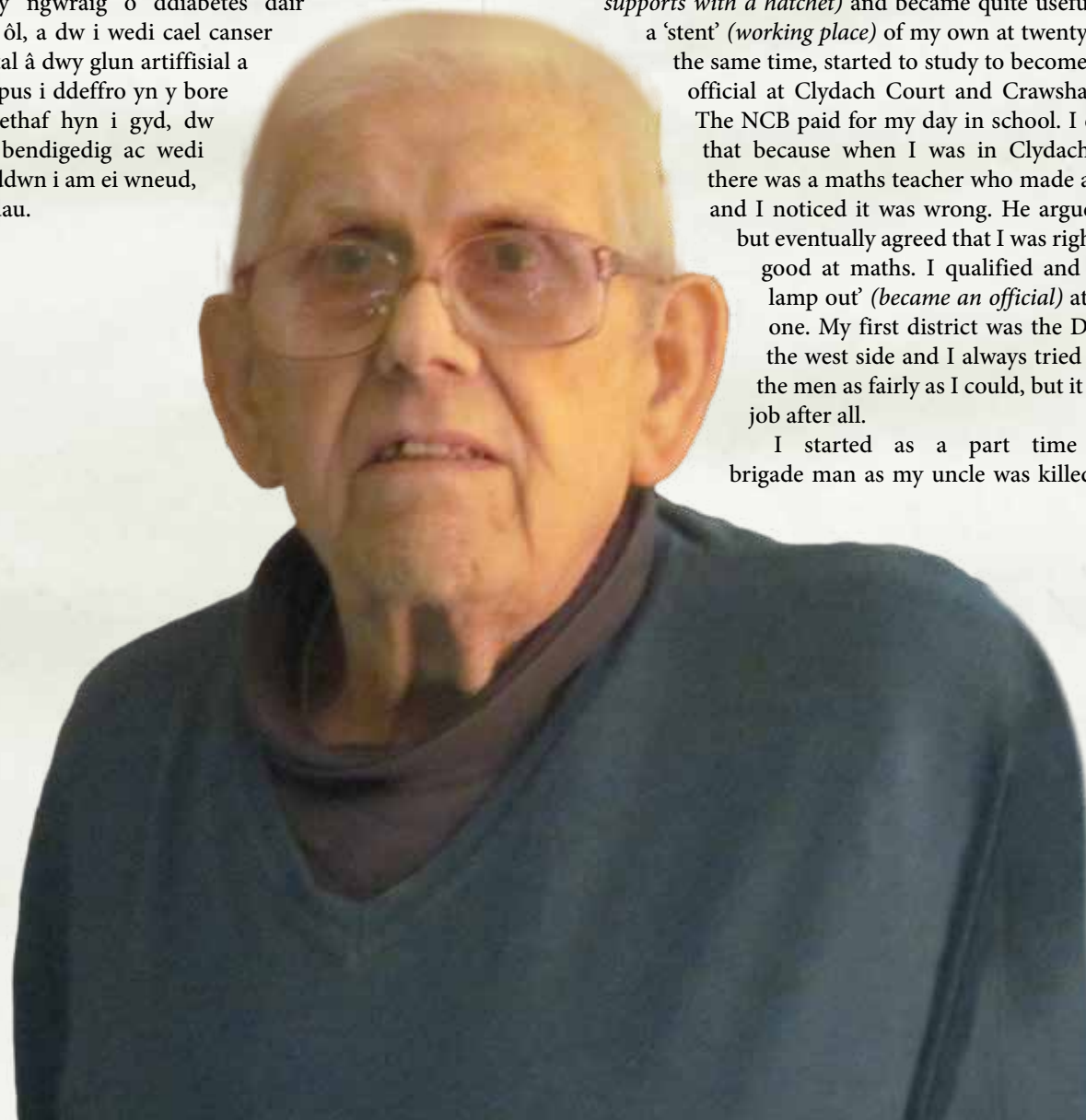
In the meantime I had been on holiday in Porthcawl and rescued four people who had got into difficulty in the sea and managed to get them to safety.

I was living in Williamstown 1965 and was putting the coal in one day when my wife told me there had been an explosion in Cambrian. I left her to put the rest of the coal in and went up the pit. Although I was a part-time rescue brigade man they wouldn't let me or my brother Johnnie go down the pit. In fact they had to forcibly stop him. So we stopped on the top of the pit and saw the bodies coming up. They wouldn't let us go underground because they knew that my father had been killed. He was the furthest from the explosion and was the oldest man killed. It was terrible, I really felt it.

I was a deputy for about sixteen years. After the explosion I went to work in Cwm Colliery for about two years. I went to see the lodge official (*trade union*) and told him that I wanted to finish. I went to Homerton Rubber factory in Trefforest as a machinist but when they heard of my experience in mines rescue they made me a fire officer and was sent to Manchester once a month to sit on the board of the Safety and Health in Work Act. I finished there after eleven years. From there I went to St Athan (*RAF station*) for a job as a sweeper up. Then they found out about my managerial experience and gave me a job as a foreman and, within six months, became manager of a section which I did for thirteen years. I retired with ill health aged sixty.

I have a lot of interests – painting, pottery making, carpentry, computers – I try anything. I get into things, learn how to do them and then try something else, I was a member of the South Wales Potters for years. I take after my father who used to make dolls' prams out of cheese boxes and scooters for the boys. My wife died thirteen years ago and I've had cancer three times, two artificial hips and diabetes – now I'm just happy to get up in the morning! In spite of this I've had a wonderful life and have done everything I wanted to do and succeeded to a certain extent.

Brian Lee



Beth am roi cynnig ar y pwll?

Ces i fy ngeni ym Mhengam, Sir Fynwy, ym mis Mawrth 1930. Roedd fy nhad yn is-reolwr gyda Chwmni Glo Powell Duffryn ac yn cael ei symud o lofa i lofa dan reolaeth y cwmni. Felly es i naw ysgol wahanol gan orffen yn Ysgol Sir y Porth, Cwm Rhondda, a graddio ym 1947.

Fy mwriad gwreiddiol oedd dilyn gyrfa mewn peirianeg aerforwrol, ond roedd fy nhad yn rheolwr glofa'r Cambrian, Cwm Clydach, ar y pryd yn awgrymu "Beth am roi cynnig ar y pwll a gweld sut aiff hi?". Ac yn y diwydiant glo y bues i am ddeg mlynedd ar hugain!

Dechreuais weithio yng nglofa'r Cambrian ym mis Hydref 1947, yn y gweithdai ffitio cyn mynd danddaear ar fy mhen-blwydd yn ddeunaw oed ym mis Mawrth 1948 i wneud fy hyfforddiant ffas lo. Ar ôl cwblhau hyn, a dan gyfarwyddyd fy nhad, fe wnes i sawl swydd. Rhaid i fi bwysleisio nad oedd cael tad fel rheolwr yn sicrhau breintiau a bywyd hawdd i fi – i'r gwrthwyneb! Mynychais y Ysgol Fwyngloddio Britannia, Pengam am 12 mis, yna cyfnod ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd, cyn dychwelyd i lofa'r Cambrian ym 1951 gan ymuno hefyd â'r Tîm Achub Glofaol.

Dechreuais weithio fel ffeiarman ym Mhwl Rhif 1 y Cambrian, yng ngwythien Pentre. Roedd y Pentre'n wythien dda iawn, dw i'n cofio P2 [*ffas lo a gloddiwyd rhwng 1948 a 1958*] a oedd yn ymestyn am ryw 2,000 o lathenni gyda dim ond un ffawt pum modfedd. Roedd yn ffas lo o'r radd flaenaf, ac er ei bod hi'n wlyb ac oer, nid oedd y lofa'n cael ei hystyried yn bwl arbennig o beryglus.

Dw i ddim yn cofio unrhyw un yn cael ei ladd ym Mhwl Rhif 1 pan oeddwn i yno. Bois lleol o Gwm Clydach a Thonypandy oedd y gweithwyr yn bennaf, gyda'r pellaf yn dod o Benrhiwfer siŵr o fod. Er ei fod yn bwl eithaf milwriaethus, ches i erioed unrhyw drafferth. Clywais fod fy nhad, Albert Ivor Higgs, wedi'i benodi'n rheolwr y Cambrian am mai ef oedd yr unig allai ymdopi â'r gyfrinfa [*cangen yr undeb llafur*].

Pan ddigwyddodd y ffrwydrad ym 1965, roeddwn i ar gwrs yn Ysgol Hyfforddi Britannia. Rwy'n cofio gadael y dosbarth gyda 'Cy' [Cyril] Windos, is-reolwr yng nglofa'r Lady Windsor ar y pryd a chyn is-reolwr yn y Cambrian, pan gafodd ei alw at y ffôn. Ar ôl clywed am y ddamwain, dywedwyd wrtho am fynd i'r Cambrian oherwydd ei brofiad o weithio yno.

Ym 1954, roeddwn i ar gwrs hyfforddiant ymarferol dan gyfarwyddyd [DPT] yn astudio i fod yn rheolwr. Roedd yn cynnwys gweithio mewn glofeydd a swyddfeydd amrywiol er mwyn ehangu gorwelion ym maes rheoli. Ar y pryd, roeddwn i'n mynychu Ysgol Fwyngloddio Trefforest am ddiwrnod yr wythnos, gan ennill cymhwyster HND mewn Mwyngloddio yn y pen draw. Dan y cynllun DPT, roeddwn i'n cynorthwyo Mr Albert Fox, rheolwr glofa Lewis Merthyr, Trehafod. Roedd problem yn un o'r ardaloedd danddaear yn y pwll ac roeddwn i fod i fynd lawr gydag e. 22 Tachwedd 1956 oedd hi, pan gafodd naw o ddynion, gan gynnwys Mr Fox, eu lladd mewn ffrwydrad,

ac anafwyd pump arall yn ddifrifol. Yn ffodus, roeddwn i'n sefyll fy arholiad Rheolwr Glofa ar y diwrnod hwnnw, neu gallai fy ngyrfa wedi dod i ben yn y fan a'r lle. Derbyniais fy nhystysgrif rheolwr ym mis Ionawr 1957.

Cefais fy mhenodi'n daniwr yng nglofa Lady Windsor yn y lle cyntaf, yna roeddwn i'n gyfrifol am ddatblygiadau yng nglofa Nantgarw. Wedyn, symudais i lofa'r Maindy, Tonpentre, i oruchwylio'r dasg o greu ffordd danddaear oddi yno i Bwl Rhif 1, glofa'r Cambrian. Contractwyr oedd yn gwneud y gwaith, pob un yn Wyddel. Roedden nhw'n weithwyr rhagorol, ond cafwyd problem un penwythnos pan fu'n rhaid i fi drafod â heddlu Tonypandy er mwyn rhyddhau rhai o'r celloedd er mwyn aildddechrau'r gwaith ar y dydd Llun. Dro arall, ddaeth neb i'r gwaith ar y dydd Llun oherwydd eu bod wedi dychwelyd i Iwerddon gan fod pobl Cyllid y Wlad ar eu holau. Erbyn diwedd yr wythnos, roedden nhw wedi dychwelyd drwy Lerpwl i aildddechrau gweithio, gyda rhifau Yswiriant Gwladol newydd, ac un neu ddau gydag enw newydd hyd yn oed! Fe ddwedon nhw y gallen nhw gael Rhif Yswiriant Gwladol newydd i fi hefyd, am bris.

Erbyn Rhagfyr 1960, roeddwn i'n gyfrifol am ddatblygiad sylweddol yng nglofa'r National, Wattstown, eto gyda chontractwyr – ond nid Gwyddelod y tro hwn. Ym mis Medi 1961, cefais fy anfon i Nantgarw fel is-reolwr dros dro tan cael fy mhenodi'n is-reolwr y lofa ym mis Ionawr 1962. Doedd Nantgarw mo'r pwll hawsaf

i'w weithio, gyda rhai amodau anodd iawn, ond mae na broblemau ym mhob pwll.

Ym mis Ionawr 1973, cefais fy mhenodi'n is-reolwr glofa Abercynon a gysylltwyd danddaear â'r Lady Windsor yn ddiweddarach. Ymddeolais o'r Lady Windsor/Abercynon ar 30 Ebrill 1986, cyn i'r pwll gau. Ar ymweliad â'r pwll roedd y Cyfarwyddwr yn teimlo 'mod i a'r rheolwr, Glyn Pritchard, yn rhy hen – dim ond 56 oed oedd y ddau ohonom ni! Symudais o lofa i lofa ac o dŷ i dŷ gydol fy ngyrfa. Roedd yr oriau'n hir, a finnau wastad ar alwad. Er bod yna dda drwg, mwynheais fy ngyrfa.

Tom Higgs

Tom Higgs



Why not try the pit?

I was born in March 1930 in Pengam. All my family were in mining. My father was an undermanager in Deri when I was born and eventually became a manager. One of my grandfathers was killed in Markham Colliery and the other was a colliery engineer. A cousin was also killed in Markham in the 1940s.

We moved to the Rhondda to live in Britannia, Porth, in 1931 and I left school in 1947. I wanted to go into aero engineering but dad was manager of Cambrian Colliery at that time and said "Why not try the pit and see how it goes". That was it and I was there for thirty odd years.

I started in the colliery when I was seventeen but worked in the fitting shop until I was eighteen as a stop gap. By doing that I avoided having to do three months training in Wattstown which I would have had to do if I'd gone there before I was eighteen. As I waited until I was eighteen I only had to do a few weeks. I started underground in Cambrian in the East Side, Yard Seam, in Number 4 Pit. I was supervised by Bill Jones on an AB 15 Undercutter (*coal cutting machine*). I did that for a few months.

I studied mining engineering in Britannia School of Mines for about twelve months, then went to Trefforest School of Mines. I was doing my DPT (*practical training*) in Lewis Merthyr Colliery in 1956 and I was supposed

to be down the pit with the manager Albert Fox on the twenty second of November. However, I had to go down to Cardiff for my colliery manager's certificate got my colliery manager's certificate. When I came out of the office with my 'ticket' I saw a notice on the bulletin board saying that there had been an explosion in Lewis Merthyr. Two men had been killed immediately and seven died later including Mr Fox. If I hadn't had to go to Cardiff I would have been with him.

I completed the training course and my first appointment was as a shotsman in Lady Windsor Colliery in 1957. I was there for about six months and then worked as an official at a number of collieries including Nantgarw, Maindy and National Collieries. I worked as a 'fireman' (*deputy*) in Cambrian Colliery in Number 1 Pit, Pentre seam on the 'plough' (*a type of coal cutter*) faces. The Pentre seam was a very good seam, I remember P2 (*a coal face worked between 1948 and 1958*) going for around 2,000 yards with only one 5" fault – a first class coal face, although it was a cold, wet seam. Cambrian was never regarded as a particularly dangerous pit. People died there but I don't remember anyone being killed in Number 1 Pit when I was there.

The workforce was mostly local boys from Clydach Vale

and Tonypandy, the furthest away was probably Penrhiwfer. The pit was quite a militant one but I didn't get much trouble. I was told that my father, Albert Ivor Higgs, had been made manager of Cambrian as he was the only one who could handle the 'lodge' (*trade union branch*) there. I later became overman by night at Cambrian with Thyssens contractors driving the Maendy heading. I got married in the August and was on nights for eighteen months! I went to National Colliery in 1961 as a development overman.

When the explosion happened in 1965 I was on a course in Britannia Training School. I remember coming out of class with 'Cy' (Cyril) Windos, who was under manager at Lady Windsor at the time but had been previously under manager at Cambrian, when he was called to the phone and told there had been an explosion and called back to the colliery because of his experience there.

After Cambrian closed a couple of the men came to work in Nantgarw but they didn't last long. There was a world of difference between Nantgarw and Cambrian, all the coal faces were on a steep slant at Nantgarw. None came as face workers but most didn't last more than a few weeks, then they were gone.

I finished in the pits as manager of Nantgarw Colliery in 1986 when that colliery closed. During my career I worked in a lot of pits and lived in a lot of houses. I worked long hours and was always on call, there were ups and downs but I enjoyed my career.

Tom Higgs

Bwced o stêm

Ces i fy ngeni yng Nghaerdydd ym mis Gorffennaf 1928. Gŵr o Ganada ac aelod o'r Llynges Fasnachol oedd fy nhad, ond gadawodd pan oeddwn i a'm dau frawd yn fabanod, a symudodd y teulu i Gwm Glydach i fyw gyda mam-gu a dad-cu. Roedd Clydach yn gymuned arbennig, gallech chi chwarae yn y tywyllwch heb ofni neb, a phawb yn helpu'i gilydd. Roedd mam angen arian, felly dechreuais weithio yn ffreutur glofa'r Cambrian pan oeddwn i'n 16 oed, yn syth o'r ysgol.

Ces i nghyflogi gan Jack 'Butch' Evans, y mecanig ar yr wyneb. Roedd rhaid i ni weithio shifftiau – chwech o'r gloch tan ddau y prynhawn, dau tan saith yr hwyr, yna dychwelyd am naw o'r gloch ar gyfer y shifft nos a gorffen am hanner nos neu un o'r gloch y bore. Saith a chwech oedd fy nghyflog cychwynnol, a byddwn i'n ei roi i mam ac yn cael arian poced yn ôl ganddi. Roeddwn i'n mwynhau'r gwaith, ac roedd y dynion yn dishgwyl ar ein holau ni. Roedden ni'n gwerthu te, sigarêts, pasteiod, cacennau, 'twist' [*baco cnoi*], gwm cnoi a sebon. Jack Evans oedd ein rheolwr ni.

Dw i'n cofio un digwyddiad pan aeth y dynion ati i dynnu'n coes ni. Daeth un ohonyn nhw draw a rhoi bwced i fi. "Beth ti moyn i fi wneud 'da hwn?" holais, "Wy moyn i ti fynd lan i'r tŷ weindio i ôl bwced o stêm" atebodd. A dyna wnes i, mynd i'r tŷ weindio gan chwifio'r bwced yn fy llaw, a dyma Sid Daw, dyn yr injan weindio yn gofyn, "Beth wyt ti moyn Bet?". A medde fi "Ma' nhw di hala fi i ôl bwced o stêm". Aeth e bant a dychwelyd gyda'r bwced a dweud "Gan bwyll nawr, mae'n drwm". Edrychais yn y bwced, oedd yn hollol wag, "Bydda'n garcus, paid â'i ollwng e," medde fe. Gafaelais yn y bwced a mynd yn ôl i'r ffreutur gyda'r dynion i gyd yn edrych arna i gan chwerthin yn braf. Rhais y bwced ar y llawr a gofyn "Pam y'ch chi moyn hwn?" Roeddwn i'n teimlo mor dwp ar ôl sylweddoli beth oedd wedi digwydd, a finne'n teimlo mor browd yn mynd i nôl stêm. Bues i'n llawer mwy gofalus ar ôl hynny – allwn i ddim dal fy mhen yn uchel ar ôl cael fy nhwyllo.

Roedd cownter bach ganddon ni a'r dynion yn arfer galw draw gyda'u bocsys bwyd i brynu brechdanau. Un diwrnod, daeth bachan i mewn a gofyn am frechdanau, a dyma fi'n dweud "Tynn y caead i ffwrdd" fel y gallwn eu rhoi nhw yn y boc. Dyma fe'n gofyn "Allet ti dynnu'r caead i fi?" a phan wnes i, roedd chwe cocrotsien, y tu mewn – sôn am sgrechian!

Bydden ni'n llenwi poteli gwydr â the i'r dynion ac roedd gan un bachan botel wydr werdd. Gofynnodd "Pa fath o de y'ch chi'n defnyddio, ma' ryw flas od arno'n ddiweddar?" Dyma ni'n dweud y bydden ni'n golchi'r botel iddo, ond fe gawson ni dipyn o drafferth. "Ma' 'na rywbeth yn hon" medde fi, ac atebodd e "O's potel sbâr da chi? Os felly, fe dorra i hon i weld beth sy' na." Beth welodd e oedd llygoden wedi marw – a dyn a ŵyr ers faint!

Pan ddechreuais i weithio yno, roedd y ffreutur drws nesaf i'r lamprwm reit ar ben y pwll. Roedd yn lle mawr gyda lle tân yn y canol a llwch llif ar lawr. Byddai'r dynion yn ymgasglu yno cyn mynd i lawr y pwll yn eu dillad budr, gan nad oedd baddondai pen pwll yno bryd hynny, ac yn

dychwelyd yno eto cyn mynd adref, felly roedd y ffreutur yn dueddol o fynd yn frwnt. Roedd rhwng pedwar a chwech ohono ni'n gweithio yno.

Un diwrnod, roedden ni'n golchi cwpanau yn y sinc, ac roedd yna ffenestr fawr o'n blaenau ni. Roedd hi mor dywyll nes bod modd gweld ein hadlewyrchiad ynddi. Edrychais i fyny a gweld rhywbeth siâp gwyn a meddwl "Nid fi yw honna!" Trois at Mary a gofyn "Beth yw hwnna?" a dyma'r ddwy ohonom ni'n sgrechian. Dyma ddeall wedyn bod crwtyn ifanc o'r lamprwm wedi gwisgo cynfas i'n dychryn ni. Roedd ganddon ni ormod o ofn cerdded adref yn y tywyllwch wedyn, felly dechreuodd plisman y lofa ein hebrwng ni.

Byddai'r dynion yn arfer gofyn "Ti moyn reid?" a bydden ni'n mynd i waelod y pwll ac yn ôl. Aethon ni i'r ffas lo un diwrnod, a dyma fi'n meddwl, petawn i'n cael plant, fyddwn i byth yn gadael iddyn nhw ddod lawr fan hyn. Dyma ni'n diffodd ein lampau i weld pa mor dywyll oedd hi, a gallech chi glywed y llygod mawr yn sgrialu. Wnai fyth anghofio mynd ar y ffas, a'r to'n mynd yn is ac yn is, a gorfod sefyll yn erbyn yr ochr wrth i'r dramiau basio.

Pan adeiladwyd y baddondai pen pwll [1953], cafodd ffreutur newydd ei chodi'r un pryd. Dyma ni'n cael rheolwraig, a daeth yn adran llawer mwy. Roedd ganddon ni gogydd erbyn hyn, ac roedden ni'n gwneud ein teisennau a'n pasteiod ein hunain yn hytrach na'u prynu. Arferai menyw ddod draw unwaith y mis i archwilio'r llyfrau. Gwahaniaeth arall oedd ein bod ni'n gorfod golchi'r llawr â mop bob dydd yn hytrach na newid y llwch llif yn unig. Erbyn hynny, gweithwyr wyneb y pwll neu rai ar shifft ychwanegol oedd yr unig rai mewn dillad brwnt erbyn hynny.

Roedd bywyd yn braf yn y ffreutur, pawb mewn cytgord ac yn gofalu amdano. Newidiodd popeth ar ôl i ni symud draw i'r baddondai pen pwll, roedden ni ychydig ar wahân erbyn hynny.

Doeddwn i ddim yn gweithio yn y Cambrian adeg y ffrwydrad, gan ein bod ni wedi symud i Faglan erbyn hynny, ond cafodd Billy, brawd fy ngŵr, ei ladd. Daethon ni lan i'r Cambrian am fod fy ngŵr yn poeni am ei frawd, ac er mwyn gweld allen ni wneud unrhyw beth i helpu, ond roedd ambiwlansys a phobl ym mhob man a doedd dim posibl mynd yn agos at y lle. Ymunodd fy ngŵr, Albert Thomas, â'r lofa fel rhaffwr ar ôl gadael y llynges, ac roedd fy nau frawd yno hefyd am sbel.

Symudon ni i Faglan ym mis Ionawr 1965 a chafodd fy ngŵr swydd fel gyrrwr lorri gydag Andrew Scott. Dechreuais i weithio yn y ffreutur yn ffatri Ford Abertawe. Roedd yn fyd o wahaniaeth, gyda ffreutur ar gyfer y gweithwyr ac un arall ar gyfer y swyddfeydd. Roedd hi'n llawer iawn mwy – gyda dau gogydd, a llawer mwy o'r gweithlu yn bwyta yno o gymharu â'r lofa. Yna, bues i'n gweithio yn siop groser Bateman, Port Talbot am sbel cyn mynd ymlaen i ffatri sigârs Freeman am ddeuddeg mlynedd cyn ymddeol. Tipyn o amrywiaeth mewn bywyd.

'Betty' Thomas



A bucket of steam

I was born in July 1928 in Cardiff. My father was a Canadian in the Merchant Navy but left us when my two brothers and I were babies and we moved to Clydach Vale to live with my grandparents. Clydach was a wonderful community, you could play out in the dark without being afraid and everyone helped one another. My mother needed the money so I started in the canteen in Cambrian Colliery when I was sixteen, straight from school.

I was taken on by Jack 'Butch' Evans the surface mechanic. We had to do shifts – six o'clock until two pm, two pm until seven pm and come back at nine for the night shift and finish at twelve or one o'clock in the morning. I started on seven and six pence and I used to hand it over to my mother and she gave me pocket money. I used to enjoy the work and the men used to look after us. We used to sell tea, cigarettes, pies, cakes, 'twist' (*chewing tobacco*), chewing gum and soap. Jack Evans managed us.

I remember one incident where the men used to tease us. One came onto me and gave me a bucket, "What do you want me to do with this?" I asked him, "I want you to go up to the winding house and get a bucket of steam" he answered. I actually went, swinging the bucket, up to the winding house and Sid Daw, the winding engine man,

said "What do you want Bet?" I said "I've been sent for a bucket of steam". He went off and came back with the bucket and said "Be careful, this is heavy". I looked in the bucket and couldn't see anything, "Be careful you don't spill it" he said. I took hold of the bucket and went back to the canteen with all the men all watching me and laughing. I put it down and asked "What do you want it for? When I realised I felt so soft, I'd been up there so proud to fetch the steam. I was more cautious after that – I couldn't hold my head up the way I'd been tricked.

We had a short counter and the men used to come in with their 'tommy boxes' (*metal food containers*) to buy sandwiches. One day a chap came in and asked for sandwiches and I said "Take the top off" so I could put them in. He said "Could you take the top off for me?" and when I did there were six 'black pats' (*a type of cockroach*) inside – we all screamed!

We used to fill glass bottles full of tea for the men and one chap had a green glass bottle. He asked "What type of tea are you using there's a funny taste on the tea lately?" We said that we'd swill the bottle out for him but had a job to clean it out. I said to the chap "There's something in there" and he said "Do you have a spare bottle? If so I'll break

it and see what's in there." When he did he found a dead mouse – goodness knows how long it had been in there!

When I started the canteen was next to the lamproom right on top of the pit. It was a big place with a fireplace in the centre and sawdust on the floor. The men used to gather there before they went down the pit in their dirty clothes, as there was no pithead baths then, and again before they went home so it got quite dirty. There were between four and six of us working there.

One day we were washing cups in the sink and there was a big window in front of us, it was so dark that you could see our reflections in it. I looked up and saw a white form and I thought "That's not me!" I said to Mary "What's that?" and we both screamed. We found out that a young boy from the lamp room had put a sheet on to frighten us.

We were scared to walk home in the dark after that so the colliery policeman started to accompany us.

The men used to say "Do you want a ride?" and we used to go down the pit to pit bottom and back up. One day they took us into the coal face and I thought if I had children I'd never let them come down here. We put our lamps out to see how dark it was and you could hear rats scurrying. I'll never forget going onto the face and it was getting lower and lower and you had to stand against the side while the drams went passed you.

When the pithead baths were built (1953) a new canteen was built as part of. We had a manageress and it became a bigger organisation altogether. We now had a cook and made our own cakes and pies rather than buy them in. A lady used to come in once a month to check the

books. Another difference was that we now had to mop it all out every day rather than just change the sawdust. Although the only men we had in there in dirty clothes were surface men or men doing an extra shift.

It was a good life in the canteen, there was harmony there and everybody looked after you. It all changed when we moved over to the pithead baths, we were a bit more separate then.

I wasn't working in Cambrian when the explosion happened as we had moved to Baglan by then, but my husband's brother Billy was killed in the explosion. We came up to Cambrian because my husband was worried about his brother as well as seeing if we could do anything to help, but there were ambulances and people everywhere and we couldn't get near. My husband, Albert Thomas, had come

out of the Navy to work in the colliery as a rope smith and my two brothers had also worked there for a while.

We had moved to Baglan in January 1965 and my husband had got a job as a lorry driver with Andrew Scott's. I started working in Ford's in Swansea in the canteen. It was completely different, there was a canteen for the workers and one for the offices. It was a much bigger scale – they had two chefs and more of the workforce ate food there than in the colliery. I then worked in Bateman's grocers in Port Talbot for a while before going to Freeman's Cigar Factory where I worked for twelve years before retiring. Quite a varied life.

'Betty' Thomas

○ Durham i Gwm Clydach

Ganwyd fi yn Swydd Durham yn Rhagfyr 1911. Bu farw mam wrth roi genedigaeith, ac roeddwn i'n ddwy oed pan welais i 'nhad am y tro olaf. Cefais fy magu gan anti ac wncwl ers pan oeddwn i'n dair wythnos oed. Gadewais yr ysgol yn bedair ar ddeg oed a mynd i weithio yng nglofa Lady Dorothea a oedd yn eiddo i gwmni glo Lantern and Hutton. 1926 oedd hi, ac ym mis Mai, aethon ni ar streic am ryw wyth mis. Pan ddaeth y streic i ben, fe wnaethon nhw 'nghymryd i'n ôl, ond nid fy nhad – wel, fy wncwl mewn gwirionedd ond dad oedd e i fi bob amser – am ei fod e ar bwyllgor y gyfrinfa [undeb] mwy na thebyg.

Porthor oeddwn i, yn rheoli drws aer danddaear. Roedd ganddo ni lampau olew cyffredin [lampau diogelwch] ac roedd gen i guddfan [lloches wedi'i thorri yn ochr y ffordd] a pan fyddwn i'n clywed merlyn yn nesáu gyda bowc o lo, roedd yn rhaid i fi agor y drws iddo ddod trwyddo. Bues i yno am dair blynedd a hanner cyn i'r lofa gau.

Ar ôl gadael y lofa, es i'r Swyddfa Gyflogi a chofrestru, a cael fy anfon i Ganolfan Hyfforddi Carsholton ar gyfer pobl ar y dŏl. Oddi yno, cefais dŷ lojins yn Calham a theithio bob dydd i Croydon lle'r oedden nhw'n adeiladu ysbyty. Roedden nhw'n lefelu cae ar gyfer codi'r ysbyty, ac yn symud tybiau o glai o un lle i'r llall. Roeddwn i yno am dri mis, a dw i'n dal i gofio fy mysedd yn greithiau a chleisiau i gyd ar ôl gwrthio'r tybiau o glai ac ati. Roedd yn lladdfa, a llond gwlad o fechgyn ifanc a dynion yna.

Pan orffennodd hynny'n mis Rhagfyr, clywais fod gwesty'r King's Head, Chigwell, yn chwilio am borthor yn y gegin. Arhosais i yno am bum mlynedd tan 1934. Yno y cwrddais i â'm 'tynged' – Moran Roberts o Howard Street, Cwm Clydach, oedd yn gweithio fel morwyn gegin mewn ysgol breifat gyferbyn â'r King's Head – gallen ni chwibanu ati ar draws y to fin nos. Penderfynais adael y swydd a mynd i Dde Cymru gyda hi. Roedd llawer o bobl ar y pryd yn gadael De Cymru am Lundain, ond dyma Joe Smith yn penderfynu cyfnwied Llundain am Gwm Rhondda.

Dyma fi'n cofrestru gyda'r Swyddfa Gyflogi yn Nhonypandy – ac roedd rhyw dri chant o ddynion yn

gwneud yr un fath, cofiwch. Cefais fy ngalw i'r swyddfa, a dywedwyd bod cwmni yng Nghaerdydd yn chwilio am asiantiaid i werthu hwfers – dim cyflog, comisiwn yn unig. Pe tawn i'n dweud na, gallen nhw stopio'r arian, felly cytunais i, a bues i'n gweithio iddyn nhw am ryw flwyddyn i bymtheg mis. Erbyn y diwedd, roeddwn i wedi canfasio pob athro, meddyg a deintydd, pob gweithiwr proffesiynol ac yn dod adref heb yr un ddime goch. Ar ôl treulio wythnos heb werthu dim, roedd rhaid i fi roi'r ffidil yn y to. Roedd rhaid i fi wneud cais i gael y dŏl, ac fe ges i'r arian yn y pen draw ar ôl gorfod disgwyl tair wythnos amdano.

A dyma ddod i'r Cambrian. Es i draw yno un diwrnod i weld D.C. Jones, dw i'n credu, rheolwr y lofa. Roeddwn i mewn ystafell gyda rhyw ddwsin o fois yn chwilio am waith, a dyma'r amserwr yn dod i mewn a dweud, "Sori, dim gwaith, smo' ni moyn neb heddi" a dechreuodd y dynion eraill fynd dros y bont o'r lofa. Dechreuais i sgwrsio gyda dyn oeddwn i'n ei adnabod yn y lamprwm, a dyma'r rheolwr yn digwydd pasio a minnau ychydig gamau y tu ôl iddo, ac fel roeddwn i hanner ffordd dros y bont fe stopiodd fi a dweud "Hei, dere 'ma. Wyt ti'n gwybod rhywbeth am gymorth cyntaf?" Atebais i "Ydw, ma gen i dystysgrif o'r cyfnod pan oeddwn i'n y lofa yn County Durham." "Iawn," meddai, "Dere i weld Mr Pugh yfory".



Joe Smith

From Durham to Clydach Vale

I was born in December 1911 in County Durham. My mother died in childbirth and I saw my father last when I was about two years old. I was brought up by an aunt and uncle. I came to them when I was three weeks old. I left school at fourteen and started in Lady Dorothea Colliery owned by the Lantern and Hutton Coal Company. That was in 1926 and in May we went on strike for about eight months. When the strike ended they started me back on but wouldn't start my father, well, he was my uncle really but I always called him father, probably because he was a lodge (union) committee man.

I was a door boy controlling an air door underground. We had ordinary oil lamps (flame safety lamps) and I had a 'man hole' (a refuge cut into the side of the roadway) and, when I heard the pony coming with a tub of coal, I had to open the door for him to go through. I worked there for about three and a half years and then the colliery closed.

After I came out of the colliery I went to the Labour Exchange and signed on and was sent to Carsholton Training Centre for people who were on the dole. From there I got lodgings in Calham and travelled every day into Croydon where they were building a hospital. They were levelling out a field to make the hospital and moving tubs of clay from A to B. I was there for about

three months and I can still remember my fingers all cuts and bruises from pushing the tubs of clay and all the rest of it. It was hard work and it was not only me there were lots of young boys and men there.

When that finished in the December I was told that they wanted a kitchen porter in the King's Head Hotel in Chigwell. I carried on there for about five years until 1934. It was there that I met my 'doom' - she was Moran Roberts from Howard Street, Clydach Vale who was working as a kitchen maid in a private school opposite the King's Head – I could whistle across the roof to her at night. I decided to pack the job in and go to south Wales with her. For a lot of people at that time they would be leaving south Wales and going to London but Joe Smith decides that he's going from London to the Rhondda Valleys.

I signed on at the Labour Exchange at Tonypandy – and about three hundred other men signing on with me at that particular time mind. I was called into the office and told there was a firm in Cardiff that required agents to sell vacuum cleaners – there was no pay, it was commission only. If I said no they could stop my pay so I said yes and worked for them for about a year or fifteen months. In the end I'd canvassed all the teachers, doctors, dentists, all the professional people until I was on no money at all coming home. I was going a week and not having a sale and I had to pack it in. I had to claim to get dole and eventually got it but they made me wait three weeks.

Well this comes now to Cambrian. I went over one day to see, I think, DC Jones the manager of the colliery. I was in a room with about a dozen fellows looking for work and the timekeeper came in and said "Sorry, no work, nobody wanted today" and the other chaps started their way across the bridge from the colliery. I started talking to a man in the lamp room who I knew and the manager passed me and I left the lamp room just behind him and was half way over the bridge when he stopped me. "Hey, come over here" he said. He said "Do you know anything about first aid?" I said "Yes, I have a certificate for that

Fe es i weld Mr Pugh a dywedodd wrtha i am ddechrau'r shift brynhawn y diwrnod canlynol. Cefais fy anfon at griw o 'dwrnwyr' oedd yn symud cludfelt y ffas lo ymlaen bob dydd ar ôl i'r shift lo orffen. Wel, ar ddiwedd y shift, dywedodd yr arweinydd "Cer lan at y dynfa, Joe, a gwed 'tho'r bachan ar y pen i dynhau'r tyniant." Felly, i fyny'r ffas a fi, ac ar y ffordd nôl, llithrodd slab o garreg o'i lle a tharo cefn fy mhen, roedd fy mys yn hongian i ffwrdd a chollais i bedwar dant. Am gyflwyniad i lofa'r Cambrian! Bues i bant o'r gwaith am dair wythnos, ond fe ges i iawndal chwarae teg.

Ym 1945, fe ges i swydd ysgrifennydd iawndal. Er mai swydd ran-amser oedd hi, roedd digon o waith i fod yn llawn amser. Roedd yn rhaid trin a thrafod gyda meddygon a chyfreithwyr, a bu'n rhaid i fi ddysgu sut i drin ffigyrau. Fe ges i rywfaint o help gan Trevor Davies, athro oedd yn byw drws nesaf i ni â brawd yr oferman yn y lofa. Fe ddes i'r afel â hi yn y pen draw, a bues i wrthi tan 1966.

Ar 17 Mai 1965, roeddwn i'n gweithio danddaear ym Mhwl Rhif 4 pan ddaeth brawd Trevor 'Digger' yr oferman ata i a dweud "Gwisga dy got, Joe". Roeddwn i'n gweithio ar ben arall y cludfelt a gofynnais "Beth sy'n bod?" "Ma' na ffrwydrad di bod, Joe", atebodd. "Duw mowr, ble?" atebais i. "Pwll Rhif 1" meddai, "Ma'n eitha gwael, wy' di cal ordors ich cal chi lan y pwll, dim gair wrth neb am y tro. Dere." Wel, fe ddes i lan y pwll a mynd i'r swyddfa, ac roedd swyddogion yno'n dweud bod y sefyllfa'n wael iawn a'u bod nhw wedi galw am swyddogiuron uwch. Fe es i i olchi cyn mynd adref, a dywedodd fy ngwraig "Joe, ma' pobl yn rhedeg oboitu'r lle, a sa i'n gwybod beth sydd wedi digwydd". "Moran, ma ffrwydrad 'di bod" medde fi. "O Dduw!" meddai, a finnau'n ateb, "Ie, sa i'n gwbod pa mor wael yw pethe, ond wy'n mynd yn ôl nawr. Dim ond dod i weu'tho ti nes i."

Es i'n ôl yna, ac roedd y stryd yn frith o bobl, ceir, bysiau ac ambiwlansys. Dyma nhw'n symud pawb oedd wedi anafu, gyda'r meirwon yn cael eu gosod yn un o'r siedau ar yr wyneb. Dw i ddim yn cofio pa un, ddim bod hynny'n bwysig. Cafodd 31 eu lladd gan gynnwys Ernie Breeze y rheolwr a Les Williams, yr is-reolwr. Bachan hyfryd, oedd wir, roeddwn i'n dod mlân yn dda iawn ag e. Roedd Tim Achub y Pyllau Glo wedi mynd i lawr y pwll. Wel, roedd hi tua wyth o'r gloch nos erbyn i ni glywed cymaint o drychineb oedd hi. 31 yn farw ac 14 wedi'u hanafu. Yn ddiweddarach, cynhaliwyd ymchwiliad a oedd, yn fy marn i, yn celu'r gwir.

Pennawd y Daily Mail adeg yr ymchwiliad oedd "Two Guilty Men" sef y ddau drydanwr. Es i draw i'n prif swyddfa [NUM] yng Nghaerdydd a dweud wrth Archie James "Drych Archie, wy' moyn i ti wadu hyn ar unwaith. Nid 'two guilty men' oedd yn gyfrifol am hyn, ond pobl eraill". "Iawn" meddai "rwy'n gallu gweld dy fod di'n teimlo i'r byw am hyn". "Ydw, achos mae'r ddau drydanwr hyn wedi colli'u bywydau, ac nid nhw oedd ar fai". Alla' i fyth brofi'r peth, ond dw i'n credu iddyn nhw gael eu gorfodi i wneud, dim ond cael glo o'r wythien oedd yn bwysig.

Joe Smith



Diolch i Bill Richards
Courtesy Bill Richards

when I was in the colliery in County Durham." "Righto" he said, "Come to see Mr Pugh tomorrow".

I saw Mr Pugh and he told me to start on afternoon shift the following day. I was sent with a set of 'turners' who moved the coal face conveyor forward every day after the coal shift had finished. Well. At the end of the shift the leader of the 'turners' said 'Go up to the tension end Joe and tell the chap up the top to tighten the tension.' So I went up the face to tell him and on my way back a slab of stone slid out and hit me on the back of my head, my finger was hanging off and I had four teeth knocked out. A lovely introduction to Cambrian Colliery! I was out for three weeks, but they paid me compensation, fair play.

In 1945 I took over as compensation secretary. It was a part time position but a full time job. I had to deal with doctors and solicitors and I had to learn how to deal with figures, which I did with the help of Trevor Davies a teacher who lived next door and had a brother who was an overman in the colliery. I conquered it eventually and did the job until 1966.

On 17th May 1965 I was working underground in Number 4 Pit when Trevor's brother 'Digger' our overman came to me and said "Joe, put your coat on". I was working on the end of the belt and I said "What's the matter?" He said "There's been an explosion Joe." "Good God, where?" I said, "Number 1" he said "Pretty bad, I've had orders to get you up the pit, don't say anything to anyone for now. Come on." Well I came up the pit and went into the office and there were officials in the office who said it was pretty bad and they'd sent for somebody above them. I went for a bath and went to my house and my wife, Moran, said "Joe, people are running around and I don't know what's happened". I said "Moran, there's been an explosion. "O my God" she said, I said "Yes, I don't know how bad it is but I'll be going back now. I only came to tell you."

I went back over and the street was black with people, cars, buses and ambulances. They got the injured away and the dead were put in one of the sheds that we had on the surface. I forget which one it was now but that doesn't matter. There were thirty one killed including Ernie Breeze, the manager and Les Williams, the under manager and he was a lovely chap, he was, I really got on with him. The Mines Rescue had gone down the pit. Well. It was about eight o'clock at night before we knew exactly the full extent of the disaster. There were thirty one dead and fourteen injured. The enquiry took place later and, in my personal opinion, was a whitewash.

When the enquiry was held the Daily Mail heading was "Two Guilty Men" meaning the two electricians involved. I got onto our (NUM) head office in Cardiff and said to Archie James "Look Archie, I want you to deny this straight away. It wasn't 'two guilty men' responsible for this it was other people". "Yes" he said "I can see that you're worked up about this". "Yes, I am because those two electricians lost their lives and it wasn't their fault". I can never prove anything but I think that they were driven to it, they just wanted coal out of that seam.

Joe Smith

Pair y diafol

Ganwyd fi yn Nhonyrefail ym 1929, ac roedd fy nhad yn gweithio yng nglofa Cilely. Pan oeddwn i'n bedair ar ddeg oed, gadewais yr ysgol a mynd i Cilely - 'Hell's Kitchen'! Doedd gen i ddim syniad beth oedd o fy mlaen i, doedd dim diogelwch yno - roedden ni'n gweithio mewn 'Dai caps' [cap fflat], a finnau ochr yn ochr a'n wncwl, Ifan Coombes, yn crafu glo i'r bocs cwrlo. Un diwrnod, roeddwn i'n gafael mewn pensil yn yr ysgol, a'r diwrnod nesaf gyda bocs cwrlo o 'mlaen i. Am fyd o wahaniaeth.

Dw i'n cofio mynd i nôl fy lamp pan ddechreuais i, a dywedodd un dyn roeddwn i'n nabod "Paid ffwdanu 'da'r lle ma", ond dal ati wnes i. Roedden ni'n gweithio yn y talcenni, ac yn ogystal â chlirio'r glo roedd rhaid i ni wneud twll gyda dril clicied er mwyn chwythu'r to i lawr fel bod digon o le i geffyl ddod i mewn gyda dram. Doeddwn i ddim yn fawr iawn bryd hynny yng nglofa Cilely, roedd hi'n gyfnod y rasiwns, dim ond croen ac esgyrn oeddwn i. Yna, bues i'n gyrru injans halio tan i lofa Cilely gau. Erbyn y diwedd, roeddwn i ar beiriant halio mawr yn mynd â dramiau yn ôl i waelod y pwll. Fe wnes i weithio'n ffordd i fyny - roedd halio'n haws na rhawio glo.

Caeodd Cilely ym 1950, a ces i fy nhrosglwyddo i lofa Llanharan lle'r oedd y gwythiennau ar oleddf, yn wahanol iawn i Cilely. Roedd hi'n lofa dda, ond gyda fi'n byw yn Nhonyrefail ac yn gorfod teithio a newydd briodi, fe drosglwyddais i lofa'r Cambrian ym 1953. Yn y Cambrian, bues i'n gweithio ar y ffas lo o 1953 tan 1967. Dyna chi lofa dda arall, er yn wlyb mewn rhai mannau, a bydden nhw'n colli'r glo oherwydd y ffawtiau, felly roedd digon o waith chwilio am y wythien ac aildrefnu'r ffas. Roedd gen i ffrindiau da iawn yn y Cambrian - pawb yn sefyll ysgwydd wrth ysgwydd.

Dw i'n cofio'r ffrwydrad. Shift brynhawn oedd hi. Ffe glywais i'r glec, a dyma fy chwaer-yng-nghyfraith oedd â'i gŵr yn gweithio ym Mhwll Rhif 4, yn rhedeg i fyny'r hewl a dweud "Ma 'na ffrwydrad di bod yn y pwll". Es i lawr y pwll, a daeth Arthur Parker i'n cyfarfod a dweud wrthon ni am fynd at giât Ffas P26. Felly, draw aethon ni a chwrdd ag un o'r tîm achub a ddywedodd "Ma 'na gorff yn fan'na, allwch chi godi fe?" "Peidiwch ag edrych o gwmpas," medde rhywun, "Dim ond gwneud beth sydd rhaid i chi wneud." Felly, fe wnaethon ni ei gario fe'n ôl a'i roi mewn

dram, a dychwelyd i waelod y pwll tra'r oedd y lleill yn mynd ag e i'r wyneb. Cawson ni ein hanfon adref wedyn. Roeddwn i'n nabod pob un a laddwyd.

Aethom i'r angladdau, oedd yn anferth. Cerddodd pawb i lawr i fynwent Trealaw, diwrnod trist iawn. Ddywedodd neb yr un gair.

Fe gafon ni ddiwrnod neu ddau bant wedi'r ffrwydrad, ond roedd yn rhaid i ni ailgydio, ac fe dreuliais i gyfnod ar y ffas lo cyn i'r gwaith hwnnw ddod i ben, yna gwneud gwaith trwsio ac ati tan i'r pwll gau.

Ces i fy nhrosglwyddo i lofa'r Cwm, fel llawer o'r Cambrian. Bues i'n cloddio glo am sbel hir cyn symud i gynnal a chadw'r 'choc' [gofalu am y cynhalbyst hydrolog]. Roedd y Cwm yn fwy modern na'r Cambrian. Iyffach, fel mae'r oes wedi newid - fe ddechreuais i mewn talcen gyda bocs cwrlo yn Cilely, ac yn y Cwm, roedd peiriant llafnu yn torri'r glo a chwistrelli dŵr i gadw'r llwch i lawr - yn gorfforol roedd y gwaith dipyn haws. Nid pwll teuluoedd oedd y Cwm, yn wahanol i'r Cambrian, ond roeddwn i'n dod ymlaen yn dda gyda nhw.

Gadewais i ym 1973 gyda chlefyd y llwch. Dywedodd y meddyg fod gen i 10% o'r 'dwst' ar fy ysgyfaint, a chefais gyngor i adael y ffas lo a gweithio mewn amodau di-llwch. Allwn i ddim cael swydd o'r fath yn y Cwm, felly gadewais i'r pwll a mynd i weithio yn Bramber Trailers, Treorci, tan i fi ymddeol yn 64 oed pan gaeodd y ffatri. Roedd Cwm Clydach yn lle braf pan oedd yn llawn glowyr, hyd yn oed wedi i'r pwll gau roedd tipyn o ddynion yr ardal yn dal i weithio yng nglofeydd Cwm a Lewis Merthyr. Mae'r pentref wedi newid erbyn hyn, mae pobl newydd wedi ymgartrefu yma. Roedd hi'n gymuned glos flynyddoedd yn ôl, ond mae hynny i gyd wedi newid nawr.

Dilwyn Jones

Hell's kitchen

I was born in Tonyrefail in 1929 and my father worked in Cilely Colliery. I left school at fourteen and went to Cilely - 'Hell's Kitchen'! What did I get myself into, there was no safety - we worked in 'Dai caps' (*flat caps*). I worked with my uncle, Ifan Coombes, scraping coal onto a curling box. One day I was in school handling a pencil and the next with a curling box in front of me. If found it so different.

I remember going up for my lamp when I started and a chap I knew said "Don't bother with the place!" but I stuck it out. We worked in stalls and, on top of clearing the coal, we had to bore a hole with a ratchet machine to fire down the roof to make room for the horse to come in with the dram. When I was in Cilely I wasn't very big, it was rationing and I was all skin and bones. I was then put on a small haulage engine and was driving haulage machines until Cilely shut. In the end I was on a big haulage machine taking journeys of drams back to pit bottom. I worked my way up - hauling was easier than shovelling coal.

Cilely closed in 1950 and I was transferred to Llanharan Colliery where the seams were on a slant, very different to Cilely. It was a good colliery but I was living in Tonyrefail and having to travel and I'd got married so I transferred to Cambrian Colliery in 1953. In Cambrian I worked on the coal face from 1953 to 1967. It was another good colliery, wet in parts and they used to lose the coal through faults so there was a lot of work going down to find the seam and re-organise the face. I had good butties at Cambrian - we were all 'shoulder to shoulder'.

I remember the explosion. I was afternoon shift and I heard a bang and my sister in law, whose husband worked

in Number 4 Pit, came running up the road and said "There's been an explosion up the pit". I went down the pit and Arthur Parker met us and said to go to the gate end of the P26 Face. So we got to the gate end and met one of the rescue people who said "There's a body in there, can you arrange to pick him up?" We were told "Don't look around, just do what you have to do." So we carried him back and placed him in a dram and took the journey back to pit bottom and others took him up to the surface. We were told to go home then. I knew all of the people who were killed.

We went to the funerals which were big. We all walked down to Trealaw cemetery, a very sad day. No one said a word, massive funerals.

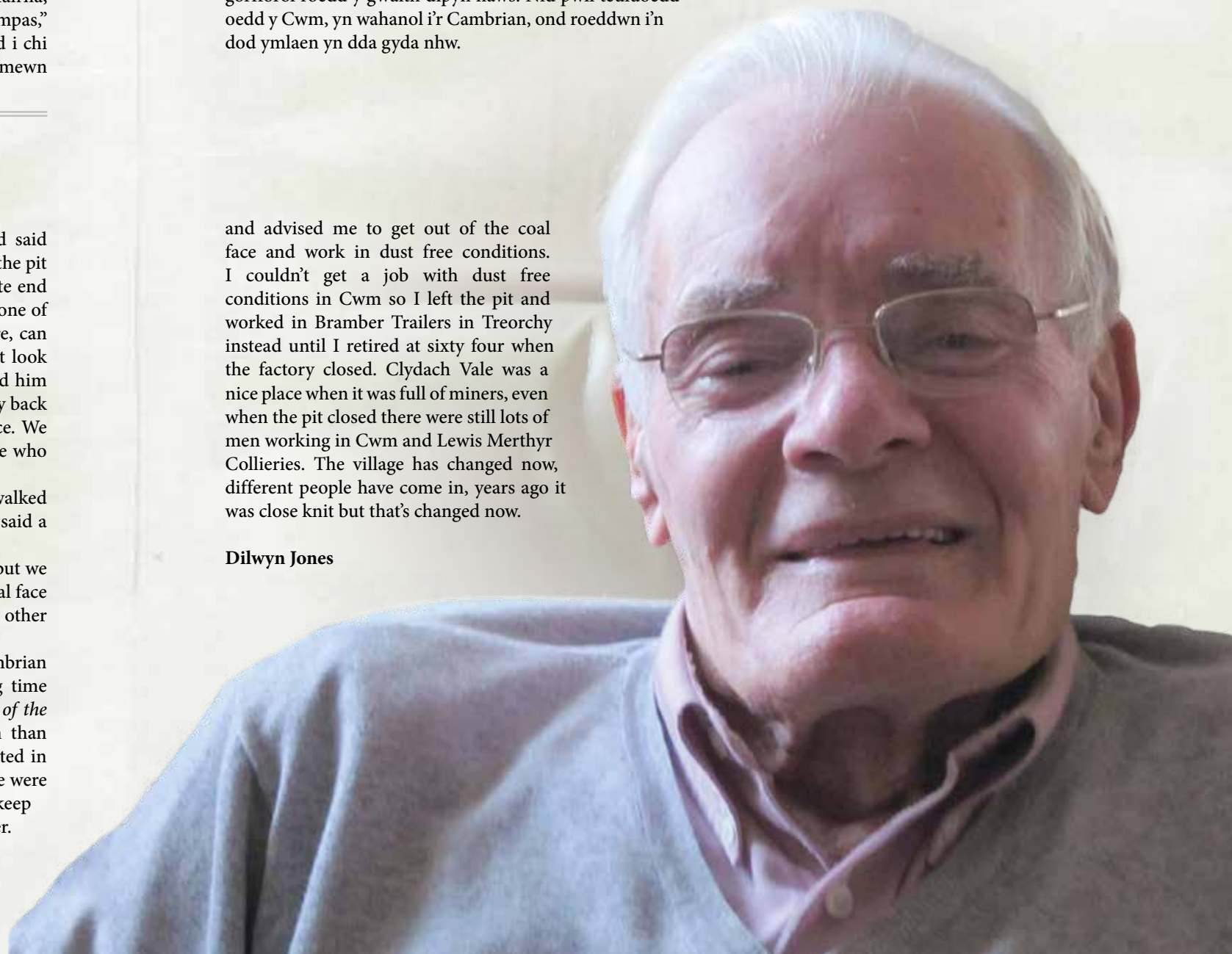
We had one or two days off after the explosion but we had to start back and I spent a while back on the coal face before that finished and I did some repairing and other work until the pit shut.

I was transferred to Cwm Colliery, a lot of Cambrian men went there. I worked on the coal for a long time and then went on chock maintenance (*taking care of the hydraulic roof supports*). Cwm was more modern than Cambrian. Damn, how times had changed - I started in a stall with a curling box in Cilely and in Cwm there were disc shearers cutting the coal and water sprays to keep the dust down - the physical side was much easier. Cwm wasn't a family pit like Cambrian but I got on well with them.

I left in 1973 with pneumoconiosis. The doctor said that I had 10% 'dust' on my lungs

and advised me to get out of the coal face and work in dust free conditions. I couldn't get a job with dust free conditions in Cwm so I left the pit and worked in Bramber Trailers in Treorchy instead until I retired at sixty four when the factory closed. Clydach Vale was a nice place when it was full of miners, even when the pit closed there were still lots of men working in Cwm and Lewis Merthyr Collieries. The village has changed now, different people have come in, years ago it was close knit but that's changed now.

Dilwyn Jones



Hamddena yw'n hanes i

Cefais fy ngeni yn Ynyscynon Road, Trealaw, ym mis Mai 1928. Cafodd fy nhad-cu ei wahardd gan berchnogion y lofa ym 1926 am ei fod yn weithgar gyda'r undeb llafur, a weithiodd e ddim eto tan y 1940au. Anafodd dad ei law mewn damwain yng nglofa Glamorgan, a bu'n gweithio yn Lloegr adeg y rhyfel. Roedd yn golier yng nglofa Naval wedi'r rhyfel.

Es i'r ysgol yn y 'Tin School' yn Llwynypia, yna Ysgol Pont Rhondda tan oedddwn i'n un ar ddeg oed, cyn mynd i Ysgol Trealaw tan i fi droi'n bedair ar ddeg oed. Bues i'n gweithio mewn siop cigydd yn Nhonypandy, am flwyddyn, yna yn y Thomas and Evans Tea Department yn y Porth, yn malu a chymysgu te. Wedyn, bues i'n dosbarthu gyda'r faniau. Roedd gan Thomas and Evans tua 99 o siopau yng Nghymru. Ymunais â'r RAF pan oedddwn i'n 17½ oed, gan hyfforddi fel Mecanig Hedfan [cyrff awyrennau]. Es i Ambala Station yn Punjab, lle'r oedd peilotiaid o India yn cael eu hyfforddi i hedfan awyrennau Spitfire – gwaith gwych. Yna, pan rannwyd India hanfonwyd fi i Karachi i wneud yr un swydd. Hedfanais yn ôl i Brydain mewn awyren Dakota ar ôl i'r sgwadron gael ei ddirwyn i ben. Gadewais yr RAF, a gweithio fel labrwr cyffredinol wedyn yn Ashton under Lyme.

Roedd fy nghariad i'n byw yn y Porth, felly dychwelais adref. Doedd dim sôn am swydd arall yn yr ardal, felly dechreuais yng nglofa'r Cambrian ym 1949 fel atgyweiriwr cynorthwyol ugain oed yn ardal Deep 7. Dywedodd fy nhad "Os wyt ti'n aros danddaear, cer yn ddirprwy." Enillais gymhwyster dirprwy ym mis Chwefror 1951,

cyn cael tystysgrif ONC mewn Mwyngloddio yn Ysgol Mwyngloddio Trefforest ac yna cymhwyster HNC ym 1952. Ym 1958, cefais Ddiploma Cenedlaethol mewn Mwyngloddio a Thystysgrif Cymhwysedd Ail Ddosbarth [papurau'r is-reolwr]. Cefais Dystysgrif Cymhwysedd Dosbarth Cyntaf [papurau Rheolwr Glofa] ym 1959.

Cawsom ein hanfon ar gwrs DPT gan y Bwrdd Glo, gyda phawb yn mynd i adrannau gwahanol i ddysgu'r grefft gan gynnwys astudio amser a symud yng nglofa Nantgarw lle'r oedden nhw'n turio hedin caled. Pan orffennais y cwrs DPT, dychwelais i'r Cambrian fel dirprwy yn Deep 7 ar ffas 91, ac yna'n oferman shifft nos. Fe ddes yn is-reolwr Pwll Rhif 4 wedyn, cyn symud i Bwll Rhif 1 lle'r oedden nhw'n gosod peiriannau torri glo. Roedd y gwythiennau'n isel, ond y to yn dda. Pan adewais i, roedd pedwar peiriant wrthi yno, a'r rhan fwyaf o gynnyrch y Cambrian yn dod o Bwll Rhif 1. Cai'r toean eu cynnal gan brops Dowty [hydrolig] a 'chocks' Becorit. Y peth gwaethaf oedd pan fyddai cadwyn y sgrapar yn bachu dan y cludfelt – roedd yn andros o job cael trefn yno wedyn! Bues i yn y Cambrian rhwng 1948 a 1964, pan gefais fy anfon ar gwrs chwe wythnos yn yr NCB Staff College yn Chalfont. Er bod pob rheolwr yn mynd yno, ni oedd y criw cyntaf o is-reolwyr i fynychu'r lle.

Wedi'r Staff College, es i lofa Lady Windsor fel is-reolwr. Un bore, roeddwn i ar gwrs mecaneiddio yn NCB Llanisien pan gefais fy ngalw i'r swyddfa a chael gorchymyn i gyrraedd glofa'r Cambrian cyn gynted â

phosibl. Es i'r Lady Windsor yn gyntaf i gasglu fy nillad gwaith, a chyrraedd y lofa tua 2pm. Cefais i fy anfon i'r Cambrian gan fod y rheolwr a'r is-reolwr wedi'u lladd yn y trychineb, ac roeddwn i'n adnabod y lofa'n dda. Roedd y lofa'n edrych yn union yr un fath, ond bod torf o bobl yn amgylchynu'r fynedfa. Roeddwn i'n byw yn Glynclydach House, gerllaw'r lofa ar y pryd, felly fe es i'r lofa heibio cefn fy nhŷ ac i'r baddondai. Gwisgais fy nillad gwaith yn y baddondai pen pwll, a mynd am y swyddfa. Meddai Tal Pugh, Rheolwr y Grŵp "Ni'n mynd i lawr y pwll, cer i 'whilo am rywun i fynd da ni." Felly, aeth Tal Pugh, Idris 'Bosh' Davies [oferman Pwll Rhif 4] a minnau i lawr y pwll a thrwy'r 'Loco Road' wrth i'r siwrnai ddod mas gyda'r cyrff olaf. Ein gorchwyl ni oedd archwilio'r ardaloedd a helpu'r syrfewyr oedd wrthi'n nodi lleoliad pob darn o offer, eitemau personol, a lle cafodd pob corff ei ganfod. Dychwelais i ben y pwll wedyn, roedd yn teimlo fel deuddydd yn ddiweddarach, ond mae'n siŵr mai tua 10 o'r gloch nos oedd hi. Un o'r rhai a laddwyd oedd fy nghefnider Ivor Jacobs. Arhosais yn y Cambrian am ddeufis tan fis Gorffennaf 1965 ac, yn ystod y cyfnod hwnnw, bues i'n cydgerdded â pheirianwyr awyru ac arbenigwyr eraill wrth iddynt ymchwilio danddaear. Hefyd, goruchwyliais y gwaith o symud ac anfon llawer o ddarnau o gyfarpar i'r Safety in Mines Research Establishment yn Swydd Derby.

Pan gymerodd y rheolwr newydd, Ernest Knowles, yr awenau yn y Cambrian, fe es i lofa'r Cwm fel is-reolwr yn

Ardal Third West ac Ardal Diamond. Gorffennais yn y Cwm ym 1970, a mynd ymlaen i agor pwll bach yn Wern Tarw, ger Pen-coed. Dyma ni'n cloddio gwythien Rhif 2 y Rhondda am dair blynedd, ond roedd y costau'n ormod, a daeth y fenter i ben. Roedd hysbyseb yn yr Echo am reolwr ym mhwl bach Blaengrenig [Glanaman, Rhydaman] yn cloddio gwythien Red Vein, a dyna wnes i tan i fi ymddeol yn 62 oed ym 1990. Roedd y busnes glo yn mynd ar i lawr, a'r perchennog wedi gwerthu'r pwll a doeddwn i ddim eisiau gweithio i neb arall. Hefyd, roeddwn i'n cael trafferth gyda 'nghefn felly dyma benderfynu rhoi'r gorau iddi a hawlio budd-dal anabledd nes cyrraedd oedran pensiwn. Treuliais 42 o flynyddoedd yn y pyllau glo, y rhan fwyaf mewn gwythiennau isel. Hamddena yw'n hanes i ers hynny.

Dwi'n meddwl yn aml am yr adeg y cefais fy nhystysgrif rheolwr Dosbarth Cyntaf. Roedd rhai o'r bechgyn wedi gadael y diwydiant glo ac wedi ymuno â BP [British Petroleum]. Efallai y dylwn i fod wedi gwneud hynny, ond roedd y Bwrdd Glo wedi f'addysgu i, felly roeddwn yn teimlo bod dyletswydd arnaf i aros.

Cyril Windos



A man of leisure

I was born in May 1928 in Ynyscynon Road, Trealaw. My grandfather was blacklisted by the colliery owners in 1926 for trade union activities and didn't work again until the 1940s. My father had an accident to his hand in Glamorgan Colliery and worked in England during the war. After the war he worked in Naval Colliery as a collier.

I went to school in the 'Tin School' in Llwynypia, then Pont Rhondda School until I was eleven, then Trealaw School until I was fourteen. I worked in a butchers in Tonypandy for a year, then in Thomas and Evans Tea Department in Porth, milling and blending tea. From there I went on the delivery vans doing the rounds. Thomas and Evans had about ninety nine shops in Wales. I went into the RAF at seventeen and a half and trained as a Flight Mechanic (Airframes). I went to Ambala Station in the Punjab where Indian pilots were trained to fly Spitfires - a great job. Then India partitioned and I was sent to Karachi doing the same job. I flew back to Britain in a Dakota after the squadron was disbanded. I finished in the RAF and worked in Ashton under Lyme as a general labourer.

My girlfriend was living in Porth so I came home. I couldn't find any other job in the area so I started in Cambrian Colliery in 1949 as a twenty year old assistant repairer in Deep 7. My father said that "If you're staying underground, become a deputy." I qualified as a deputy

in February 1951, then gained my Ordinary National Certificate in Mining in Trefforest School of Mines followed by my Higher National Certificate in 1952. In 1958 I acquired the National Diploma in Mining and received my Second Class Certificate of Competency (*Under Manager's papers*). I acquired my First Class Certificate of Competency (*Colliery Manager's papers*) in 1959.

The Coal Board sent us on a DPT course where we went to all different departments to learn the trade including doing a time and motion study in Nantgarw Colliery where they were driving a hard heading. When I finished DPT I went back to Cambrian as a deputy in Deep 7 on 91 face, then a night shift overman. I became undermanager in Number 4 Pit, then I was transferred to Number 1 Pit where they were installing ploughs (*a type of coal cutter*), the seams were low but a good roof. When I left there were four ploughs working and most of Cambrian's output was coming from Number 1 Pit. The roofs were supported by Dowty (*hydraulic*) props and Becorit chocks. The worse thing was when the scraper chain got caught under the conveyor - it was a terrible job to sort that out! I was in Cambrian from 1948 to 1964 when I was sent on a six weeks course in the NCB Staff College in Chalfont. Although all the managers went we were the first batch of under managers to go there.

After Staff College I went to Lady Windsor Colliery as under manager. One morning I had been sent on a mechanisation course in NCB Llanishen and was called into the office and told to get up to Cambrian Colliery as quickly as possible. I first went to Lady Windsor to pick up my working clothes and arrived at the colliery about 2pm. I was sent to Cambrian because the manager and under manager had been killed in the disaster and I knew the colliery well. The colliery looked as it always did but there were crowds of people all around the entrance. I was living in Glynclydach House, just by the colliery, at that time so I came into the colliery through the back of my house and went into the baths. I put my working togs on in the pithead baths and went over the office. Tal Pugh, the Group Manager said "We're going down the pit, find someone to go with us." So Tal Pugh, Idris 'Bosh' Davies (*Number 4 Pit overman*) and myself went down the pit and through the 'Loco Road' as the journey was coming out with the last of the bodies. Our job was to check the district and assist the surveyors who came down to carry out a survey that charted the position of every piece of equipment, personal effects and where each victim had been found. I came up the pit after what seemed two days later but was probably about ten o'clock that night. My cousin, Ivor Jacobs was one of those killed. I stayed at Cambrian for two months until July 1965 and, during that time, accompanied ventilation engineers and other specialists on their investigation visits underground.

I also oversaw the removal and dispatch of many pieces of equipment to the Safety in Mines Research Establishment in Derbyshire.

When the new manager, Ernest Knowles, took over at Cambrian I went to Cwm Colliery as under manager in the 3rd West District and the Diamond District. I finished in Cwm in 1970 and went to open a small mine in Wern Tarw, near Pencoed, we worked the Number 2 Rhondda seam for three years but the cost of overheads proved too much and it didn't work out. There was an advert in the Echo for a manager in Blaengrenig small mine (*Glanaman, Ammanford*) working the Red Vein seam and I did that until I retired at sixty two in 1990. The coal business was going downhill and the owner had sold the mine and I didn't want to work for someone else. In addition I had trouble with my back so I packed it in and went on disability until I reached my old age pension. I did forty two years in the mines, mostly in low seams. I've been a man of leisure ever since.

I often think back to when I got my First Class manager's certificate, some of the other boys left the coal industry and went to BP (*British Petroleum*). Perhaps I should have done that, but the Coal Board had educated me so I felt that I had a duty to stay.

Cyril Windos

Does gen i ddim hiraeth am y pwll

Cefais fy ngeni yng Nghwm Clydach ym mis Ebrill 1932. Cafodd fy nhad, David Williams, ddamwain yn y lofa a bu'n gweithio yn Arfdy Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr yn ystod y rhyfel, ond fe ddychwelodd i'r lofa wedyn. Ailddechreuodd yn y Cambrian ym 1947 a chafodd ei ladd dan y gwmp fwyaf yn hanes y lofa ym 1951. Cafodd pedwar arall anafiadau difrifol. Roedd e'n 57 oed.

Dechreuais weithio yn y Cambrian ym 1946, yn trwsio wagenni ar wyneb y pwll cyn mynd danddaear, ac ar y ffas lo y bues i tan gaeodd y lofa ym 1966. Gwas colier oeddwn i ddechrau, roedd y dynion eraill wastad yn barod eu cymorth a nhw ddysgodd y grefft i fi. Roedd fy nhad a'm dau frawd yn gweithio yn yr un rhan o'r pwll, sef Ardal S o Bwll Rhif 4. Roedd yr amodau cystal â'r disgwyl – roedd gwythïen Bute yn llychlyd dros ben. Bydden ni'n torri'r glo â 'puncher pick' [*ffon niwmatig*] ac yn ei rawio ar gludfeltiau 'ysgwyd' wedyn. Fel gwas colier, roeddwn i'n derbyn 'trymps' [*arian ar ben y cyflog sylfaenol*] gan y glöwr roeddwn i'n cydweithio ag ef. Doedd y 'trymps' ddim yn gyson, ond yn aml byddai'r bechgyn yn llenwi mwy na'r dynion hŷn, felly roedden ni'n gwneud gwaith dyn. Erbyn i fi gyrraedd 19 neu 20 oed, roedd gen i 'stent' [*man gweithio*] fy hun. Pan symudais i Ardal Deep 7, roedd gen i fechgyn yn gweithio i fi. Er bod y gwaith yn galed, roedd yna berthynas dda rhwng gweithwyr y ffas. Alla i ddim dweud fy mod i'n mwynhau'r gwaith, ond doedd hi ddim yn rhy ffôl.

Tua 1958, fe symudais i o Bwll Rhif 4 i Bwll Rhif 1 a oedd wedi'i fecaneiddio. Roeddwn i'n symud o wythien Bute tua chwe throedfedd o uchder i wythien Pentre prin lathen o uchder. Roeddwn i'n chwe troedfedd, ac roedd yr amodau'n galed, a finnau'n gorfod gweithio ar fy mhengliniau. 'Aradr' [peiriant torri glo] oedd yn cloddio gwythïen Pentre, ac roedd propiau hydrolog a bariau'n cynnal y to. Bydden ni'n cael ein talu fesul lathen [*yardage*] ar ôl i'r aradr dorri'r glo a'r gwasgydd hydrolog wthio'r cludfelt ymlaen, roedd rhaid i ni symud y cynhalbyst ymlaen. Er bod hynny'n haws na thorri'r glo â llaw, roedd hi'n fwy anghyfforddus gweithio ar fy mhengliniau a minnau heb arfer gwneud hynny – dw i wedi cael dwy ben-glin newydd ers hynny! Bues i'n gweithio yn P25 [*ffas lo yng ngwythïen Pentre*] cyn symud i ffas P26 lle'r oeddwn i'n cyflenwi deunyddiau i'r ffas wrth aros am le ar y ffas ei hun. Aeth y lle gwag hwnnw i fachan uwch na mi, a finnau'n parhau i gyflenwi wrth aros fy nhro. Ei enw oedd Ray Daniels, a chafodd ei ladd yn ffrwydrad 1965.

Roedd y criw codi/llwytho glo ar shiftt ddydd, ac roeddwn i'n cyflenwi'r ffas yn ystod y shiftt brynhawn. Ym 1965, roeddwn i'n byw yn Wern Street [Cwm Clydach] adeg y ffrwydrad ac fe glywais i lot o draffig yn pasio a chyrn y lofa'n seinio. Es i fyny i'r ffreutur a chlywed bod ffrwydrad wedi digwydd ar ein ffas lo ni. Daeth Arthur Parker i'r ffreutur a dewis Jim Tucker, Dilwyn Jones, Cyril Bugler a fi i fynd i lawr y pwll i helpu. Felly, aethon ni i'r

baddondai i newid i'n dillad gwaith cyn mynd i lawr y pwll.

Dyma ni'n mynd draw i'r Ardal ac ar ôl i'r Tim Achub ddweud ei bod hi'n ddiogel, dyma ein hanfon i'r ffas lo i symud y cyrff i'r wyneb. Dim ond unwaith y gofynnwyd i ni wneud hynny. Roedd yn sioc fawr, ac yn anodd iawn i'w dderbyn ar y pryd, ond dyma ni'n gwneud yr hyn oedd yn rhaid ei wneud. Ond pan es i adref, gwylio'r teledu a chlywed yr holl enwau ar y newyddion, fe effeithiodd hynny'n waetharna i nag wrth gludo'r cyrff allan. Arhosodd fy ngwraig yn y ffreutur gyda'r holl wragedd oedd wedi ymgasglu yno, yn enwedig rhai â gŵyr ar y shiftt ddydd. Aeth pob un a gollodd ŵr fesul un i weld Megan Davies, nyrs y lofa. Roedd un o'r gwragedd ar fin cael babi.

Wnaeth e môch taro chi bryd hynny, dim ond pan es i adref a chlywed yr enwau, dim ond wedyn ges i 'sgytwad' – ac wrth gwrs, roedd camerâu teledu a newyddiadurwyr yn bla yn y pentref. Roedd hi'n dorcalonnus meddwl bod eich ffrindiau wedi mynd, bois fuodd gyda chi yn yr ysgol. Fe es i 80% o'r angladdau. Roedd hi'n ergyd aruthrol i'r lofa, a phenderfynodd llawer adael y diwydiant, ond roedd gen i forgais a thri o blant, felly roedd rhaid i fi fynd yn ôl. Dychwelais i'r un ffas lo, bellach fel colier gan fod y bois eraill wedi mynd, ond wnaethon nhw ddim ei gweithio hi rhyw lawer wedi hynny. Ym 1965 oedd y ffrwydrad, a chaeodd y lofa ym mis Medi 1966 – mater o fisoedd oedd hi.

Fe weithiais i tan ddiwedd y Cambrian, a chael cynnig symud i lofa'r Cwm, ond fe welais i swydd wag fel stiward yn y Marxian Club, Cwm Clydach. Am jobyn braf o gymharu â gwaith caled y pwll. Prin fod unrhyw drafferth yno, roedd yn glwb teuluol iawn. Ar ôl rhyw dair blynedd yn y 'Max', symudais i'r

Polikoff's Social Club am tua 5-6 blynedd, yna i dafarn y Griffin, Pentre, fel tenant i fragdy Bass Charrington. Doedd gen i ddim hiraeth o gwbl am y pwll – roedd hi'n haws rhedeg tafarn na llafurio gyda rhaw. Rhais y gorau iddi oherwydd salwch ym 1988.

Roedd chwareon yn ddiddordeb mawr. Bues i'n chwarae rygbi i dim ieuenctid y Cambrian, yna Treorci a Chlwb Rygbi Pen-y-graig, gan gynrychioli'r clwb ar lefel Ardal y Rhondda. Bues i'n ail reng i dim Sir Forgannwg hefyd.

Dw i wedi gweld newidiadau mawr, gyda siopau'n cau a chymdogion yn ddieithr i'w gilydd heddiw. Yn yr hen ddyddiau, os oedd rhywun wedi marw, roedd pawb yn gwybod. Heddiw, does neb yn gwybod tan ar ôl yr angladd. Dw i'n credu bod pethau llawer gwaeth. Roedd y Cambrian yn lofa deuluol, pawb yn nabod pawb. Yn y clwb, bydden ni'n trafod gwaith, ac yn y gwaith, roedd pawb yn trafod y clwb!

Gwyn Lewis

I didn't miss the pit

I was born in Clydach Vale in April 1932. My father, David Williams, had an accident in the colliery and worked in the Bridgend Arsenal during the war but returned to the pits after the war. He started back in Cambrian Colliery in 1947 and was killed under the largest fall in the history of the colliery in 1951. Four other men were badly injured. He was fifty seven years old.

I started work in 1946 on wagon repairs on the surface at Cambrian and then went underground to work and stayed on the coal faces until the colliery closed in 1966. I started as a collier's boy, the men I was working with were always very good and taught me the trade. My two brothers and my father worked in the same S District of Number 4 Pit. The conditions were as good as you'd expect them to be – the Bute Seam was very dusty. The coal was hand cut by 'punchers' (*pneumatic picks*) and filled onto 'shaker' conveyors by shovel. As a collier's boy I was given 'trumps' (*money on top of the basic wages*) by the collier I was working with. There weren't fixed 'trumps' but the boys were often filling more than the older men so we were doing a man's work. At nineteen or twenty years old I had my own stint (*place of work*). When I moved to Deep 7 district I had boys working with me. It was hard work but there was a good relationship between the men working on the face. I wouldn't say that I actually enjoyed the work, but I didn't mind it.

I moved from Number 4 Pit to Number 1 in about 1958 which was mechanised. I'd come from the Bute seam which was about six feet in height to the Pentre seam which was only a yard high and, as I was six feet tall, was hard as I now had to work on my knees. The Pentre seam was cut by a 'plough' (*a coal cutting machine*) and the roof was supported by hydraulic props and bars. We were on 'yardage' (*piecework*) and, after the plough had cut the coal and the conveyor had been pushed forward by hydraulic rams, we had to move the supports forward. It was easier than cutting coal by hand but I found it more

uncomfortable working on my knees when I wasn't used to it – I've had two replacement knees since then!

I worked in P25 (*coal face in the Pentre seam*) and then moved onto the P26 face where I was supplying the coal face with materials while waiting for a place on the actual coal face. The boy senior to me got a place while I stayed on supplies waiting for my turn. He was Ray Daniels who was killed in the 1965 explosion.

The coaling shift was on days and I was working on supplies on the afternoon shift. In 1965 I was living in Wern Street (*Clydach Vale*) at the time of the explosion and I heard a lot of traffic going up the road and the colliery hooters going. I went up to the canteen and heard that there had been an explosion on our coal face. Arthur Parker came into the canteen and selected Jim Tudor, Dilwyn Jones, Cyril Bugler and myself to go down the pit to give assistance. So we went to the baths to change into working clothes and went down the pit.

We went into the district and, after Mines Rescue told us it was safe, we were sent into the coal face to remove the bodies to the surface. We were only asked to do it the once. It was a big shock and I couldn't really take it all in at the time, but we did what we had to do. However, when I went home and saw the TV and heard the names on the news, then it hit me a lot worse than when we were actually bringing the bodies out. My wife was waiting in the canteen with all the women who were gathered there, especially those with husbands on the day shift. If they had lost a husband they were taken in independently to see the (*colliery*) nurse, Megan Davies. One of the chap's wives was heavily pregnant.

It didn't really hit you then, only when I went home and heard the names, then it really stabbed you – and of course the village was full of TV cameras and reporters. It was heart breaking to think that your friends had gone, boys that you had been in school with. I attended 80% of the funerals. It hit the colliery hard and a lot of people left the industry, but I had a mortgage on the house and three children so I had to go back. I went back on the same face but I was now a collier on the face as the other boys had gone, but they didn't work it for long afterwards. The explosion was in 1965 and the colliery closed in September 1966 – it was only a matter of months.

I worked up to the end of Cambrian and was offered a transfer to Cwm Colliery but a job came up as steward in the Marxian Club in Clydach Vale. It was very enjoyable working in the club, not hard work like underground. There was never any trouble, it was a family club. After three years in the 'Max' I moved to Polikoff's Social Club for about five or six years, then into the Griffin in Pentre as a tenant to Bass Charrington Brewery. I didn't really miss the pit – it was a lot easier running a pub than working with a shovel in your hand. I finished with ill health in 1988.

I played a lot of sport, I played rugby for Cambrian Youth and then went to Treorchy and afterwards to Penygraig RFC where I represented the club at Rhondda District level and played for Glamorgan County as a second row.

I've seen a lot of changes, shops have closed and neighbours don't know one another now. In the old days, if someone passed away, everybody knew, but these days nobody knows until the burial. I think it's a lot worse. Cambrian was a family colliery, everybody knew everyone else. In the club we'd all talk about work and, in work, everybody talked about the club!

Gwyn Lewis

Storman

Ces i fy ngeni ym mis Medi 1922, a gadael yr ysgol yn bedair ar ddeg oed. Doedd fawr o swyddi ar gael ar y pryd, ond dywedodd rhywun bod swydd danddaear yng nglofa Blaenclydach a gallwn i ddechrau ar y dydd Llun. Wel, roeddwn i yn Llyfrgell a Sefydliad y Gweithwyr Cwm Clydach ar y nos Sadwrn yn gwylio'r snwcer, a daeth peiriannydd mecanyddol glofa'r Cambrian i mewn a dweud, "Trefor, gei di ddechre ar yr wyneb fore Llun, cer i'r swyddfa gofnodi am 'wharter i saith, a byddi di'n dechra ar y sgrins."

Wel, roeddwn i'n meddwl bod hynny'n wych o gymharu â gweithio danddaear ym Mlaenclydach achos doedd fy nhad, oedd yn gweithio ar y ffas lo yn y Cambrian, ddim am i fi weithio danddaear. Felly, dechreuais ar y sgriniau, ac yno y bues i rhwng tua 1936 a 1939. Un bore, daliodd y peiriannydd fachgen arall a fi'n bwyta brecwast [yn answyddogol] a dywedodd wrth y bachgen i fynd i'r gweithdy ffitio a finnau i'r seidins i chwilio am rywbeth i'w wneud. Felly, es i lawr, a dywedon nhw fod y dyn a oedd yn gludo labeli ar wagenni yn absennol oherwydd salwch, a gofyn i fi wneud hynny yn ei le. Felly, cefais y swydd o roi labeli ar y wagenni, ac os nad oedd y labeli'n gludo'n sownd, byddwn i'n ôl yn gweithio ar y sgriniau.

Ym 1940, a'r rhyfel wedi cychwyn wrth gwrs, es i Gaerdydd a gwirfoddoli ar gyfer yr RAF fel cynorthwyydd claf-welyau. Roeddwn i'n aelod o Adran Ambiwylans [Sant Ioan] Clydach ac ro'n i meddwl y gallwn i wneud fy rhan fel 'ny. Dywedon nhw fy mod i, fel gwas sgriniau, yn y categori gwaith neilltuedig, ond y gallwn i ymuno â'r lluoedd petai fy mheiriannydd yn ysgrifennu llythyr yn dweud nad oeddwn i wedi fy nghyflogi'n llawn amser yn y sgriniau. Pan es i'n ôl i'r lofa, gofynnais hynny i'r peiriannydd ac atebodd e "Nefar in Iwrop gw'boi, efallai y byddi di'n fy ngalw i'n bob enw dan haul nawr, ond cred ti fi, byddi di'n diolch i fi ymhen blynnyddoedd."

Felly, aros yng nglofa'r Cambrian wnes i. Fi oedd yn camu i'r adwy os oedd y 'pwyswr' [y dyn oedd yn rheoli'r peiriant a oedd yn pwysu'r glo a ddaeth i fyny'r pwll] yn absennol. Weithiau, byddwn i'n llenwi'r bwlch yng nglofeydd y Naval neu'r Glamorgan hefyd. Yna, gofynnwyd i fi gymryd lle'r amserwr tra bod hwnnw ar wyliau. Dywedais wrth y peiriannydd nad oeddwn i'n gwybod y nesaf peth i ddim am gofnodi amser, ond ei ateb ef oedd "Mae'n hen bryd i ti blydi ddechre' dysgu!" Roeddwn i mewn picil, felly ffoniais i'r clerc cyflogau yn swyddfa Llwyn-y-pia am gymorth, a dyma fe'n dangos i fi beth i'w wneud. Wnes i ddim troi'n ôl wedyn.

Dw i'n cofio un diwrnod, tua diwedd fy nghyfnod yn y Cambrian, cerdded dros y bont i'r ffreutur i gael tamaid i'w fwyta, pan glywais i sgrech o'r seidins. Pan gyrhaeddais yno, gallwn weld llanc o Drealaw wedi'i wasgu yn erbyn ochr y wagen. Fe ruthrais i'r stafell ambiwlans i nôl dyn ambiwlans ato – roedd e mewn cyflwr difrifol. Galwyd am Dr Simmering, a ddywedodd "Mae'n go ddrwg, wnaiff e ddim para digon hir i gyrraedd Ysbyty'r Porth". Dro arall, roeddwn i yn y bont bwyso uwchben pan glywais swm taro mawr. Edrychais mas a gweld bod sawl wagen ugain tunnell wedi torri'n rhydd. Es i lawr i weld beth oedd wedi digwydd,

The storekeeper

I was born in September 1922 and left school at fourteen. There wasn't a lot of work at the time but I was told that I could have a job underground in Blaenclydach Colliery and could start on the Monday. Well. I was in the Clydach Vale Library and Institute on the Saturday night watching the snooker and the mechanical engineer of Cambrian Colliery walked in a said "Trefor, start on the surface on Monday morning, report to the check office at quarter to seven and you'll start on the screens."

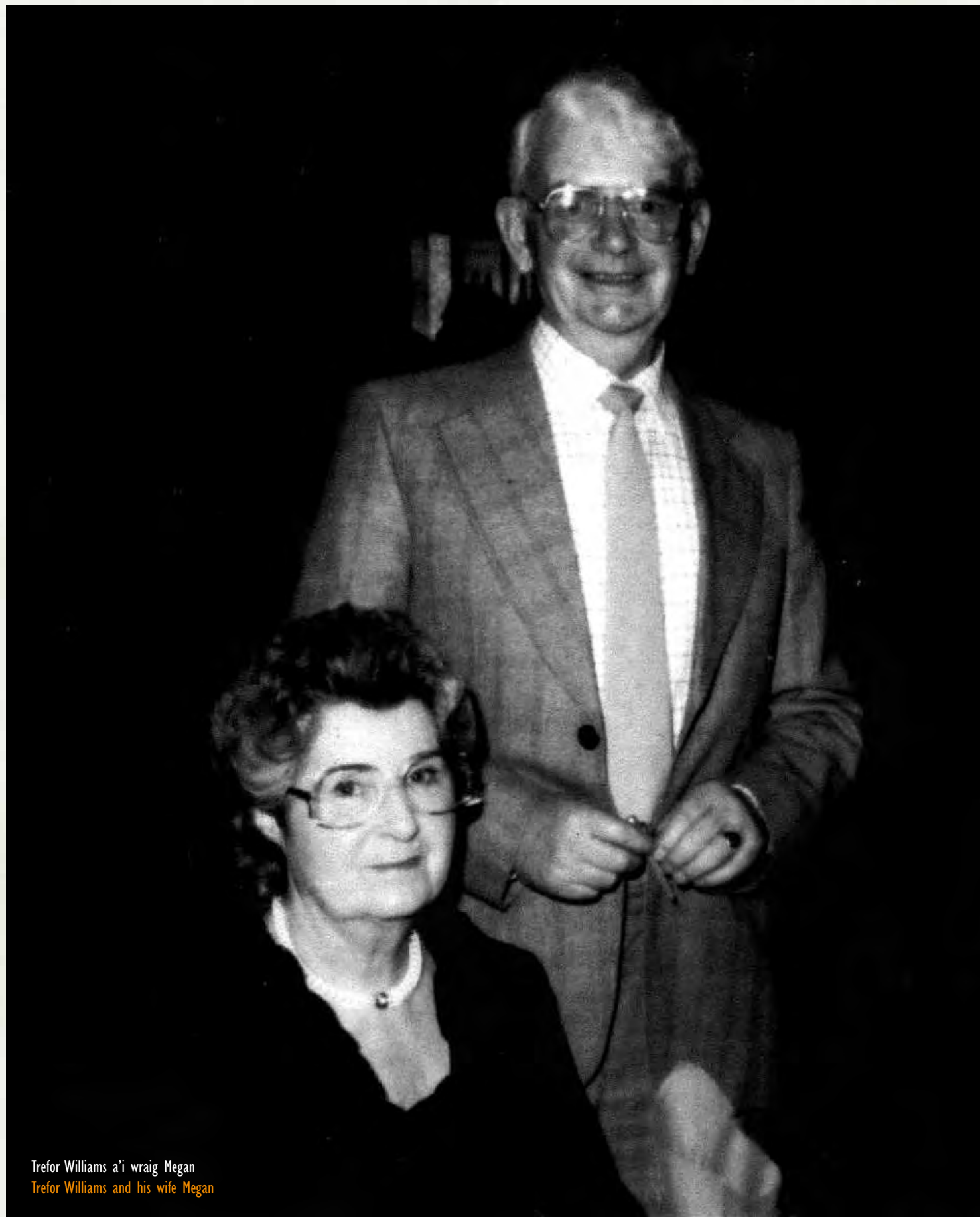
Well, I thought that was great compared to working underground at Blaenclydach because my father, who worked on the coal (*face*) in Cambrian, didn't want me to work underground. So I started on the screens and was there from about 1936 until 1939. One morning the engineer caught another boy and myself having breakfast (*unofficially*) and told the other boy to go to the fitting shop and me down the sidings (*to find something to do*). So I went down and they told me that the man sticking labels on the wagons was off sick and asked me to do it. So I was given a job sticking labels on the wagons and, if labels weren't being stuck on wagons, I'd go back to working on the screens.

I remember one day, it must have been in my later years at Cambrian, I was going over the bridge to the canteen to get food when I heard screams coming from the sidings. When I got there I could see a boy from Treallaw being squashed up against the side of a wagon. I rushed up to the ambulance room and fetched the ambulance man to see him – he was in a bad way. Doctor Simmering was called for and he said "It's bad, he won't last until he gets to Porth Hospital". On another occasion, I was in the overhead weighbridge?

In 1940, the war had broken out of course, I went to Cardiff and volunteered for the RAF as a sick berth attendant. I was in the Clydach (*St John's*) Ambulance Division so I thought I could do my bit that way. They told me that, as a screens boy, I was in a reserved occupation, but if my engineer wrote a letter saying that I wasn't fully employed on the screens I could join up. When I went back to the colliery I asked the engineer and he said "Not on your life, maybe you'll call me everything now but mark my words you'll thank me in years to come."

So I stayed on in Cambrian Colliery. I started to fill in if a 'weigher' (*the person who operated the machine which weighed the coal coming up the pit*) was missing. Sometimes, if there was a weigher missing in Naval Colliery or Glamorgan Colliery, I also used to fill in there as well. Then I was asked to cover the timekeeper while he was on holidays. I told the engineer that I knew nothing about timekeeping but he said "It's about bloody time that you learnt!" I was in a hell of a knot so I rang the pay clerk in the Llwynypia offices for help and he showed me what to do and I never looked back after that.

While I was working in Cambrian my father was working on the coal face and one day Mr Higgs the manager, a lovely chap, said "Trefor, your father is killing himself down there trying to keep up with the men on that coal face. Tell him to come up on the surface, he can do



Trefor Williams a'i wraig Megan
Trefor Williams and his wife Megan

a gweld bod cyfaill i fi wedi'i ladd. Cafodd e'i gario i'r ystafell ambiwlans, a gan ei fod yn ffrind i fi gofynnwyd i fi fynd i dorri'r newydd i'w chwaer. Ond allwn i ddim gan mod i wedi ypsietio'n lân, ac fe es i adre. Es i'r gegin fach i olchi 'nwylo cyn cinio, ond doeddwn i ddim yn gallu'i fwyta, a llafain fues i yn lle hynny. Anghofia i fyth mo hynny.

Tra'r oeddwn i'n gweithio yn y Cambrian, roedd fy nhad yn gweithio ar y ffas lo, ac un diwrnod, daeth Mr Higgs y rheolwr, bachan ffein, draw a dweud "Trefor, mae dy dad yn lladd 'i hun wrth geisio dal lan gyda'r dynion ar y ffas lo 'na. Dwêd wrtho fe am ddod i'r wyneb, geiff e wneud unrhyw job mae e moyn, ma'n drueni 'i weld e". Roedd dad yn dioddef o'r dwsf, ac mae gen i dystysgrif sy'n dangos bod ganddo fe 100% o niwmoconiosis. Doedd dad ddim yn rhy awyddus i ddod i weithio i ben y pwll, ond mae'n rhaid ei fod yn teimlo'i hun yn dechrau diffygio oherwydd rhyw fis neu ddau'n ddiweddarach, dywedodd "Trefor, wy'n credu 'mod i am dderbyn y cynnig". Cafodd dad ei fagu mewn ardal wledig yn y Gogledd, a dywedodd "Hoffwn i ofalu am y ceffylau". Daeth yn was stabl, ac arferai fynd i lawr yn y bore i weld y ceffylau ac yna lawr yn y prynhawn i'w bwydo a'u brwsio. Byddai'n dal llygod mawr yn y stablau, ac yn cael pedair ceiniog y gynffon gan Higgs y rheolwr.

Erbyn 1954, roeddwn i'n dechrau danto ar fod yn amserwr, oherwydd byddwn i'n gorffen fy ngwaith erbyn tua hanner dydd a dim byd i'w wneud wedyn, diflas braidd. Roedd yna swydd wag yn y storfeydd, felly gwnes gais amdani a chael swydd fel stormon cynorthwyol yn y Cambrian. Bues i yno am ddeuddeg mis, yna gofynnwyd i fi wneud gwaith tebyg yng nglofa Britannic, y Gilfach-goch. Dechreuais yno ym 1955, ac enw'r rheolwr oedd Tom Williams neu 'Tom Cwm' i bawb arall. Bachan ffein iawn, a brodor o Gwm Clydach. Bob bore tua chwarter i saith, bydden ni'n mynd i'r ffretur gan drafod corau a cherddoriaeth. Yna, fe orffennodd gweithio, a daeth rheolwr newydd yn ei le. Roedden ni'n anfon yr un faint o bren a archebwyd danddaear, ond rhyw ddwy neu dair gwaith yr wythnos, byddai'r rheolwr yn dod i mewn a dweud eu bod nhw'n brin o goed mewn rhai ardaloedd. Ro'n i'n dechrau cael llond bol, oherwydd ro'n i'n gwybod yn iawn bod yr archebion yn gywir.

Daeth i'r storfa un prynhawn, ac yn anffodus, fe gollais fy nhymer. "You're a big-headed little bugger," medde fe ac atebais i, "You're literally a big-headed bugger" oherwydd roedd ganddo ben mor fawr nes bod yr helmedau yn y storfeydd yn rhy fach iddo, ac roedd rhaid i ni ofyn i'r cwmni cynhyrchu am rai mwy o faint. Doedd dim ar gael, ond roedd na rai wedi eu gwrthod oedd yn ei ffitio i'r dim. Y diwrnod canlynol, dyma fi'n teimlo braidd yn euog, felly es i ato i ymddiheuro. "I'm not apologising for calling you a big-headed bugger, because you called me a big-headed little bugger, I'm apologising for saying literally." Roedden ni'n dod 'mlaen yn iawn ar ôl hynny.

Ym 1957, gofynnwyd i fi fynd i storfa glofa Wattstown, oedd yn fwy na storfa'r Britannic, a bues i yno am wyth mlynedd go dda. Un diwrnod yn Wattstown, daeth gwerthwr pren i mewn gyda llwyth felly dyma fi'n gwirio'r archeb a gweld bod popeth yn iawn, ond pan ofynnodd i fi lofnodi'r llyfr, roedd yna hanner canpunt ynddo. Ac meddai, "Mae'r llwyth yn werth cant a hanner o bunnoedd, hanner canpunt am y lori, hanner canpunt am y llwyth a hanner can punt

i ti." Atebais i, "Na, dadlwytha'r cyflenwad a phaid â dod nôl" ac meddai "Gofyn i hwn a hwn, 'wnewn nhw ddweud mod i'n foi iawn." ac enwi dau storman roeddwn i'n eu hadnabod yn iawn. "Y cythrel," medde fi, "Ti newydd enwi dau gydweithiwr i fi. Sut wyt ti'n gwybod na fydda i'n codi'r ffôn i'w riportio nhw". Ac meddai "Na, galla i weld dy fod di'n fachan gonest." ond dywedais i, "Dwyt ti ddim yn gwybod unrhyw beth amdana i, dyma'r tro cyntaf i ti fod yma".

Fe ffoniais i Gaerdydd y diwrnod canlynol, a dweud beth oedd wedi digwydd, cyn ffonio'r ddau storman hefyd. "Diolch Trefor" meddai un ac atebodd y llall "Sa i 'di gwneud unrhyw beth". "Sdim gwahaniaeth 'da fi, ond mae'r gwerthwr wedi dweud dy enw di wrtha i, ac fe allai dy enwi di wrth rywun arall hefyd. Os wyt ti'n gwneud rhywbeth, well i ti roi'r gorau iddi." A dyna ddigwyddodd. Cafodd llawer o stormyn eu galw i'r swyddfa twyll difrifol yn y Bargoed a bu tipyn o ffys a ffwddan. Ces i fy anfon i weithio yng nglofa'r Cwm oherwydd y trwbl, ac es i fyth yn ôl i Wattstown wedyn.

Yn y Cwm, roeddwn i'n gyfrifol am wariant wythnosol o ryw £65,000 yr wythnos sef tua £3.3 miliwn y flwyddyn. Roedd glofa'r Cwm yn anferth, a doeddwn i ddim yn cwrdd â chymaint o'r gweithwyr yno gan fy mod i yn y swyddfa, ond roeddwn i'n nabod pob un yn y Cambrian. Byddech chi'n eu gweld nhw'n dod i fyny'r pwll yn ddu fel y frân, ond roeddech chi'n eu hadnabod nhw yn ôl eu cyfeiriadau gan eich bod chi'n danfon glo i'w cartrefi nhw.

Bues i'n ffodus dros ben o ran swyddi – ac fe wnes i bob gwaith clericio yn y lofa heblaw am glerc y rheolwr.

Trefor Williams



Glofa Cambrian 1966 - Diolch i Bill Richards
Cambrian Colliery 1966 - Courtesy Bill Richards

any job he wants" he said "Because it's a pity to see him". My father was suffering from 'dust' and I have a certificate showing that he had 100% pneumoconiosis. My father wasn't fussy about coming up the pit but he must have felt himself failing because, a month or so afterwards, he said "Trefor, I think I'll take up the offer" which he did. My father had been brought up in the country in north Wales and said "I'd like to look after the horses". He became an ostler and he used to go down in the morning to see to the horses and then go down in the afternoon to feed them and brush them down. He used to catch rats in the stables and Higgs the manager used to give him four pence a tail.

By 1954 I was getting a bit fed up with timekeeping as I'd have finished my work by about twelve o'clock and had nothing to do afterwards, it was a bit boring. A vacancy came up in the colliery stores so I applied and got the job of assistant storekeeper in Cambrian. I was there for a twelve month and then I was asked to go to Britannic Colliery in Gilfach Goch as a storekeeper. I started there in 1955 and the manager there was Tom Williams, but he was always called 'Tom Cwm'. A lovely type of fellow, he was from Clydach Vale. Every morning about quarter past seven we'd go to the canteen and talk about music and choirs. Well, he finished and we had another manager. We used to send the amount of timber that had been ordered underground but two or three times a week the manager used to come in and say that they were short in a certain district about two or three times a week. It was getting on my nerves as I knew that the correct orders had been sent underground.

He came into the stores one afternoon and I'm afraid I lost my temper. He said "You're a big headed little bugger", so I said "You're literally a big headed bugger" because he had such a big head that the helmets in the stores were too small for him and we had to ask the firm making them if they had bigger sizes. They didn't but did have a few rejects which fitted him. The following day I thought that I shouldn't have said it so I went and apologised. I said "I'm not apologising for calling you a big headed bugger, because you called me a big headed little bugger I'm apologising for saying literally." So we got on pretty well after that.

In 1957 I was asked to go to the stores in Wattstown Colliery, which was bigger than the one in Britannic, and was there for about eight years. One day in Wattstown a timber merchant came in with a load so I checked it and found out that it was right but when he asked me to sign the book there was fifty pounds in it. He said "The load is worth a hundred and fifty pounds, fifty pounds for the lorry and fifty pounds for the load and fifty for you". I said "No, take off the load and don't come back" and he said "If you want to know if I'm all right ask so and so" and named two storekeepers that I knew. I said "You dirty devil, you've just named two colleagues of mine. You don't know that I won't pick up the phone and report them". He said "No, I can see that you're a decent fellow" but I said "You don't know anything about me, this is the first time you've been in here".

I phoned Cardiff the next day and told them what had happened and also phoned the two storekeepers. One storekeeper said "Thanks Trefor" and the other said "I'm not doing anything". I said "I'm not concerned whether you are or not but the merchant named you to me and could name you to someone else. If you are doing anything you'd better stop" and that's what happened. A lot of storekeepers were called to the serious fraud office in Bargoed and there was a lot of trouble. I was sent to work in Cwm Colliery because there been trouble there and I never went back to Wattstown.

In Cwm I was responsible for a weekly outgoing of about sixty five thousand pounds a week which meant about 3.3 million a year. Cwm Colliery was big, I didn't meet the workmen there much because I was in the office, but in Cambrian I knew every man. You'd see them coming up the pit and they'd be as black as the ace of spades but you knew them by their addresses because you sent coal to their houses.

I've been fortunate in my jobs, the only clerical job I haven't done in the colliery is manager's clerk.

Trefor Williams

Y cyntaf a'r olaf

Cefais fy ngeni yn Nhrealaw ym mis Mawrth 1940, ond symudodd y teulu i Gwm Clydach pan oeddwn i'n dair oed. Roedd fy nhad, Ivor Pennington, yn golier yng nglofa Glamorgan 'Scotch' ac yna Pwll Rhif 2 y Cambrian tan iddo orffen yn 47 oed ym 1947 gydag achos drwg o glefyd y llwch. Es i Ysgol Ramadeg y Porth, ond doedd gen i ddim clem beth oeddwn i am ei wneud ar ôl gadael yr ysgol. Y coleg neu'r lofa, dyna oedd y dewis. Doedd fy rhieni ddim yn gallu fforddio fy anfon i'r coleg, ac roeddwn i wedi gwneud cais am lyfryn o'r enw 'About Chartered Surveyors' a sylweddoli bod posibilrwydd y gallwn i ddilyn y cwrs drwy'r Bwrdd Glo. Gwnes gais i'r NCB am brentisiaeth syrfêwr glofaol. Cefais fy nerbyn, a dyna ni, er nad oeddwn i'n gwybod ar y pryd beth yn union oedd dyletswyddau prentis o'r fath gan nad oeddwn i erioed wedi bod danddaear.

Dilynais gwrws bum wythnos o hyfforddiant glofaol sylfaenol yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Wattstown cyn mynd i Swyddfeydd y Grŵp yn Nhreorci i ddechrau fy mhrentisiaeth - i lofa'r Cambrian ges i fy anfon. Ar fy ail ddiwrnod, es danddaear gyda'r syrfewyr. Doedd Ardal P2 y Cambrian ddim byd tebyg i'r hyn welais i'n Wattstown. Dyma wneud peth gwaith alinio ffordd, yna dywedodd y syrfêwr wrtha i nôl y lamp olew a dilyn gweddill y criw i'r ffas lo. Fe ges i'r lamp, ond allwn ni ddim dod o hyd i'r lleill wedyn. Es i lan at y dynion a oedd yn gweithio ar y 'ripping lip' ar ddiwedd y ffordd, a holi'n gwrtais lle'r oedd y ffas lo. Dyma nhw'n pwyntio lawr i ochr y ffordd gan ddweud "Lawr fan yna." Felly, es i lawr ar fy mhedwar a chropian i fyny rhyw ganllath o ffas lo wlyb tua dwy droedfedd wyth modfedd o uchder. A dyna fy mhrofiad cynta o wythien Pentre, glofa'r Cambrian.

Roedd glowyr yn arfer ystyried taw gwaith hawdd oedd gwaith syrfêwr, ond roedd yn fath gwahanol o waith a oedd yn cynnwys llawer o gerdded, cario offer ac ati lan a lawr ffasy glo isel. Er bod gwythien Pentre glofa'r Cambrian yn wlyb, roedd y to yn y ffas yn gryf, yn wahanol i'r gwythiennau ym Mhwll Rhif 4. Byddai'r to yn cynnal ei hun am gryn bellter y tu hwnt i'r ffas pan oedd gwir angen iddo ddadfeilio a thynnu'r pwysau oddi ar y ffas lo. Byddech chi ar y ffas lo a byddai'r 'gob' yn dal y pwysau am gryn bellter, yna sŵn 'bwm' a'r ddaear yn crynu, a'rto yn dymchwel mewn chwinciad ac yn gadael wal solet o graig y tu ôl i'r cynhalbyst. Roedd e'n frawychus - a finne'n gorwedd ar y llawr yn disgwyl i'r cyfan orffen. Maen nhw'n dweud 'cynhalbyst', ond rheoli'r to oedden nhw mewn gwirionedd, achos doeddech chi ddim yn gwybod pryd byddai'r to yn dod i lawr yn y Pentre yn y Cambrian. Roedd y coliers ar y ffas wastad yn ymddangos yn llai pryderus nag ymwelydd fel fi.

Syrfewyr glofa oedd 'y cyntaf i mewn a'r olaf allan' gan ein bod ni'n trefsur pob ffas wrth iddi gael ei hagog ac eto cyn ei chau am y tro olaf. Gan fod Pentre mor wlyb, roedd gweoedd o 'llynynau' gwyn o ffynghau a chorynnod coch pan oedden ni'n bwrw golwg ar yr hen ffyrdd yno. Pan oeddwn i'n trefsur yng nglofa'r Naval, roedd ganddyn nhw fwydod danddaear, a welais i mo hynny'n unlle arall.

Pan oeddwn i'n gweithio yn y Naval, roeddwn i'n gorfod teithio ar fws i'r gwaith mewn dillad budr gan nad oedd baddondai pen pwll yno.

Roedd yna awyrgylch da yn y Cambrian, roedd yn lle mawr gyda thua 1500 o ddynion yn gweithio yno. Gwariodd y Bwrdd Glo lawer o arian yno, ac roedd cryn dipyn o waith ailadeiladu'n mynd ymlaen ar y wyneb a danddaear. Datblygwyd ffordd loco newydd i Ardal P2, a dyna'r lle cyntaf i fi weld leinin sment rhwng y bwâu dur a oedd yn cynnal y to. Roedd e'n edrych yn dda, ond dwi ddim yn gwybod pa mor effeithiol oedd e' chwaith. Roedd Deddf Mwyngloddiau 1954 wedi dod i rym, ac yn cyflwyno safonau cywirdeb newydd ar gyfer trefsur pyllau glo. Roedden ni'n gallu arolygu yn fwy effeithlon diolch i'r deialau optegol newydd ar gyfer gwaith cyffredinol a theodolitu ar gyfer arolygon mwy manwl. Newidiodd gwaith syrfêwr yn aruthrol dros y blynyddoedd, ac erbyn y 1960au, roedd Swyddfa Ardal NCB yn Nhredomen yn frith o gyfrifiaduron. Mae technoleg wedi datblygu cymaint erbyn heddiw, gallech chi ddefnyddio'ch gliniadur i wneud holl waith yr hen beiriannau mawr hyn - dynna gynnnydd!

Fe weithiais i'n y Cambrian tan 1961 pan enillais gymhwyster Syrfêwr Glofaol Statudol, a cael fy anfon i lofa'r Cwm fel 'Syrfêwr Ailadeiladu' oherwydd yr holl waith ailwampio yno. Ond syrfêwr cynorthwyol oeddwn i mewn gwirionedd. Roedd Cwm fel byd arall ar ôl y Cambrian, gyda phopeth mor fawr a dim gwythiennau glo main.

Enillais fy nghymhwyster Syrfêwr Siartredig ym 1966, a dod yn Gymrawd y Sefydliad ym 1988. Bedair blynedd ar ôl cymhwyso, cefais fy mhenodi'n syrfêwr yr uned yng nglofa Coedely tan 1967/68 pan es i weithio yn swyddfa'r ardal yn Nhon-du ac yna i swyddfa Llanisien ger Caerdydd. Ym 1973, ymunais â'r gwasanaeth sifil fel Prisiwr Mwynau o 1973 tan 1996 pan ymddeolais yn gynnar. Am y deng mlynedd nesaf, gweithiais fel ymgynghorydd tan rhoi'r gorau iddi'n llwyr yn 65 oed.

Dychwelais i'r Cambrian ym 1965 ar ôl y ffrwydrad, gan deithio i fyny'r cwm heibio'r dyrfa fawr ar ochr y ffyrdd.

The First and the Last

I was born in Trealaw in March 1940 but we moved to Clydach Vale when I was three years old. My father, Ivor Pennington, worked as a collier in Glamorgan 'Scotch' Colliery and later in Number 2 Pit Cambrian until he finished at 43 years old in 1947 with advanced pneumoconiosis. I went to Porth County Grammar School but I didn't really have any idea about what I wanted to do after school. In any case it was just after the war and there weren't many options in the Rhondda in those days. You either went on to college or into the colliery. My parents couldn't afford to send me to college and I had sent for and read a booklet called About Chartered Surveyors and realised I might be able to do it through the National Coal Board. I applied to the NCB for an apprenticeship in mining surveying. I was accepted and it went on from there although at the time I still didn't really know what an apprentice mining surveyor actually did as I had never been underground.

I did five weeks basic mining training in Wattstown Training Centre and, after that, was sent to the Group Offices in Treorchy to start my apprenticeship and was allocated to Cambrian Colliery. On my second day I went underground with the surveyors. The P2 District in Cambrian was nothing like I had seen in Wattstown. We did

some alignment of the roadway then the surveyor told me to fetch the oil lamp and follow the rest of them into the face. I retrieved the lamp and went after them but on my return could not locate them. I went up to the men working on the ripping lip at the end of the roadway and, very politely, asked one of them where the coal face was. He pointed down to the side of the road and said "It's down by there." So I went down on my hands and knees and crawled up about a hundred yards of wet coal face which was about two feet eight inches high. This was my introduction to the Pentre Seam, Cambrian Colliery.

The colliers used to regard surveying as an 'easy job' but it was a different form of work including lots of walking, carrying survey equipment etc. up and down low coal faces. Cambrian Pentre seam was wet but the roof at the face was strong unlike the seams in Number 4 Pit. The roof would hold up for long distances behind the face when it really needed to break up and take the pressure off

the coal face. You'd be on the face and the gob would be holding up for a long distance and then you'd hear a 'bump' and the ground would shake and the roof would come down very quickly and end up with a solid wall of rock behind the roof supports. It was frightening - I used to lie on the floor and wait for it all to stop. They talk about 'roof support' but really it was roof control as you didn't know when the roof was going to come down in the Pentre in Cambrian. The colliers working at the face always seemed less concerned than a visitor like me.

Colliery surveyors were always 'first in and last out' as we used to survey the faces when they began and survey them when they were abandoned at the end. Because the Pentre was so wet, when we used to survey old roads there used to be webs of white 'strings' of fungus and red spiders. When I was surveying in Naval Colliery they had worms underground, I never saw them anywhere else. When I was in Naval I had to travel to work on the bus in dirty clothes as the colliery didn't have a pithead baths.

There was a good atmosphere in Cambrian, it was a big place with about 1500 men working there. The Coal Board spent a lot of money and there was a lot of reconstruction going on both surface and underground. A new loco road was developed into the P2 District and it was the first place I saw cement lining between the steel arches which held the roof up. It looked a nice finish but I don't know how effective it was. The 1954 Mines Act had come in and new standards of accuracy for mine surveying set out. We were equipped with new optical dials for general work with theodolites for more accurate surveys enabling surveys to be made more efficiently. Surveying changed a lot over the years, by the 1960s Tredomen offices was full of computers. These days with the development of high tech equipment you could do the things these huge machines could do on your laptop at home - progress!

I worked in Cambrian until 1961 when I qualified as a Statutory Mine Surveyor and was sent to Cwm Colliery as a 'Reconstruction Surveyor' because of all the reconstruction work that was going on there. But really I was an assistant surveyor. Cwm was a different world after Cambrian, everything was on a big scale and no thin coal seams.

In 1966 I qualified as a Chartered Surveyor and later in 1988 I became a Fellow of the Institution. Four years after qualifying I was appointed the unit surveyor in Coedely Colliery until 1967/1968 when I went to work in the area offices in Tondy and from there to Llanishen offices near Cardiff. In 1973 I joined the civil service as a Mineral Valuer from 1973 to 1996 when I took early retirement. For the next ten years I worked as a consultant until I finished for good at sixty five years old.

I went back to Cambrian in 1965 after the explosion, travelling up the valley past crowds of people who lined the roads. We were sent underground the following day after all the victims had been recovered and the pit made safe. There were three teams of surveyors and I was on the team surveying the supply road where the explosion had taken place. It was an eerie feeling as I had been underground there before. We surveyed the roadway and measured out



Denzil Pennington

Cawsom ein hanfon danddaear y diwrnod canlynol, ar ôl i'r cyrff gael eu cludo i'r wyneb ac i'r pwll gael ei ddiogelu. Roedd tri thîm o syrfewyr yno, a finnau'n aelod o'r tîm oedd yn gwneud arolwg o'r ffordd gyflenwi lle bu'r ffrwydrad. Roedd yn gyrru ias i lawr fy nghefn, gan fy mod wedi bod yno o'r blaen. Buon ni'n tîrfesur y ffordd ac yn mesur yr ardaloedd y gofynnwyd i ni ganolbwyntio arnynt. Rwy'n cofio gweld adlewyrchydd lamp cap glôwr yn ddwfn mewn cynhalbost pren, sy'n rhoi syniad i chi o rym y ffrwydrad. Aethom i lawr y pwll am naw o'r gloch a dychwelyd i'r brig erbyn dau o'r gloch. Nodwyd yr holl fesuriadau ar gynlluniau anferth a gafodd eu drafftio a'u hailddrafftio cyn eu hanfon i dynnu lluniau ohonynt a'u paratoi ar gyfer adroddiad swyddogol Arolygiaeth EM i'r trychineb.

Roedd yna deimlad rhyfedd tu hwnt yn y pwll, gyda phawb yn syfrdan gan nad oedd y Cambrian yn cael ei ystyried yn bwl nwyol. Yn fy marn i, roedd yn un o'r pethau na ddylai fod wedi digwydd. Roedd cylched bwt ar y cerrynt awyru, felly doedd dim esgus mewn gwirionedd. Roedd cynhyrchiant yn bwysig, oedd, ond nid mor bwysig â bywydau pobl.

Roedd yr angladdau'n anferth, mor fawr a'r drasiedi. Cerddodd cannoedd ar gannoedd o bobl i'r fynwent, a oedd gryn bellter i ffwrdd, gyda thyrfafawr ar hyd y pafin yr holl ffordd i fynwent Trealaw.

Dw i ddim yn difaru mynd i'r pwll. Fe ges i amser da yn y Cambrian er bod yr amgylchiadau'n ofnadwy yn aml. Alla i ddim cwyno. Dechreuais weithio'n 16 oed a dal ati tan oeddw'n i'n 65, a 'sdim llawer sy'n gallu dweud hynny heddiw. Cefais yrfa gymharol lwyddiannus, a phrofiad gwerthfawr o weithio yng nglofa'r Cambrian.

Denzil Pennington



the areas we were told to concentrate on. I remember seeing the reflector of a cap lamp embedded deeply in a timber support which gave you an idea of how powerful the blast had been. We went down the pit at nine o'clock and were back up at two. All the measurements were plotted on huge plans which were drafted and re drafted until they were sent off to be photographed and made ready for the official report of H M Inspectorate into the disaster.

The feeling in the pit was weird, people were stunned as Cambrian wasn't regarded as a particularly gassy pit. In my view it was one of those things that shouldn't have happened. The ventilation current had been short circuited, there was no excuse really. Production was important but not so important as human lives.

The funerals were huge, it was a massive tragedy. Hundreds and hundreds of people walking to the cemetery, a hell of a way, with people lining the roads all the way to Trealaw Cemetery.

I'm not sorry that I went into the colliery, I had a good time at Cambrian even though the conditions were often terrible. I can't complain. I started work at sixteen and worked until I was sixty five, not many can say that these days. I had a relatively successful career and the experience of working at Cambrian served me well.

Denzil Pennington



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