

BIG PIT: AMGUEDDFA LOFAOL CYMRU BIG PIT: NATIONAL COAL MUSEUM

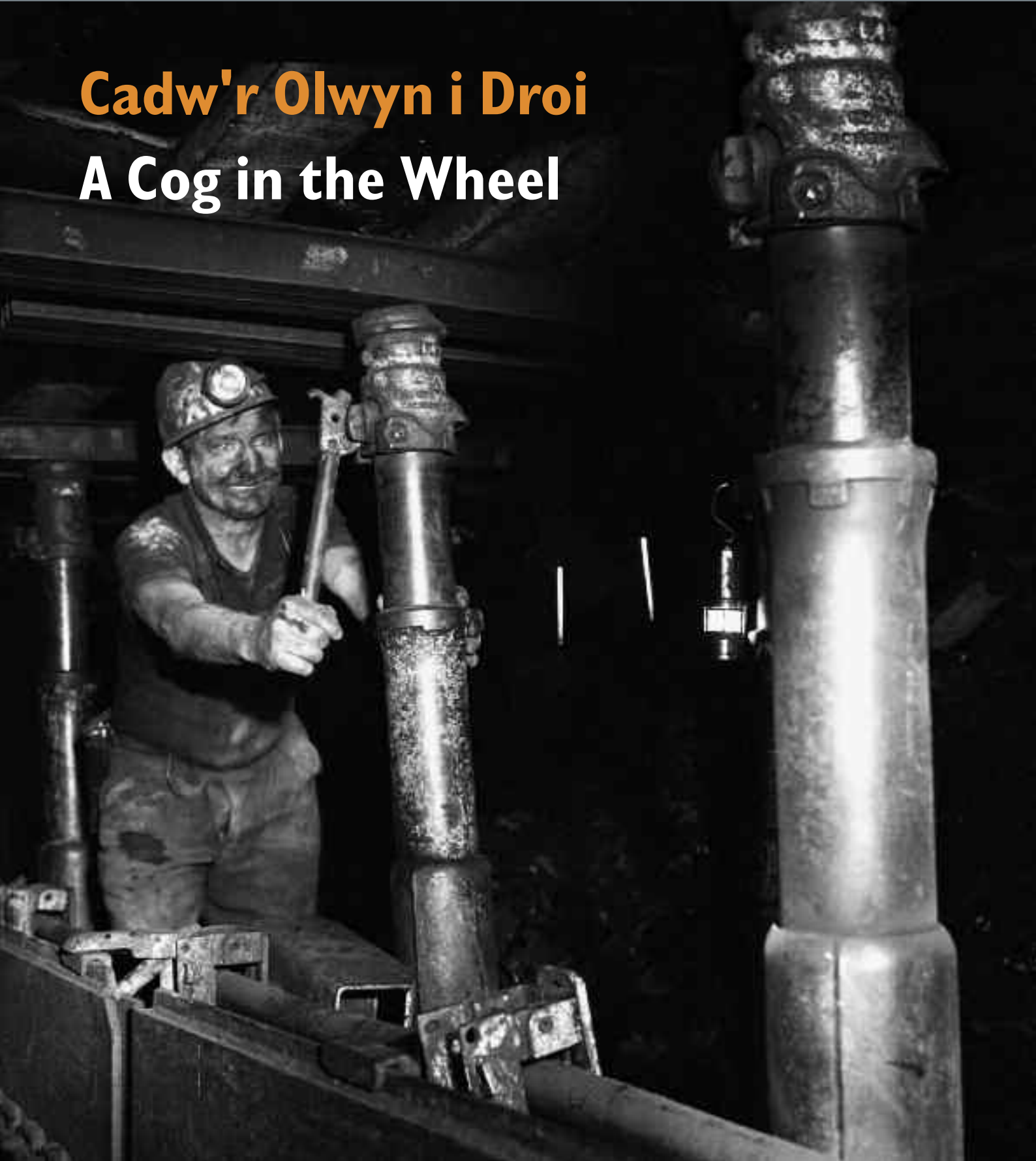
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# GLO

# COAL

## Cadw'r Olwyn i Droï A Cog in the Wheel





## Cyflwyniad

Croeso i Cadw'r Olwyn i Droï, y seithfed rhifyn o 'GLO' – cylchgrawn hanes pobl Big Pit.

Mae'r rhifyn hwn yn portreadu swyddi a phrofiadau amrywiol y rhai fu ynghlwm wrth ddiwydiant glo ein gwlad ar hyd y blynyddoedd. Er bod y straeon yn ddigon dirdynnol yn aml, mae hwyl a ffraethineb enwog y glöwr Cymreig yn dod i'r wyneb hefyd.

Big Pit fydd prif ganolbwynt y rhifyn nesaf, gan fod yr hen lofa'n dathlu deng mlynedd ar hugain fel amgueddfa yn 2013. Felly, rydym yn chwilio am gyfraniadau gan bobl a fu'n gweithio yno – yn lwywr a staff amgueddfa fel ei gilydd.

Os hoffech chi rannu'ch straeon neu'ch lluniau, cysylltwch â ni yma yn Big Pit: Amgueddfa Lofaol Cymru.

Ceri Thompson,  
Curadur

## Introduction

Welcome to 'A Cog in the Wheel' the seventh edition of 'GLO' - Big Pit's people's history magazine.

This edition illustrates the various jobs and experiences of people who have been involved with the Welsh coal industry over the years. The stories are often harrowing but the famous Welsh mining humour also comes through.

The next edition of GLO will cover Big Pit itself as 2013 is the thirtieth anniversary of the colliery becoming a museum. Therefore we are looking for contributions from people who worked at Big Pit as a working colliery as well as those who worked here after it became a museum.

If anyone would like to contribute stories or images please contact Big Pit: National Coal Museum.

Ceri Thompson,  
Curator

Brenhines y Glo, Glofa Britannia, 1980  
Coal Queen at Britannia Colliery, 1980'

## Merch sy' ma!

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1986, bu'n nhad-cu yn gweithio yng Nglofa Llanmorlais ond ers hynny prin oedd y cysylltiadau rhwng fy nheulu i â'r diwydiant glo. Diolch i un o athrawon brwdfrydig yr ysgol, dechreuais ymddiddori mewn daeareg a hanes natur ac es ymlaen i astudio daeareg ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd. Ar ôl graddio yn 2008, cefais swydd ar lwyfan nwy ym Môr y Gogledd. Bu'n rhaid mynd i hyfforddi yn Aberdeen a Tunisia yn gyntaf, felly roeddwn i wedi hen arfer mynd i lefydd ar fy mhen fy hun a dysgu i fod yn annibynnol. Bues i'n gweithio ar rig wedyn, gan weithio sifftiau deuddeg awr am bythefnos a chael pythefnos i fwrdd wedyn. Mae yna ymdeimlad cryf o gymuned ar y rigiau, gyda phobl o bob cwr o'r byd.

Symudais i fyw i'r Iseldiroedd am flwyddyn gyda fy nghariad. Tra'r oeddwn i yno, bues i'n gweithio mewn gardd fotaneg am bedwar mis, ac yna i gyngor yn Frysllan yn cynllunio llwybr beicio ar gyfer cwmni amgylcheddol. Mae ffrwyth fy ngwaith bellach yn gyhoeddiad dwyieithog ar gyfer ysgolion y wlad honno.

Gwnes gais am fy swydd bresennol fel daearegwr yng Nglofa Aberpergwm ym mis Medi 2010, a symudais yn ôl i Gymru. Mae fy swydd yn cynnwys materion bioamrywiaeth a chynllunio, ac rwy'n disgwyl cael gwneud fy hyfforddiant danddaear felly mae'n rhaid i reolwr, daearegwr arall neu beiriannydd mwyngloddio graddedig fy hebrwng i danddaear ar hyn o bryd. Doedd gen i ddim syniad beth i'w ddisgwyl cyn mentro danddaear, ond dwi wedi hen arfer â'r amodau a'r tywyllwch erbyn hyn, er ei bod hi'n dipyn cynhesach na'r disgwyl. Dwi'n eithaf hyderus yng nghrombil y ddaear bellach.

Rydyn ni'n mynd i'r ffas lo i fwrw golwg ar ffawtiau ac ati, yna'n dod â'r braslun i'r wyneb a'i roi yn y cyfrifiadur ar gyfer gwneud 'model o'r pwll' er mwyn trefnu gwaith archwilio pellach – daearegwr archwiliol ydw i i bob pwrpas. Mae tua dwsin o ferched yn gweithio yma yn Aberpergwm, ond fi yw'r unig un sy'n mynd danddaear. Pan rydyn ni'n cael ein pelydr-x rheolaidd o'r frest, maen nhw'n dweud, 'O, merch sy' ma – mas â chi bois!' Arferai llawer o'r dynion weithio i'r Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol cyn iddyn nhw gau'r lofa ym 1985 – mae'n hawdd adnabod dynion yr NCB gan fod gan bob un ohonynt fwstas safonol y Bwrdd Glo!

Ar hyn o bryd, rydym yn gorfod anfon ein glo i'w olchi ym mhwl y Tŵr, Hirwaun, ond bydd gennym olchfa ar ein safle ni erbyn mis Hydref. Dwi'n teimlo bod gennyf swydd saff, mae gennym tua 7.6 miliwn tunnell o lo wrth gefn a dylai Aberpergwm bara am ryw 30 mlynedd arall eto. Dwi'n hoffi gweithio i'r diwydiant glo gan fod pawb mor gyfeillgar, ac mae'n braf bod yn rhan o'r gymuned lofaol.

Katherine Voyle, Glofa Aberpergwm

## Oh, it's a girl!

I was born in 1986; my grandfather worked in Llanmorlais Colliery but since then my family had little connection with the mining industry. Owing to an enthusiastic teacher in school I became fascinated by geology and natural history and went on to study geology in Cardiff University. After I graduated in 2008 I obtained a job on a gas rig in the North Sea. I first had to do my training in Aberdeen and Tunisia so I got used to going to place on my own and learnt independence. I worked on the rig for a year working twelve hour shifts for two weeks then having two weeks off. There is a strong community on the rigs formed by people from all over the world.

I moved to Holland for a year to live with my boyfriend. While there I worked in a botanical garden for four months then for the council in Friesland working on planning a bike route for an environmental company. My work is now a bi-lingual publication for schools in that country.

I applied for my present job as a geologist at Aberpergwm Colliery in September 2010 and moved back to Wales. My job involves biodiversity and planning and I am waiting to do my underground training so I have to be accompanied underground by the manager, another geologist or the graduate mining engineer at the moment. I didn't really know what to expect before I went underground but I have got used to the conditions and the darkness although it is a lot warmer than I expected it to be. I am now quite confident being underground.

We go into the coal face to check on faults etc. then bring the sketch up and put it into the computer to make a 'mine model' in order to plan further exploration work so I'm basically an exploratory geologist. There are about a dozen women working at Aberpergwm but I'm the only one who goes underground. When we have our regular chest x-rays they say "Oh it's a girl – all the boys get out!" A lot of the boys worked for the National Coal Board before they closed the colliery down in 1985 – you can always tell the NCB men because they all have the standard Coal Board moustache!

At the moment we have to send our coal up to Tower in Hirwaun to be washed but we will have built a washery on site by October. I feel that I am in a secure job, we have about 7.6 million tonnes of reserve coal and there should be about 30 years of life left in Aberpergwm. I like working for the coal industry as everyone is so friendly, it's really nice to be part of the mining community.

Katherine Voyle, Aberpergwm Colliery





# On'd yw Trevor chi wedi tyfu'n fachan mowr?

Cefais fy ngeni yn Rhymni ym mis Mai 1932. Ar ôl gadael ysgol yn bymtheg oed, es i weithio mewn siop, ond roedd y cyflog yn wael felly cefais swydd yng Nglofa McLaren, Abertyswg. Bues i'n gweithio ar wyneb y lofa am dri mis, cyn cael f'anfon am bythefnos o hyfforddiant yng Nglofa Bargod ac wythnos yn Ysgol Hyfforddi Britannia. Yna, fe'm hanfonwyd yn ôl i weithio danddaear yn McLaren. Roedden ni'n dal i ddefnyddio lampau llaw trydan bryd hynny, ac yn eu hongian nhw o'n beltiau a rhwng ein coesau – roedden nhw'n boeth iawn ac yn taro yn erbyn eich pengliniau.

Roeddwn i'n gweithio fel gwas colier yn nhalcen y ffas lo. Roedd y colier yn torri'r glo gyda mandrel, neu gŷn hollt, a finnu'n llenwi'r dram gyda rhaw. Byddai'r halier a'i geffyl yn mynd a dod gyda'r dramiau o lwybr y talcen. Roedd un o'r haliers yn arfer gofyn 'O's joien (baco cnoi) da chi?' Byddai'r colier yn ateb, 'Faint wyt ti moyn?' ar llall yn ateb, 'Digon i fynd rownd fy arddwrn, sef cryn dipyn! Ond os na fyddech chi'n rhoi baco iddo, fe ddôi'r dram nesaf yn llawn mwd a bydden ni'n gorfod gwagio'r dram cyn ei ailenwi â glo!

Roedd y ffas lo yn naw troedfedd o uchder, a oedd yn waeth na gweithio mewn gwythien isel. Roedd yna haen o faw yn mynd drwy ganol y wythien lo, felly roedden ni'n torri'r glo uchaf yn gyntaf a'i rawio i lawr i'r dramiau. Erbyn inni gyrraedd y glo gwaelod, roedden ni'n gorfod ei rawio ar i fyny. Roedd y darnau mawr yn cael eu rhoi o gwmpas ochrau'r dram, hyd at uchder o ryw ddwy droedfedd, a'r glo llai yn y canol – techneg o'r enw 'racing'. Bydden ni'n llenwi rhwng wyth a deg dram bob sifft.

Wnes i ddim aros yno'n hir iawn. Fe es i weithio i ffas lo wedi'i mecaneiddio a rheoli'r botwm a oedd yn dechrau a diffodd y peiriant cludo. Yna, fe'm hanfonwyd i'r talcen gyda chludydd 'gogrwr' a oedd yn swnllyd dros ben – doedd neb eisiau'r 'stent' (man gweithio) drws nesaf i'r peiriant turio oherwydd yr holl ddwndwr a ddoi o'r injan 'chwythu' (aer cywasgedig) a oedd yn gyrru'r cludydd. Roedd y glo'n cael ei dandorri gan beiriant â jib torri pedair troedfedd er mwyn ei ryddhau o'r wythien, cyn i'r glowy'r lanhau'r glo bach o'r toriad a thynnu'r cyfan i lawr gyda pheiriannau tyllu niwmatig. Roedd 'stent' pob glöwr oddeutu 24 troedfedd o hyd a rhyw bum troedfedd o uchder.

Roeddech chi i fod yn un ar hugain oed cyn cael eich 'stent' eich hun; a dyma'r oedran yr oeddech yn cael eich ystyried yn ddyn! Er hynny, cafodd fy mrawd ei weithle ei hun pan oedd yn ddeunaw oed gan ei fod yn weithiwr mor dda. Doeddwn i ddim yn gallu cael fy stent fy hun gan mai dim ond dwy ar bymtheg oeddwn i, felly roeddwn i'n pacio y tu ôl i'r ffas lo. Roedd rhaid i ni adeiladu paciau pum llath, gyda'r cerrig mawr ar y waliau allanol a llenwi'r tu mewn â cherrig mân – i fod! Ond roedden nhw'n wag hanner yr amser. Pe bai wal yn cwmpo, yna colli rhan o'ch cyflog oedd hi.

Doedd dim baddondai pen pwll yn y dyddiau hynny, ac roedd tri o'n tŷ ni'n gweithio yn y pwll glo. Gan mai fi oedd yr ieuengaf, roeddwn i'n gorfod aros i gael bath. Byddai'n had yn golchi hanner uchaf ei gorff i ddechrau, yna fy mrawd yn gwneud yr un peth, cyn i fy nhad a'm brawd olchi'u hanner isaf. Dim ond wedyn oedd hi'n bryd i mi 'folchi' – ac erbyn hynny, roedd modfedd o laid ar wyneb y dŵr! Os oedd angen rhagor o ddŵr poeth, byddai'n rhaid i mam ferwi mwy ohono. Roedd y menywod yn gorfod codi am hanner awr wedi pedwar y bore i gynnu'r tân a rhoi'r dillad gwaith i sychu yn y ffwrn fechan yn y grât wedi'i blactedio. Roedd hi mor boeth, nes bod y botymau'n llosgi'ch stumog wrth i chi wisgo amdanoch!

Roedd fy mrawd yn arfer smygu, ond byth yn y tŷ chwaith, felly un diwrnod fe aeth i waelod yr ardd am fwgyn bach. Erbyn iddo gyrraedd y tŷ, roeddwn i wedi golchi hanner uchaf ac isaf fy nghorff i gyd, a dywedodd, 'Clefar iawn!' yn bigog, oherwydd roeddwn i fod i adael iddo fe gael bath yn gyntaf ac yntau ddeunaw mis yn hŷn! Wrth iddo dynnu'i ddillad a chamu i'r bath, dywedais, 'Wy'di piso yn y dŵr!' Neidiodd o'r bath a rhoi crasfa i mi. Roeddwn i'n llwch i gyd eto, ac roedd rhaid i mi neidio i'r bath



Trevor Mumford yn Plantation Terrace, Rhymni, 1947  
Trevor Mumford photographed in Plantation Terrace, Rhymney, 1947

# There's a big boy your Trevor is getting!

I was born in Rhymney in May 1932. When I left school at fifteen I worked in a shop but the money was poor so I got a job in McLaren Colliery, Abertyswg. I worked on the colliery surface for three months and then was sent for two weeks training in Bargoed Colliery and then a week in Britannia Training School. After all this I was sent back to McLaren to work underground. We were still using electric hand lamps then which we used to hang from our belts and between our legs – they used to get very hot and bang against your knees.

I worked as a collier's boy in a stall on the coal face. The collier cut the coal with a mandrel, or sometimes with wedges, and I filled the dram with a shovel. Drams were brought into and taken from the stall road by a haulier and his horse. One of the hauliers used to ask us "You haven't got a 'chew' (chewing tobacco) for me, have you?" The collier used to answer "How much do you want?" and got the reply "Enough to go around my wrist", which was a lot of tobacco but, if you didn't give him any, the next dram he brought in would be full of muck which we'd have to empty out before refilling it with coal!

The coal face was nine feet high, which was worse than working in a low seam. There was a band of muck running through the centre of the coal seam, so we used to cut the top coal first and you could shovel it down into the dram. When you came to working the bottom coal you had to shovel upwards. The larger lumps were arranged to about two feet above and around the sides of the dram and smaller coal was

placed inside, this was called 'racing'. We used to fill between eight and ten drams every shift.

I didn't stay there long, I went into a mechanised coal face where I was stationed on 'the button' which started and stopped the conveyor motor. I was then sent into a face equipped with a 'jigger' conveyor, this was very noisy – nobody wanted the 'stent' (working place) next to the drive motor because of the loud noise coming from the 'blast' (compressed air) engine which powered the conveyor. The coal was undercut by a machine with a four foot six cutting jib to loosen it from the seam, then the colliers used to 'duff out' (clean out the small coal from the cut) and then bring the coal down with pneumatic 'punchers'. Each collier's 'stent' was about twenty-four feet long by about five feet high.

You were supposed to be twenty one before you got your own 'stent'; this was the age that you were regarded as becoming a man! However, my brother got his own place at eighteen because he was such a good worker. Because I was only seventeen, I couldn't have my own stent so I was put packing behind the coal face. We had to build five yard packs, the outer walls were of large stone and the inside was supposed to be filled up completely with smaller stone. However, half the time, the insides were empty! If a pack actually fell down you'd find your pay cropped.

There were no pithead baths in those days and there were three of us in our house working in the pit. Because I was the youngest I had to wait for the bath water. My father used to wash his top half first, then my brother washed his top half, then my father washed his bottom half followed by my brother, then it was time for me to wash - there was an inch of slurry on top of the water when I got into the bath! If more hot water was needed mother had to boil up more. Women had to get up at half past four to light the fire and put the working clothes in the little oven in the black leaded grate to dry out. The got so hot that when you put them on the buttons would burn your stomach!

My brother used to smoke, but never in the house, so one day he went down the bottom of the garden for a fag. When he got back I had washed my top and bottom half and he said "You think you're clever don't you?" as I was supposed to wait for him to bath first



eto. Roedd menywod bob amser yn dod heibio pan oeddem ni'n ymolchi. Un diwrnod, roedd hen fenyw'n eistedd ar y sofffa yn edrych arna i'n cael bath, ac meddai, 'Jiw, ond yw Trevor chi wedi tyfu'n fachan mowr?'

Roedd y gwaith yn galed; ac weithiau, byddwn i'n dod adre wedi ymlâdd ac yn cwmpo i gysgu ar y llawr. Pan fyddai hynny'n digwydd, byddai mam yn fy rholio i o dan y bwrdd – yng nghanol y cocroctsis oedd yn rhedeg drosoch chi. Roedd hi'n taro'r bwrdd a gweiddi 'Dere Trevor ne byddi di'n colli'r bws' a byddwn i'n neidio ar fy nhraed, bachu'r boc bwyd a rhedeg mas dim ond i weld bechgyn yn chwarae pêl-droed a sylweddoli ei bod wedi chwarae tric arnaf. Arferwn i ddod adre'n ddu bitsh tan i McLaren gael baddondai pen pwll ym 1957, ac er bod gennym dŷ gydag ystafell molchi erbyn hynny, fe wellodd pethau'n arw gyda'r baddondai pen pwll.

Ymunais â band pres Gweithwyr Rhymni ym 1949. Roeddwn i'n canu tiwba B fflat am nad oedd gen i ddannedd. Allwn i ddim canu'r corned achos doeddwn i ddim yn gallu dal genau'r offeryn yn iawn. Fe wnes i briodi ym 1954 ac roeddwn i'n dal i ddod adref yn ddu o'r gwaith ac yn gweithio'r sifft nos yn rheolaidd. Arferwn i fynd i'r ymarfer band am saith o'r gloch bob nos Wener, yna mynd am ddau beint o sgrympi (seidr garw) ac yna i'r gwaith. Un noson, roedd y to wedi cwmpo danddaear a buon ni'n gweithio'n galed drwy'r nos. Pan gyrhaeddais adref yn y bore, roeddwn i wedi blino'n lân, ond dywedodd y wraig, 'Wy'n ffaelu cynnau'r tân, felly roedd rhaid i mi wagio'r grât i gyd, rhoi'r papur, priciau a glo ynddo a defnyddio'r ddalen 'chwythu' fetel dros y grât i godi'r tân. Felly, cynnais y tân a berwi dŵr i gael bath. Roedd fy ngwraig yn golchi 'ngwallt, a phrin y ces gyfle i olchi 'nghefn gan fod bws y band yn disgwyl amdanaf i fynd i gystadleuaeth yn Abertawe. Pan ruthrais i'r bws, yn debyg i banda gyda chlytiau o lwch glo drostaf, ac roedd y bois yn cwyno am fy mod yn hwyr. Ond fe enillon ni'r gystadleuaeth, ac aros yn Abertawe tan i'r tafarnau gau – roeddwn i wedi ymlâdd!

Fe wnes i bob math o swyddi gwahanol danddaear, ac un diwrnod, gofynnwyd i mi gymryd ceffyl felly fe es i'r stabl i daclu'r ceffyl. Codais y goler a cheisio'i rhoi dros ei ben, ond roedd yn gwrthod aros yn llonydd. Gofynnodd un o'r haliars beth oedd y broblem, felly dywedais wrtho, a dywedodd fod rhaid i mi roi'r goler ben i waered ac yna ei throï pan oedd dros y gwddw – 'sdim rhyfedd bod y ceffyl yn pallu aros yn llonydd! Yna, roeddwn i'n tynnu'r ceffyl gyda dramiau mewn a mas o'r ffas i'r gyffordd lle'r oedd yr injan halio yn codi'r dramiau wedyn. Pan es i am fwyd, hongiais fag bwyd am ei wddw er mwyn i'r ceffyl gael tamaid hefyd. Roeddwn wedi gadael fy nghot ar fachyn, gyda gellygen yn y boced i'w bwyta ar ddiwedd y sifft. Ond pan wisgais fy nghot wedyn,

roedd y ceffyl wedi sugno'r ellygen drwy'r brethyn gan adael dim ond y coesyn a'r hadau ar ôl!

Roedd gennym ryw ugain o geffylau yng Nglofa McLaren gan gynnwys Lion, Dobbin, Captain, Admiral (clamp o geffyl mawr gwyn) a Bodger (a oedd yn drefni'n ddifrifol oherwydd ei fod yn dioddef o 'grease heel'). Byddai ceffyl arall, Actor, yn cystadlu yn Sioe Geffylau Coed-duon gan ennill bob blwyddyn; roedd yn weithiwr da hefyd. Roedd ceffylau'n cael pob gofal yn McLaren, yn cael bwyd da ac archwiliad rheolaidd gan ffariar i weld a oedd olion briwiau neu anafiadau eraill a all gael eu hachosi wrth weithio mewn mannau cyfyng neu isel. Byddai un haliar yn dangos ei bapur cyflog i'w geffyl gan ddweud, 'Shgwyl yr arian pitw wy'n ei gal am dy yrru di!' Roedd yn galw'r ceffylau'n bob enw dan haul.

Roedd yna hen ddyn yn gweithio danddaear (o'r enw 'Billy Welsh Cakes' oherwydd dim ond teisennau fyddai ganddo yn ei focs bwyd) heb ddannedd o gwbl, ac un diwrnod roedd yn sugno cneuen. Dyma un o'r bois yn gofyn, 'Beth sy' da ti'n fanna Bill?' Rhoddodd Bill lond llaw iddo, ac roedd y bachgen wrthi'n bwyta'r cnau gan ddweud, 'Maen nhw'n flasus, ble ges ti nhw?' Atebodd Bill, 'O far o siocled' – roedd e eisoes wedi sugno'r holl siocled oddi arnynt yn llwyr!

Bues i'n gweithio yn McLaren am bedair blynedd ar ddeg, ond roedd fy ngwraig yn awyddus i mi adael ar ôl i ambell un gael ei ladd yno, felly ymunais â Gwaith Dur Glynebwy. Dim ond ychydig wythnosau fues i yno, oherwydd symudais i Lofa Bargod lle'r oeddwn i'n derbyn y cyflenwadau gan mai peiriannau a ddefnyddid i dorri a llwytho ar y ffas yno – rhywbeth na welais erioed o'r blaen. Ar ôl rhyw saith mlynedd yno, cefais gyfle i ymuno â ffatri Hymac, yn profi'r peiriannau. Doeddwn i ddim yn hapus yno, felly fe es i weithio ar ffas lo lle'r oedd peiriannau torri a llwytho yng Nglofa Penallta. Pan yn gweithio yno, roeddwn i fod i fynd mas gyda'r band ond roedd gennyf sifft brynhawn felly trefnais ddiwrnod o wyliau. Y noson honno, roedd tân yn y ffas lo, a thrannoeth, gofynnodd fy nghydweithiwr i, 'Beth wyt ti'n ei wneud pan fyddi di'n dod i'r gwaith bob dydd?' Dywedais fy mod i'n mynd yn syth i'r ffas i weld beth oedd angen ei wneud. Pe tawn i wedi gwneud hynny'r diwrnod blaenorol, meddai, buaswn i wedi llosgi'n ddifrifol fwy na thebyg!

Daeth fy nghyfnod ym Mhenallta i ben pan oeddwn i'n 58 oed, ac fe es i weithio mewn ffatri dofednod yn sgubo'r lloriau – am jobyn uffernol! Dwi wedi ymddeol erbyn hyn, ond yn dal i chwarae yn y band ar ôl yr holl flynydde!

**Trevor Mumford**

because he was eighteen months older than me! As he undressed and got into the bath I said "I pissed in the water!" He jumped out of the bath and gave me a pasting, I was covered with coal dust and had to get back into the bath again to wash it all off again. Women always came into the house when we were bathing. One day an old lady was sitting on the sofa watching me bath when she said "There's a big boy your Trevor is getting!"

The work was hard; sometimes I came in and fell asleep on the floor. When I did that Mam used to roll me under the table – amongst the black pats (cockroaches) running all over you. She used to tap the table top and shout "Trevor, come on you'll miss the bus" and I used to spring up grab me tommy box and run out only to see the boys playing football and realise the trick she had played on me. I used to come home black until McLaren got a pithead baths in 1957, although we got a house with a bathroom before that it was a lot better again with the pithead baths.

I joined Rhymney Workmen's Brass Band in 1949. I used to play Bb bass because I didn't have any teeth, I couldn't play a cornet because I couldn't hold the mouth piece properly. I married in 1954 and was still coming home black from work and was working nights regular. I used to go to band practice at seven on the Friday night, then go for two pints of scrumpy (rough cider) and then go to work. One night there had been a roof fall underground and we were working hard all night and I was dog tired when I got home in the morning. As I got through the door the missus said "I can't light the fire" so I had to empty all the grate, put paper, sticks and coal on and use the metal 'blower' sheet over the grate to draw the fire up. So I lit the fire, boiled the water up to put in the bath. My missus was washing my hair and I was struggling to wash my back because the band bus was waiting outside to go to a competition in Swansea. When I rushed onto the bus I must have looked like a panda, patches of coal dust all over me and the boys were complaining because I was late. But we won the competition and stayed in Swansea until stop tap – I was shattered!

I did a lot of jobs underground and one day I was asked to take a horse out so I went to the stable to dress the horse. I picked up the collar and tried to put it over his head but he wouldn't keep still. One of the hauliers asked me what the matter was so I told him and he said that you had to put the collar on upside down and turn it when it was over his neck - no wonder the horse wouldn't keep still! I took the horse out pulling drams in and out from the face to the parting where they were picked up by the haulage engine. When I went for food I hung the feed bag around his neck so he could have his grub as well. I had hung my coat up and had a pear in the pocket which I was keeping to eat at the end of the shift.

When I put my coat back on the horse had sucked the pear out through the cloth, there was only the stem and pips left in the pocket!

We had about twenty horses in McLaren Colliery including Lion, Dobbin, Captain, Admiral (who was a big white horse) and Bodger (who used to smell badly as he suffered from 'grease heel'). We had one called Actor who used to compete in the Blackwood Horse Show and win every year; he was a good worker as well. Horses were well looked after in McLaren, they were given good food and the farrier used to regularly check their backs and legs for signs of cuts or other damage ('roughage') which could be caused when working in low or confined places. We had one haulier who used to show his horse his docket and say "Look how little they're giving me for driving you!" He used to call the horse all the bastards going.

We had an old fellow underground (known as Billy Welsh Cakes because he only ever had cake in his tommy box) who didn't have any teeth and one day he was sucking a nut. One of the boys said "What you got there Bill?" Bill gave him a handful and the boy was eating the nuts and said "There's nice nuts, where did you get them?" Bill answered "Out of a bar of chocolate" – he had already sucked all the chocolate off!

I worked in McLaren for fourteen years and then a couple of men got killed there and my missus wanted me to get out of the pit so I went to work in Ebbw Vale Steelworks. However, I was only there a few weeks and ended up in Bargod Colliery where I worked getting in supplies as the coal faces were all 'power loading' (fully mechanised) which I'd never seen before. I worked there for about seven years until I had the chance of a job in the Hymac works, testing the machines, but I wasn't happy there and went to work in Penallta Colliery on a power loading coal face. When I was in Penallta I was supposed to be going out with the band but I was afternoon shift so I booked in a rest day. That night there was a fire in the coal face and, next day my butty said "What do you do when you come into work every day?" I told him that I always went straight into the face to check what work was to be done. He said that if I had done that the day before I would have caught the full flame of the fire and probably been badly burnt!

I eventually finished in Penallta at the age of fifty-eight and went to work in a poultry factory sweeping up – a terrible job! I have now retired, however, after all these years I still play in the band.

**Trevor Mumford**



# Doeddwn i 'rïoed eisiau dychwelyd i Lundain

Cefais fy ngeni yn Cotton Street, Tower Hamlets, Llundain, ym mis Awst 1918. Fy nghof cynharaf yw hwnnw o 'nhad yn symud i Dover i weithio fel contractwr cludiant yn y 1920au. Dwi hefyd yn cofio'r ychydig dramiau a oedd yn rhedeg adeg Streic Gyffredinol 1926 gyda menywod yn gwerthu tocynnau; roedden nhw dan eu sanga o deithwyr.

Roedd fy mywyd cynnar braidd yn gymhleth. Cafodd fy nhad ysgariad oddi wrth mam ac ailbriododd hithau wedyn; pan fu dad farw ym 1928, daeth mam yn ôl i'm mofyn i. Yna bu farw mam, a symudais o un perthynas i'r llall am sbel wedyn. Gadewais yr ysgol yn 14 oed, a mynd i weithio mewn ffatri weiarles am ddeg swllt yr wythnos. Fe ddywedon nhw 'os byddwn ni'n dy gadw di, fe gei di 12 swllt yr wythnos'. Arhosais yn y ffatri am ddwy flynedd. Roedd fy llystad yn dafarnwr, a symudodd i Hampstead lle y cyfarfu â menyw ifanc o Gymru. Treuliais wyliau yng Nghymru, ac yn ddiweddarach, fe wnaeth mam y ferch fy ngwahodd i fyw gyda'i theulu yng Nghymru.

Doedd dim llawer o waith ar gael yng Nghymru yn ystod y 1930au, ond fe lwyddais i gael gwaith yng Nglofa Wyllie maes o law yn Nhachwedd 1934. Dechreuais fel cynorthwydd colier, ac roeddwn i braidd yn bryderus ynglŷn â gweithio danddaear ar ôl gweithio mewn ffatri. Ond roedd llawer o fechgyn o'r un oed â mi yno, felly fe wnes i addasu'n iawn. Roedd yn waith aruthrol o galed ond roeddwn i'n gryfach yn y dyddiau hynny. Roedd fy nghydweithiwr cyntaf yn gefnogol iawn, ond dim ond am ddiwrnod y bues i gydag e tra'r oedd y glöwr yr oeddwn i fod i weithio gydag ef ar fusnes yr undeb. Pan ddaeth e'n ôl, roedd pethau'n wahanol iawn – heb os, roedd yn disgwyl cael gwerth ei arian. Roedd hi'n dipyn o gamp cael fy 'nhrymps' ganddo, byddwn i'n ennill tua 19 swllt 9 ceiniog yr wythnos – roedd yn rhoi papur punt i mi ac eisiau'r newid – doedd e byth yn gadael i mi gael y tair ceiniog hynny!

Caeodd yr ardal roeddwn i'n gweithio ynddi ym 1935 ac roeddem yn gweithio ar notis, ond cynigiodd y ffeiarman swydd sifft nos i mi yn Pugh's District – sef y 'sifft sbwriel' lle'r oedden nhw'n llenwi'r hen weithfeydd. Roedd 24 ohonom yn gweithio yno, a thros yr wythnos ganlynol, diflannodd deuddeg ohonyn nhw gan eu bod dros un ar hugain oed ac felly i fod i gael cyfradd uwch o gyflog – gan adael y rhai iau (a rhatach) ohonom. Erbyn 1939, roeddwn wedi dechrau gofalu am yr offer signalau trydan yn y tai injan a'r tramffyrdd. Roedd yn waith diddorol, a bues i'n gweithio gyda thrydanwyr ar benwythnosau hefyd, gan ddysgu llawer ganddynt.

Pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel, cafodd ychydig o aelodau o'r Fyddin Dirioagaethol eu galw i'r fyddin – anfonwyd rhai i Ffrainc hyd yn oed cyn penderfynu bod glo'n bwysicach i'r ymdrech rhyfel, a'u hanfon yn ôl adref. Cefais innau fy ngalw i'r fyddin hefyd, ond mynnodd rheolwr y lofa fy mod i'n aros yn y lofa a dychwelyd y papurau oedd yn fy ngalw i'r fyddin gydag archeb bost pedwar swllt a anfonwyd fel treuliau. Ym mis Medi 1939, priodais Doris Tyndall, merch y fenyw yr arhosais gyda hi pan ddes i Gymru am y tro cyntaf.

Er bod y gwaith yn lladdfa ar brydiau, doeddwn i byth eisiau dychwelyd i Lundain. Roedd hi'n hyfryd yma yng Nghymru, yn enwedig yng nghefn gwlad er gwaetha'r holl byllau a thomenni glo a oedd yn creithio'r ardal. Bu ambell gwmp go gas yn Wyllie, gan gynnwys un noson tua 1936 pan oedd llanc ifanc yn gaeth am ryw 14 awr. Gan ei bod hi'n rhy beryglus i fynd ato dros y cwmp, bu'n rhaid iddyn nhw dorri twnnel i'w gyrraedd, ond roedd yn iawn diolch byth.

Roedd gan bawb lysenw yn y lofa, a 'Cockney' neu 'Mumf' oeddwn i bob amser. Roedd llawer o'r glowyr yn ennill ambell damaid ychwanegol, fel un bachan yn torri gwalltiau yn y tŷ injan danddaear, un arall yn mynd â llifiau gartre' i'w hogi am swllt ar y tro. Roedd un o'r Bois Bevin oedd yn gweithio gyda ni yn Iddew, a'i dad yn deiliwr yn Llundain. Pan oedd un o'r oferman angen siwt, byddai'r Iddew yn ei fesur o dan y ddaear a threfnu i'w dad wneud siwt iddo am fargen. Cafodd y bachgen hwnnw amser braf iawn wedyn.

Tan hynny, roeddwn i'n dysgu sgiliau trydanol wrth fynd ymlaen, ond ym 1960 fe es i'r Britannia School of Mines er mwyn cael tystysgrif Dosbarth 1 mewn Peirianeg Drydanol. Ym 1965, cefais fy mhenodi'n beiriannydd trydanol cynorthwyol. Ar ôl i Lofa Wyllie gau ym 1968, cefais fy nhrosgrlwyddo i weithio yng Nglofa Windsor tan fy ymdeoliad ym 1979.

**Frederick John Mumford**

**Swyddogion a gweithwyr Glofa Wyllie gyda chynrychiolwyr cwmni Meco Moore a oedd yn gosod torrwr/llwythwr glo newydd, Awst 1950. Mae Mr Mumford yn y gwaelod ar y dde**

**Wyllie Colliery officials and workmen with Meco Moore Company representatives who were installing a new coal cutter/loader, August 1950, Mr Mumford is bottom right.**



# I never wanted to go back to London

I was born in Cotton Street, Tower Hamlets, London, in August 1918. My earliest recollection is of my father moving to Dover as a haulage contractor during the 1920s. I also remember the few trams that were running during the General Strike in 1926 with lady conductresses; they were choc-a-block with passengers.

My early life is quite complicated. My father had divorced my mother who had then re-married; when my father died in 1928 she came and collected me. Then my mother died and I spent a long time knocking about between one relative and another. I left school at 14 years old and worked in a wireless factory for ten shillings a week; they told me "If we keep you on we'll give you twelve shillings a week." I stayed in the factory for two years. My stepfather was a publican and transferred to Hampstead where he met a young lady from Wales. I spent a holiday in Wales and later the girl's mother invited me to live with her family in Wales.

There wasn't a lot of work available in Wales during the 1930s but I eventually got a job at Wyllie Colliery in November 1934. I started as a collier's helper and, coming from factory work, I was a bit apprehensive at the thought of working underground. However, there were a lot of boys of the same age as me and I adapted. The work was exceptionally hard but I was stronger in those days. The first collier I worked with was very helpful but I was only with him for a day while the collier I was actually allocated to was away on union business. When he returned things were different, he really expected his pound of flesh. I had a job to get my 'trumps' from him, I used to get about nineteen shillings and nine pence a week – he used to give me a pound note and wanted change – he wouldn't let me have the three pence!



**Sifft olaf Frederick Mumford, Awst 1979, Glofa Nantgarw/Windsor. Last shift for Frederick Mumford, August 1979, Nantgarw/Windsor Colliery.**

The district I was working on closed down about 1935 and we were on notice to finish, but the fireman offered me a job on the night shift in Pugh's District on the 'rubbish shift' where they were filling old workings up. There were twenty four of us working there and the next week twelve disappeared because they were all over twenty one and were therefore due for a higher rate of pay, while those of us who were younger (and cheaper) were kept on. By about 1939 I had begun to look after the electric signaling apparatus in the engine houses and roadways which I found interesting work. I also used to work with the electricians on the weekends and picked up a lot of knowledge from them.

When the war started a couple of Territorials working in the colliery were called up and some were even sent to France before it was decided that coal was more important to the war effort and they were sent back home. I was actually called up myself but the colliery manager told me that I was to stay in the colliery and return the call up papers, including the four shilling postal order that was included as expenses. In September 1939, I married Doris Tyndall, the daughter of the lady I stayed with when I first came to Wales.

Although the work was rough and tough I never wanted to go back to London, it was lovely in Wales especially the countryside in spite of it being scarred by all the pits and the coal tips. There were a couple of nasty roof falls in Wyllie, one night in around 1936 a young fellow was trapped for about fourteen hours. It was too dangerous to get him out over the fall so they had to cut a tunnel to get him out but he was ok.

Everybody had a nickname and I was always 'Cockney' or 'Mumf'. A lot of the miners used to make a bit of money on the side, one chap used to do haircuts in the underground engine house and another used to take home saws to be set and sharpened for a shilling a time. One of the Bevin Boys who worked with us was Jewish and his father was a tailor in London. One of the overmen wanted a suit made and the Bevin Boy measured him underground and got his father to make him a suit at a very cheap price. That Bevin Boy had a cushy time afterwards.

Up until then I had basically picked up my electrical knowledge as I went along but I attended Britannia School of Mines in 1960 in order to get a Class 1 Certificate in Electrical Engineering and in 1965 I became assistant electrical engineer. Wyllie closed in 1968 and I transferred to Windsor Colliery where I worked until I retired in 1979.

**Frederick John Mumford**



Cefais fy ngeni ar 24 Mai 1928 yn 16 Gladys Street, Coed-elái, tua milltir o'r lofa. Roedd Coed-elái yn bentref glofaol nodweddiadol, a dim ond dyrnaid o ffermydd oedd yn yr ardal cyn i'r pwll cyntaf agor. Ar ôl gadael ysgol, roeddech chi naill ai'n mynd i weithio ar y rheilffyrdd neu i'r lofa. Ac os oedd eich tad yn gweithio yn y pwll glo, felly'r oedd hi i chi hefyd fel arfer. Felly, pan adewais i'r ysgol yn grwtyn 14 oed ym 1942, dechreuais weithio yng Nglofa Coedely. Cefais fy magu yng nghanol y diwydiant. Glöwr oedd fy nhad, a byddwn i a'm ffrindiau ysgol yn crwydro o amgylch y lofa'n casglu nytiau a phicied i'r tai weindio a'r adeiladau eraill. Y diwydiant glo oedd ein byd, ac roeddech chi'n nabod pawb.

Dechreuais weithio fel gwas colier gyda 'nhad yng ngwythien Rhif 3, oedd oddeutu dwy droedfedd tair modfedd o uchder. Roeddem yn gweithio ar system pileri a thalcan, gan dyllu hedins (tua phum troedfedd o led er mwyn gadael lle i basio wrth ochr y dramiau) a chreu talcenni bob 16 llath ar hyd yr hedyn. Ym mhob talcan wedyn, roedden ni'n cloddio tua wyth llathen i'r wythien. Roedd yr hedins tua saith troedfedd o uchder, gyda'r lle ychwanegol yn cael ei greu trwy dorri'r garreg o dan y wythien. Defnyddiwyd y garreg wedyn i lenwi'r gob. Wrth i ni lenwi'r gob gyda'r garreg, byddai 'nhad yn taflu'r 'baw' ataf i gyda'i raw, ond os oedd yna delpyn mawr byddai'n gweiddi 'Bysedd!' fel rhybudd. Ond os oedd yn tarôch llaw chi, byddech yn aml yn dioddef o 'ewin du' a'r unig ffordd o leddfu'r boen oedd ei fyrstio â phin nodwydd.

Dim ond i symud baw a cherrig yr oedden ni'n cael defnyddio rhawiau. Doedden ni ddim yn cael eu defnyddio nhw i symud glo, gan mai dim ond talpiau mawr oedd eu hangen a byddai'r rhaw yn eu torri'n ddarnau llai. Roedd gennym ddwy raw, dwy gaib i dyllu o dan y wythien (i lacio'r glo) fel y byddai'r wythien yn llacio a gollwng, bwyell gyda llafn naw modfedd, bar rhywgo er mwyn codi'r garreg, gordd a sbaner neu ddwy. Roedd y colier yn gwneud popeth, nid dim ond ceibo'r glo yn unig. Roedd yn fecanig, yn drilio'r tyllau tanio – yn y dyddiau hynny, doedd dim piston aer i gynnal y dril, roeddech chi'n gorfod dal y peiriant ar eich ysgwydd. Roedd gennych gymaint o offer fel nad oedd modd cloi popeth yn eich bar twls felly roeddech chi'n gorfod cuddio ambell beth!

Byddem yn defnyddio 'bocsys cwrlu' i lenwi'r dramiau â glo. Doedd dim modd cario'r bocs llwythog gan ei fod mor drwm (tua chanpwys) felly

roedd rhaid i chi ei lusgo neu ei sleidio i fyny wyth llath i gyrraedd y dram. Gan ein bod yn cael ein talu fesul tunnell o lo, byddem yn ychwanegu hyd at ddwy droedfedd chwe modfedd o bentwr uwchben ymylon y dram (a oedd rhwng pedair a phum troedfedd o uchder). Er mwyn rhoio'r dram, roeddech chi'n gorfod creu bocs o gnapiau mawr ac ymestyn drostynt wedyn i lenwi'r canol â glo llai. Ar ôl gorffen eu llenwi, roedd y dramiau hyn yn debyg i longau bach wrth fynd i lawr y llwybr. Cefais fy man gwaith fy hun yn 19 oed, ar ôl 'prentisiaeth pum mlynedd'. Roeddwn i'n ffodus fy mod wedi gweithio gyda 'nhad a'm hewythrod a'm dysgodd sut i 'ricio' pren. Roedd llawer o'r glowyr yn torri'r pren eu hunain oherwydd gallai gymryd cyhyd i ddsygu'r bechgyn ifanc i'w wneud yn iawn.

Ni ddaeth baddondai pen pwll i Goed-elái tan oddeutu 1956, a chyn hynny, roeddwn i'n gorfod cerdded adref yn fy nillad brwnt. Byddai'r fest yn diferu o chwys erbyn i mi orffen gweithio, felly roeddwn i'n ei thynnu i ffordd a'i gadael yn fy nhun bwyd cyn cyrraedd y prif lwybr lle'r oedd yr aer fel rhew. Byddai'r fest yn cael ei golchi bob dydd, tra câr dillad eraill eu hongian o flaen y tân ar ddiwedd diwrnod gwaith a'u golchi bob dydd Gwener yn unig. A sôn am waith golchi! Roedd angen berwi bwcedi o ddŵr ar y tân ar gyfer ymolchi, a llenwi boeler o ddŵr i wneud y golch. Roedd ambell ewythr yn gwrthod sgwrio'i gefn tan ddiwedd yr wythnos, rhag i hynny eu gwanhau yn eu tyb nhw. Ni fyddai rhai o'r dynion yn cael bath tan y bore, ar ôl cwmpo i gysgu'n sownd ar ôl swper.

Un diwrnod, ym 1950, roeddwn i'n dychwelyd o'r gwaith tua 3 o'r gloch gydag Oswald Watkins (tua 57 oed) a William Griffiths (tua 34 oed) pan welon ni foi yn pwysu yn erbyn giatiu'r groesfan rheilffordd. Dywedodd ei fod yn gweithio i gylchgrawn *Life* a'i fod yma ym Mhrydain i bortreadu'r etholiad cyffredinol. Gofynnodd am ganiatâd i dynnu lluniau ohonom ni. Tynnodd rhyw bedwar llun ar ôl ein trefnu i sefyll gyda'n gilydd, a phentref Coed-elái yn y cefndir. Dwi'n credu fod ganddo syniad yn ei ben yn barod,



Vernon Harding © W. Eugene Smith/Magnum Photos

I was born on the 24th of May 1928 in 16 Gladys Street, Coedely, about a quarter of a mile from Coedely Colliery. Coedely was a typical Welsh mining village, before the colliery was sunk there were only a few farms in the area. When you left school you either went on the railways or into the colliery. If your father worked at the pit you usually ended up there as well. So, when I left school in 1942 at fourteen years old, I started in Coedely Colliery. I was brought up amongst the coal industry. My father was a miner and my school friends and I used to wander around the colliery picking nuts and go into the winding houses and other buildings. Mining was a very familiar thing to us, it was a mining community and you knew everybody.

I started work as a collier's boy with my father in No.3 seam which was about two foot three in height. We were working on the pillar and stall system, driving headings (about five feet wide to leave passing room at the side of the drams) and turning stalls every sixteen yards along the heading. The stalls were then worked about eight yards into the seam. The headings were about seven feet in height, the extra room being cut from the stone beneath the seam. The stone was then used to pack the gob. When we were packing the gob with stone my father would be throwing the 'muck' to me with his shovel, if he threw a large lump he would shout "Fingers!" as a warning but if it caught your hand you'd often end up with a 'black nail' which you had to puncture with a needle to relieve the pain.

We were only allowed to use shovels when shifting stone and muck, we weren't allowed to use them for moving coal as only lump coal was needed and shovelling them broke the large lumps up. We had two shovels, two coal picks for holing under the coal seam (to 'work the coal') so that the seam would loosen and drop, a hatchet with a nine inch wide blade, a ripping bar for levering out stone, a sledge and a couple of spanners. The collier did everything, he didn't just pick at the coal, he was a mechanic, he drilled the shot holes – in those days you didn't have an air leg to support the drill, you had to hold the machine on your shoulder. You had so much equipment that you couldn't lock it all on your tool bar so you had to hide some of the stuff!

We used to have to use 'curling boxes' to fill the coal into the drams. You couldn't carry the loaded box because it was so heavy (about one hundredweight) so you had to drag or slide it up to eight yards to reach the dram. We were paid by the tonnage of coal we produced so we used to 'race' the coal about two feet six above the rim of the dram (which was between four and five feet in height itself). To race a dram you had to build a box of large lumps and reach over these to fill the middle with smaller ones. When they were being taken out, the raced drams looked just like little ships going down the roadway. I got my own working place at 19 after my '5 years apprenticeship'. I was lucky as I had worked with my father and uncles who had taught me to 'notch' timber. Training a boy to cut the timber properly was time consuming so most colliers did it themselves rather than teach their boys to do it.

The pithead baths came to Coedely around 1956, up till then we had to walk home in dirty clothes. My vest would be wringing wet with sweat when I finished work so I would take it off and stick it in my tommy box before I reached the main roadway where the air was freezing. My vest was washed every day but the rest of my clothes were hung in front of the fire when I got home and only washed on a Friday. Washing was a big business; buckets of water had to be boiled on the fire for bathing and a boiler of water for the clothes. Some of my uncles wouldn't wash their backs until the end of the week because they reckoned that it would weaken them. Some men would have their dinner first then fall asleep and wouldn't bath until morning.

One day, in 1950, I was coming from work about 3 o'clock with Oswald Watkins (about 57 years old) and William Griffiths (about 34 years old) and there was a chap leaning on the railway crossing gates. He said that he was working for *Life* magazine and was in Britain



oherwydd fe ddeallais wedyn ei fod eisoes wedi tynnu llun o dri glöwr yn Nhonypandy, ond mai'n llun ni ddewisodd e maes o law. Roedd yn ffotograffydd profiadol ac yn gwybod yn union pa fath o ddelwedd yr oedd am ei chreu; fe wnaeth 'droi'r' llun hyd yn oed er mwyn cyflawni ei weledigaeth. Gallai fod wedi defnyddio'r lluniau a dynnodd yng Nghwm Rhondda, ond dwi'n credu ei bod yn well ganddo'r mannau agored ehangach yng Nghoed-elái, gyda'r lofa gyferbyn â strydoedd y pentref. Roedd hynny'n siwtio'i ddbenion yn well.

Dim ond rhyw fachan tynnu lluniau oedd e ar y pryd. Doeddwn i'n gwybod dim am Eugene Smith er ei fod yn fyd-enwog. Ro'n i wedi clywed am gylchgrawn *Life*, fodd bynnag, fel darlennydd mawr. Wnes i erioed sylweddoli 'mod i'n rhan o ffotograff mor enwog tan iddo ymddangos yn y *Western Mail* ym 1986. Ers hynny, dwi wedi darllen tipyn o'i hanes mewn llyfrau ac ar y we, gan gynnwys ei anafiadau rhyfel, ei waith yn Japan a'i luniau o felinau dur Pennsylvania.

Gorffennais weithio yn y lofa ym 1959 ar ôl llafurio'n gyson ar y ffas lo. Roeddwn i'n gweithio dwy sifft, ac roedd y sifft b'nawn yn fy nicalonni i braidd. Roedd fy mab newydd ei eni, a phenderfynais adael y pwll. Bues i'n gweithio i gwmni tarmacio, ar ffyrdd ac ystadau tai newydd – yn labrwr i ddechrau, yna'n gyrru peiriannau ac yn fforman maes o law. Aeth y cwmni i'r wal, ac ymunais â chwmni Burrige Construction fel fforman cyffredinol. Adfer hen lofeydd oeddem ni, yn tynnu hen adeiladau a thomenni. Aeth pethau i'r gwellt yn fan'ny hefyd, ac fe es i'n Glerc Gweithfeydd gyda Rhaglen Adfer Tir Cyngor Morgannwg. Ar ôl trychineb Aber-fan, roedd y Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol yn gwybod bod rhaid iddyn nhw fynd i'r afael â'r holl domennydd glo ar y mynyddoedd. Buon ni'n clirio safleoedd ar hyd a lled y De, gan gynnwys capio wyth siafft yng Nghwm Garw yn unig – roedd hynny'n bedair blynedd o waith. Roeddem ni'n ailwampio'r Cymoedd! Er i mi ymddeol yn 65 oed, fe weithiais ar fy liwt fy hun am ryw ddwy flynedd arall. Yn wir, roeddwn i'n rhan o waith adfer Glofa Coedely. Coed-elái oedd dechrau a diwedd fy ngyrfa, felly.

Mae *'Three Generations of Welsh Miners'* yn adrodd stori, stori am ddiwydiant glo a greodd ffordd o fyw a drosglwyddwyd o'r tad i'r mab (er nad oedd y tri yn y llun yn perthyn i'n gilydd o gwbl!). Daeth Eugene Smith i wledydd Prydain i dynnu lluniau o'r ymgyrchoedd etholiadol, ac i weld o ble y daeth pleidleisiau'r Blaid Lafur. Dwi'n credu ei fod wedi'n dangos ni ar ein gorau, wedi dangos ein dycnwch a'n hawydd i ennill. Llafurwr i'r carn oeddwn i bryd hynny hefyd, oherwydd roedd y syniad o 'ni a nhw' yn gryf iawn iawn, a doeddech chi byth bythoedd yn pleidleisio i'r Tori!

Vernon Llewelyn Harding

covering the general election and did we mind if he took some photographs. He took about four photos after arranging us to suit the shot. He got us all together and wanted Coedely village in the background. I think that he had thought of the composition of the photo previously as I found out later that he had already taken photographs of three miners in Tonypandy but we were the ones he chose. He was an experienced photographer and knew exactly what image he wanted; he even 'flipped' the photo to satisfy his vision. He could have used the photos he took in the Rhondda but I think that he liked the wider open spaces in Coedely which had the colliery opposite the village streets, it suited his purpose.

It was just someone taking a photo, I didn't know of Eugene Smith even though he was world famous, although I had heard of Life magazine as I have always been a big reader. I didn't even find out that I was part of a famous photograph until it appeared in the *Western Mail* in 1986. Since then I've read quite a lot about him, both in books and on the internet, being wounded in the war, his work in Japan and his images of the Pennsylvania steel mills.

I finished in the colliery in 1959 after always worked on the coal face. I was working two shifts and the afternoon shifts were getting me down, my son had just been born and I decided to get out. I worked for a local tar marking firm on road construction and housing estates. I started off labouring, later drove machines and became a foreman. They went through and I went with Burrige Construction as a general foreman. We reclaimed disused collieries, taking down old buildings and tips. Then they went into liquidation and I went as Clerk of Works with the Glamorgan Council Land Reclamation Programme. After Aberfan the National Coal Board knew they had to do something about all those coal tips up on the mountains. We sorted out sites all across south Wales, in the Garw Valley alone we capped eight shafts – it took us four years. We were re-shaping the valleys! I retired at 65 years old but I went back on a self employed basis for about two years afterwards. In fact I worked on the reclamation of Coedely Colliery. I started my working life in Coedely and I finished in Coedely.

'Three Generations of Welsh Miners' tells a story, a story of how mining had created a way of life which had been handed down from father to son (even though none of us in the photo was actually related!). Eugene Smith came to Britain to photograph the election campaign and wanted to see where the Labour party got its voters from. I think that he showed us at our best, he showed our determination to win. Even then I was Labour through and through because it had been drummed into me that it was 'us and them' and you never, ever, voted Tory!

Vernon Llewelyn Harding

## Y dyn weindio

Cefais fy ngeni ar 8 Tachwedd 1916. Bu farw mam ym 1925 gan adael dad i fagu tri ohonom. Roedd rhaid iddo drefnu bod rhywun yn gwneud cinio i ni ar ôl ysgol. Doeddwn i ddim yno hanner yr amser, ta beth, oherwydd ro'n i'n cadw reiet gyda'r bechgyn eraill ar y stryd. Bydden ni'n clymu darn o linyr ar gnochr drws, rhedeg tu ôl i'r wal agosaf cyn tynnu'r llinyn a tharo'r drws. Pan fyddai'r dyn yn agor y drws, roedden ni'n gollwng y llinyn yn sydyn a chuddio tu ôl i'r wal. Felly, byddai'n cau'r drws a ninnau'n taro'r cnociwr eto, cyn rhedeg fel cath i gythrel ar ôl iddo'n gweld ni.

Dechreuais weithio fel gwas colier ym mhwl Rhif 8 Tylorstown pan oeddwn i'n 14 oed. Dyna'r unig waith oedd ar gael ar y pryd; naill ai mynd yn fachgen delifro am ryw 5 swllt yr wythnos neu lawr i'r lofa am dri swllt ar ddeg. Y pwll aeth â hi, felly. Roedd yn wych, achos doeddwn i erioed wedi cael llawer o arian cyn hynny, heblaw am chwe cheiniog yr wythnos gan y fenyw drws nesaf am nôl bara iddi o'r pobydd, a swllt a chwech am werthu wyau ar ran y ffermwr ar benwythnosau. Hyd yn oed ar ôl i mi ddechrau ennill cyflog, roedd fy modryb yn cymryd pymtheg swllt oddi arnaf fel costau llety. Dim ond 17 swllt oedd fy nghyflog ar y pryd, a byddwn i'n gwario'r ddau swllt dros ben ar sigarêts i mi fy hun. Pan oedd fy ffrindiau'n mynd mas i fwynhau, felly, roeddwn i'n gorfod aros gartre' heb yr un ddimai goch.

Roedden ni'n cloddio gwythien 2 droedfedd 9 modfedd, a olygai ein bod ar ein pengliniau bron drwy'r dydd. Gan fod y 'bos' (y glöwr hŷn) yn gweithio ar ei ochr, byddai'n gorfod torri i waelod y glo nes ei fod yn torri'n rhydd mwy'r sydyn. Roedd pa mor gyflym y byddai'r glon gollwng yn dibynnu ar natur y wythien, ond gallech chi fod yno am hanner awr neu fwy gyda'ch mandrel.

Ar ôl i'r glo ollwng o'r graig, byddai'n disgyn gyda 'bwff', yn llithro i lawr, a byddwn i'n gorfod codi'r glo i'r bocs cwrlu a'i lusgo i fyny er mwyn llenwi'r dram. Un byr oeddwn i bryd hynny, ac felly roedd rhaid i mi gael bocs i sefyll arno wrth ochr y dram er mwyn i mi allu codi'r glo. Roeddwn i wedi blinon shwps erbyn i mi gyrraedd adref.

Ar ôl ei gludo i wyneb y pwll, byddai'r holl lo'n cael ei ddioli yn y sgriniau glo. Doedden nhw ddim yn defnyddio'r glo bach yn y dyddiau hynny, felly byddai'n mynd lan i'r domen. Roedd slag o bedair glofa, Rhif 6 a 7, a Rhif 8 a 9, yn cael ei roi ar y domen honno. Mae'r domen yno o hyd, ac mae'r bechgyn lleol yn ei defnyddio heddiw i fynd lan a lawr gyda'u beiciau modur. Pan oedden ni'n fechgyn ysgol, bydden ni'n disgwyl i'r dramiau llawn fynd i fyny'r domen cyn neidio ar y cyplynnau a chael lifft i'r brig rhwng y dramiau. Un diwrnod, fe lithrodd bachgen a cholli'i goes.

## The winding man

I was born on the 8th of November 1916. My mother died in 1925 and my father had three of us and he had a job looking after us. He had to get someone to make lunch for us after school. I wasn't there half the time anyway because I was usually out with the boys in the street into devilment. We used to tie a string around the knocker on a door and go and hide behind the wall and pull the string and the knocker would go. When the man came to the door you'd let the string go and we'd be hiding behind the wall. So he'd shut the door and we'd do it again and when he came out again and caught us, we'd run like hell.

At the age of fourteen I began work as a collier's boy in Tylorstown Number 8 Pit. That was really the only work available then; it was either taking a job as a delivery boy for about five shillings a week or going down the colliery for thirteen shillings, so I went into the pit. That was great as I'd not had a lot of money before then, except the woman next door would give me 6d a week to fetch the bread from the bakers for her and I sold eggs for the farmer on the weekend for another 1s 6d. Even so, after I started earning, I was lodging with my aunt and she was taking 15s off me and I was only having 17s at the time. So I had 2s for myself for cigarettes and when all my mates were going out here and there I couldn't go because I didn't have the money.

We worked the 2ft 9in seam and of course you were on your knees practically all day. The 'boss' (the adult collier) worked on his side, and he would have to cut into the bottom of the coal and all of sudden it would 'bust' and become loose. It depended on the nature of the coal seam how quickly the coal would release but you could be there half an hour or more with that mandrel.

After the coal is released it would all come out with a 'bwff', slide out, and then I'd have to get that coal into the curling box and I'd be dragging it back up to fill the dram. And I was short then so we had to have a box at the side of the dram for me to stand on so I could lift it and put the coal into the dram and I was really tired by the time I went home.

All the coal went up to the surface and then it'd go to be sorted out in the coal screens. The small coal wasn't used in those days so that would go up to the tip. Now that tip was taking the slag from four collieries, the No. 6 and 7, and the No. 8 and 9. You can still see the tip the local boys use it now for motor bikes going up and down. When we were schoolboys we would wait for the full drams going up the tip and you would jump on the shackle and get a lift up between the drams. A boy slipped one day and lost his leg.





**Thomas John Williams yn nhŷ weindio Glofa'r Maerdy, gyda llysgennad UDA ym Mhrydain ar y chwith, a rheolwr y lofa gyda'r helmed yn y tu blaen.**  
**Thomas John Williams in Maerdy Colliery winding house, on the left is the US ambassador to the UK, helmet in foreground is the colliery manager.**

Dim ond rhyw ddwy dram o lo fyddwn i'n eu llenwi yn ystod bob sifft gan ei bod yn wythien galed iawn i'w cheibo gyda mandrel. Roedd caib wrth gefn ar gyfer y fandrel, ac roedd gennym tua thri neu bedwar llafn. Pan fyddai'r llafnau'n colli'u min, byddem yn mynd â nhw at y gof i'w hogi ar ben y pwell.

Pan oedd y dram yn llawn, byddai'r halier yn cyrraedd, yn cysylltu'r dram â'i geffyl, ac yn llusgo'r dram yn ôl i'r prif lwybr lle byddai'r prif gludwr yn mynd â deg dram yn ôl i waelod y pwell. Ar ddiwedd bob sifft, byddem yn gafael yng nghynffon y ceffyl er mwyn cael lifft i fyny'r rhiw gan fod y llwybr yn serth. Roeddem wedi'n

dallu gan lwch. Dim ond yng ngwaelod y pwell oedd yna unrhyw olau, ac ar ôl gadael fan'ny, roedd hi mor dywyll â'r fagddu heblaw am olau'ch lamp.

Rhoddais y gorau i fod yn was colier o dipyn i beth, a dod yn yrrwr injans halio o dan y ddaear. Dechreuais gydag injan gweddol fach 'pot coffi' mewn datblygiad newydd, yn tynnu dwy neu dair dram i fyny llwybr serth. Ymhell ar ôl i'r ardal honno ddatblygu, cafodd injan fwy ei rhoi yno er mwyn tynnu deg dram ar y tro. Byddech yn eu llusgo i 'gyffordd' cyn datod y rhaff o'r dramiau llawn a'i chysylltu â'r dramiau gwag i'w dychwelyd i waelod y pwell. Felly, datblygais i fod yn yrrwr injan halio yn y pen draw. Fel un o ddynion yr is-reolwr, byddwn yn llenwi lle unrhyw yrrwr absennol.

Pan dorrodd y rhyfel, fe ysgrifennon nhw yn y llyfrau mai mecanig danddaear (gwaith neilltuedig) oeddwn i er mwyn osgoi fy ngholli i'r fyddin. Roeddwn i'n ddefnyddiol iddyn nhw oherwydd 'mod i'n gallu troi'n llaw at unrhyw beth oedd yn ymwneud â chludiant tanddaearol. Felly, roedd hynny'n help i'nghadw allan o'r fyddin er bod gen i bapurau yn galw arnaf i ymuno. Roeddwn i'n foi ymarferol iawn ac yn giamstar ar wneud tasgau mecanyddol. Os oedd injan wedi torri a hwythau'n methu cael ffitiwr i lawr i'r pwell mewn pryd, bydden nhw'n anfon y darn newydd i'r gwaelod er mwyn i mi ei osod, fel y gallai'r gwaith barhau.

Bues i'n beiriannydd yr injan weindio ym Mhwl Rhif 5 am sbel cyn i beiriannydd y lofa ofyn 'Hoffet ti fynd i Lofa'r Maerdy? Maen nhw'n bwriadu ei hailagor hi'. Mis Chwefror 1949 oedd hi, a dywedodd 'Os na gymeri di'r swydd nawr, fydd dim cyfle arall achos bydd rhywun arall wedi'i chael hi'. Felly, dyma fi a'm cydweithiwr ar injan Rhif 1 yn mynd lan i'r Maerdy lle'r oedden nhw'n ailadeiladu'r lofa a oedd wedi bod ar gau ers 1940. Roedd fy 'byti' 17 mlynedd yn hŷn ac yn ddoethach na fi, ac meddai 'Shgw' Tom, 'smo ni'n mynd yn ar lai o gyflog'. Felly, pan ofynnodd Sam Thomas,

asiant y lofa 'Odych chi wedi 'styried y peth?' atebais, 'Dy'n ni ddim yn barod i fynd i Lofa'r Maerdy am lai o arian na fan hyn'. Dywedodd 'O, alla i ddim gwneud hynny', felly atebais i 'O wel, dyna chi te, 'smo ni'n mynd'. Tua phythefnos wedyn, daeth yn ôl atom. 'Ydych chi wedi ystyried y cynnig eto? Iawn te, caiff y ddau ohonoch chi fynd i Lofa'r Maerdy ond bydd rhaid i chi fod yn swyddogion diogelwch pan nad oes gwaith ar yr injans weindio.'

Byddai un neu ddau go gyfrwys yn dod lan mewn fan neu gar, a dwyn glo neu dywod neu gerrig mân o'r datblygiadau yn y Maerdy. Byddan nhw'n aml yn sleifio i mewn yn syth ar ôl y loriau dosbarthu, felly roedd rhaid i ni gadw llygad barcud fel swyddogion diogelwch.

Cyn newid y trefniadau weindio yng nglofa'r Maerdy, roedd rhaffau llywio ym mhob siafft, pedwar ym mhob caets, a doedd hi ddim yn hawdd cadw gafael arny'n nhw. Roedd tair landin, tua 80 troedfedd ar wahân i'w gilydd, yn siafftau Maerdy. Bydden nhw'n anfon deunyddiau fel pyst neu gylchau i lawr i un landin, a byddai'r llwythwr yn eu tynnu o'r gaets i'r landin. Ar un adeg, doedd dim golwg o'r llwythwr, a bu cryn holi amdano, gan nad oedd modd symud y caets hebdo. Aethon nhw i chwilio amdano, a'i weld yn gorwedd yn farw ar ôl disgyn i waelod y pwell. Daethpwyd i'r casgliad fod y caets wedi symud rhyw droedfedd oherwydd bod y rhaffau llywio yn llac, a bod y creadur anffodus wedi llithro yn ei welingtons neu rywbeth. Dyna'r unig ateb posibl oedd ganddynt.

Pan foderneiddiwyd y siafftau felly, cafodd sglefrau eu rhoi yn lle rhaffau llywio wrth osod caetsys newydd fel na fyddent yn siglo. Rhai deulawr oedd y rhain, yn dal 40 o ddynion ar y tro. Disodlwyd yr hen dramiau gan 'dybiau' mwy modern a oedd yn dal yn union yr un faint o lo. Gellid rhoi dau dwb yn y caets, neu gar mawr oedd yn dal rhyw dair tunnell o lo. Gallech weindio tua 60 o weithiau yr awr. Byddai'r dyn weindio'n symud y caets yn ôl y signalau a gâi; byddai'r llwythwr ar y gwaelod yn canu'r gloch unwaith i symud y caets, a'r arolygydd pen pwell hefyd yn canu'r gloch unwaith hefyd, a bant â chi. Aeth rhywbeth o'i le un diwrnod pan oeddwn i'n gyfrifol am weindio'r olwyn. Efallai bod rhywun yn sgwrsio â'r arolygwr pen pwell yn ei gaban neu doedd ei feddwl ddim ar ei waith, wn i ddim, ond fe ges i'r signal anghywir beth bynnag - a dyma fi'n tynnu'r caets yn ôl i fyny ar gyflymder weindio glo, sy'n gyflymach o lawer na chaets sy'n cario dynion. Dyma'r gaets yn dod i'r golwg gyda dyn, nid dramiau glo, ynddo! Fe gafodd dipyn o ysgytwad, ond ar ôl dishgled fach, cafodd ei anfon yn ôl i'r gwaelodion eto.

Bues i'n ddyn weindio yn y Maerdy o fis Chwefror 1949 tan 1979. Ymddeolais ddwy flynedd a hanner yn gynnar mewn gwirionedd. Roedd croeso i chi orffen yn drigain oed os oeddech chi'n dymuno neu ddal ati nes cyrraedd 65 oed. Roeddwn i'n 62½ oed pan benderfynais mai digon oedd digon.

Thomas John Williams

Well I'd only fill about two drams of coal during the shift because it was a very hard seam to work and it was all cut with a mandrel. The mandrel had a replaceable pick and we had three or four blades and when they were going blunt we'd take them up to the blacksmith on the surface and he would sharpen them back up.

When the dram was full the haulier would come in, shackle his horse to the dram, and take the dram back to the main roadway where the main haulage would take ten drams back to pit bottom. At the end of the shift we used to catch hold of the horse's tail for a lift up the hill, because the road was on a gradient. You couldn't see for all dust. Nothing was lit up only the pit bottom and once you left there then you're in darkness apart from your lamp.

I gradually stopped being a collier's boy and got jobs driving the haulage engines underground. I started off on a 'coffee pot' which was working in a new development, this was quite a small engine that would pull two or three drams up a gradient. Well after that district was developed a bigger engine was put there that would take ten drams at a time. You ran them into a 'parting' where you would disconnect the rope from the full drams and connect it to the empty ones to pull them back in. So I built myself up into being a haulage engine driver. I was classed as one of the under-manager's men and used to replace whichever driver hadn't turned up.

When the war broke out they put me on the books as an underground mechanic (a reserved occupation) so that I wouldn't be drafted into the forces. I was useful for them because I could do anything that was involved with underground transport. So that kept me out the army even though I had my calling up papers because they kept me back by putting me on as the underground mechanic. I was quite practical, anything mechanical I was really good at. If an engine had broken down and they couldn't get a fitter down the pit in time they used to send the part down the pit and I would change it for them so that they could keep on going.

I became the colliery winding engine man in Number 5 Pit and I was there for a while before the engineer of the colliery asked me "Would you like to go to Maerdy Colliery? They are thinking of opening it out". That was in February 1949 and he told me "If you don't take the job now you won't have another chance as the job will be filled". So my mate on the Number 1 engine and me got to go up to Maerdy where they were reconstructing the colliery which had been closed since 1940. My buttoy was seventeen years older than me and a bit smarter, and he said "Look Tom, we're not going to go up there for less money than we are having here". So when Sam Thomas the colliery agent said "Have you considered it?" I said "We are not prepared to go to Maerdy Colliery for less money than we are having by here". He said "Oh, I couldn't do that", so I said "Oh well, there you go then, we aren't going". About a fortnight

passed then, he came again to us. "Have you considered the offer again? Right the both of you can go up to Maerdy Colliery but you will have to act as security officers when there's no work on the winding engines."

There were a few clever ones that would come up in a van or car and thief either the coal or sand or chippings from the developments at Maerdy. Very often they would come straight in after the lorries had delivered to pinch the stuff. So as part time security officers we had to watch out for that.

Before they changed the winding arrangements at Maerdy there were rope guides in the shaft, four to each cage and there was a lot of play with them. There were three landings in the Maerdy shafts about eighty feet apart. They would send material such as rings or posts down the pit to any one of these landings and the onsetter would have to take them out from the cage onto the landing. On one occasion they lost the onsetter, they didn't know where he had gone and there was an enquiry because they couldn't move the cage without him. When they came to find him, he was dead on pit bottom having fallen down the pit. They came to the conclusion that what had happened that when he was taking the material out of the cage it had moved because of the play in the guide ropes. They reckoned the cage must have moved away about a foot and he had slipped because he had Wellington boots on or something. But that was the only conclusion that they could come to.

So when they modernised the shafts they put skids instead of guide ropes when they installed the new cages so that they wouldn't swing back and fore. The new cages were double deck and held about 40 men at a time. The old drams were replaced by 'tubs' which were the same capacity but more modern in shape. Two of them could fit into the cage or a big mine car which held about three tons of coal. You could do about sixty winds in an hour. The winding man moved the cage according to which signals he was given; the onsetter on pit bottom would ring one to move the cage and the banksman on top of the pit he'd also ring you one and away you'd go. Well, something went wrong one particular day when I was on the winder. I don't know whether someone was chatting with the banksman in his cabin or he didn't have his mind on his work, but I got the wrong signal and brought up the cage at coal winding speed which was a lot faster than when men were being carried. So up comes the cage with a man in it instead of drams of coal! He was a bit shook up but we gave him a cup of tea and sent him back down again.

I was a winding man in Maerdy from February 1949 until 1979. I actually finished two and half years before my time. You could finish then at sixty if you wished to or you could carry on until you were sixty five. Well I was sixty two and a half when I decided that I would leave it there.

Thomas John Williams



# Llygod mawr fel cathod!

**Y**munais â'r Gwarchodlu Cartref ym mis Mai 1940 ar ôl clywed araith enwog Winston Churchill ynglŷn â'n cefnau yn erbyn y wal. Wyddoch chi, honno a oedd yn sôn rhywbeth am 'We'll fight them on the streets' ac ati. Fe es i swyddfâr heddlu ac ymuno'n syth bin. Ar ôl hynny, roeddwn i'n gweithio o danddaear yn ystod y dydd ac yn rhedeg ar hyd a lled y mynyddoedd gyda'r nos cyn cael ychydig oriau o gwsg. Yn y Gwarchodlu Cartref y gwelais i'r enghraifft orau o frawdoliaeth. Pan es i'r ysbyty ar ôl damwain danddaear, daeth y platŵn cyfan i'm gweld, pob un yn sefyll o amgylch fy ngwely. Cefais becyn o bum sigarét gan un ohonyn nhw. Allech chi ddim cael sigarêts bryd hynny, a rhai 'Pasha's' oedden nhw. Ar ôl rhoi'r sigarêts i mi, gofynnodd, 'Alla i ga'l rhywfaint i fynd yn ôl 'da fi? Wy ddim di cael mwgyn drw'r dydd'. Roedd newydd roi pum sigarét i mi, a dyma fi'n gorfod rhoi eu hanner nhw'n ôl.

Rhai o gyn-filwyr rhyfel 1914 oedd aelodau cynta'r Gwarchodlu Cartref, a gan eu bod nhw'n hen lawiau ar drin arfau, fe gawson nhw ddrylliau pelets. Ni chafodd y gweddill ohonom ynnau tan i'r Americanwyr anfon cesys o reiffls atom, a dyna'r rhai ddefnyddion ni gydol y rhyfel. Roedden nhw'n seimllyd ofnadwy, ac roedd rhaid i ni eu glanhau. Dwi'n credu bod rhyw 140 ohonom yn y platŵn, ac roedden ni'n gwneud tri pharêd yr wythnos. Bydden ni'n ymarfer tanio ein reifflau ar draws argae Treherbert. Arhosais gyda'r Gwarchodlu Cartref tan iddo gael ei ddirwyn i ben.

Pan ddes i allan o'r ysbyty, es i weld Mr Oliver, rheolwr y lofa, i ofyn am swydd. Roedd cadeirydd cyfrinfâr lofa yn digwydd bod yno a gofynnodd, 'Odych chi am roi cyfle i'r bachan hwn? Gath e ddamwain, mae ei fam yn wraig weddw a ma' da fe ddou frawd anabl - beth am roi cyfle iddo fe?' Ta beth, cefais swydd gyda dyn o'r enw Tommy Taylor 'tyllwr' (gweithredwr driliau) a oedd wedi gweithio ym Mecsico; roedd e dros 60 oed, yn llai na fi hyd yn oed ac yn llawn 'dwt' (silicosis).

Roeddwn i'n gorfod sefyll y tu ôl i Tommy wrth iddo ddrilio twll, ac yna byddwn i'n gweithio'r handlen yng nghefn y peiriant tan i'r rhoden gyrraedd y pen. Yna, byddwn i'n rhoi rhoden ddrilio ac un arall nes bod gennym ddril chwe throedfedd. Rhoddodd Tommy'r gorau iddi yn y diwedd am na allai weithio mwyach, roedd yn rhy hen a'i frest yn rhy ddrwg oherwydd y llwch. Felly, daeth y rheolwr ata' i a gofyn 'Wnei di ddal ati ar dy ben dy hun?'. Atebais i 'Iawn' cyn meddwl, 'Y twpsyn i ti!'. A dyna'n swydd i, felly. Prin y gallwn i gerdded oherwydd fy nghoes stiff, ac roedd rhaid i mi gario'r holl gyfarpar o dalcen i dalcen, yn tyllu.

# Rats like cats!



Sylvanus Thompson, ei fab Mike (gyda'r bat criced a wnaed adeg y streic) a 'Sally'

Un diwrnod, daeth y rheolwr ata i a gofyn, 'Liciet ti gael jobyn yn gyrru'r injan halio?'. 'Iawn te, meddwn i, a dyma'r bachan hyn yn dangos i mi sut i yrru'r injan a'n gadael i wrthi. Fe wnes i hynny am bedair blynedd. Priodais wedyn, a gofynnodd fy nghymydog 'Mr Thomas, pam na ddewch chi 'da ni i Lundain i glirio llanast y bomio, mae'n arian hawdd am y nesaf peth i ddim. Ond mae'n rhaid i chi gwplu yn y lofa achos mae'n rhaid i chi fod yn ddi-waith er mwyn gwneud cais'. Felly, ymddiswyddais a mynd ar y dôl. Dyna pryd y ganwyd fy mab. Bues i'n ddi-waith am chwe wythnos, ac yna daeth y dyn yma'n ôl o Lundain a mynd â 41 ohonom yno.

Erbyn hyn, roedd hi'n 1946. Prin dri mis fues i yn Llundain pan gefais alwad gan y Llu Awyr. Es i'n ôl adref a chael gair gyda rheolwr y lofa a ddywedodd na fyddai rhaid i mi fynd, fel glöwr, felly dechreuais weithio fel glöwr eto. Gofynnodd rhywun i mi, 'Pan na ei di lan i'r lefelau newydd? Mae'n neisiach fan'ny, yn sych braf'. Felly es i weld y rheolwr a roddodd fraw i mi. Mewn gwirionedd, roedd y bachan a oedd wedi canmol y lefelydd gymaint yn gweithio yn y pwll islaw Lefel Moscow lle'r es i i weithio. Lle'r oeddwn i, roedd y dŵr i fyny at eich fferau. Dim ond rhyw dri mis barodd hynny, a gofynnais a gawn i fynd i'r pwll

When I came out of hospital I went up to see Mr Oliver the colliery manager to ask him for a job. The chairman of the union lodge was there and said "Are you going to give this boy a start? He has had an accident, his mother is a widow and he has two invalid brothers - give him a start?" Anyway I got a job with a chap called Tommy Taylor a 'borer' (drill operator) who had worked in Mexico; he was over 60, even smaller than me and full of 'dust' (silicosis).

I had to stand behind Tommy while he was boring the hole and I'd be shoving the handle at the back of the machine until it was driven in and then I'd put a longer drill rod in until we ended up with the full six foot drill rod. Tommy eventually finished because he couldn't do the work any more, he was too old and his chest was so bad because he was full of dust. So the owner came on to me and said "Will you carry on doing this job on your own?" I said "Righto", but I thought, "You fool, man!" So that was my job, I had a stiff leg and could hardly walk and I had to carry all the equipment around the stalls, boring holes.

One day the manager came on to me and said "Would you like to have a job driving the haulage engine?" "Aye" I said, so the chap that was on there showed me how to drive the engine and left me to it and I did it for four years. I got married about then and the chap that was living next door came in and said "Look Mr. Thomas why don't you come up with us to London sorting out the bomb damage, its money for old rope up there. But you got to finish in the colliery as you have to be on the dole to apply for the job". So I put my notice in and signed on the dole. That's when my son was born. And I was on the dole then for about six weeks and then the chap came down from London and took forty-one of us back

It was then 1946 and I had only been up there three months when I got called up for the Air Force. I went back home and had a word with the colliery manager who told me that, as a miner, I wouldn't have to be conscripted so I started back as a miner again. A chap said to me "Why don't you go up on the new levels? It's lovely up there, its nice and dry." So I went up to the manager and he gave me a start. The chap who had told me how nice the levels were was actually working in the pit below the Moscow Level where I went to work. Where I was there was water up to your ankles so I only stuck that for about three months and I asked if I could go to the new pit in the 'Hook and Eye' (Glen Rhondda Colliery), and I got a job as a labouring assistant to the repairer. I was there for about three months and the overman came around and said "Would you take on the job as repairer?" I said "I don't

Sylvanus Thompson, with son, Mike (with the cricket bat made during the strike) and Sally

I joined the home guard in May 1940 after Winston Churchill made his 'backs to the wall' speech. You know, the one that said "We'll fight them on the streets" or something like that. I went to the police station and joined straight away. After that I was working underground during the day and running about the mountains in the night, we were only having a few hours sleep. The finest comradeship I have ever seen was in the Home Guard. When I went into hospital after an accident underground, the whole platoon came in to see me all stood by the bed. One gave me a packet of five fags. You couldn't get fags then and they were 'Pasha's'. After giving me the fags, he said "Can I have some to go back with? I ain't had a fag all day." He just brought me five fags and I had to give him half back.

The Home Guard started off with a lot of people who had been in the 1914 war and because they were experienced with handling guns they were given shot guns. The rest of us didn't have guns until the Americans sent us cases of rifles over and those are the ones that we used all through the war. They were covered in grease and we had to clean them up. I think there were about 140 of us in the platoon and we did three parades a week. We used to practice firing our rifles across Treherbert Dam. I stayed in the Home Guard until they were disbanded.



newydd yn yr 'Hook and Eye' (Glofa Glynrhondda), lle cefais swydd fel labrwr cynorthwyol i'r atgyweiriwr. Ar ôl tri mis, gofynnodd yr oferman, 'Hoffet ti fod yn atgyweiriwr?'. 'Sa i'n siŵr', atebais, oherwydd doeddwn i'n fawr o beth, ond dywedodd, 'Gallet ti 'neud e'n iawn', felly dechreuais yr wythnos ganlynol.

Pan es i yno ddydd Llun, roedd yr heddi i gyd wedi cwmpo ac roedd angen codi saith pâr o brennau ar unwaith, rhai mawr coch, y 'French Sticks'. Wrth i mi bendroni lle i ddechrau arni, daeth yr oferman i mewn a dywedais wrtho, 'Dwi heb ricio pren ers pan o'n i'n 15 oed' ac atebodd 'Ddangosa i i ti. Fe wnâi ricio un pen, gei di wneud y pen arall, a gawn ni gymharu wedyn. Fe oedd yr oferman gorau ges i erioed; roedd e fel tad i mi. Felly, dangosodd i mi sut i ricio'r pren a'm helpu i godi'r pâr cyntaf o byst cyn fy ngadael i. Roedd rhaid i mi osod chwe pâr o byst pren ar fy mhen fy hun.

Doedd neb arall yn gweithio o fewn milltir i mi, a fyddwn i ddim yn gweld yr un enaid byw ar wahân i'r haliars – a'r llygod mawr! Diwedd annwl! Roedden nhw'n tua throedfedd o hyd, yn anferth, fel cathod. Wrth eistedd lawr i fwyta, byddan nhw'n dringo ar eich brest yn gobeithio bachu briwsion, roedd shwt gymaint ohonyn nhw. Roedd 'da chi ormod o ofn gadael eich bocs bwyd ar lawr oherwydd bydden nhw yno ar unwaith. Dwi ddim yn cofio am ba hyd y bues i'n atgyweiriwr, ond newidiais fy swydd eto pan ddaeth cyfle i weithio ar y ffas lo.

Tua 1948 oedd hi pan ymunais â streic feddiannu. Roeddwn i'n cerdded gyda hen foi, colier a oedd yn gweithio hanner ffordd i lawr y ffas lo lle'r oeddwn i wrthi, ac fe gwrddon ni â rhai o'r bechgyn o ochr chwith y ffas lo, sef y 'cludwr aer'. Roedd ochr dde'r ffas lo yn iawn, ond roedd yr ochr chwith, lle gweithiai'r bechgyn hyn, yn wael iawn. Roedd y to mewn cyflwr gwael a doedden nhw ddim yn cael unrhyw 'lwfans' (arian ychwanegol) am weithio yno. Beth bynnag, wrth i ni gydgerdded gyda'r bechgyn hyn, dywedais, 'Doeddwn i ddim yn gwybod bod pethau mor ddrwg â hyn, os bydd unrhyw drwbl, fe wnawn ni'ch cefnogi chi'. Yna, fe aethom ni i'r ffas lo, cymryd ein tŵls oddi ar y bar a dechrau tynnu'r glo i lawr a'i daflu ar y cludfelt.

Cyn pen hanner awr, dyma rywun yn gweiddi, 'Pawb i adael, mae'r ochr chwith wedi cerdded mas 'to!' Roedd cadeirydd y gyfrinfa (undeb llafur) yn gweithio ar ein hochr ni o'r ffas, a dywedodd, 'Dewch 'mlan, mas â chi', felly trois at y boi a fu'n cerdded gyda mi a gofyn, 'Beth wnawn ni, 'naethon ni addo'u cefnogi nhw, bydd rhaid i ni fynd lan i'w gweld nhw nawr'. Felly, fe neidion ni ar y cludfelt a phan oeddem ni hanner ffordd i fyny ochr chwith o'r ffas, dyma rywun yn gweiddi, 'Ma' na ddou arall wedi ymuno â ni, dewch i mewn â chroeso', a'n llusgo ni oddi ar y belt. Roedden nhw'n bwriadu cynnal streic feddiannu. 'O'r mowredd!' meddyliais!

Yna, daeth yr is-reolwr a Frank Beasley yr oferman draw atom ni. Roedd Frank yn fachan iawn, ond roedd pawb yn casáu'r is-reolwr, brodor o Swydd Efrog. Fe wnaeth ei orau glas i'n cael ni i adael, ond dywedodd rhywun wrtho, 'Cymer ofal, 'smo ti moyn lando yn y cog!'. Cafodd fraw, a gadael. Yna, fe wnaethon nhw ddiffodd y goleuadau a throi'r ffan yn gyflymach i geisio chwythu llwch i'r aer. Dechreuodd aelodau o bwyllgor y gyfrinfa anfon bwyd i waelod y pwll. Dwi'n credu bod rhyw 14 ohonom ni yno i gyd, ac roedden nhw'n rhoi te a brechdanau i ni a rhywfaint o Spangles hefyd. Dwi heb edrych ar Spangles byth ers hynny; maen nhw'n dal i 'ngwneud i'n sâl. Yna, roedden ni'n cerdded yn ôl i'r ffas a oedd yn rhewllyd o oer erbyn hyn oherwydd eu bod nhw wedi cyflymu'r ffan, a'r gwynt yn chwipio drwy'r lle. Roedd gennym gemau ac ati, ac roedd rhywun wedi dod â phaced o gardiau achos eu bod nhw'n gwybod bod yna streic ar y gweill, felly chwarae cardiau ac ati fuon ni. Roedd gan un o'r bechgyn hen ddarn o gludfelt i'w roi ar lawr, ac aeth ati i naddu darn o bren (cynhalbost). Gwnaeth belen ac ychydig o sgittls, a chwason ni gêm fach yn y fan a'r lle. Llwyddais i wneud bat criced o hen ddarn o bren hefyd. Es i â'r bat allan gyda fi wedyn i'w roi i Miike fy mab – roedd bron mor fawr ag e!

Er bod gennym fwyd, doedden ni ddim yn cael cysgu o dan ddaear. Roedd y boi nesa ata i'n ailadrodd, 'Paid â mynd i gysgu, paid â mynd i gysgu!'. Gan fod y goleuadau wedi'u diffodd, fe adawon ni un o'n lampau ynghyn a diffodd y gweddill. Un noson, roeddem ni'n mynd i lawr y pwll i gael te chwech pan ddywedodd un o'r ofermyn, Reg Ruddock, 'Dwi'n falch fy mod i wedi dy weld ti. Dwi wedi dod i 'nôl ti, mae dy wraig wedi cael y babi yn y gadair olwyn, ac mae hi wedi llewygu tu fas i siop Carpenters, Blaen-cwm. Der' i weld dy wraig'. Trois at Jack, arweinydd y streicwyr, a gofyn, 'Ydy hi'n iawn i mi fynd lan?'; ac edrychodd e braidd yn amheus oherwydd roedd e'n gwybod eu bod nhw'n ceisio chwalu'r streic. Ond fe atebodd 'lawn sbo, dan yr amgylchiadau. Felly, fe ddychwelais i waelod y pwll gyda'r oferman a mynd i'r caets gyda'n gilydd. Unwaith gyrhaeddwn ni ben y pwll a chamu allan o'r caets, dyma fe'n chwethin a dweud, 'Dwi wedi cael un mas!'. Roedd wedi dweud celwydd noeth wrthyf. A dyna ddechrau'r chwalfa. Parodd y streic am ddiwrnod arall cyn i'r cyfan ddod i ben.

Pan gaeodd yr 'Hook and Eye' cefais gynnig swydd yng Nglofa Cwm, ger Pontypridd, ond roeddwn i eisiau aros yn y Rhondda ac fe es i Lofa Fernhill yn lle hynny. Roedd tri ohonom yn gweithio yn Fernhill ar y pryd – fi, fy mab, a'r ferch a oedd yn glerc i'r rheolwr. Ar ôl i Fernhill gau, bues i'n gweithio i'r cyngor fel goruchwyliwr ar y Rhigos – roedd gan ein cwt flodau a phob math o blanhigion yn garped o'i gwmpas. Roedd rhaid i mi roi'r gorau i weithio wedyn, pan gwmpais wrth gario clawr twll caead a brifo 'nghefn – anaf gwaeth o lawer nag unrhyw un a gefais o weithio danddaear!

Sylvanus Thompson

know" as I was only a short little chap, but he said "You can do it" so I started the following week.

When I went in on the Monday the whole heading had fallen in and there was seven pairs of timber to be stood straight away, those big red timbers, you know, the 'French sticks'. While I was wondering where to start the overman came in and I said to him "I haven't notched a timber since I was 15" and he said "I'll show you, I'll notch one end and you notch the other end and we'll compare them". He was the best overman I ever worked with; he was like a father to me. So he showed me how to notch the timber and he helped me to put that first pair of timber up and then he left me to carry on, I had to put six pair of timber up on my own.

There was nobody working within about a mile of me, you wouldn't see anyone except the hauliers – and the rats! Good God! They were about a foot long, huge they were, like cats. When you sat down to have your food they would be up on your chest catching the crumbs, there was so many of them. You were afraid to put your food box down because they would be in it. I forget how long I was on repairing but then the chance came to go on the coal face, so I changed jobs again.

It was about 1948 when I got involved in a 'stay down strike'. I was walking in with an older fellow, he was a collier working half way down the coal face where I was working, and we met some of the boys from the left hand side of the coal face, the 'air conveyor' we called it. The right hand side of the coal face was good but the left hand side, where these boys were working, was very bad. They had very bad roof conditions and weren't getting 'allowances' (extra money) for working there. Anyway, while we walking in with these boys, I said "I didn't know it was as bad as that, if there's any trouble we'll support you". Then we went in to the coal face and took the tools off the bar and started pulling the coal down and chucking it on the conveyor belt.

We hadn't been there half an hour and someone shouted "All out, the left hand side have walked out again!" The lodge (trade union) chairman was working on our side of the face, and he said "Come on, out you come" so I said to this fellow who had been walking on with me, "What are we going to do, we promised we support them, we'll have to go up and see them now". So we jumped onto the conveyor belt and when we were half way up the left hand side of the face, we heard someone shout "There's two more recruits for us, come on in, you're welcome" and they dragged us in off the belt. They were planning on a 'stay in strike' and I thought "Oh my God!"

Then the under manager and Frank Beasley the overman came in to see us. Frank was great to us, but the under manager, who had come down from

Yorkshire, was hated. He tried to get us to leave but someone told him "You better watch you don't end up in the cog!" and he got afraid and left. Then they turned the lights off and speeded up the fan to try and blow the dust into the air. The lodge committee used to fetch grub down to pit bottom for us. I think there was about fourteen of us, they would give us tea and sandwiches and they also gave us some spangles. I've never looked at Spangles since that day; I'm still sickened with them. Then we walked back to the face and it was freezing down there because they had speeded up the fan, the wind was whistling through there. We had games and stuff and someone had brought a pack of cards in because they knew they were going on strike, so we played cards and things like that. One of the boys had an old piece of conveyor belt and put it down on the floor and he shaved a bit of post (wooden pit prop) and made a skittle ball and some skittles and we were playing skittles! I also got hold of a piece of timber and made a cricket bat out of it, I later took it out to give to my son Mike – it was just about as big as he was!

Although we had food we weren't allowed to sleep underground. I was near a chap and he kept saying "Don't go to sleep, don't go to sleep!" There were no lights on so we kept one of our lamps lit and the others out. One night we were going back to pit bottom for tea at about six o'clock and one of the overman, Reg Ruddock, said "I'm glad I've seen you now. I've come to fetch you, your wife had the baby in the wheelchair and she's collapsed on the pavement outside Carpenters the shop in Blaen Cwm. I've come to fetch you to go to see to your wife". I turned to Jack, the leader of the strikers, and said "Is it alright for me to go up?" and he looked a bit suspicious because he knew they were trying to break us up. But he said "Aye, I suppose so, seeing what the circumstances are". So I went back to pit bottom with the overman and he came up in the cage with me. Once we got to pit top and stepped out of the cage he laughed and said "I got one out!" He had been lying to me. So that was the start of them breaking us up, the strike only lasted to the next day and then they packed it in.

When the 'Hook and Eye' closed I was offered a job in Cwm Colliery, near Pontypridd but I wanted to stay in the Rhondda and went to Fernhill Colliery instead. Actually there was three of us working at Fernhill at the same time – me, my son and my daughter, who was the manager's clerk. When Fernhill closed I worked for the council as a watchman on the Rhigos mountain, our hut had all flowers and stuff planted around it. I had to finish work altogether when I fell carrying a man hole cover and damaged my back – a worse injury than any I had had working underground!

Sylvanus Thompson



# Beth yw bag tri chwarter?

Cefais fy ngeni ar 15 Mehefin 1944. Gadewais yr ysgol ym 1960 ac es i am brentisiaeth gyda'r Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol yng Nglofa Bargod. Cawsom ein hanfon i'r ysgol hyfforddi yng Nglofa Britannia ac rwy'n credu i ni dreulio'r flwyddyn gyntaf yno. Arferem astudio yng Ngholeg Addysg Bellach Cross Keys yn y dyddiau hynny, felly fe wnes i brentisiaeth peirianeg glo am bum mlynedd.

Roedd gen i gefndir glofaol, gyda 'nhad yn ffeiarman yng nglofa Elliot ger Tredegar Newydd ac yna yng Nglofa Britannia. Dechreuodd fel glöwr, cyn mynd ymlaen i astudio a dod yn swyddog diogelwch yng Nglofa Britannia. Bu farw danddaear yn y diwedd, wrth dywys ymwelwyr o gwmpas. Cafodd drawiad ar y galon, ond erbyn iddyn nhw ei gludo'n ôl i'r brig, roedd wedi'n gadael ni. Dim ond 52 oed oedd e.

Wnes i erioed ystyried unrhyw beth heblaw mynd i weithio danddaear ar ôl gadael ysgol – wedi'r cwbl, roedd fy nhad yn löwr, a'r lofa oedd prif gyflogwr yr ardal. Er bod llawer o gwmnïau peirianeg bach yn yr ardal, wnes i ddim ystyried gwneud cais am swydd gyda nhw, felly penderfynais fwrw prentisiaeth gyda'r NCB fel llawer o'm ffrindiau. Dyma oedd y prif gyflogwr bryd hynny. Mae'n stori wahanol iawn heddiw, wrth gwrs, mae'r pyllau glo wedi hen ddiflannu tydyn?

Roedd gweithio yn y diwydiant glo yn dipyn o her. Roeddech chi'n treulio'r flwyddyn gyntaf yn ysgol hyfforddi Britannia, a rhywfaint o amser yn y lofa ei hun hefyd – yn y gweithdai ac o dan y ddaear, a bydden ni'n ymweld â glofeydd eraill hefyd. Doedd dim llawer o fywyd cymdeithasol yn y lofa fel y cyfryw – roeddech chi'n mynd i'r gwaith, dod adref, a dyna ni. Er bod sefydliadau'r glowyr ym mhob pentref, rhywbeth o'r oes o'r blaen oedden nhw, a doedd dim gymaint o fynd arny'n nhw erbyn fy nghyfnod i. Mwynheais i'r diwydiant glo ar y cyfan, oherwydd roedd yn brofiad da ar gyfer y dyfodol.

Ni arhosais yn y lofa; roedd fy nhad yn dioddef o'r emffysema ar ôl gweithio danddaear ac nid oedd yn awyddus i mi barhau'n löwr. Dwi'n credu 'mod i wedi

**Y diwrnod gwaith olaf  
yng Nglofa Bargod – Mai 1977**  
Bargoed Colliery –  
last day of work May 1977

# What's a three quarter bag?

I was born on the 15th of June 1944. I left school in 1960 and I went in for an apprenticeship with the National Coal Board and I was based at Bargoed Colliery. We used to go to a training school in Britannia Colliery and I think we spent the first year there. We used to study at Cross Keys College of Further Education in those days, so for five years I did a mining engineering apprenticeship.

I came from a mining background, my father was a fireman in Elliot's colliery near New Tredegar and, later, Britannia Colliery. He started off as a miner and he studied and he ended up being the safety officer in Britannia Colliery. He actually died underground, he was taking visitors to the colliery underground and he had a heart attack and by the time they got back to the surface there was nothing they could do and he died. He was only 52 years of age.

I never really thought about not going underground when I left school. I suppose with my father being in the colliery and the fact that mining was the main employer around here. There were a lot of little engineering companies around here, but it didn't cross my mind to try for work with them so, along with a lot of my friends, I went in for an NCB apprenticeship. It was the main employer of those days. It's very different today, there are no mines left are there?

Working in the mining industry was challenging. You spent the first year in the training school in Britannia but you would also spend time on the colliery itself in the workshops and below ground and we also visited other collieries. There wasn't much of a social life connected with the mine as such – you went to work, you came home and that was it. There were miner's institutes in all the villages but I think they were of a bygone age when I came along and they weren't so frequented as they had been in the past. On the whole I enjoyed the mining industry it prepared me well for the future.

I didn't stay in the colliery; my father had emphysema from working underground and wasn't keen for me to stay in mining. I think I always looked at getting out after I served my apprenticeship. I was looking at a career such as the Merchant Navy and then this thing came up about atomic energy. They were looking for qualified people so, before I'd actually finished my NCB apprenticeship, I went for an interview in Bristol and they told me to get in touch with them when I'd finished my apprenticeship about three or four months later. They offered me a position

and I went to Harwell nuclear power station for about three or four months and from there I transferred to Weymouth and later to Winfrith, I stayed there about seven years.

There was a big difference between the nuclear power industry and coal mining. You didn't have to shower everyday to get the coal out of your eyes and your hair for a start, it was much more pleasant. The terminology was also different, I remember going to the stores and asked for some three quarter bag and the guy's looking at me stupid, he said "What's a three quarter bag?" He eventually worked out that it was three quarter hose pipe that's what I wanted! I enjoyed the atomic energy because it was totally different from mining. You were always in clean conditions; you were always well protected from the dangers of radiation as working practices were very strict, how you went in and out of certain areas and so on.

I didn't stay in atomic energy. There were quite a few of us youngsters who decided that we were going to go abroad. So off my wife, two children and I all went to Mufulira on the Copper Belt in Zambia. I didn't go underground in the copper mine and I wasn't unhappy about that because they were very, very deep mines, I worked on the surface in the power plant instead. Zambia was a nice country, the living conditions were ok and we made some money but we decided we'd go down to what was then Rhodesia and is now Zimbabwe.

So we went down to Salisbury in Rhodesia in 1972 and worked for an electrical cable manufacturer. I started off in the workshops and worked there for seven years and then I took over as the workshop foreman and then I had the opportunity to become works manager at Phoenix Brushware who manufactured brushes and plastic packaging and I started off there as the works manager running the factory. After I'd been there for about five years, they asked me to take over as the chief executive and take over responsibility for running the company I stayed there until 2000.

When we went there in 1972 it was still Rhodesia and there was a guerilla war going on. After about a year I was called up to the forces I had to do basic army training, weapons, marching and all the rest of it. Then after that they sent us out to what they called 'keeps' which were fortified enclosures or towers. They had 'keeps' in the middle of villages throughout the country and you were based there to look after the



bwriadu gadael beth bynnag ar ôl cwblhau fy mhrentisiaeth. Roeddwn i'n ystyried gyfa gyda'r llynges fasnachol pan welais rywbeth am ynni atomig. Roedden nhw'n chwilio am bobl gymwysedig, felly cyn i mi orffen fy mhrentisiaeth gyda'r NCB, fe es i am gyfweiliad ym Mryste. Dywedon nhw wrthyf am gysylltu eto ar ôl i mi orffen fy mhrentisiaeth rhyw dri neu bedwar mis wedyn. Cefais gynnig swydd, ac fe es i orsaf niwclear Harwell am ryw 3-4 mis cyn cael fy nhrosglwyddo i Weymouth ac yna Winfrith, lle bues i am tua saith mlynedd.

Roedd byd o wahaniaeth rhwng y diwydiant ynni niwclear a'r diwydiant glo. Doedd dim angen i chi gael cawod bob dydd i ddechrau, er mwyn rhwbio'r llwch glo o'ch llygaid a'ch gwallt, felly roedd hynny'n brafach. Roedd y derminoleg yn wahanol hefyd. Dwi'n cofio mynd i'r storfeydd a gofyn am "three quarter bag" a'r dyn yn edrych yn hurt arnaf. Deallodd wedyn mai gofyn am beipen ddŵr tri chwarter oeddwn i! Fe wnes i fwynhau gweithio yn y diwydiant ynni atomig gan ei fod mor wahanol i'r pwll glo. Roeddech chi bob amser yn gweithio mewn amodau glân; roeddech chi'n ddiogel rhag peryglon ymbelydredd gan fod arferion gwaith mor gaeth, fel sut i fynd a dod o rai llefydd ac ati.

Arhosais i ddim yno'n hir iawn. Roedd criw ifanc o'n plith wedi penderfynu mynd dramor. Felly, bant â fi a'r wraig a dau o blant i Mufulira yn ardal gopr Zambia. Es i ddim danddaear i'r mwynloddiâu copr chwaith, ac roeddwn i'n falch gan fod rhai o'r pyllau'n hynod o ddwfn. Yn hytrach, bues i'n gweithio yn y pwerdy ar y wyneb. Roedd Zambia yn wlad hyfryd, y safon byw yn weddol a'r arian yn dda. Yna, penderfynon ni fynd ymlaen i Rhodesia, neu Zimbabwe erbyn heddiw.

Aethom i Salisbury yn Rhodesia ym 1972, a gweithio i gwmi cynhyrchu ceblau trydanol. Dechreuais weithio yn y gweithdai am saith mlynedd cyn dod yn fforman gweithdy. Yna, cefais gyfle i fod yn rheolwr gwaith gyda chyfrifoldeb am redeg ffatri Phoenix Brushware a oedd yn cynhyrchu brwsys a pheynnau plastig. Pum mlynedd yn ddiweddarach, fe wnaethon nhw ofyn i mi gymryd yr awenau fel prif weithredwr y cwmni a bues i yno tan y flyddyn 2000.

Pan gyrhaeddwn ni ym 1972, roedd rhyfel gerila yn Rhodesia. Ar ôl tua blwyddyn, cefais alwad i ymuno â'r fyddin a bu'n rhaid i mi wneud hyfforddiant sylfaenol fel defnyddio arfau, gorymdeithio ac ati. Yna, cawsom ein hanfon i'r hyn yr oedden nhw'n ei alw'n 'keeps' sef tyrau caerog neu gadarnleoedd. Roedd ganddynt dyrau yng nghanol pentrefi ar hyd a lled y wlad, ac roeddech yno i warchod y trigolion a chadw trefn pan oedd rhyw helyntion teuluol neu broblemau meddygol, pethau felly. Byddem yn gwneud hyn am chwe wythnos ar y

tro, cyn mynd adref i weithio am ddeuddeg wythnos, yna'n ôl i'r tyrau gwarchod eto. Parodd hyn am ryw bedair i bum mlynedd.

Erbyn hyn, roedden nhw'n sôn am gynnal etholiadau a chawsom ein galw i gadw'r heddwch am ddeuddeg wythnos. Roedd yn gyfnod cythryblus iawn gan fod llawer o herwfilwyr ar led, ac roedd angen eu cadw dan reolaeth. Felly, roedd llawer ohonom yn gwarchod y pentrefi gan fod rhywrai'n bygwth a dychryn y trigolion gan ddweud dros bwy ddylen nhw bleidleisio, beth i'w wneud a sut. Roedd y sefyllfa'n wael iawn, gyda llawer o lofruddiaethau. Yna fe gynhaliwyd yr etholiad, enillodd ZANU-PF, a chawsom annibyniaeth. Ac felly mae hi ers hynny.

Ar ôl annibyniaeth, roedd arian yn brin a thanwydd wedi'i ddogni. Dechreuon nhw roi pawb a fu'n ymladd dros ryddid yn y fyddin. Roedd y misoedd cynta'n llawn tensiwn - un bore, fe wnaethon ni ddefro a gweld cerbydau arfog, tanciau ac ati ar y strydoedd oherwydd eu bod nhw'n poeni sut fyddai pobl yn ymateb, a chafwyd rhai problemau yn Bulawayo cyn i bethau setlo ar ôl i'r fyddin gyrraedd. Ond amser a ddengys, edrychwch beth mae Mugabe yn ei wneud nawr a'r hyn y mae wedi bod yn ei wneud dros y deng mlynedd diwethaf. Mae pobl wedi dychryn yn lân.

Buon ni yn Zimbabwe am 36 mlynedd, ond daethon ni adref yn y diwedd. Cefais drawiad ar y galon yn 2005, ac roeddem wedi penderfynu fwy neu lai i aros am gwpl o flynyddoedd eto, dirwyn pethau i ben, datrys hyn a llall ac arall cyn dychwelyd i Gymru, fel y gwnaethom yn 2008. Daethon ni'n ôl i'r un tŷ ag yr oedd gennym ym 1965 - yr un tŷ, yr un cwm, ond heb y pyllau glo.

Petawn i wedi parhau gyda'r Bwrdd Glo, byddwn i wedi fy siomi oherwydd fe gaeodd Glofa Bargod ym 1977 pan oeddwn i'n ddeugain oed. Byddwn i wedi cael tâl diswyddo, ac wedi cael cryn drafferth dechrau o'r dechrau eto mae'n siŵr. O'r safbwynt yna, felly, dwi'n credu ein bod wedi gwneud y penderfyniad iawn.

Alan Walker

villagers and sort them out when they had domestic or medical problems, things like that. We used to do six weeks at a time, then you'd come back home and go back to work for twelve weeks and then off you'd go again and that went on for about four or five years.

By then they were talking about having elections and we were called out for twelve weeks. It was a very dodgy period because there were a lot of guerrillas in the country running around and they had to be controlled. So they had lots of us out there protecting the villages because the villagers were being intimidated, which way to vote, what to do and how to do it. There were lots of murders and it was quite bad. Then we got the elections and the ZANU-PF came in and we had independence and that's what it's been ever since.

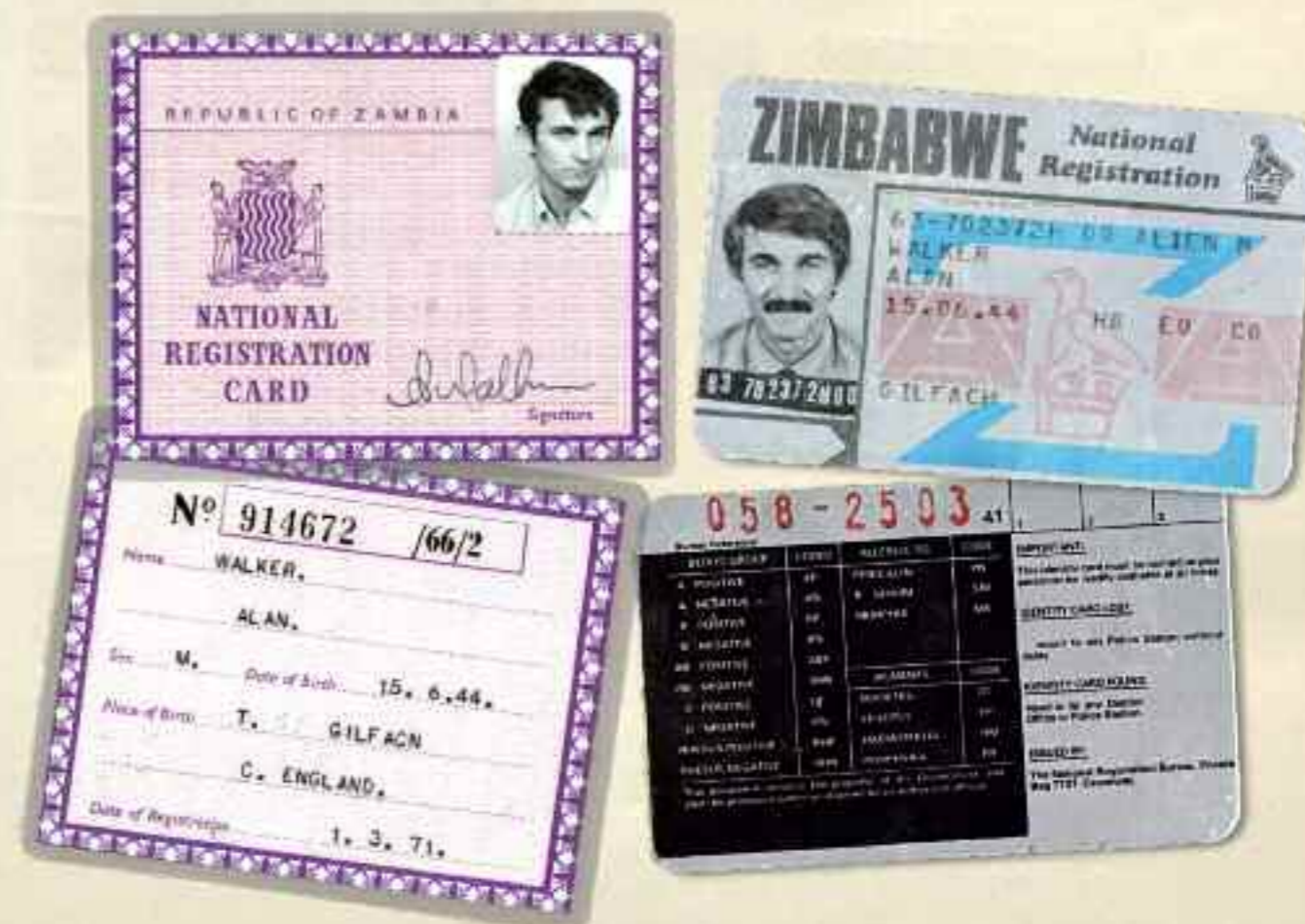
After independence there were shortages of money and fuel rationing. They put all the freedom fighters into the army and amalgamated them and things like that. It was a bit touchy for a few months - one morning we got up and there were armoured vehicles, tanks and stuff in the streets because they

were worried that people might react and they did have problems in Bulawayo where they had to send the army but it settled down. But time speaks for itself, look what Mugabe's doing now and look what he's been doing for the last ten years. People are terrified.

We were in Zimbabwe for thirty six years but we came back because I'd had a heart attack in 2005 and we more or less decided we'd give it a couple more years, wind down things, sort things out and then come back to Wales, which we did in 2008. We came back to the same house as we started way back in 1965 - same valley, same house, but no mines.

If I'd stuck with the Coal Board I would have been disappointed because I think Bargoed pit here closed in 1977 which would have made me almost forty and I would have got redundancy pay but, at that age, it's a very difficult time to start again. So I think from that point of view, it was probably just as well we did what we did.

Alan Walker





# Dwi wedi colli 'nghoes!

Cefais fy ngeni ym 1936 a dechreuais weithio ym Mhwl Glo Bargoed House ym 1952. Ar ôl hyfforddi, es i weithio yn y pwll glo stêm, fel gwas coed i ddechrau ac yna'n gynorthwydd colier. Fe ddes i'n löwr gyda fy stent fy hun pan oeddwn i'n 18 oed, a oedd yn anghyffredin bryd hynny gan nad oeddech fel arfer yn cael eich lle'ch hun nes cyrraedd 21 oed. Bues i'n gweithio ar y ffas lo am bedair blynedd ar ddeg, yn gwneud gwaith 'cloddio cyffredin' yn bennaf yn llwytho'r glo ar y cludfelt, er i mi dreulio'r ychydig flynyddoedd olaf ar sawl ffas lo lle'r oedd peiriannau torri a llwytho.

Pan oeddwn i tua 17 oed, diffoddodd fy lamp a dyma'r ffeiarman yn fy anfon i'n ôl i waelod y pwll gyda bachgen arall yn dal golau i mi. Wrth i ni gerdded o'r ardal, rhedodd y bachgen i ffwrdd i gael tipyn o 'hwyl' a 'ngadael i yn y tywyllwch dudew. Bu'n rhaid i mi deimlo fy ffordd mas gan ddilyn y cledrau dan fy nhraed. Pan gyrhaeddais i waelod y pwll, dyna lle'r oedd y cythrel yn chwethin ar fy mhen i!

Roedd dyn yn gweithio ar yr hewl pan gafodd ei ddal yn sownd rhwng dram lawn ac ochr yr hewl. Roedd wedi anafu'i gefn yn ddrwg, a gwaed yn pistyllu o'r briw. Gallai deimlo'r gwaed yn llifo i lawr ei goes, ac roedd yn gweiddi 'Dwi wedi colli 'nghoes!' Chafodd e fawr o gydymdeimlad fodd bynnag, achos fe waeddodd rhywun yn ôl, 'Well i ti siapio hi a hercian o 'na te, achos allwn ni ddim dy gael di mas!'.

Un tro, cefais innau fy nal gan gwmp am ryw dair awr. Wrthi'n agor ffas newydd oedden ni, ac yn defnyddio sled fawr newydd wedi'i chysylltu â rhaff halio ddiddiwedd i gludo'r deunyddiau i mewn. Roedd y bachgen a reolai'r injan braidd yn wyllt, a llwyddodd i fachu rhai o'r props ac achosi i'r to gwmpo. Lwcus mai pibelli metel 4 modfedd oedd yn dod â'r aer i mewn i'r siafft, yn hytrach na'r pibelli hyblyg diweddaraf, neu byddai pob un ohonom wedi'n llorio gan y cwmp ac wedi mygu i farwolaeth. Soniais

i'r un gair wrth mam am hyn – fyddai hi ddim wedi gadael i mi fynd i lawr y pwll byth eto!

Gadewais y diwydiant pan oeddwn i'n 32 oed, a mynd i weithio i British Nylon Spinners ym Mhont-y-pwl; a hynny am sawl rheswm, ond yn bennaf oherwydd bod fy nhad a'm hewythrod wedi dal y dwst ac roeddwn i'n poeni y byddwn i'n dioddef hefyd. Sbardun arall oedd y ffaith fod Nylon Spinners yn talu'r un faint o gyflog â'r pwll glo.

Ron Thomas



Yr helmed gardbord gywasgedig a ddefnyddiodd Ron Thomas gydol ei yrfa yn y lofa.  
The compressed cardboard helmet which Ron Thomas used from the time he started until the time he finished in the colliery.

Ron Thomas

# My leg's off

I was born in 1936 and started work in Bargoed House Coal Pit in 1952. After training I worked in the Steam Coal Pit, first as a timber boy then as a collier's assistant. I became a collier with a stent of my own at 18 years of age which was unusual then as you normally didn't get your own place until you were 21. I did 14 years as a collier at the coal face, mostly 'conventional mining' filling coal onto a 'shaker' or belt conveyor, although I worked the last few years on 'power loading' (mechanised) faces.

When I was a lad of about 17 my lamp went out and the fireman sent me back to pit bottom

accompanied by another boy to show light for me. As we were walking out from the district the other boy shot off in front of me as a 'joke' and left me in the dark. I had to feel my way out by the rails under my feet. When I got to pit bottom he was there laughing at me!

A man was working in the roadway when he got caught tightly between a full dram and the side of the road. His backside was cut badly and there was blood pouring out of him. He felt all the blood running down his leg and shouted "My leg's off!" He didn't get much sympathy though, someone shouted back "You'd better 'hec it' (hop) out of there then, 'cos we can't get you out!"

I was trapped by a fall for about three hours one time. We were opening up a new face and were using a large sledge attached to an endless haulage rope to bring in materials. The boy operating the engine went a bit wild and managed to pull some props out and brought down a fall. We were lucky because we had 4 inch metal pipes bringing in the ventilation, if we had the newer flexible ducting it would have been flattened by the fall and we would have all suffocated. I never told my mother that I had been trapped – she would have never let me go down the pit again!

When I was 32 I left the industry and worked for British Nylon Spinners in Pontypool; there were a few reasons for this but mainly it was because my father and uncles had contracted dust and it was starting to play on my mind that I would end up the same, also the money in Nylon Spinners was about the same as I was getting in the colliery so I finished.



# Glowyr dawnus a medrus

**W**rth fynd i weithio i'r pwll glo, buan y sylweddolodd y dynion bod ganddynt lawer i'w ddysgu'n gyflym iawn. Doedd dim modd i bawb ddysgu popeth, ond daethant yn fedrus yn eu tasgau dewisol cyn pen dim. Roedd help llaw wastad ar gael gan yr hen bennau profiadol, ac ymhen amser, byddan nhw hefyd yn trosglwyddo'r wybodaeth hon i rywun newydd.

Nid oedd gan y rhan fwyaf o'r gweithwyr lawer o gymwysterau academaidd, os o gwbl, ond roeddynt yn dysgu'n gyflym. Yn wir, y gweithwyr eu hunain gyflwynodd lawer o'r systemau gwaith newydd ac arloesol i'r glofeydd. Efallai bod hyn yn syndod i bobl o'r tu allan, ond nid i'w cydweithwyr. Roedden nhw'n gwybod bod gan rai o'u ffrindiau ddoniau cudd, rhyw grefft neu hyfedredd arbennig y dylid fod wedi'u defnyddio at bethau amgenach o lawer na chynhyrchu glo.

Roedd hi'n weddol rwydd i'r rhai a oedd yn gallu canu neu actio i ddangos eu doniau yng nghorau'r ardal, cyngherddau mewn tafarnau lleol neu ambell neuadd bentref. Ond beth am y gweddill – y dyfeiswyr, gwneuthurwyr modelau, awduron, ffotograffwyr, offerynwyr cerdd, artistiaid, dynwarddwyr, casglwyr, mecanyddion ceir, beirdd, cartwnyddion,

comediwyr, garddwyr, adarwyr, raswyr milgwn, casglwyr stampiau, niwmismategwyr a'r llu o lowyr a oedd yn astudio'n rhan-amser er mwyn dianc rhag y diwydiant?

Byddai unrhyw un sydd wedi gweithio mewn pwll erioed yn dweud wrthyh eu bod wedi cydweithio â rhywun fyddai ar y rhestr uchod. Mwy na thebyg bod llawer o'r gwaith a gynhyrchwyd ganddynt wedi hen ddiplannu. Ond efallai bod yna enghreifftiau o'r gwaith hwn ar gael yn rhywle o hyd, wedi'i drosglwyddo o genhedlaeth i genhedlaeth, ac yn dal i gael ei drysori gan y teulu. Ein dyletswydd ni yw dod o hyd iddyn nhw, a'u harddangos efallai er mwyn i bawb eu gweld a'u gwerthfawrogi. Gall fod yn unrhyw beth o gasgliad o doriadau papur newydd i wrthrych gwirioneddol hardd, a gorau po fwyaf anghyffredin.

Llofnodion oedd yr unig beth a gasglais i. Roeddwn i hefyd yn gallu gwneud portreadau o enwogion, felly dechreuais anfon fy narluniau at bobl enwog gan ofyn iddynt eu llofnodi i mi. Erbyn heddiw, mae gennyf bortreadau wedi'u llofnodi gan gannoedd o bobl – sêr byd ffilm a chwaraeon, bocswyr, gwleidyddion, cantorion a sêr y West End. Ddim yn ffôl i hen goliar!

Gwyn Morgan

# Many Skilled Miners

**M**en going to work in the Pit soon realized that there were many things that they would have to quickly learn. No one could learn everything, but they quickly became adept at their chosen tasks. There was always help at hand from someone more experienced in what they were doing and in the course of time they too would pass this knowledge on to someone new.

Most of the workers had little or no academic qualifications but they were quick learners and many innovations in the systems of work were introduced by the workmen themselves. This might surprise someone with no knowledge of these workmen but it was no surprise to their mates. They knew that some of their friends had a talent to be envied, an untapped skill that should have been put to far better use than just the production of coal.

It was relatively easy for men who could sing or act to display their talents in the local choirs, or concerts in local pubs or village halls. But what of the others – the inventors, model makers, writers, photographers, instrumentalists, artists, mimics, collectors, motor mechanics, poets, cartoonists, comedians, gardeners, bird fanciers, greyhound racers, philatelists, numismatists and the many studying part time to get out of the pits?

Anyone who has ever worked in a pit will tell you that they had worked with someone who would fill a slot on the above list. A lot of the work that they produced is probably long gone. But maybe somewhere there are still examples of this work, perhaps handed down from generation to generation, still treasured within the family. It is our duty to seek out examples of this work and perhaps display it for everyone to see and appreciate. It could be anything from a collection of newspaper cuttings to an object of extreme beauty, the more unusual the better.

The only thing I have ever collected were Autographs, I could also draw portraits of famous people, so I started sending my drawings to famous people asking them to sign them for me. I now have portraits signed by hundreds of people – Film Stars, Sportsmen, Boxers, Politicians, Singers and West End Stars. Not bad for an old collier is it?

Gwyn Morgan



Darlun Gwyn Morgan o Aneurin Bevan  
Gwyn Morgan's drawing of Aneurin Bevan

# Ghosts of the past

*The wheel has stopped, it winds no more  
Sheep now sleep behind rotted stable door  
Wind whistles through broken windowpanes  
Locker and lamp rooms, reduced to shame*

*The pithead baths once painted white  
Glowed and sparkled in winter light  
Now derelict and broken down  
It bears resemblance to our town*

*Night has devoured all daylight  
Making way for silver moonlight  
Transforming pithead into Eiffel Tower  
Restoring faith and trust by people in power*

*Dreams are broken when the sun starts to shine  
Bringing back memories of friends lost in mine  
Wind carries their voices on mountaintop  
Listen, listen, and don't ever stop.*

Anne Jenkins,  
Glofa Groes-faen/Groesfaen Colliery



Glofa Groes-faen  
Mehefin 1969  
Groesfaen Colliery  
June 1969



# Sefydliad Iles

Roedd yna rywun yn ffugio rhyw salwch neu'i gilydd ym mhob glofa, ond yn Oakdale, roedd gennym gryn dipyn o bobl hynod ddidwyll a barhaodd i weithio er gwaethaf anafiadau neu anhwylderau eraill gan gynnwys clefyd coronaidd y galon a phroblemau'r frest oherwydd y dwst. Cafodd dynion ag anhwylderau'r frest eu cynghori i osgoi parhau i weithio dan amodau llychlyd, ond roeddynt am wella eu safon byw. Roedd ganddynt blant yn y brifysgol ac ati felly bydden nhw'n parhau i weithio yn yr amodau hyn. Wrth gwrs, bydden nhw'n gorfod rhoi'r gorau iddi ar unwaith heddiw, ond nid felly'r oedd hi'r dyddiau hynny. Roedden ni'n arfer clywed hanes teuluoedd y dynion drwy'r adeg. Doedd y dynion hyn byth yn trafod eu pryderon, roedd rhaid iddyn nhw fod yn wrol fel dynion go iawn, ond roedd y dynion iau yn rhannu'u gofidiau, yn enwedig os oedd eu gwragedd yn dost. Roedden nhw'n dod i eistedd wrthych chi a bwrw'u calonnau. Rwy'n mynd yn grac iawn pan fydd pobl yn dweud nad yw dynion yn gofidio – maen nhw, dy'n nhw ddim yn gwybod sut i ddangos hynny, dyna'r cwbl.

Roedd y ganolfan feddygol yn debycach i sefydliad Iles na dim arall. Os oedd dyn yn yr ysbyty gyda salwch difrifol, roedden ni'n mynd i'w weld ar ôl iddo ddod gartre. Byddwn i'n gofyn a oedd e'n falch o fod gartre, a oedd yn teimlo'n well, ac yna byddai ei wraig yn cerdded gyda chi at y gât a byddech yn gofyn, 'Sut ydych chi'n teimlo?'. A byddai hi'n dweud, 'A dweud y gwir Sister, dwi ofn cysgu.' 'Pam?' 'Achos yn yr ysbyty mae'r holl offer a chyfarpar ar gael petai rhywbeth yn mynd o'i le, a dwi ar ben fy hunan fan hyn ac yn ofni y bydde rhywbeth yn digwydd.' Felly, roeddwn i'n gorfod bod yn gefn ac yn gysur i'r wraig a'r teulu hefyd. Roedd rhai o'r dynion yn poeni'u henaid am eu plant a oedd yn sâl iawn a bydden nhw'n dod aton ni am sgwrs fach. Doedd y dynion hyn ddim eisiau gwybod, ond roedd y rhai iau wastad eisiau gwybod beth oedd yn digwydd, a beth oedd modd ei wneud i wella'r sefyllfa.

Roedd un dyn a ddoi i'r ganolfan feddygol yn ffeiarman, ac wedi magu ei frawd iau gan fod eu rhieni wedi marw. Roedd y ddau'n gweithio yn y pwll, a dyma'r brawd hyn yn cerdded i mewn un diwrnod gan ddweud, 'Oeddech chi'n gwybod Sister fod Dai ni wedi 'whare dros Gymru?' 'Dofe wir? Jiw, mae'n rhaid bod hynny wedi bod yn brofiad gwych iddo fe', atebais. 'O, oedd, bendigedig.' Gofynnais, 'Es ti i weld e?' 'Do', atebodd, 'es i lawr i'w weld e.' A dyma fi'n gofyn, 'Shwt deimlad odd i weld e'n rhedeg mas ar y cae?' 'Dim syniad Sister', atebodd, 'weles i mohono fe.' 'Beth ti'n feddwl weles ti



Sister O'Shea o Lofa St John's (chwith), Harry Harris, swyddog hyfforddi yn Oakdale a Mrs Iris Evans ar fin mynd i lawr i Lofa Oakdale.

Sister O'Shea of St John's Colliery (left), Harry Harris training officer at Oakdale and Mrs Iris Evans waiting to descend Oakdale Colliery.

mohono fe?' Ac meddai, 'Rôn i mor browd, bues i'n llefen reit drwyddo!' Wel, am chwerthin!

Pan gaeodd y glofeydd, aeth llawer o'r sisters nyrsio i weithio mewn meddygfydd, eraill i gartrefi nyrsio preifat ac ati. Fe wnes i ymddeol. Roeddwn i'n 55 oed, ond cafodd fy ngŵr ei daro'n wael ac aethon ni i fyw i'r Gorllewin. Ond merch y Cymoedd ydw i o hyd! Roedd y diwydiant glo wedi 'nyssgu i sefyll dros yr hyn sy'n gyfiawn. Roeddwn i'n arfer mynd i'r cyfarfodydd, a byddai'r dynion yn edrych arnoch chi fel rhyw druan fach ddiniwed, ond roeddwn i'n meddwl, 'Meiddiwch chi bois, meiddiwch chi!' Roeddwn i'n barod i sefyll yn gadarn yn erbyn y rheolwyr a'r undebau.

Mrs Iris E. Evans

# A welfare organisation

you about it and they'd just sit down and tell you their worries. I get very angry when they say that men don't care, they care alright they just don't know how to express it.

The medical centre acted as a welfare organisation as much as anything else. If a man was in hospital with a serious illness we'd go to see him when he came home. I'd ask him if he glad to be home, if he was feeling better and then the wife would walk you to the gate and you'd say, "How are you feeling?" And she'd say, "To be honest Sister, I'm afraid to sleep." "Why?" "Because in hospital there's all the equipment if something goes wrong and now he's home and I'm all on my own and terrified that something will happen." So I would have to comfort the wife and family as well. We had chaps who were very concerned about their children who were very ill and they used to come and chat about it. The older men didn't want to know but the younger ones wanted to know what was going on and what could be done about it.

One chap who came into the medical centre was a fireman and he had brought up his younger brother because their parents had both died. The two of them were working in the pit and the elder brother came in one day and said to me, "Did you know Sister that our Dai played for Wales?" "Did he? Well gosh that must have been great for him" I answered. "Oh yes it was wonderful." I said, "Did you go and see him?" "Yes" he said, "I went to see him". I said, "How did you feel like when you saw him running onto the field?" "I don't know Sister" he said, "I didn't see him". "What do you mean you didn't see him?" He said, "I was so proud that I cried all the way through!" You've got to laugh haven't you?

When the collieries closed down a lot of nursing sisters went into doctors' surgeries, some of them went into private nursing homes and things like that. I just retired, I was 55 but my husband became ill and we went to live in west Wales. However, you can take the girl out of the Valleys but you can take the Valleys out of the girl. Being in the mining industry taught me to stand up for what I thought was right. I used to go to meetings and the men there used to look at you as a poor little woman coming in, but I used to think "Try it boys, you try it!" I was willing to stand up to both management and unions.

Mrs Iris E. Evans





## Adrian Street a'i dad yng Nglofa Beynon

**F**e wnes i basio fy ysgoloriaeth i Ysgol Ramadeg Brynmawr ar y cynnig cyntaf, cyn cael fy niarddel ddwy flynedd yn ddiweddarach gan 'mod i'n casáu'r ysgol. Roedd yn well gen i focsio na gwneud gwaith cartref. Gadewais yr ysgol yn 15 oed a dechrau gweithio yng Nglofa Beynon gyda 'nhad a'm brawd hŷn. Gas 'da fi'r lle! Dim ond ar ddydd Sul oeddwn i'n gweld golau dydd yn y gaeaf. I'r diawl â'r twll yma! Pan oeddwn i'n 16 oed, codais fy mhac a symud i Lundain. Roeddwn i'n gwybod fy mod i'n dda iawn am anafu pobl - roeddwn i'n gallu maeddu pawb yn yr ysgol, roeddwn i'n gallu maeddu pawb yn y pwll glo, felly beth am gael fy nhalu i wneud hynny? Roeddwn am fod yn frwydrwr gorau'r byd; yn reslar proffesiynol!

Adrian Street

## Adrian Street and his father at Beynon's Colliery

**I** passed my scholarship to Brynmawr Grammar School on my first try, but got expelled two years later, as I hated school and still preferred fighting, to doing homework. I left school at the age of 15 and began work in Beynon's Colliery with my father and older brother. I hated it! In the winter the only time I saw daylight was on a Sunday. To hell with this crap! when I was 16 years old I left home and went to live in London. I knew I was very good at hurting people - I could beat everyone in school - I could beat everyone in the coal mine, so why not get paid for it? I was going to be the best fighter in the world; I was going to be a professional wrestler!

Adrian Street



# Oriawr fy nhad

Cefais fy ngeni ar 10 Rhagfyr 1933 a dechreuais weithio pan oeddwn i'n dair blynedd ar ddeg a saith mis oed. Roedd glowyr yn dechrau gweithio o dan y ddaear yn bedair ar ddeg bryd hynny, ond cefais ganiatâd i adael yr ysgol yn gynnar ar ôl cael cynnig swydd yn y baddonai pen pwll yn hytrach nag i lawr yn y pwll. Pan oeddwn i'n 16 oed, dechreuais weithio fel cynorthwydd glöwr danddaear yng Nglofa Markham. Erbyn i mi droi'n ugain oed, roeddwn i'n goliar yng Nglofa Oakdale.

Tua thrigain mlynedd yn ôl, prynodd fy nhad, Sidney George Gardiner, oriawr o siop Crouch the Jewellers, Coed-duon. Byddai'n ei chario wrth weithio danddaear, ac fe'i rhoddodd i mi wedi iddo ymddeol. Arferwn ei gwisgo yng Nglofa Markham.

Roeddwn i'n gwisgo'r oriawr tra'n ddyn achub adeg tanchwa Six Bells ym 1960. Roeddwn i'n dal ar gwrs hyfforddwr Tim Achub Glofeydd ar y pryd, a dim ond rhyw bythefnos o'r cwrs oedd ar ôl pan darodd y drychineb. Gan fy mod i'n hyfforddi fel arweinydd tîm yng Ngorsaf Achub Crymlyn yn hytrach na gweithio yn Markham, es i ddim i Six Bells gyda thîm achub Glofa Markham. Yn hytrach, gofynnodd fy hyfforddwr Mr Webb i mi arwain tîm o 'ddynion achub dros ben' er nad oedd gen i'r cymwysterau llawn. Oherwydd hyn, ni soniais yr un gair wrth neb am flynyddoedd wedyn, oherwydd roeddwn i'n teimlo fy mod i wedi gwneud rhywbeth anghyfreithlon.

Aeth fy nhîm o dan ddaear tua 2.30pm, a ni oedd y trydydd neu'r pedwerydd tîm i fentro 'lawr ar ôl y danchwa. Ein dyletswydd ar y diwrnod cyntaf oedd chwilio am rai a oedd yn dal yn fyw a dod â nhw allan, er bod unrhyw un a lwyddodd i fyw drwy'r danchwa wedi cyrraedd y wyneb erbyn hynny. Fe wnaeth fy nhîm dri 'thrip' dwy awr yr un, dri diwrnod yn olynol. Dyna faint o amser yr oedd ein hoffer anadlu yn gallu para mewn awyrgylch llawn nwyon. Ar y dda ddiwrnod olaf, roeddem ar ddyletswyddau 'casglu a chyrchu', gan gludo'r cyrff i ben y pwll lle'r oedd dynion eraill yn eu derbyn. Roedd yn brofiad erchyll. Effeithiodd hyn arna i am flynyddoedd lawer wedyn. Ac i wneud pethau'n waeth, allwn i ddim trafod y peth gyda neb, ddim hyd yn oed fy nhad.

Ar ôl gorffen gweithio fel glöwr yn 39 oed, bues i'n gweithio mewn tafarn yn Aberhonddu a Soho, ac wedyn yn yrrwr lori a gofalwr yn Ysgol Gyfun Coed-duon.

Ymunais â'r NUM yn 16 oed, a pharhaodd fy niddordeb brwd mewn materion undeb llafur gydol fy oes. Dwi'n cofio gwranddo ar Aneurin Bevan sawl tro, ac fe gwrddais i â Nelson Mandela a Desmond Tutu. Bues i'n gynghorydd lleol hefyd, yn Faer Coed-duon a Chyngor Islwyn wedyn. Dwi'n Rhyddfreniwr yn Islwyn a Dinas Llundain hefyd.

**Leon Gardiner, Glofa Markham**



# My father's watch

I was born on the 10 December 1933 and started work at 13 years and seven months old. At that time mineworkers started work underground at 14 but because I had been offered a job in the pithead baths rather than down the pit I was allowed to leave school early. At 16 years old I started working underground at Markham Colliery as a collier's assistant. By the age of 20 I was working as a collier in Oakdale Colliery.

My father, Sidney George Gardiner, bought a watch from Crouch the Jewellers in Blackwood about 60 years ago. He carried it with him while he was working underground until he retired and then passed it on to me. I also used it underground when I was working at Markham Colliery.

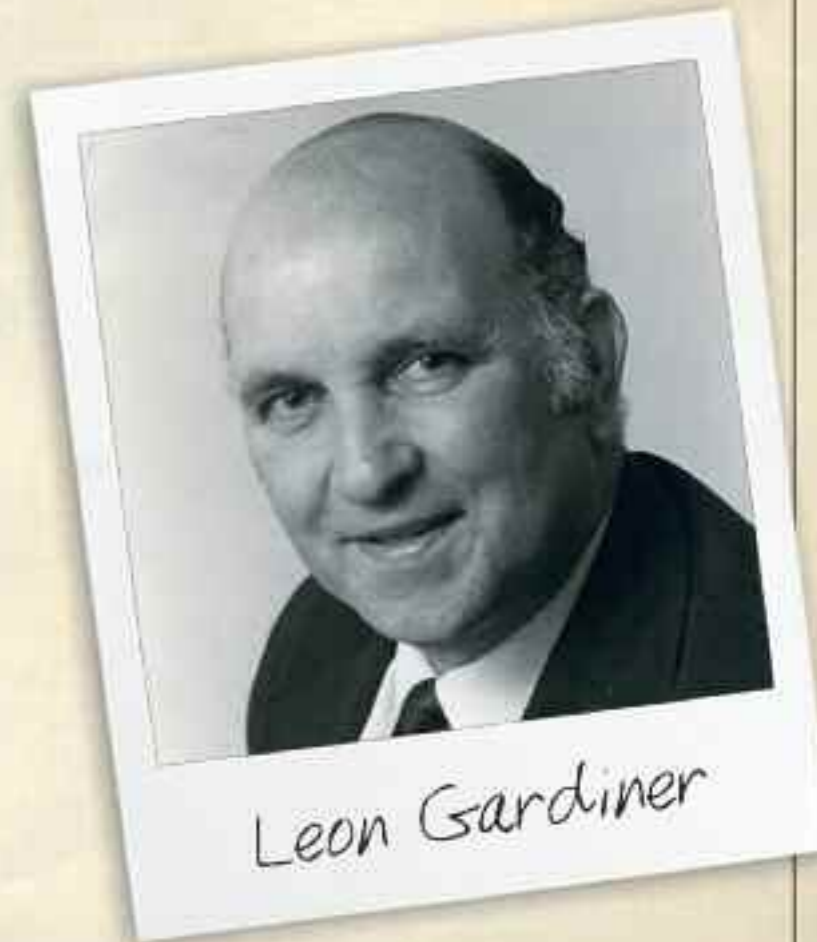
I was actually carrying the watch when I was a rescue man during the Six Bells explosion of 1960. At that time I was still training as a Mines Rescue instructor and had only two weeks to finish the course when the disaster occurred. Because I was still undertaking my training as a team leader at Crumlin Rescue Station rather than working at Markham, I didn't go to Six Bells with the Markham Colliery rescue team. Instead I was asked to lead a team of 'surplus rescue men' by my instructor Mr. Webb even though I hadn't fully qualified. Because of this, I didn't tell anyone that I had taken part in the rescue for many years afterwards as I felt that he had done something illegal.

My team went underground at about 2.30pm and was the third or fourth rescue team to go down after the explosion. On the first day our duty was to 'look for the living and fetch them out' even though anyone who had survived had been brought out by then. We never saw anyone alive. My team did three 'trips' of two hours each, on consecutive days. This was the length of time allowed by our breathing apparatus in a gassy atmosphere. The last two days we were on 'recovery and fetch' duties, when we brought bodies up to the top of the pit where the surface men took over from us. It wasn't very nice at all. The sights I saw affected me for many years afterwards. It was made worse because I felt that I couldn't talk about it to anyone, not even my father.

I finished as a collier at the age of 39 and worked as a barman in Brecon and Soho, and later as a long distance lorry driver and a caretaker at Blackwood Comprehensive School.

I joined the NUM at 16 and continued to interest myself in trade union matters all through my life. I remember listening to Aneurin Bevan on a number of occasions and also met Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. I also served as a local councillor and became Mayor of Blackwood and then Islwyn. I am a Freeman of Islwyn and also the City of London.

**Leon Gardiner, Markham Colliery**





## Gŵr a gwraig y Betws

**F**e'm ganwyd ym mis Gorffennaf 1929 a dechreuais weithio'n bedair ar ddeg oed. Roedd fy ewythr yn gweithio yn swyddfeydd y lofa, a cheisiodd gael swydd i mi yn y lamprwm, ond mae'n debyg fy mod yn rhy ifanc i ysgwyddo'r fath gyfrifoldeb, felly gwas colier yng Nglofa Saron fues i. Roedden ni'n cloddio'r ffas ar y system dalcen, a byddwn i'n llenwi pump neu chwe dram y dydd ar gyfer y glöwr. Byddwn i'n defnyddio rhaw pan oedd y dram yn ddigon agos at y ffas lo, ond bocs cwrlo oedd hi fel arall. Er mai crwtyn bach oeddwn i, roedd hi'n anodd llusgo bocs cwrlo llawn glo gan mai dim ond dwy droedfedd chwe modfedd o uchder oedd y wythien.

Fe wnes i hyn tan oeddwn i'n ddigon da i fod yn löwr am ychydig flynyddoedd, cyn symud i Lofa Rhydaman ac yna i'r ffas lo yng Nglofa'r Betws tan i mi gael emffysema yn 55 oed. Bues i'n gweithio ar wyneb y pwll am ychydig cyn cael gwaith yn y lamprwm. Roeddwn i'n mwynhau bod yn ddyn lampau gan fod y gwaith yn fwy amrywiol nag ar y ffas lo. Ond ar ôl streic 1984-85, doedd hi ddim yn swydd mor bleserus gan fod y rheolwr yn amau ein bod ni'n ochri gyda'r dynion, a'r dynion yn eich ystyried yn un o'r rheolwyr. Dyn lampau cynorthwyol oeddwn i, a byddwn i'n llenwi lampau cap trydan â dŵr distyll (roedd tua 250 o lampau cap yn cael eu defnyddio ym mhob sifft), glanhau'r lampau diogelwch â fflam, pwyso a gwirio'r offer achub personol (offer yr oedd pob glöwr yn ei gario ar ei felt er mwyn iddo anadlu pan fo prinder ocsigen neu nwyon gwenwynig o'i gwmpas), a glanhau'r lamprwm. Roedden ni hefyd yn carco a gofalu am bâr o ganeris a oedd yn cael eu cadw yn y lamprwm, ac a fyddai'n cael eu defnyddio gan y Frigâd Achub Glofeydd er mwyn profi am nwyon wedi ffrwydrad danddaear.

Felly, fe ges i'r union swydd yr oeddwn ei heisiau'n 14 oed, ond roedd rhaid i mi ddisgwyl tan i mi fod yn 56 oed i'w chael hi! Roedd Eirlys fy ngwraig yn gweithio yn ffreutur y Betws, tua 60 llath o'r lamprwm, a chan ein bod ni'n gweithio sifftiau, roedden ni'n gweld ein gilydd yn amlach yn y ffreutur na gartre!

George Batsford

## Husband and wife at Betws

**I** was born in July 1929 and started work when I was 14 years old. I had an uncle working in the colliery offices and he tried to get me a job in the lamp room, however I was considered too young to have that sort of responsibility so I had to go underground at Saron Colliery to work as a collier's boy instead. We worked the face on the stall system and I used to fill five or six drams a day for the collier. When the dram was close to the coal face I used to fill it with a shovel, otherwise I used the curling box. Although I was quite small I used to find dragging the curling box full of coal hard work as the seam was about two feet six inches in height.

I did this until I become good enough to work as a collier for a few years until I transferred to Ammanford Colliery and later Betws Colliery where I worked on the coal face until I contracted emphysema at the age of fifty five. I did a brief spell as a surface worker before I got a job in the lamp room. I enjoyed my work as a lamp man as it offered more variety than working on the coal face. However, after the 1984-85 strike, being a lamp man wasn't such a happy job as the manager thought we were on the men's side and the men regarded you as being management. I was the assistant lamp man, I used to top up the electric cap lamps with distilled water (there were about 250 cap lamps in use for each shift), clean the flame safety lamps, weigh and check the self rescuers (a piece of equipment that every mine worker carried on his belt to enable him to breathe when the surrounding atmosphere lacks oxygen or is contaminated with toxic gases), and clean the lamp room. We also looked after a pair of canaries which were kept in the lamp room which would be used to test for gas by the Mines Rescue Brigade if an explosion occurred underground.

So I got the job that I wanted when I was fourteen but had to wait until I was fifty six to get it! My wife Eirlys was working in Betws canteen which was about sixty yards away from the lamp room, because we were both working shifts we met more often in the canteen than we did at home!

George Batsford

Merched ffreutur y Betws a ddaeth yn ail yng nghystadleuaeth Diogelwch Ffreutur yr NCB, 1982.

Chwith i'r dde: Mair Lewis, Eirlys Batsford, Brenda O'Connor, Eirlys Mathias, Veronica Davies, Eluned Davies.

Betws canteen staff who came second in the 1982 NCB Canteen Safety competition.

L - R: Mair Lewis, Eirlys Batsford, Brenda O'Connor, Eirlys Mathias, Veronica Davies, Eluned Davies.



**B**ues i'n gweithio yn ffreutur y Betws am ryw 10-11 mlynedd. Byddwn i'n cyrraedd y gwaith tua hanner awr wedi pump y bore a gorffen am un ar ddeg, yna'n dod yn ôl am ddau tan hanner awr wedi tri, ac yna o naw yr hwyr tan hanner awr wedi un ar ddeg. Weithiau, roeddwn i awydd dweud wrth y dynion a oedd yn aros yn y ffreutur ar ddiwedd eu sifft, 'Stopwch lapan ac ewch adre' er mwyn dyn, wy moyn mynd i 'ngwely!'

Roedd Mrs Evans y bos yn rheolwr da iawn, a'r dynion i gyd yn ei pharchu. Doedden nhw byth yn rhegi o'n blaenau ni, heblaw am un adeg pan oedd bachgen ifanc eisiau potel o bop - ond roedd e'n rhegi fel cath, a minnau'n gwrthod rhoi diod iddo. Dyma'i ffrind yn ei gymryd i'r naill ochr, a dweud wrtho am ymddiheuro. A dyna a wnaeth, a dweud nad oedd yn sylweddoli ei fod yn rhegi. Dywedais wrtho 'mod i bron iawn â hwp'o'r botel o bop wysg ei hochr i'w geg!'

Arferai'r Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol gynnal cystadlaethau ar gyfer staff y ffreutur, ac ym 1982, aethon ni i'r rownd derfynol yn Blackpool. Roedden nhw wedi ail-greu cegin ffreutur yn dangos camgymeriadau bwriadol fel gadael blodfresych mewn sinc llawn dŵr brwnt, dalennau cardbord ar y llawr, bocs cymorth cyntaf anodd ei gyrraedd ar ben y rhewgell a pheryglon eraill. Roedden nhw hefyd wedi gosod bwrdd yn cynnwys pob math o fwydydd gwahanol, ac roeddech chi'n gorfod gwahaniaethu rhwng siwgr a halen, blawd a phowdwr llaeth heb eu cyffwrdd na'u blasu - gawson ni hwyl dda ar y prawf hwnnw. Ond wnaethon ni ddim ennill, gan mai enillwyr y llynedd oedd yn fuddugol eto. Roedden ni'n tampan, ac yn credu taw twyll oedd y cyfan. Roedd rhaid i ni rannu ystafell wely yn Blackpool, tair merch mewn un ystafell, ond roedd yn brofiad da. Mwynheais fy amser yn gweithio yn y ffreutur, ond roedd rhaid i mi roi'r gorau iddi ar ôl cwmpo ac anafu fy nghefn.

Eirlys Batsford

**I** worked in Betws canteen for about ten or eleven years all together. I used to come to work at half past five in the morning, finish at about eleven, then come back at two, finish at half past three, then come back again from nine to half past eleven. On times I used to feel like telling the men who hung around the canteen after their shifts "Why don't you go home and stop wittering, I've got a bed to go home to!"

My boss Mrs. Evans was a really good manager and all the men respected her, in fact the men never used to swear in front of us except on one occasion when a young boy wanted a bottle of pop and wouldn't stop swearing so I wouldn't serve him. His friend took him to one side and told him to apologise which he did and said that he didn't realise he was swearing. I told him that he was only a couple of seconds from having the bottle of pop put sideways into his mouth!

The National Coal Board used to hold competitions for canteen staff and, in 1982, we went up to Blackpool for the finals. They had built a mock up of a canteen kitchen with deliberate mistakes such as having a cauliflower in a sink full of dirty water, cardboard sheets on the floor, a first aid box out of reach on top of the fridge freezer and other hazards. There was also a table set up with various food stuffs and you had to differentiate between sugar and salt and flour and dried milk without touching or tasting them - we did very well in that test. But we didn't win as the team that had won the year before won again, we felt it was a fix - we were tamping! We had to share a bedroom in Blackpool, there were three girls in one room but it was a really good experience. I enjoyed working in the canteen but had to finish after a fall which knocked my back out of place.

Eirlys Batsford



## Gwaed ar lawr y parlwr

**G**aned George Preece yn Sir Benfro ar 10 Rhagfyr 1880. Pan oedd yn ei ugeiniau, symudodd gyda'i rieni i Abercynon er mwyn chwilio am waith, a chafodd swydd yng Nglofa Abercynon. Ym 1909, cafodd ei daro gan dram lo o dan ddaear ac fe'i cludwyd ar stretsier dros dro i'w gartref yn Aberdare Road, tua dwy filltir i ffwrdd. Roedd ganddo anafiadau difrifol, ac roedd cymaint o waed ar lawr y parlwr ffyrnt fel na allai'r teulu ei

olchi'n lân i gyd. Dywedodd y meddyg ei fod yn dda o beth nad oedd yn yfwr mawr neu fe fyddai wedi marw – roedd yn wyrth ei fod yn dal yn fyw! Yna, cafodd ei roi ar y trên a'i gludo i'r Inffymari yng Nghaerdydd (gyda dim ond peint o waed ar ôl, yn ôl pob son) lle torrwyd un goes ychydig o dan y pen-glin a'r llall fymryn uwchben y pen-glin. Cafodd fadredd (*gangrene*) wedyn, a bu'n rhaid torri un o'i goes i ffwrdd yn llwyr. Cafodd ddwy lawdriniaeth arall yn ddiweddarach oherwydd madredd. Ni weithiodd fyth wedyn.

Prin y defnyddiodd y coesau artiffisial sydd ganddo yn y llun hwn am eu bod yn drwm ac anghyfforddus; roedd hi'n well ganddo fynd a dod yn ei gadair olwyn. Ar ôl y ddamwain, dysgodd sut i grosio gan Susan Lilly Smith ei gyfnither, a oedd yn byw yn yr un stryd, fel rhan o'r broses o wella. Roedd yn hoff o drin tun hefyd, a defnyddiai hen duniau llaeth cyddwysedig i greu cwpanau yfed i blant lleol.

George Preece a'i goesau artiffisial  
George Preece with his artificial legs

## The parlour floor was covered in blood

**G**eorge Preece was born in Pembrokeshire on 10 December 1880. He moved with his parents to Abercynon when in his twenties looking for employment and got a job in Abercynon Colliery. In 1909 he was run over by a coal dram underground and had to be carried home on a makeshift stretcher to his home in Aberdare Road, which was a distance of around two miles. His injuries were very severe and the front room parlour floor was so covered in blood that the family 'couldn't mop it all up'. The doctor told the family that it was a good job he wasn't a drinker or he would have died – it was a miracle he survived! He was then put on a train and taken to Cardiff Infirmary (reputedly having only one

pint of blood left) where one leg was taken off below the knee and the other one just above the knee. He later contracted gangrene and some more of one of his legs had to be removed. He later had two more operations due to gangrene. He never worked again.

He very rarely used the artificial legs he wears in the photo as he found them heavy and uncomfortable; he preferred to get about in his wheelchair. After the accident he was taught crocheting by his cousin Susan Lilly Smith, who lived in the same street, as part of his rehabilitation. He also liked working with tin and made the local children drinking cups from used condensed milk containers.

## Fy namwain angheuol gynta

**H**anner ffordd drwy sifft y bore, fe glywsom ni waedd ar hyd y ffas wal hir – 'mae Harry wedi'i gladdu'. Dyma Doug, cydchwaraewr rygbi Harry, yn rhuthro heibio cyn i ni ymuno â'r gweithwyr eraill i geisio achub Harry; ond yn anffodus, roedd wedi'i gladdu am ormod o amser. Anfonais rywun i nôl stretsier a blancedi, a chyda chymorth y dynion eraill, lapiais Harry a'i glymu ar y stretsier cynfas. Wrth i'r dynion ddechrau'r daith o filltir a hanner yn ôl i grombil y pwll, bu'n rhaid i mi fynd i nôl fy nghot o'r ffas lo cyn ymuno â nhw.



Ar y wyneb, roedd meddyg yn disgwyl amdanom mewn adeilad bychan gan nad oedd baddondai pen pwll na chanolfan feddygol yng Nglofa Llanhilledd ar y pryd. Wedi iddo archwilio'r corff, dywedodd wrthyf am fynd â Harry yn ôl i'w gartref yn yr ambiwlans a safai i fyny ar y ffordd fawr. Gyda chymorth dyn a oedd newydd ymuno â dosbarth hŷn Urdd Sant Ioan, aethom ryw ddwy filltir i gartre' Harry, sef tyddyn bach ar y mynydd uwchben Crymlyn.

Dyma ni'n rhoi Harry, a oedd yn dal yn ei ddillad gwaith llychlyd, ar ffwrdd cegin prysgoed lle bues i'n ei folchi a rhoi crys glân amdano. Rwy'n cofio sylwi ar gard o amgylch y lle tân glo yn y gegin, a chewynnau babi ychydig fisoedd oed yn sychu arno.

Pan gyrhaeddodd mam Harry o Llanhilledd i fod yn gefn i'w wraig, gadewais i a'm cynorthwydd er mwyn cerdded tair milltir yn ôl adref i newid o'n dillad gwaith. Wrth fynd dros y mynydd, dyma ni'n aros wrth nant fach er mwyn i mi olchi fy nwylo a 'ngwyneb. Yna, eisteddais i lawr ac agorais fy mocs bwyd i fwyta brechdan. Yn sydyn, dechreuodd y dyn arall gyfogi, ac ar ôl iddo ddod ato'i hun dywedodd, 'Sut ar y ddaear all di fwyta ar ôl popeth sy' newydd ddigwydd?' Dim ond dwy ar bymtheg oed oeddwn i, cadét Sant Ioan, ond doeddwn i ddim wedi cynhyrfu o gwbl ar y pryd. Ond, yn ddiweddarach, dyma'r cyfan yn fy nharo i ac allwn i ddim cysgu'r noson honno wrth ail-fyw popeth.

Arthur Lewis OBE

## Dealing with my first fatality

**I**t was the early half of the morning shift and along the longwall coalface came a shout – "Harry's buried". Doug, a rugby colleague of Harry rushed past me as we joined other workmates to recover Harry; unfortunately Harry had been buried too long. I sent out by for the stretcher and blankets and, with help, I wrapped Harry and secured him on the canvas stretcher. As the men began the one and half mile walk back to pit bottom I had to go back down the coal face to get my coat before catching them up.

On the surface a doctor was waiting in a small building as there were no pithead baths or medical centre at Llanhilleth Colliery at that time. He examined the body and said for me to take Harry to his home in the ambulance waiting up on the main road. With the help of a man who had recently joined the Senior St John's Ambulance class, we travelled some two miles to Harry's home which was a small holding on a mountain overlooking Crumlin.

We laid Harry's body, still in his working clothes and covered with coal dust, on a scrub topped kitchen table where I bathed him and put a clean shirt on him. I remember noticing that the coal fire in the kitchen was surrounded by a guard on which there were napkins drying for the baby which had been born a few months earlier.

With the arrival of Harry's mother from Llanhilleth to support Harry's wife, my helper and I left to walk the three miles home to change out of our working clothes. On the way back over the mountain we stopped by a stream so that I could wash my hands and face. Having washed I sat down and opened my tommy box and started to eat a sandwich. The man with me was immediately sick and, when he stopped retching he said "How on earth can you eat after what's happened?" I was seventeen years old and still a St John's cadet but I felt quite calm at the time. However, the reaction set in later and I couldn't sleep that night reliving it all.

Arthur Lewis OBE



## O Gaint i Gymru

**B**rodor o'r Blaenau, Sir Fynwy, oedd 'nhad, ond symudodd i weithio yng Nglofa Chislet, Swydd Caint, yn ystod y 1930au. Cefais fy ngeni yn Ramsgate ym 1936. Dechreuais weithio yn y sied lampau yng Nglofa Chislet pan oeddwn i'n bymtheg oed. Ar ôl troi'n ddeunaw, dechreuais weithio fel gwas colier ac yna'n löwr tan 1970 pan ddes i'n ddynd hedins. Pan gaeodd Chislet ym 1963, symudais i Lofa Tilmanstone tan i honno gau ym 1986.

Treuliais gyfnod byr yn gweithio yn ne Cymru ym 1969. Daeth fy nheulu gyda mi ar wyliau, ond fe arhosom ni am dri mis yn y diwedd a chefais waith yng Nglofa Rose Heyworth. Yna bu farw fy nhad, a dychwelais i Gaint. Tra'r oeddwn i'n gweithio yng Nglofa Rose Heyworth, roedd fy ngwraig yn feichiog ac aeth i Ysbyty Blaina. Sifft brynhawn oedd hi, a dyma'r heddwys yn cnocio'r drws a dweud wrthyf am fynd i'r ysbyty cyn gynted â phosib. Roedd e'n gwrthod rhoi lifft i mi, felly roedd rhaid i mi gerdded drwy'r glaw trwm!

A minnau'n un ar hugain oed, roeddwn i'n gweithio ar y ffas lo yn Chislet pan ddisgynnodd fy ffrind o flaen y peiriant torri glo a cholli'i goes. Cafodd forffin, ac roedd rhaid i mi gario'r goes wedi'i lapio mewn brethyn bradis a dilyn y stretsier am ryw ddwy filltir at y siafft. Pan gyrhaeddodd ni'r wyneb, gadewais y goes ar fwrdd yr ystafell ambiwlans, gyda'r esgid ar ei droed o hyd. Roeddwn i'n sâl fel ci pan es i mas. Cefais dri diwrnod i ffwrdd, heb dâl.

Dro arall, roeddem ar ein cwrcwd tu ôl i'r tybiau glo yn yr hedins, yn cysgodi rhag y gwaith tanio. Dyma ddarn o garreg yn bownsio i lawr y llwybr, taro dolen ac yna bwrw'r dirprwy yn anymwybodol. Roedd rhaid i ni ei gario oddi yno, wedyn. 'Doggy' oedd ei enw i ni, oherwydd bod ganddo goler ci am ei wddf er mwyn hongian ei lamp ddiogelwch. Brodor o Abertylery oedd e, ac un diwrnod, roedden ni wedi paratoi'r hedins yn barod ar gyfer tanio ffrwydrion pan ddaeth i mewn a dweud, 'O yffach, wy' di gadael y batri tanio tu fas!' Felly, roedd rhaid i ni ddefnyddio batri'r lamp cap i danio'r ffrwydrion, a dywedodd, 'Dim gair wrth neb neu fe gaiff pawb y sac'. O ran diogelwch, roedden ni'n torri sawl cornel gan ein bod ni'n cael ein talu ar sail cynnyrch, a bydden ni'n colli arian fel arall.

Yn Chislet, roedd yna ddau Gymro eisiau gadael y pwll yn gynnar i wylio'r rygbi. Doedden nhw ddim yn gallu fforddio colli cyflog, felly fe benderfynon nhw fugio anaf. Meddai un brawd wrth y llall, 'Arhosa di

fan hyn ac esgus bo' ti wedi cael anaf, ac af i nôl y dirprwy'. Pan ddychwelodd gyda'r dirprwy, fe welodd ei frawd yn griddfan mewn poen ar lawr gan feddwl, 'Am actor da!' Ond mewn gwirionedd, tra'r oedd yn cymryd arno' i fod wedi anafu ar y llawr, disgynnodd carreg ar ei wyneb. Cafodd ei gludo mas ar stretsier a cholli'r gêm rygbi wedi'r cwbl.

Bues i'n gofalu am lawer o fois dan hyfforddiant gydol fy ngyrfa, ac roedden ni bob amser yn chwarae tricie arnyn nhw. Roeddwn yn dweud wrthynt eu bod yn gorfod pasio prawf, a bydden ni'n gosod bloc o bren chwe modfedd o'u blaenau. Y gamp oedd torri'r pren yn ei hanner gydag un ergyd o'r fwyell, ond gyda mwgwd dros eu llygaid. Felly, roedden ni'n rhwymo hen sgarff am eu llygaid, ac yn sleifio eu bocs bwyd yn lle'r pren cyn iddyn nhw daro gyda'r fwyell. Alla i ddim ailadrodd eu hymateb nhw wedyn!

'Prawf' arall oedd gofyn iddyn nhw godi sach o lwch carreg dros eu pennau ddeg o weithiau. Roedden nhw'n credu bod hynny'n hawdd, ond wrth iddo godi'r sach, byddwn i'n sleifio'r tu ôl iddynt a gwneud twll gyda chyllell yn y sach fel bod y llwch yn tywallt drostyn nhw – roedd yn debyg i ddosbarthwr blawd!

Aeth 'Chalky', un o'r glowyr dan hyfforddiant gyda mi, ymlaen i fod yn swyddog yr heddlu ac roedd ar y llinell biced yn ystod streic 1984-85. Gan ei fod yn gyn-löwr, roedd ei benaethiaid am iddo enwi 'bwllis' undeb yr NUM, ond gwrthododd fradychu ei ffrindiau, a chafodd ei drosglwyddo.

Arferwn i roi gwersi gyrru peiriant ar gledrau (*gathering arm loader*) i'r glowyr dan hyfforddiant. Un diwrnod, roedd un ohonyn nhw'n gyrru'r llwythwr pan ddaeth y dirprwy i mewn a gofyn, 'Pwy sy' ar y peiriant?' 'Gary', atebais, 'ma'r papurau da fe, ac ma fe'n gwneud yn dda iawn'. Wrth i mi orffen y frawddeg, bachodd Gary y peiriant yn y cylchoedd a oedd yn cynnal y llwybr cyn llwyddo i ddymchwel hanner yr hedins – aeth y dirprwy'n benwan!

Does dim cofeb o fath yn y byd i'r diwydiant glo yng Nghaint. Lleiafrif oedd y glowyr yno, ac roedd y bobl leol yn troi'u trwynau arnom. Mae'n braf dod yn ôl i Gymru lle mae yna ymdeimlad cryf o falchder yn tifeiddiaeth y diwydiant glo.

**Brian Webber**

## Working in Kent

**M**y father was born in Blaina but moved to work in Chislet Colliery, Kent during the 1930s. I was born in Ramsgate in 1936. I started work in the lamp room at Chislet when I was fifteen years old. When I reached eighteen I started underground as a collier's boy and later became a collier until 1970 when I became a heading man. Chislet closed in 1963 and I transferred to Tilmanstone until that colliery closed in 1986.

I worked in south Wales for a short period during 1969. I brought my family down for a holiday but actually stayed for three months and started work in Rose Heyworth Colliery. However, my father died and I transferred back to Kent. While I was in Rose Heyworth my wife was pregnant and in Blaina Hospital, I was on afternoon shift and a policeman knocked the door and told me that I had to get down to the hospital as soon as possible. He wouldn't give me a lift so I had to walk there in the pouring rain!

When I was twenty-one I was working on the coal face in Chislet when my friend fell in front of the coal cutter and lost his leg. He was given morphine and I was given the leg wrapped up in brattice cloth and told to follow the stretcher for about two miles to the shaft. When we got to the surface I put the leg on the ambulance room table, it still had the boot on the end of it. I went outside and was sick as a dog. I was given three days off without pay.

Another time we were in the heading crouched down behind the tubs sheltering from shot firing. A piece of stone bounced down the roadway, hit a ring and then hit the deputy out cold so we had to carry him out. We used to call him 'Doggy' because he used to wear a dog collar around his neck to hang his flame safety lamp on. He was from Abertillery and one day we had prepared the heading ready for shot firing when he came in and said "O Christ, I've left the shot firing battery outside!" So we had to use a cap lamp battery to set the charge off and he said "Don't tell anyone or we'll all have the sack." Talk about safety, we used to cut a lot of corners because we were on piecework and would lose money if we didn't.

There were two Welsh brothers in Chislet who wanted to leave work early to watch the rugby but couldn't afford to lose the pay so they decided to fake an injury. The one brother said to the other "You stay there and pretend to be injured and I'll fetch the deputy". When the brother came back with the deputy he saw his brother lying on the floor moaning and groaning and thought to himself "He's a good actor!" But, in fact, while he was lying on the floor pretending to be injured, a stone



Sied lampau, Glofa Tilmanstone 1982. O'r chwith i'r dde: Gary Hardacre, Lloyd Stewert ('Chalky'), Brian Webber, Mick Denny, Terry Ratlan  
Lamp room Tilmanstone Colliery 1982. From left to right: Gary Hardacre, Lloyd Stewert ('Chalky'), Brian Webber, Mick Denny, Terry Ratlan

had come down and cut his face open, so he had to be carried out on a stretcher and missed the rugby anyway.

Throughout my career I looked after a lot of trainees and we used to always play tricks on them. I used to say that they had to pass a test and we used to get a six-inch block of wood and put it in front of them. They were told that they had to cut it in half with one blow of the hatchet but they had to be blindfolded first. So we used to wrap an old scarf around their eyes and, just before they struck the blow, would put their food box in place of the wood. I can't tell you what they would say to us afterwards!

Another 'test' which we asked trainees to do was to lift a bag of stone dust over his head ten times. They thought that was easy but as he was doing it I used to sneak around behind him and slit the bag with a knife so that the dust went all over him – he looked like a flour grader!

One of my trainees was called 'Chalky' and he later became a police officer and was on picket lines during the 1984-85 strike. Because he had been a miner his superiors wanted him to name the NUM 'bully boys' but he wouldn't split on his mates and got transferred.

I used to give trainees lessons on driving a tracked machine called a gathering arm loader. One day a trainee was operating the loader and the deputy came in and asked "Who's on the machine?" I answered "Gary, he's got his papers and is doing very well." As I finished the sentence Gary caught the machine on the rings holding the roadway up and brought down half the heading – the deputy went berserk!

There are no memorials to mining in Kent. Miners were in a minority in and isolated from the locals who tended to look down on us. It's nice to come back to Wales where there's real pride in coal mining heritage.

**Brian Webber**



# Dau gan tunnell o gerrig

Ond yw bywyd yn braf? Mae'n ganol y 1960au, dwi'n bedair ar bymtheg oed, ac ar y ffordd 'nôl o wyliau am ddim diolch i'r Frenhines a'r Fyddin Dirioogaethol. Yr unig reswm wnaethon ni ymuno oedd achos bod bar y Neuadd Ymarfer ar agor am ba hyd bynnag yr oedden ni ei eisiau ar ôl ychydig o wilibawan a oedd yn cael ei alw'n 'hyfforddiant'. Roedd llawer o'r sarjants yn gyn-filwyr o'r rhyfel diwethaf, ac roedden nhw'n defnyddio'r lle fel rhyw fath o ad-daliad am eu gwasanaeth ar flaen y gad. Un tro, cafodd y Fyddin rybudd bod yr IRA yn mynd i ddwyn gynnu o neuadd ymarfer, ond doedd neb yn gwybod p'un yn union, felly roedd yr holl neuaddau ymarfer ar wyladwriaeth. Nos Wener oedd hi, a gadawyd deg ohonom i warchod ystafell y bar. Aeth y stiward adref am un ar ddeg, gan adael y bar ar agor er mwyn i ni gael cysgu. Jiawch, gredwch chi fyth faint o gwrw am ddim yfon ni'r noson honno. Hancocks oedd e, ac roedd yn blasu fel *anti freeze*, nid 'mod i erioed wedi blasu hwnnw chwaith. Dyle'r IRA fod yn ddiolchgar nad aton ni ddaethon nhw'r noson honno, neu byddai'n hanadl ni wedi'u lladd nhw.

Newydd ddod nôl o wersyll Otterburn yn Northumberland, lle hyfryd os ydych chi'n hoffi grug a thywydd diflas, a'r unig ddiwrnod pan na chawson ni law; fe gawson ni eira; a hyn ddiweddd Ebrill! Aethom dros y ffin i Hawick yn yr Alban ddydd Sul diwethaf. Caeodd y bar ar ei ben am ddeg yr hwyr, ond llwyddon ni'r Cymry clyfar i gael cwrw ychwanegol cyn stop tap a pharhau i ganu pa bynnag ddwli ddaeth i'n meddyliau meddw. Agorodd drws y dafarn a dyma'r cawr o gwnstabl yn dod trwyddo a horwth o sarjant mawr wrth ei ochr gan ddweud, 'Amser gadael fechgyn', a ninnau'n ateb, 'Cer i grafu', neu rywbeth fel'na. Doedden nhw ddim yn derbyn unrhyw nonsens lan fa'nny, daeth ei bastwn mas a chwalu'r gwydrau llawn ar y bwrdd nesaf. 'Eich pennau chi fydd nesa', meddai fe, 'Hwy!' medden ni, a gadael. Roedd Newcastle yn fyd hollol wahanol, cwrw da a merched gwych. Mewn tafarn ger yr afon, roedd dynion wedi gwisgo fel menywod, credwch neu beidio, felly roedd rhaid i chi fod yn ofalus! Roedd gyda nhw aderyn Mynah hefyd a ddysgodd ambell air newydd i mi, ond roedd y merched lleol yn rhegi'n well na fe!

Dwi newydd fynd heibio i Drefynwy, felly bydda i adref toc os na fydd yr hen gronc o lori Bedford tair tunnell yn torri lawr. 'Nôl i'r gwaith ddydd Llun fel prentis trydanwr yn y pwll glo. Dyw'r gwaith ddim yn ddrwg i gyd, y cwbl sydd angen ei wneud yw mynd trwy 'mhethau gan geisio ymddangos yn ddeallus a tharo pethau gyda morthwyl bob hyn a hyn, digonedd o amser bant ar gyfer hyfforddiant ac ati ac arian da ar derfyn dydd. Fel dywedais i, mae'n fywyd braf. Criw

o ddynion gwych hefyd, yn tynnu'ch coes chi'n ddi-baid cofiwch, ac yn dangos fawr ddim emosiwn, ond gallwch chi ymddiried ynndyn nhw. Tua mis yn ôl, roedd Tom Treherbert, sy'n gweithio sifft b'nawn ar y dydd Gwener, wedi casglu ei gyflog ond wedi anghofio ei gadw gyda'i ddillad glân yn y locer gan ei adael ar y silff yn lle hynny. Mae'n siŵr bod tua 500 neu 600 o ddynion wedi pasio'r arian y prynhawn hwnnw, ond roedd yn dal i fod yno pan ddychwelodd i ben y pwll.

Mi fydda i'n ôl yn Ardal B10 ddydd Llun, fodd bynnag, yn y Wythien Fawr – dyn a ŵyr pam maen nhw wedi'i henwi'n Wythien Fawr gan mai dim ond deng modfedd ar hugain o drwch yw hi fel arfer. Mae yna ryw ffawt daearegol ar y ffas lo ar hyn o bryd, ac mewn un man maen nhw wedi gorfod gosod pyst pren naw troedfedd i gynnal y to da uwchben y darnau sydd wedi disgyn. Fel 'wedes i, mae'r rhain tua naw troedfedd o uchder a phymtheg modfedd ar draws, ond yn torri fel matsis os bydd pwysau arny'n nhw. Yn y stent nesaf, roedd y pwysau wedi gwrthio'r to mor isel nes eich bod yn gorfod tynnu batri'ch lamp cap i fwrdd i wasgu drwodd. Dyw hynny ddim yn beth da iawn, nagyw?

Ond ta waeth, problem rhywun arall yw honno. Fe wnafe i aros yma gyda'm byti Dai, ac adrodd y straeon diweddaraf wrtho am fy anturiaethau yng ngwersyll y fyddin dirioogaethol. Fe es i'r ysgol gyda Dai, ac rydyn ni'n ffrindiau byth ers hynny, a dwi wedi gaddo ei helpu i ddysgu gyrru. Mae'n rhaid i mi wneud tipyn o ymdrech oherwydd mi wnes i ei siomi cyn i mi fynd i'r gwersyll. Roedd e'n edrych ymlaen shwt gymaint at gael gyrru fy nghar i, ond roeddwn i'n rhy flinedig ar ôl gwaith, a dywedais, 'Tro nesa, ife?'

'Na chi swydd braf sydd ganddo fe, y cythrel lwcus. Y cwbl mae'n ei wneud yw eistedd ar ben pellaf cludydd y ffas a thynnu'r lifer bach i un ochr er mwyn i'r aradr lo ddod i lawr y ffas, a thro'i'r lifer y ffordd arall iddo fynd i fyny. Dim ond eistedd yno'n gweld y glo'n mynd heibio, pan nad yw'r ffas ar stop hynny yw, sef y rhan fwya o'r amser. Mae'n ennill cyflog colier am hynny hefyd, sydd ddim yn ffôl.

Yr hyn na wyddwn i, fodd bynnag, wrth yrru adref o Ogledd Lloegr, oedd bod y to wedi cwmpo ar y ffas lo B10 ddeuddydd ynghynt, uffarn o gwmp hedyd, a bod Dai wedi'i gladdu gan dros ddau gan tunnell o gerrig – doedd gan y creadur bach ddim gobaith.

Mae'n rhyfedd fel mae'ch meddwl yn crwydro'n ôl weithiau. Digwyddodd e flynydde'n ôl, ond weithiau dwi'n meddwl y byddwn i wedi bod gyda fe mwy na thebyg petawn i ddim yn y Gwersyll. A dwi'n dal i deimlo'n euog am y gwersi gyrru hyd heddiw.

Ray Lawrence

# Two hundred tons of stone

Great life this, isn't it? It's the mid 1960s, I'm nineteen years of age, and on the way back from a free holiday courtesy of Queen Liz and the Territorial Army. We only joined up because the bar at the Drill Hall stayed open as long as you wanted it too after the little bit of messing around that they called training. Lot of the sergeants there were old soldiers from the last war and they used the place as a sort of reimbursement for their service at the front. One time the Army had a tip-off that the IRA was going to raid a drill hall for the guns, but they didn't know which one so they put them all on alert. It was a Friday night and they plonked ten of us in the bar room to guard the place. The steward left at 11 o'clock but left the bar open for us to kip down. God, some free beer was drunk that night! Hancock's it was, tasted like anti freeze, not that I've ever tasted anti freeze. Lucky for them the IRA didn't turn up or we would have knocked them out with our breath.

Just been to Otterburn Camp up in Northumberland, lovely place if you like heather, and bad weather (hey, that rhymes), the only day it didn't rain; we had snow, this in late April! We went 'North of the Border' on Sunday last to Hawick in bonny Scotland. Ten o'clock prompt they shut the bar, but us clever Taff's got extra beer in before shut tap and continued singing whatever gibberish our drunken minds could think of. The pub door opened and in walked a bloody huge police constable and alongside him a bloody gigantic sergeant, "time to go lads," he said, "Rhubarb" or words to that effect we replied. They don't mess about up there, out comes his truncheon and he smashes the full ones on the nearest table. "Next time it's your heads" says he, says we, "Goodbye" and we left. Newcastle was a different place, great beer and great girls. In a pub down by the river there were men dressed as women, believe it or not, so you had to be careful! They also had a Mynah bird who taught me a few new words, only the girls up there could swear better than him.

I have just passed Monmouth so it won't be long until I'm home, unless this old Three Ton Bedford lorry breaks down. Back to work on Monday, apprentice electrician in the pit I am, it's not a bad job, you just strut around trying to look intelligent and if things don't work you hit them with an hammer, plenty of time off for schooling and good money at the end of it. As I said it's a great life. Good bunch of men too, take the mickey out of you a lot mind, and won't show you a lot of emotion, but you can trust them. A month ago Tom Treherbert was afternoons on the Friday, he collected his pay but forgot to put it in his clean clothes locker leaving it on the ledge. Must have been 500 or 600 men passed that pay packet but it was still there when he came up the pit.

Although I'm back in B10 District on Monday, it's in the Big Vein, how the hell they can call it the Big Vein when its only thirty inches thick normally. At the moment there is a geological fault on the coalface and in the one place they have had to put up nine-foot high timbers to hold the good roof above the falls. As I said they are nine feet high and about 15 inches wide, but snap like matchsticks when the weight comes on. In the next stent a squeeze has brought the roof down so low that you have to take your cap lamp battery off your belt to wriggle through. That's not great is it?

Never mind, that's somebody else's problem. I will stay on the dump end of the face panzer with my old butty Dai, and put him up to date on my escapades in Camp with the TA. Went to school with Dai, and remained friends since, in fact I have promised him that I would teach him to drive. I will have to make an effort on that because I let him down just before I went to camp. He was all excited about having a go in my car but I was too tired after work, and said "Another day, huh?"

Now he hasn't got a bad job, fell in lucky he did, all he does is sit on the end of the face armoured conveyor and pull a little lever one way, for the coal plough to come down the coalface, and then the other was for it to go back up the face. Just sits down and watch the coal go by, that is when the face is not on stop, which it mostly is. He gets the colliers' rate for that as well, not bad is it?

What I didn't know when I was driving down from 'Up North' was that two days earlier they had a fall of roof in the dump end of the B10 coalface, a bloody big fall it was too, over two hundred tons of stone came down and poor old Dai was under it, he didn't stand a chance.

It is funny how your mind drifts back sometimes, it happened all those years ago, but sometimes I think that I would probably been with him if I wasn't in Camp, and even to this day I feel guilty about the driving lessons.

Ray Lawrence

Ray Lawrence gyda'r criw yng ngwersyll Otterburn, Northumberland, tua 1965.

Ray Lawrence with his anti tank gun team at Otterburn Camp, Northumberland, c.1965.





# Glöwr yr heulwen

Cefais ddamwain ar Hedin Will Fry yn y Wythien Ddeunaw Troedfedd i lawr yn y Cornish Drift yng nglofa Onllwyn No. 3, neu Lofa Banwen i chi a fi. Collais fy llygad, a dyna ddiwedd ar fy ngyrfa mewn pwll glo dwfn.

Gan nad oeddwn i'n gallu gweithio danddaear mwyach, fe es i'r canolfannau adsefydlu ym Mhort Talbot a Rhodfa'r Gorllewin, Caerdydd. Y lleoliad hwnnw yng Nghaerdydd, gyda llaw, oedd ble cafodd yr arian cyntaf ei fathu yng Nghymru. Roedden nhw'n hyfforddi gweithwyr yno ar gyfer y Bathdy Brenhinol a oedd yn cael ei godi yn Llantrisant ar y pryd, ac fel ceidwad storfa beirianeg dan hyfforddiant, roeddwn i'n pwysu'r blancs cyntaf ac, ar ddiwedd y sifft, yn pwysu'r ceiniogau cyntaf. Yr hen ddarnau hanner ceiniog cyn-degol oedd y rhain, gyda llun llong hwylio ar un ochr, ac fe'u hanfonwyd i'r Bathdy Brenhinol yn Llundain a oedd yn dal ar waith cyn i Lantrisant agor.

Roedd y Bwrdd Glo wedi dweud y bydden nhw'n dod o hyd i waith i mi ar ôl y ddamwain, ond er i mi wneud dwsin o geisiadau, ches i erioed unrhyw ateb heb sôn am gyfweiliad. Fy swydd gyntaf go iawn oedd gyda chwmni Baglan Engineering, Castell-nedd. Prif gontract y cwmni oedd creu drysau haearn bwrw crwn anferthol yn ogystal â'u fframiau dur gwrthstaen ar gyfer system garthffosiaeth Tokyo. Yn anffodus, roedd rhaid i mi adael y cwmni ar ôl i lwch yr haearn bwrw fynd i'm twll llygad, ond cefais swydd yn syth wedyn fel uwch-swyddog clerigol mewn ysbty. Er bod y cyflog yn fach, roedd gennyf waith o leiaf ac roedd y bobl yn hyfryd. Ond doedd gyrfa gwas sifil ddim at fy nant, a gwelais hysbyseb swydd gan Bewley and John Engineers. Cefais gyfweiliad gan foi o Swydd Efrog, Bill Unthank, a chael y swydd. Roedd y cyflog yn well o lawer, a'r gweithle yn debycach i'r hyn yr oeddwn wedi arfer ag e.

Ar ôl Bewley's, fe es i weithio i Roadville Engineers oedd â chontract gyda Morganite Electrical Carbon Ltd, Abertawe. Yna, fe wnaeth cyfaill i mi, Ken Curan, sefydlu ei gwmni peirianeg ei hun o'r enw Gemmak ac fe es i weithio iddo fe, yn Morganite o hyd ond mewn swyddfa yng Nghastell-nedd a olygai lai o deithio. Er hynny, daeth contract Morganite i ben, a chafodd Gemmak gontract newydd yn y Barri. Doeddwn i ddim yn edrych ymlaen at deithio o Banwen i'r Barri bob dydd.

Fodd bynnag, roedd Wimpey yn agor safle glo brig newydd gerllaw safle glo brig anferthol Maesgwyn wrth ymyl fy nghartref yn Banwen ac roedden nhw'n chwilio am rywun i reoli swyddfa'r safle. Gwnes gais, gan fod



**Datgymalu'r peiriant W1800 Ransome Rapier Walking Dragline ym Maesgwyn er mwyn ei gludo i UDA ym 1989. Adeiladwyd y peiriant hwn ar y safle a chafodd ei gomisiynu ym 1961. Dyma'r peiriant tir mwyaf yng ngwledydd Prydain ar y pryd, a gallai symud 10,000 tonn o ddeunyddiau mewn sifft 24 awr. Roedd yn pwysu 1,800 tonn ac yn cael ei alw'n 'Big Lady' ar lafar gwlad. George Brinley Evans sy'n sefyll oddi tano.**

cyfle i weithio mor agos at gartref eto fel ennill y pwls. Dywedwyd wrthyf nad oedd Wimpey yn hoffi'r undebau llafur ac y bydden nhw'n rhoi'r sac i unrhyw un a oedd yn aelod ohonynt. Roeddwn i'n aelod hir oes o Undeb Cenedlaethol y Gweithwyr Glo ac, er bod Wimpey yn ymwybodol o hyn, soniwyd yr un gair am y peth. Bellach, roeddwn i'n gweithio i gwmni rhyngwladol. Fe ges i lwfans car, swyddfa gyda dodrefn newydd sbon, roedd yno dai bach glân fel pin mewn papur a ffreutur gwaith oedd gyda'r gorau i mi ei gweld erioed. Pan gafodd fy ngwraig salwch anghueol, fe wnaeth Elton Morgan y cyfarwyddwr fy ngalw i'w swyddfa a dweud wrthyf am gymryd faint bynnag o amser bant yr oeddwn ei angen. Pe bawn i'n dal i weithio i'r Bwrdd Glo, byddwn i wedi gorfod esgus bod yn sâl er mwyn cael nodyn gan y meddyg. Dwi wedi bod yn lwcus; bues i'n gweithio i gyflogwyr da o 14 oed tan 64½ oed. Wimpey oedd y gorau ohonynt i gyd, heb os.

George Brinley Evans

# Sunshine mining

I had been told by the National Coal Board that they would find me a job after my accident but, even though I applied a dozen times, I never had a reply let alone an interview and my first proper job was at Baglan Engineering in Neath. Their main contract was making huge cast iron circular doors together with their stainless steel doorframes for the Tokyo sewage system. Sadly, the heavy cast iron dust got into my eye socket and I had to leave but I went straight into a job as a Higher Clerical Officer in the hospital service. The pay was small but it was a job and the people I worked with were lovely. However, I wasn't cut out to be a civil servant and applied for a job which was advertised by Bewley and John Engineers. I was interviewed by a Yorkshire man named Bill Unthank and was given the job. The pay was much better and the work environment was what I had been used to.

From Bewley's I went to work for Roadville Engineers who had a contract with Morganite Electrical Carbon Ltd., Swansea. Then a friend of mine, Ken Curan, started up his own engineering company called Gemmak and I went to work for them, still at Morganite but with an office in Neath which cut down on my travelling. However the contract with Morganite ended and Gemmak's next contract was in Barry and I didn't relish the prospect of travelling from Banwen to Barry every day.

However, Wimpey were opening a new opencast coal site adjacent to the massive Maesgwyn opencast site near my home in Banwen and wanted someone to manage the site office. I applied and got the job, being able to work so close to home again was like winning the pools. I was told that Wimpey didn't like trade unions and would sack anyone who belonged to one. I was a life long member of the National Union of Mineworkers and, although Wimpey was well aware of this, they didn't even mention it. I was now working for a company that operated world wide. I was automatically given a car allowance, the office furnishings were brand new, the toilets were spotlessly clean and the works canteen was the best I had ever used. When my wife became terminally ill, Elton Morgan, the director, called me into his office and told me to take off whatever time I needed. If I had still been working for the National Coal Board I'd have had to go to the doctors pretending to be ill in order to get a sick note. I have been lucky; I worked for good employers from the age of fourteen until I was sixty-four-and-a-half. However, Wimpey was by far the best of them.

George Brinley Evans

**The W1800 Ransome Rapier Walking Dragline being dismantled at Maesgwyn Cap in readiness for transporting to the USA in 1989. This machine was built on site and commissioned in 1961. It was then the largest land machine in Britain and was capable of moving 10,000 tons of material in a 24 hour shift. It weighed 1,800 tons and was known locally as the 'Big Lady'. The man standing under it is George Brinley Evans**

I had an accident on Will Fry's Heading in the Eighteen Foot Seam down the Cornish Drift at Onllwyn No. 3, better known as Banwen Colliery. I lost an eye and I had to end my deep mining career.

As I couldn't work underground anymore I attended the rehabilitation centres at Port Talbot and Western Avenue, Cardiff. Incidentally, the latter was where the first coins in Wales were made. They were training men there to man the Royal Mint which was being built in Llantrisant and, as a trainee engineering store keeper, I weighed out the first blanks and, at the end of the shift, weighed in the first coins. These coins were the old pre-decimal half pennies with a sailing ship on their tails and they were sent up to the Royal Mint which was still in production in London waiting for Llantrisant to open.



# Y ffrwydrad

Cefais fy ngeni yn Rhiwparc, Abertyleri ym 1940. Dechreuodd fy nhad-cu, cefnogwr brwd o glwb Newport County, a 'nhad weithio yng Nglofa Six Bells pan oedden nhw'n bedair ar ddeg oed. Cafodd dad anaf difrifol, sef torasgwrn agored, a wnaeth e byth wella'n iawn. Er hynny, parhaodd i weithio fel gyrrwr injan halio danddaear.

Yn y gwaith tun y dechreuais i (safle Tesco heddiw) yn bymtheg oed, ond gan fod y cyflog yn wael, ymunais â'r Six Bells yn un ar bymtheg oed. Cefais hyfforddiant am 16 wythnos, wyth wythnos yng Nghanolfan Hyfforddi Oakdale ac wyth wythnos yn y coleg technegol. Cychwynnais fel gwas colier i ddyn hŷn, a chan nad oeddwn i wedi arfer â gwaith caled, roedd y gwaith rhawio'n lladdfa!

Pan ddigwyddodd tanchwa Six Bells ym 1960, roeddwn i'n byw mewn tŷ yn Victoria Road wrth ymyl y lofa. Roeddwn i ar sifft brynhawn ym Mhwll Rhif 4, Six Bells. Tua diwedd y bore oedd hi, a minnau'n tindroi cyn mynd i'r gwaith, pan welais fod rhywbeth wedi digwydd. Rhedais at y llethr uwchben y baddondai pen pwll a gweld llawer o bobl a stŵr mawr ar hyd y lle. Clywais rywun yn dweud bod ffrwydrad wedi digwydd, roedd cryn banig yno a neb yn gwybod yn union beth oedd yn digwydd. Cyrhaeddodd llu o ohebwy'r i ofyn cwestiynau – a mynd dan groen pawb. Roeddwn i'n poeni'n arw am fy 'nhad i lawr yn y pwll, ond trwy lwc, ym mhwll Rhif 4 oedd e. Ym Mhwll Rhif 5 oedd y ffrwydrad.

Er bod y cof braidd yn niwlog, rwy'n cofio gweld y corff cyntaf yn dod i ben y pwll. Roeddwn i eisiau mynd i'r gwaelodion i helpu, ond roedd rhaid i'r criw achub glofeydd sicrhau bod popeth yn ddiogel yn gyntaf. Yna, cefais fy newis i helpu danddaear ac es i newid yn y baddondai. Y peth doniol yw hyn – roedden ni'n gwisgo ein dillad ein hunain ar y pryd, ac wedi mynd â 'nhrowsus gwaith adref i roi clytiau gwlanen arno gyda glud 'NOSO' ac wrth i mi wisgo, sylweddolais nad oedd gennyf unrhyw drowsus! Roedd rhaid i mi holi i weld a allai rhywun fenthyg pâr i mi.

Ar ôl cyrraedd y gwaelod, aethom i safle'r ffrwydrad a gweld yr holl ddfrod, gyda chludefltiau wedi'u dymchwel a llanast ym mhobman. Anfonwyd rhai ohonom i fyny i'r ffas lle daethpwyd o hyd i'r corff olaf, a'i gludo mas i'r pwll. Wn i ddim pwy oedd y dyn hwnnw hyd heddiw, ond fe oedd yr olaf i'w dynnu o'r dinistr.

Gadewais y pwll tua blwyddyn wedyn; roeddwn i bob amser yn ofni y gallai'r un peth ddigwydd eto. Felly, cefais swydd gyda ffordd newydd Blaenau'r Cymoedd am flwyddyn, ond pan ddaeth y gwaith hwnnw i ben doedd dim gwaith arall i'w gael felly dychwelais i'r lofa! Gweithiais yn Six Bells tan i'm gwraig gyntaf farw a'm

gadael gyda dau o blant. Roedd hwnnw'n gyfnod anodd iawn, a chollais sawl diwrnod o waith cyn colli'n swydd. Roedd y gŵr a roddodd y sac i mi wedi disgyn a thorr'i goes yn y cyfamser, ac erbyn iddo ddychwelyd i'r gwaith, roeddwn i'n ôl hefyd. Pan welodd e f'i'n gweithio danddaear, ddywedodd e ddim gair o'i ben, dim ond syllu fel petai'n dweud, 'Roies i'r sac i ti 'achan!'

Roeddwn i'n aelod o bwyllgor yr undeb am chwe blynedd, a phan ddechreuodd streic 1984, cawsom ein hanfon mewn faniau i feysydd glo Canolbarth Lloegr. Mae'n debyg bod rhywun yn clustfeinio ar ein sgysiau ffôn, oherwydd roedd yr heddlu wastad yn gwybod beth oedd yn digwydd. Roedden ni'n mynd ar goll o hyd, ac un tro, fe gyrhaeddwn ni ryw lofa a siarad gyda'r dyn wrth y gât a ddywedodd wrthym i ddychwelyd yn y nos gan ei bod hi'n dawel ar y pryd. Pan ddaethon ni'n ôl, roedd y lle'n llawn heddlu a'n holl faniau eraill wedi'u stopio ar y ffordd. Buon ni'n picedu yno am ychydig ddyddiau, cyn cael ein galw i ddychwelyd adref. Dro arall, roedden ni ar goll ar y draffordd a gorfod gofyn i fachan yr AA am gyfarwyddiadau. Mae'n rhaid ei fod wedi'n riportio ni i'r heddlu wedyn, achos fe gawson ni'n stopio gan y glas yn fuan wedyn, a'n rhybuddiodd i osgoi'r llinell biced neu gael ein harestio. Gan fy mod wedi cael rhybudd i gadw draw o'r llinell bicedu, cefais orchymyn i wneud dim ond gyrru ceir wedyn.

Wedi wyth wythnos o streicio, daeth fy nhad i fyw atom gan nad oedd yn iach iawn, ac roedd fy mab mewn plastr, felly bu'n rhaid i mi roi'r gorau i bicedu. Arhosais adref am weddill y streic tan aeth pawb yn ôl ym mis Mawrth 1985. Ar ôl y streic, cafodd llawer o'r gweithwyr dros 50 oed dâl diswyddo a dechreuodd y bechgyn boeni am ddyfodol y pyllau. Yr hyn a ddywedwyd wrthym oedd bod croeso i bwy bynnag oedd am orffen gweithio i wneud hynny, ac aeth llawer o'r bois i Lofar Marine. Ond doedd gen i mo'r awydd, felly gorffennais yn Six Bells. Collais fy lwfans glo oherwydd 'mod i dan 50 oed, a chefais gryn drafferth dod o hyd i waith arall. Er i mi wneud cais i fod yn gyrrwr bws, roeddwn i'n rhy hen iddyn nhw. Rhais gynnig ar gadw siop, ond roedd pethau'n anodd yn ystod y dirwasgiad, felly cefais swydd fel swyddog diogelwch yng Nghasnewydd ar sifftiau 12 awr. Ymhen amser rhoddais y gorau i weithio.

Dwi'n mynd i gartref seibiant y glowyr yn Court Royal, Bournemouth nawr ac yn y man, mae'r bwyd yn flasus a dwi'n mwynhau gwibdeithiau braf i Weymouth a Poole. Dwi hefyd yn aelod o Gôr Orpheus Abertyleri ers naw mlynedd ac wedi bod i America, Canada ac Iwerddon gyda nhw. Teimladau cymysg sydd gennyf am weithio yn y lofa. Doedd dim ots 'da fi weithio yno, ond fyddwn i byth am fynd yn ôl.

Mervyn Howells

# The explosion

I was born in Rhiwparc, Abertillery in 1940. My grandfather, who was a huge Newport County fan, worked in Six Bells Colliery and my father started in the same pit at 14, was injured and had a severe compound fracture which never really healed up properly. However, he continued to work as an underground haulage engine driver.

I actually started work in the tinworks (where Tesco is today) at 15 years old, but the wages weren't very good so I got a job at Six Bells when I was 16. I received sixteen weeks training, eight weeks in Oakdale Training Centre and eight weeks in the technical college. I started as a collier's helper with an older man and, as I wasn't used to hard work, the shoveling almost killed me!

When the Six Bells explosion happened in 1960 I was actually living in a house in Victoria Road overlooking the pit. I was on afternoon shift in Number 4 Pit, Six Bells, it was late morning and was hanging around waiting to go to work, when I saw that something was going on and ran over to the banking above where the pithead baths were. There were a lot of people about and all sorts of commotion going on and I heard that there had been an explosion. There was a lot of panic because no one knew what was going on. There were reporters asking everybody questions – they really got us down! I was very worried because my father was down the pit, however he was in Number 4 Pit and the explosion was in Number 5.

It's all a bit blurred now but I remember watching the first body being brought up. I wanted to go down the pit and help but wasn't allowed down until the Mines Rescue Brigade had made sure that everything was safe. I was then picked to go down and went to change in the baths. This is the funny part, we used to wear our own clothes at the time and I had taken my working trousers home to put patches on them with 'NOSO' glue and, when I was putting my clothes on I realised I didn't have any trousers. So I had to go around asking if anyone could lend me some trousers.

When we went down the pit we went into the area of the explosion and saw the damage that had been caused, there were belt conveyors overturned and a lot of mess. Some of us were sent up the face where the last remaining body was and we carried him out to the pit. To this day I don't know the name of the man we carried out, but he was the last body recovered.

I got out of the pit about a year later; it was always on my mind that it could happen again. So I got a job on a new road on the Heads of the Valleys for a year but, when that finished, I couldn't get anything else and went back to the pit. I had to do my training all over

again! I worked at Six Bells until my first wife died and left me with two children which was very difficult and I missed a lot of time and was sacked. The manager who sacked me fell down and cut his leg and, by the time he started back, I had got my job back. When he saw me working underground he didn't say anything to me just looked as if to say "I thought I'd sacked you!"

I was on the union committee for six years and, when the 1984 strike started, we were sent up to the Midlands coalfield in transit vans. Our phones were probably tapped because the police seemed to know exactly what was going on. We always used to get lost, on one occasion we managed to find a colliery and spoke to a man on the gate who told us that nothing was happening there but to come back in the night. When we returned the place was full of police and all our other vans had been stopped on the way. We stayed there picketing for a few days and were then told to come home. On another day we got lost on the motorway and had to ask an AA man for directions. He must have split on us to the police because we were stopped shortly afterwards and told if we were seen on a picket line we'd get arrested. Because I had now been warned to keep off picket lines I was told to just drive the cars.

After about eight weeks on strike we had my father to come to live with us because he wasn't well, and my son was in plaster, so I had to stop going picketing. I sat out the rest of the strike until we went back in March 1985. After the strike a lot of the over 50s got redundancy and all the boys who remained were starting to wonder about the future of the pit. We were told that anyone who wanted to finish could do so and a lot of the boys went to Marine Colliery. However, I didn't fancy going there and finished at Six Bells. Because I was under 50 I lost my coal allowance and had a lot of trouble getting another job. I tried to get a job as a bus driver but was told that I was too old, I then tried to run a shop but the recession was too bad for me to make it a success, then I got a job as a security guard in Newport on 12 hours shifts. I eventually finished work all together.

I go to the Miners' Rest Home in Court Royal, Bournemouth sometimes, the food is very nice and there are good trips to Weymouth and Poole. I've also sung for the Abertillery Orpheus for nine years and been to America, Canada and Ireland with them. I have mixed feelings about working in the colliery, I didn't mind the work but I'd never want to go back down.

Mervyn Howells





# Dyddiau da yn y gwaith

Cefais fy ngeni ym mis Gorffennaf 1924 yn Owen Street, Rhosllanerchrugog. Gadewais yr ysgol yn 14 oed a mynd i weithio yng Ngwaith Brics Llwyneinion. Pan ddechreuodd y rhyfel ym 1939, roeddwn i'n adeiladwr dur yn ystod gwaith adeiladu ffatri arfau ym Marchwial. Gadewais y cartre' wedyn i weithio ar ffatrioedd arfau eraill yn East Retford, Nottingham, a Phont-y-pŵl.

Ym 1942, cefais fy ngalw i'r fyddin a hyfforddi yn Derring Lines, Aberhonddu. Ar ôl gorffen hyfforddi, fê'm hanfonwyd i Aldershot ble ymunais â Chorfflu Meddygol Brenhinol y Fyddin. Gwasanaethais yn yr India a Byrma, fel cynorthwydd meddygol yn gyntaf ac yna'n sarjant yn gyfrifol am y cyflenwadau gwaed. Roedden ni'n cludo dynion i ysbytai yn yr India o feysydd y gad ger afon Irrawaddy, a oedd yn uffernol o bell, a gwelais bethau erchyll iawn yno. Roedd fy ngwraig yn y fyddin hefyd, a bu'n gwasanaethu gyda'r ATS am bedair blynedd a hanner.

Gadewais y fyddin ym 1947, a chefais waith saernio gyda chwmni preifat, ac ym 1950, gofynnwyd i mi weithio i'r Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol. Roedd y cyflog a'r amodau gwaith yn well o lawer gyda'r NCB, ac roedd digon o waith ar gael gan fod holl byllau gogledd Cymru yn cael eu hailddatblygu yn sgil gwladol i'r diwydiant glo. Gweithdai Llay Main Central oedd ein pencadlys, ac roeddem yn teithio o amgylch y glofeydd ar gefn lori; ond roeddem yn cerdded i lofa Llay Hall gyda'r tŵls ar ein cefnau. Yn wir, arferem deithio ar fysiau lleol reit aml cyn i ni gael lori.

Roeddem yn gweithio tan 9.30 neu 10 o'r gloch y nos, ac yna'n codi am bump y bore eto. Roedd rhaid i ni ymolchi adref gan nad oedd baddondai pen pwll bryd hynny. Criw o bymtheg oeddem, y Tim Symudol neu 'gang Jack Grimshaw', ac os oeddem angen rhagor o ddynion, byddem yn dewis gweithwyr dibynadwy o'r lofa yr oeddem yn gweithio ynddi. Roedd yn waith trwm a pheryglus, gyda phopeth yn gorfod cael ei winsio â llaw gan nad oedd gennym graeniau trydan. Fe wnes i dorri asgwrn pont fy ysgwydd a hefyd fy asgwrn cynffon ar ôl llithro ar beipen yn Llay Main. Roeddem yn cael ein hanafu byth a beunydd, ond yn y dyddiau hynny, doedden ni ddim yn gwneud rhyw ffys na ffwdan mawr. Y peth gwaethaf oedd gweithio pan oedd hi'n wlyb ac oer. Un tro, roedden ni'n wlyb domen yng nghrombil glofa'r Bers, a dyma'r swyddog yn dweud wrthym y gallem gael 'arian dŵr', sef rhyw ddwy geiniog yr awr – yr un faint am weithio ar uchder. Roeddwn i bob amser yn gwisgo harnais diogelwch yn y siafftiau, ond byth ar adegau eraill. Byddwn yn cael fy ngalw i swyddfa'r rheolwr yn gyson oherwydd hyn, ond

roeddwn i wastad yn dweud os na allwn i ofalu amdanaf fy hun, allai neb arall wneud c h w a i t h . Roedd 'na hwyl i'w gael hefyd, fel y diwrnod pan oeddem yn cario polion sgaffaldau yn y siafft. Ni allai un dyn ymestyn yn ddigon uchel, felly dyma'r un uwchben yn dweud, 'Aros 'funud' a phiso ar ei ben!

Yn ystod y 1950au, buom yn gweithio yng nglofa Ifton yn moderneiddio pen y pwll, ac roedd yr holl waith saernio'n cael ei wneud yng ngweithdai Llay Main. Roedden ni'n adeiladu'r sgriniau glo newydd o amgylch y rhai cyfredol, heb amharu ar y gwaith cynhyrchu glo. Fe wnaethom helpu i foderneiddio Glofa'r Hafod hefyd, gan barato'r gwaith adeiladu yng ngweithdai Llay. Dwi'n cofio'r ddamwain yn yr Hafod pan wnaeth un gaetsh ddatod o'r rhaff a phlymio i lawr y siafft. Roeddwn i'n rhan o'r holl waith trwsio, gan adeiladu'r llwyfannau newydd i lawr y siafft. Fe wnaethon ni osod rhwymdrawstiau newydd ar ben y pwll er mwyn newid olwynion pwll, a newid yr injan weindio o bŵer stêm i drydan.

Yn ystod y 1960au, bu digwyddiad yn siafft y Bers pan agorodd y rhaffau tywys a bachu yn y rhigolau gan stopio'r caets. Roedd tua phymtheg o ddynion yn y caets ar y pryd, ac roedd rhaid iddyn nhw gael eu trosglwyddo i'r 'bom' (caets bach mewn argyfwng), fesul dau neu dri. Roedden nhw'n sownd yn y caets am ychydig oriau, a phawb yn ofnus ond doedd dim panig. Bu'n rhaid i ni osod rhaffau tywys newydd yn y siafft. Cawsom ein galw i Lofa Gresffordd un noson oherwydd bod y pwll weindio wedi torri yn Siafft Martin. Buon ni wrthi drwy'r nos, ac roedd wedi'i drwsio'n barod ar gyfer weindio'r dynion i lawr am 6 y bore.

Gorffennais weithio pan gaeodd Glofa'r Bers ym 1985. Roedden nhw'n ddyddiau hapus; a byddem yn gweithio'n ddi-dor am bedair awr ar hugain weithiau. Mae'n wir i ni fentro'n bywydau, ond os oedd unrhyw beth yn codi yn y lofa, ni oedd yn dod i'r fei ac yn datrys y broblem.

Dennis Owens

# Happy working days



Gosod olwynion pwll newydd yn y Parlwr Du, gyda Dennis Owens yn y crys gwyn.

Installing new sheave wheels at Point of Ayr Colliery, Dennis Owens in white shirt

I was born in July 1924 in Owen Street, Rhosllanerchrugog. I left school at fourteen years old to work in Llwyneinion Brickworks. When the war started in 1939 I worked as a steel erector during the construction of the munitions factory at Marchwiel. I later left home to work on other munitions works at East Retford, Nottingham, and Pontypool in south Wales.

In 1942 I was called up to the forces and trained at Derring Lines in Brecon. After training I was posted to Aldershot and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. I served in India and Burma, first as a medical orderly then as a sergeant in charge of blood banks. We fetched wounded men back to Indian hospitals from the battles on the Irrawaddy River, which was a hell of a long way and where I saw some really bad sights. My wife also served in the forces during the war in the ATS for four and a half years.

In 1947 I came out of the army and got a job in fabrication with a private company and, in 1950, was asked to work for the National Coal Board. The pay and conditions with the NCB were much better and there was plenty of work going on as all the north Wales pits were undergoing redevelopment after the nationalisation of the coal industry. We were based in Llay Main Central Workshops and used to travel around the collieries on the back of a lorry; although when we used to walk to Llay Hall carrying our tools on our backs. In fact we often used to travel around on the local bus before we had a lorry.

We used to work until half past nine or ten o'clock at night and then get back up at five in the morning. We used to bathe in the house as there were no pithead baths. There were about fifteen of us in what was known as the Mobile Team or, 'Jack Grimshaw's gang' although, if we needed more men, we used to pick certain reliable men from the colliery we were working in. It was dangerous and heavy work, everything had to be hand winched as we didn't have

electric cranes and I broke my collar bone once and also my coccyx when I slipped on a pipe in Llay Main. We were always getting injured but in those days we didn't play on them. The worst part was working when it was wet and cold. We were working at pit bottom in Bersham one time and we were soaking wet, the official told us that we could have 'water money', which was two pence an hour – the same as we got for working at height. I always wore safety harness in the shafts but never at other times. I was always getting called into the manager's office because of this but I always said that if I couldn't look after myself up there nobody else could. We also used to have a bit of fun, we were handling scaffolding poles in a shaft one day and one man couldn't reach up high enough, the chap above him said "Hang on a minute" and peed on his head!

During the 1950s we worked at Ifton Colliery modernising the pit head, all the fabrication being done at the Llay Main Workshops. We built new coal screens around the existing ones and all the work was carried out without holding up coal production. At Hafod Colliery we also modernised the pit head, again fabricating the building work at Llay workshops. I remember the cage accident at Hafod when one cage detached from the rope and fell down the shaft. I was involved in all the repair work building new platforms down the shaft. We put in new 'cat heads' (girder work at the top of the headgear for changing the sheaves), skip winding and the winding engine was changed from steam to electric power.

During the 1960s there was a shaft incident at Bersham when a guide rope 'bushed up' (the rope wires had opened up) and caught in the guides stopping the cage. There were about fifteen men in the cage at the time and they had to be transferred to a 'bomb' (a small emergency cage), two or three of them at a time. They had been stuck in the cage for a few hours and were all scared but they didn't panic. After that we had to renew all the shaft rope guides. We were called out to Gresford Colliery on one night because the winding pulley on the Martin Shaft had broken. We worked through the night to change it and got it ready to wind the men down at 6 am.

I finished when Bersham Colliery closed in 1985. They were all happy working days; sometimes we would work for twenty four hours non stop. We took a lot of risks but, if anything happened in a colliery, we were the ones who would get the job done.

Dennis Owens



# Gorymdaith Newyn 1934

**R**oedd fy hen fam-gu Mary Ann Davies, Carter gynt, yn rhan o orymdaith newyn 1934, sef un o'r 11 o fenywod a gerddodd yr holl ffordd o Donypanyd i Lundain. Gyda berets coch ar eu pennau, y menywod hyn oedd yn arwain gorymdaith y De. Ymhlith y gorymdeithwyr gwrol oedd Mrs Brown o Aberdâr, Mrs Cox o Gaerdydd, Mrs Francis a Mrs Paddock o Drealaw, Mrs Garland a Mrs Woods o Donypanyd.

Roedd Mary Ann Davies yn byw yn Tyntyla Road, Llwynypia, a dyma lun ohoni yn ei thŷ cyn yr orymdaith, gyda'i mab John H. Davies. Gwrthdystiad yn erbyn y Mesur Yswiriant Di-waith newydd oedd hwn, y chweched o'i fath yn ystod caledïr 1920au a'r 30au. Roedd y mesur hwn i fod i greu Bwrdd Cymorth y Di-waith yn lle'r hen Bwyllgorau Cymorth Cyhoeddus lleol gyda'r cyfraddau'n cael eu pennu'n genedlaethol.

Roedd 17 o grwpiau rhanbarthol o bob cwr o Brydain yn rhan o'r orymdaith. Cafodd y gorymdeithwyr eu hethol gan sefydliadau amrywiol fel yr undebau llafur a grwpiau'r di-waith. Daeth gorymdeithwyr o'r rhan fwyaf o faes glo cymoedd y De, wedi'u noddi gan ddwsin o gyfrinfeydd Ffederasiwn y Glowyr De Cymru. Roedd Aneurin Bevan AS hefyd yn cefnogi'r orymdaith.

Cafodd y menywod, oll gyda'u sachau teithio, groeso mawr yn y cyfarfod ffarwel. Roedden nhw'n brwydro dros hawliau'u teuluoedd yn erbyn annhegwch y Prawf Modd, sef prawf llym ar y pryd cyn cael cymorth y di-waith. Anfonwyd mab hynaf di-waith fy hen fam-gu i weithio ar fferm fel rhan o gynllun hyfforddiant y llywodraeth, a bu'n rhaid i'w merched abl, gan gynnwys fy mam-gu, fynd i ffwrdd i weini er mwyn cynnal y teulu. Roedd ei merch hynaf yn flin ei bod wedi dychwelyd adref o'i gwaith yn rhy hwyr i ddymuno'n dda i'w mam ar yr orymdaith.

Rhestrodd fy hen fam-gu yr holl lefydd yr arhosodd hi a'r gorymdeithwyr eraill dros nos yn ystod y daith: Caerdydd, Casnewydd, Cas-gwent, Beachley, Mangotsfield, Keynsham, Caerfaddon, Chippenham, Marlborough, Hungerford, Newbury, Reading, Maidenhead a Slough cyn mynd ymlaen i San Steffan. Ymunodd grwpiau eraill â nhw yng Nghaerfaddon a Hungerford. Cyfeiriodd fy hen fam-gu at garedigrwydd pobl ar hyd y daith, gan roi paneidiau, brechdanau a ffrwythau iddyn nhw. Roedd y menywod yn canu'n Gymraeg er mwyn codi'r ysbryd, ac yn benderfynol o gyrraedd pen y daith. Cawsant hwb pellach gan yr holl negeseuon telegram o anogaeth. Helpodd sawl cyngor trwy drefnu llety

mewn neuaddau lles, neuaddau ysgol, capeli, tafarnau a chlybiau, a blancedi ar eu cyfer hefyd. Dangosodd pobl leol eu cefnogaeth trwy orymdeithio gyda nhw am gyfnod byr, ac yn ôl y sôn, roedd Mrs Brown a Mrs Cox yn mwytho traed blinedig y merched fin nos. Roedd un neu ddwy angen hoe fach, a chawsant eu cludo gan eraill er mwyn ailymuno â'r grŵp.

Ar ôl gorymdeithio ar draws y wlad mewn glaw oer, cyrhaeddodd y merched Hungerford wedi blino'n lân. Cawsant swper braf a sawl dishgled o de mewn tŷ mawr lleol. Roedd fy hen fam-gu yn rhannu ystafell gyda Mrs Woods. Yng nghanol y nos, roedden nhw'n cael trafferth cysgu ac yn chwilio a chwilio am y tŷ bach. A dyma Mrs Woods yn dweud, 'Trueni na fydden i'n ôl yn Nhonypanyd - 'sdim llawer 'da ni, ond o leia' roedden ni'n gallu dod o hyd i rywle i bi-pi!'

Gyda'r si bod yr heddlu'n mynd ati'n bwrpasol i gythruddo'r gorymdeithwyr, aeth pwyllgor o bobl flaenllaw ati i sefydlu'r Cyngor dros Hawliau Sifil. Buon nhw'n herio'r propaganda a chofnodi'r sefyllfa go iawn rhag ofn y byddai unrhyw drafferth yn codi ar ôl i'r gorymdeithwyr gyrraedd Llundain. Ar gyrion Llundain, daeth torf frwdfrydig i gefnogi'r gwragedd. Daeth pawb ynghyd mewn cyngres yn Llundain ar 24 Chwefror a 4 Mawrth, gyda'r llu o heddlu yn eu cyfarfod. Cafodd y gorymdeithwyr eu croesawu gan filoedd o weithwyr y ddinas trwy gatiâu Hyde Park, a bonllefau uchel i'r gwragedd yn arbennig.

Cafodd y gwragedd groeso mawr wrth ddychwelyd i'r cymoedd hefyd. Flynyddoedd yn ddiweddarach, aeth fy hen fam-gu i'r Albert Hall i gwrdd â hen gyfeillion a orymdeithiodd gyda hi.

Ceri Leigh



**Fy hen fam-gu ar ddechrau'r orymdaith newyn - tynnwyd y llun gan ei mab, John H. Davies.**

**My great grandmother at the start of the hunger march, taken by her son John H Davies.**

# Hunger March 1934

**Llun o'r gorymdeithwyr o Gymru yn y Daily Worker, Chwefror 1934. Fy hen fam-gu yw'r pellaf ar y chwith, yn yr ail res.**

**Daily Worker, February 1934 photograph of the Welsh marchers. My great grandmother is in the second row from front, far left.**

**M**y great-grandmother Mary Ann Davies, nee Carter, took part in the 1934 hunger march. She was one of eleven women who walked from Tonympanyd all the way to London. Wearing red berets the women headed the South Wales march. Intrepid marchers included Mrs Brown from Aberdare, Mrs Cox from Cardiff, Mrs Francis and Mrs Paddock from Trealaw, Mrs Garland and Mrs Woods from Tonympanyd.

Mary Ann Davies lived in Tyntyla Road, Llwynypia and is photographed here, at her house before the march, by her son John H Davies. The hunger march, the sixth such march of the difficult times of the 1920s and '30s, was a protest against the new Unemployment Insurance Bill. This bill was to replace the local Public Assistance Committees with the Unemployment Assistance Board and rates would now be set at a national level.

The march consisted of 17 regional contingents from across Britain. The marchers were elected from various organisations including trade unions and unemployed groups. Marchers came from most valleys of the South Wales coalfield and were sponsored by a dozen South Wales Miners Federation lodges. Aneurin Bevan MP also supported the march.

The women, all carrying rucksacks, had a great reception at the meeting to send them off on their way. They felt they were fighting for their families rights against an unfair Means Test, the strict unemployed assistance test of the time. My great-grandmother's unemployed eldest son had been sent away to work on a government training scheme on a farm and her able daughters, including my grandmother, had to move away to work as servants to support the family. Her eldest daughter was upset on returning home

from her place of work to find that she had missed seeing her mother off at the start of the march.

My great-grandmother listed the places where she and her fellow marchers stayed overnight as: Cardiff, Newport, Chepstow, Beachley, Mangotsfield, Keynsham, Bath, Chippenham, Marlborough, Hungerford, Newbury, Reading, Maidenhead and Slough before marching on to Westminster. Further contingents joined them at Bath and Hungerford. My great-grandmother recounted the kindness of the people they met, giving them cups of tea, sandwiches and fruit. The women sang in Welsh as they marched to keep their spirits up. The women were determined to complete the march. People sent telegrams of encouragement which cheered them. Various councils assisted with accommodation which they found in welfare halls, school halls, chapels, pubs and clubs, and bedding was also provided. People marched with them in support for short distances along the way. Mrs Brown and Mrs Cox apparently took charge tending to the women's feet in the evenings and there was a great deal of camaraderie. A very few needed to rest and were given a short lift to catch up with the group.

After marching across country in the cold rain the women arrived at Hungerford extremely tired. At a large house they found a welcome meal provided and eagerly drank several cups of tea. My great-grandmother shared a small room with Mrs Woods. In the middle of the night they could sleep no longer and desperately searched for a toilet. Mrs Woods declared "I wish I was back home in Tonympanyd - we didn't have much but we could always find a place to pee!"

A perception that the police were deliberately provoking the marchers led to a committee of prominent people forming the Council for Civil Liberties. They countered propaganda and recorded the facts of the situation in case of any trouble when the marchers arrived in London. On the outskirts of London the marchers were met by enthusiastic crowds. They gathered at a congress in London on 24 February and 4 March and the police were out in force to meet them. Thousands of London workers welcomed the marchers through the gates of Hyde Park and a loud cheer went up for the women's contingent.

On their return to the Welsh valleys the women received a great welcome. Years later my great-grandmother travelled to the Albert Hall in London to meet up with old friends who had once marched with her.

Ceri Leigh



# Cymorth cyntaf

Cefais fy ngeni yn Nhrefforest ym 1960. Nid oedd gennyf unrhyw gysylltiadau gwirioneddol â'r diwydiant glo er i 'nhad weithio danddaear am saith mis cyn cael ei alw i'r fyddin. Dechreuais weithio yng Ngwaith Golosg Nantgarw yn syth o'r ysgol, dilynais gwrs peirianeg fecanyddol yng Ngholeg Polytechnig Trefforest am flwyddyn cyn gweithio dan hyfforddiant a chael profiad ym mhopeth bron. Cwblheais fy mhrentisiaeth ym 1980.

Roedd gen i ddi-ddordeb erioed mewn cymorth cyntaf, a bues i'n 'ddymi' i'r criw cymorth cyntaf cyn ymuno â nhw'n swyddogol. Roedd yr hyfforddiant cymorth cyntaf yn y gwaith golosg (Coal Products Limited neu CPL) yr un fath ag un y Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol – does dim meddygon na nyrsys danddaear, felly mae'n rhaid i'r glowyr helpu eu hunain yn gyntaf pan fo rhywun yn cael ei anafu.

Nid oedd Gwaith Golosg Nantgarw erioed wedi ennill cystadleuaeth cymorth cyntaf o fri'r CPL, felly pan benodwyd rheolwr newydd yn y gwaith, ymbiliodd capten ein tîm iddo am ragor o amser hyfforddi er mwyn rhoi gwell cyfle i ni. Er iddo gytuno, doedd neb yn meddwl bod gennym fawr o obaith gan fod tîm Caerffili wedi ennill y gystadleuaeth bob blwyddyn ers pedair blynedd. Roedden nhw wedi cynrychioli Cymru a CPL y DU a hyd yn oed yn fuddugol yng nghystadleuaeth UK All Industries First Aid.

Cyrhaeddodd diwrnod y gystadleuaeth ranbarthol, a chafodd Nantgarw ddiwrnod i'r brenin. Enillais fy nghystadleuaeth unigol i ac, ar ôl cyfri'r holl farciau ac er syndod i bawb, enillodd ein tîm ni'r gystadleuaeth yn ei chyfanrwydd. Yn ogystal â chael enw Nantgarw ar y gwpan am y tro cyntaf erioed, roedd yn golygu y byddem yn cynrychioli Cymru yn rowndiau terfynol CPL Prydain yn Scarborough ac yn cynrychioli'r CPL yng nghystadleuaeth Cymru.

Gyda'r gwynt yn ein hwyliau, aeth Steve ein capten i weld rheolwr y gwaith golosg a dweud wrtho fod gan yr holl dimau eraill eu siacedi blaser a'u bathodynau arbennig eu hunain. O roi pwysau ar y bosus, llwyddwyd i gael bathodyn i'r tîm, ond bu'n rhaid i deis y cwmni wneud y tro. Fodd bynnag, daeth y rheolwr gyda ni i siop deiliwr Burton's a threfnu i bawb gael siacedi blaser. Er na wnaethom ennill yr un o'r ddwy gystadleuaeth, fe wnaethom waith da a chwedd â llu o ffrindiau newydd. Ymunais â'r gwaith Phurnacite yn Aberaman wedyn, a chymryd rhan mewn cystadlaethau CPL a chymorth cyntaf agored yno.

Robert Watts

# First aid



Gwaith Golosg Nantgarw – enillwyr cystadleuaeth cymorth cyntaf, Ardal y De, Robert Watts gyda'r tlws.

Nantgarw Coke Ovens - South Wales Region First Aid Competition winners, Robert Watts with the trophy.

Yn ystod streic 1984/85, es ar orymdaith yn Mansfield. Dechreuodd pethau'n iawn, ond digwyddodd rhywbeth ar ôl hynny ac anfonwyd heddlu ar geffylau ar ein holau. Collais barch tuag at yr heddlu wedyn – roedd hi'n flwyddyn anodd iawn, ac mae'r creithiau meddyliol yma o hyd. Ar ôl y streic, aethom i Nottingham lle arhosodd y gweithfeydd ar agor i raddau helaeth gydol y streic, gan wisgo ein bathodynau 'Nottingham Coke Works – Scab Free' gyda balchder.

Parhaodd hanes y bathodyn a'r tei ar ôl i'r gwaith Phurnacite gau, ac fe es i weithio i'r Weinyddiaeth Amddiffyn yn RAF Sain Tathan. Des i'n aelod o'r tîm cymorth cyntaf cyn hir, a helpu'r hyfforddwr i gyflwyno rhai o'r technegau a ddysgais gyda thimau cymorth cyntaf CPL. Wrth gael tynnu'n lluniau, gwisgais fy siaced a thei CPL gan nad oedd gennyf fathodyn y Weinyddiaeth Amddiffyn – doedd cadlywydd yr orsaf yn Sain Tathan ddim yn rhyw blës iawn!

pleaded with him to give us more time for training to give us a fairer chance. He agreed but thought that we had little chance because the Caerphilly team had won it continuously for the past four years. They had represented Wales and the UK CPL and had even gone on to win the Grand Prior winners of the UK All Industries First Aid Competition.

The day of the regional competition came and Nantgarw had a blue ribbon day. I won my individual competition and, when the marks were totalled up and to everyone's surprise, our team had won the overall event. This not only meant that Nantgarw's name went on the cup for the very first time but also that we would represent Wales at the National CPL finals at Scarborough and CPL at the Welsh Prior competition.

With this ammunition Steve, our captain, collared the coke works manager and told him that all the other teams had team blazers and badges. By twisting the boss's arm we got our team badges but had to be satisfied with company ties. However the manager accompanied us to Burton's tailors and fitted us all out with blazers. Unfortunately we did not win either competition but acquitted ourselves very well and made many friends. I later transferred to the Phurnacite plant in Aberaman where I competed in both CPL and open first aid competitions.

We were out on strike in 1984/85 and I went on a march in Mansfield. The march went ok but something happened afterwards and mounted police were sent in against us. What happened then made me lose my respect for the police – that year was a very difficult one and I still bear the mental scars to this day. After the strike we went up to Nottingham which had largely worked during the strike and proudly wore our 'Nottingham Coke Works – Scab Free' badges.

The tale of the badge and tie continued after the Phurnacite closed and I went to work with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in RAF St Athan. I soon became a member of the first aid team and assisted the trainer in bringing in some of the techniques I had learned in the CPL first aid teams. At the photo call I wore my CPL blazer and tie as I had no MOD insignia – the station commander at St Athan was not amused!

Robert Watts

I was born in Trefforest in 1960. I had no real connection with the mining industry although my father worked underground for seven months before being drafted into the army. I started at Nantgarw Coke Works straight from school, I did mechanical engineering at Trefforest Polytechnic for a year before doing my on the job training where I got experience in just about everything. I completed my apprenticeship in 1980.

I was always interested in first aid but I actually acted as a 'dummy' for the first aid team before joining the team properly. First aid training in the coke works (Coal Products Limited or CPL) was the same as in the National Coal Board – there are no doctors or nurses underground so miners have to help themselves initially when anybody gets hurt.

Nantgarw Coke Works had never won the coveted CPL first aid competition, so when a new manager was appointed at the coke works our team captain



# Profiad gwerth chweil

Cefais fy ngeni yn y Mwmbwls, gyda golygfa ddramatig o Fae Abertawe o'm blaen a'r diwydiannau trymion yn y cefndir. Astudiais beintio, cerflunio a gwydr lliw yng Ngholeg Celf Abertawe. Roedd gennyf ddiddordeb mewn portreadu'r diwydiant trwm erioed, a chan fod Dociau Abertawe yn allforio llawer o lo, cynhyrchais sawl darlun yno. Hwn oedd fy nghysylltiad cyntaf a'r diwydiant glo.

Pan ddaeth hi'n fater o ddewis testun ar gyfer arholiad gwydr lliw, dewisais y diwydiant glo. Prynwyd y ffenestr honno gan y Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol, a'i gosod yn y Coleg Glofaol a oedd yn newydd ar y pryd. Gan barhau i astudio byd diwydiant, gwnes gyfres o baentiadau o weldwyr a oedd yn cynhyrchu'r slediau a'r canopiau i'w defnyddio ar y ffas lo. Roedd y syniad bod darnau wedi'u creu mewn golau sy'n rhy lachar i'r llygad noeth, ac yn a'u defnyddio mewn tywyllwch dudew yn apelio'n arw ataf. Dyna a'm sbardunodd i ddilyn y trwydd danddaear felly.

Roedd hyn yn anodd iawn i ddechrau, felly dechreuais weithio ar ben y pwll mewn sawl glofa wahanol. Yna, fe'm cyflwynwyd i'r glöwr/perchennog Atilla Molner yn Onllwyn, lle'r oedd ganddo ef a phump arall waith driff a oedd yn dal i ddefnyddio chwe merlen pwll glo. O'r diwedd, daeth cyfle i weithio danddaear. Dysgais lawer am y pwnc, a chynhyrchais gyfres o baentiadau a gafodd eu harddangos yn nhafarn y Plough, Llandeilo gan wahodd Bill Cleaver o'r Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol draw i'w gweld, yn y gobaith o gael caniatâd i fynd danddaear yn un o byllau'r NCB. Cysylltodd â Mike Meredith, swyddog cysylltiadau cyhoeddus yr NCB ar fy rhan, ac o hynny ymlaen, cefais sêl bendith i ymweld â llawer o lofeydd y De.

Y pwll glo cyntaf oedd Nantgarw, lle cefais daith dywys gyda dwy ysgrifenyddes a dau löwr i'm hebrwng - achlysur go arbennig, mae'n amlwg! Er ei fod yn brofiad hynod ddiddorol, rhyw daith 'neis-neis' braidd oedd hi. Cysylltais â Mike Meredith wedyn, a'm helpodd i weithio danddaear go iawn. Bues i'n gweithio mewn 14 o lofeydd i gyd.

Dechreuais yng Nglofa Cynheidre lle'r oedd y Rheolwr mewn *jodhpurs* a *gaiters*, gwisg draddodiadol rheolwr glofa. Fe'm tywyswyd i'r ffas lo, ac arhosais yno i wneud darluniau siarcol i'w datblygu'n baentiadau yn ddiweddarach. Un diwrnod, roeddwn i'n swyddfa'r Rheolwr, yn syllu drwy'r ffenestr ar y wlad agored o'm hamgylch a gofynnais iddo ddangos lle byddwn i'n



**Dai Deacon yn Six Bells (tua 1984). Llundalew ar gynfas gan Valerie Ganz.**  
**"Dai Deacon at Six Bells" (c.1984). Oil painting on canvas by Valerie Ganz.**

gweithio'r diwrnod hwnnw. Pwyntiodd at y bryniau pell, 'Dyna lle fyddi di, o dan fan'ny!' Am syniad brawychus. Ar ôl cael hyfforddiant diogelwch, cefais lamp, peiriant achub personol, oferôls a phâr o esgidiau - y phâr lleiaf posibl (ond roedd rhaid i mi wisgo dau bâr o sanau trwchus hyd yn oed wedyn).

Ar ôl gorffen cyfres o baentiadau, cynhaliais arddangosfa yn Oriel Henry Thomas, Caerfyrddin. Roedd swyddog arddangosfeydd Oriel Gelf Glynn Vivian, Abertawe, yno, ac estynnodd wahoddiad i mi baratoi ar gyfer arddangosfa gyda Josef Herman, Jack Crabtree a Nicholas Evans ymhen tair blynedd.

Roedd y Streic Fawr ar y gweill ym 1984. Cyn gynted ag y daeth i ben ym 1985, treuliais flwyddyn yng Nglofa Six Bells a oedd yng nghanol y pentref, sef yr union beth roeddwn i'n chwilio amdano. Cynigiodd yr NCB dŷ i mi ym mhentref Blaenau ymhellach i fyny'r cwm, ond teimlais y byddwn yn rhy bell o'r lle yr oeddwn yn gweithio ac na fyddwn yn dod i adnabod neb. Yn y diwedd, symudais i rif 1 Victoria Road, Six Bells, reit gyferbyn â'r pwll.

Gyda llaw, arferai'r arlunydd L. S. Lowry ymweld â menyw dweud ffortiwn yn nhŷ rhif 3 flynnyddoedd yn ôl, a pheintio golygfa o Lofa Six Bells o'r fan honno. Ychydig flynnyddoedd yn ôl, roeddwn wrth fy

# A Rewarding Experience

I was born in Mumbles overlooking the dramatic sweep of Swansea Bay with the background of heavy industry. I attended Swansea College of Art and studied painting, sculpture and stained glass. I was always drawn to studying heavy industry and as Swansea Docks were big coal exporters I made many drawings there. This was my first connection to the coal mining industry.

When given a choice of subject for an examination in stained glass, I chose coal mining. The subsequent window was acquired by the National Coal Board, and was incorporated in the then new College of Mining. Continuing my study of industry I made a series of paintings of welders who were fabricating the sledges and canopies for use at the coal face. I became intrigued by the thought of pieces being made in a light that is too bright to view with the naked eye, and then put to use in a situation totally devoid of light; hence my wish to pursue this idea underground.

At first this proved very difficult, so I started working above ground at various collieries. Then I was introduced to a miner/owner Atilla Molner, of a mine in Onllwyn where he and five others owned a drift mine where six pit ponies still worked so at last I could work underground. I learnt a lot about the subject and completed a series of paintings which I put on show at the Plough Inn, Llandeilo and invited Bill Cleaver of the National Coal Board to view them in the hope that this would result in permission to go underground in an NCB mine. He put me in touch with Mike Meredith, the NCB's public relations officer and from then on it was like "open sesame" to enter many mines in south Wales.

The first mine was Nantgarw, where I was given a guided tour, with two female secretaries and two miners to look after us, it was obvious that this was a special occasion. It was an extremely interesting experience - but was very much a "white gloved" tour. I then approached Mike Meredith and he was able to help me to actually work underground. I eventually worked at fourteen different collieries.

I started at Cynheidre where the Manager wore the traditional attire of a mine manager of jodhpurs and gaiters. I was taken to the coalface and was able to stay there to make charcoal drawings which would later be developed into paintings. One day I was in the Manager's office, I looked out of the window at the surrounding

open countryside and asked him to show me where I would be working that day. He pointed to a distant hill and said "That's where you will, be under there"! This was quite a scary thought. I was given safety training, issued with lamp, self rescuer, overalls and boots, the smallest available (but I still needed two pairs of thick socks).

When I had completed a series of paintings I held an exhibition in Carmarthen in the Henry Thomas Gallery. The exhibitions officer from the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea saw it and invited me to prepare for an exhibition with Josef Herman, Jack Crabtree and Nicholas Evans in three years time.

The National Strike was about to start in 1984. As soon as this ended in 1985 I spent a year at Six Bells Colliery, where the colliery was in the heart of the village, exactly what I wanted. The NCB offered me a house at Blaina further up the valley, but I felt that to separate where I worked and where I lived would mean I wouldn't get to know anybody. I eventually moved into No.1 Victoria Road, Six Bells, directly opposite the pit.

Incidentally, the artist L.S. Lowry, some years before, used to regularly visit a clairvoyant at No. 3, and made a painting from that view of Six Bells Colliery. A few years ago I was delighted to find one of my mining paintings hanging between L.S. Lowry and Josef Herman at the National Museum in Cardiff.

From the outset I had stated that I wanted to make a study of the complete day in a miner's life. When he arrived clean, changed into working overalls, descended to the coal face, made his way back to the





modd o weld un o'm paentiadau glofaol ar y wal rhwng lluniau L. S. Lowry a Josef Herman yn Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd.

O'r cychwyn cyntaf, roeddwn i eisïau gwneud astudiaeth o ddiwrnod cyfan ym mywyd glöwr. Cyrraedd y gwaith yn lân, newid i'w oferöls gwaith, mynd i lawr i'r ffas lo, dod yn ôl i'r wyneb, gwiriad diogelwch, diosod ei lamp a'i beiriant achub personol a neidio i'r gawod. Yna yn y nos, mynd i'r dafarn, chwarae bingo, gêm o ddartiau, snwcer, ymarfer côr, colomendai, ymarfer band a hyd yn oed y Capel.

Pan fyddwn i'n ymweld â glofa, roedd y rheolwr wastad yn cynnig ei ystafell molchi ei hun, ond gan fy mod yn mynd i fod yno am flwyddyn penderfynais y byddai hynny'n rhy anghyfleus iddo ac y gallwn i gerdded yr ychydig lathenni yn ôl ahref i ymolchi. Des i arfer ag ymateb pobl o weld glöwr yn mynd adre'n fudr, a'r ymateb rhyfeddach fyth o sylwi mai menyw oeddwn i!

Dechreuodd y dynion ddod i arfer â 'nghael i'n rhan o'r criw, yn gweithio'n dawel wrth eu hochrau, ac roedden nhw mor garedig yn y ffordd y gwnaethant fy nerbyn i. Pan fyddwn i'n mynd i ddarlunio yn y baddondai, roeddwn i bob amser yn gofyn i'r uwch-aryolygydd fynd o'm blaen i ofyn a oedd unrhyw un yn gwrthwynebu i mi dynnu lluniau yno. Cytunodd pawb, a pharhau i'f olchi fel petawn i ddim yno.

Fe gymrodd dipyn i mi arfer â'r amodau. Er enghraifft, dim ond 33 modfedd o uchder oedd gwythïen Garw yng nglofa Six Bells. Roeddech chi'n gorfod cropan 30 metr o un pen o'r ffas lo i'r llall. Roedden nhw'n tanio yn yr hewl o flaen gwythïen y Garw un diwrnod, a dywedodd y criw wrthyf am gropian i'r wythien nes cyrraedd y gwarchodwr, a oedd yn rhwystro unrhyw un rhag mynd i'r parth peryglus.

Roedd ganddo orchudd coch dros ei lamp. Roeddwn i newydd ofyn iddo pryd fydd y ffrwydrion yn tanio pan glywais sŵn 'cyrrymff!!!!' mawr a'r lle i gyd yn ysgwyd rhywfaint. Yna, cwmwl o lwch melyn yn lleihau'ch golau lamp i ddim bron. Roedd yn brofiad digon brawychus ond diddorol iawn hefyd. Pan lusingais fy hun o'r wythïen, roedd y dynion yn gwenu, roedd yn amlwg eu bod am i mi gael profiad hollol newydd. Dwi'n falch o hynny, ac fe drois y profiad hwnnw'n baentiad wedyn.

Yn y dechrau, roedd rhywun yn gorfod dod gyda mi i bobman, ond ymhen amser, byddai'r swyddog diogelwch yn fy nhywys i lawr at fos y criw lle'r oeddwn am weithio, a byddwn i'n aros gyda fe am ychydig oriau. Roeddwn i'n rhydd i fynd a dod, ac roedden nhw'n ymddiried ynof i beidio â gwneud unrhyw beth dwl a pheidio ag amharu ar y dynion wrth eu gwaith. Dwi'n dda am fod yn anweledig, a gadael llonydd i'r dynion ddal ati.

Yn aml, byddwn i'n dewis glöwr i beintio llun ohono ar ôl i'w sifft ddod i ben. Ar ôl i mi osod fy stand arlunio yn y sied lampau, byddai'n eistedd yn amyneddgar iawn er ei fod yn ysu i gael cawod a mynd ahref mae'n siŵr. Roedd ei fêts yn tynnu ei goes, gan ddweud pethau fel, 'Does bosib bod rhywun pertach na fe?' ac ati.

Un diwrnod, pan oedd y BBC yn fy ffilmio yn Six Bells, mi faglais dros sbrogen ar olwyn y dram a disgyn ar fy hyd. Codais yn sydyn gan nad oeddwn i eisïau cyfaddef fy mod wedi brifo, rhag ofn na fyddwn i'n cael mynd danddaear wedyn. Ar ôl dychwelyd i'r brig lle'r oedd y dram dân yn cynhesu'r aer a oedd yn mynd i waelod y siafft, dyma un o'r glowyr a oedd yn gwylio'r gwaith ffilmio'n gweiddi, 'Ma'n oer iawn heddi. Cytunais, ac ychwanegodd e, 'Drafftio ghefyd!' Dim ond wedyn y sylweddolais 'mod i wedi rhwygo cefn fy oferöls wrth gwmpo, a bod fy nicys yn y golwg. Yn anffodus, caeodd Six Bells ym 1988, cwta ddwy flynedd ar ôl i mi adael. Dwi'n falch o ddweud bod fy nghymdogion yn dal i gadw mewn cysylltiad, a dwi'n dal i ymweld â nhw ar ôl yr holl flynydde.

Y flwyddyn ganlynol, dechreuais weithio ym Mhwll y Tŵr, sy'n sefyll ar ei ben ei hun ar ochr y bryn heb unrhyw bentref cyfagos. Unwaith eto, bu'r Rheolwyr o gymorth mawr, gan roi rhwydd hynt i mi astudio'r pwnc. Dyma'r tro cyntaf i mi weld ffas lo wedi'i goleuo. Roeddwn wedi dod yn gyfarwydd â dringo o gwmpas cynhalbyst a cheblau dan olau'r lamp helmed yn unig. Roedd yna amodau llawer gwell i ddarlunio yma.

Fe ddes i'n hen law ar neidio ar gludfeltiau a gludai'r gweithwyr i mewn ac allan o'r ffas lo. Roeddwn i'n gadael gyda swyddog diogelwch, fodd bynnag, ar y diwrnod arbennig hwn. Doeddwn i heb fod danddaear ers sbel. Es i fyny'r grisïau at y belt (a oedd yn symud 6 milltir yr awr!) a cholli'n hyder yn llwyr. Roedd Swyddog Hyfforddi gyda mi, a dywedodd, 'Canolbwyntia ar ddarn o lo sy'n dod at i weld pa mor gyflym mae'n mynd, a cher gyda'r cyflymdra hwnnw'. O'r diwedd, hyrdiais fy hun ar y cludfelt - yn orawyddus braidd oherwydd fy nerfusrwydd - a glaniodd fy mhen yn y glo, a hedfanodd fy helmed a'm lamp i ffwrdd. Neidiodd fy nghydymaith ar y cludfelt i ddal fy helmed a gofalu 'mod i'n iawn. Doeddwn i ddim gwaeth, ond trueni nad oedd gan rywun gamera!

Yr un math o ddynion oedd yno - gweithwyr caled, hynaws â synnwyr digrifwch od ar y naw. Roeddwn i'n darlunio un o weithiwr y ffas, a'r lleill yn gwneud hwyl am ei ben fel arfer, pan ddywedodd un, 'Cofia am ei glustdlws, dim ond newydd ddechrau i wisgo fe mae e ers i'w wraig ff'indo fe yn sedd gefn y car'.

Valerie Ganz yn gweithio yn Six Bells  
Valerie Ganz at work at Six Bells

surface, security checked, divested himself of lamp, self rescuer and then headed for the showers. Then in the evening went to the pub, bingo, darts, snooker, choir practice, pigeon lofts, band practice and even in the Chapel.

When I was visiting a colliery the manager always offered me his bathroom but now I was going to be there for a year I decided that it would be very inconvenient for him and I could walk the few hundred yards home to clean up. I got accustomed to the look on people's faces when they saw a miner going home dirty, and the even stranger looks when they realised it was a woman.

The men got used to me being with a crew quietly working alongside them, and were most generous in the way they accepted me. When I was going to the baths to draw, I always asked the superintendent to go ahead and ask if anyone objected, they all agreed and carried on as if I was not there.

The conditions took some getting used to, in the Garw seam at Six Bells it was only thirty-three inches in height. One had to crawl thirty metres to get from one side of the coalface to the other. They were shot firing on the roadway ahead of the Garw seam one day and the group I was with told me to crawl into the seam until I came to the sentry, whose job it was to stop anyone going ahead into the danger area.

He was wearing a red cover over his lamp. I had just asked him when a shot would take place when there was a 'currumph!!!!' and the place shook a bit. This was followed by a rush of yellowy dust that reduced your helmet lamp light to a pin prick. It was unnerving but very interesting. When I crawled out of the seam, the men were grinning, they obviously wanted me to experience something new! I am glad they did and later made it into a painting.

At first I had someone to accompany me all the time, but eventually I used to be taken down by the safety officer to the boss of the crew where I wanted to work, I would stay with for a couple of hours. I had freedom to move around as they now trusted me not to do anything stupid and I avoided disrupting the men working around me. I am good at becoming invisible so the men would just get on with their work.

I would often choose a miner who I would like to paint after his shift was over. I would set up my easel in the lamp room and he would very patiently sit for me, when I am sure all he wanted to do was get showered and go home. He would usually have to put up with the banter from his mates, like "Couldn't you find someone better looking than that?" and similar taunts.

Another day the BBC was filming me at Six Bells, I did not see a sprag wedged into the wheel of a tram, tripped over and measured my length. I got up quickly as I did not want to admit I had hurt myself in case I was stopped from going underground. We emerged at the top where a fire dram was warming the air current going down the shaft, when one of the miners watching the filming called out "Cold today" I agreed and he added "Draughty too"! I then realized that I had ripped the back of my overalls when I had fallen and my knickers were on display. Sadly Six Bells Colliery closed in 1988, only two years after my time there. I am pleased to be able to say that my neighbours and I still keep in touch, and I visit, all these years later.

The following year I started to work at Tower Colliery, where the pit stands on its own on the hillside, with no village nearby. Again the Management were very helpful in allowing me remarkable freedom to continue my study of the subject. This was the first time where I had seen lighting at the coalface. I was used to climbing around the pit props and cables with only my helmet light. Here the conditions were so much better for me to draw.

I became quite good at getting on and off the man rider conveyer belts when going in and out of the coalface. However, I was with a Safety Officer, we were leaving one day when I had not been underground for a while. I climbed the steps to get onto the belt (going at six miles an hour!) I lost my nerve. The Training Officer with me said, "Concentrate on to a piece of coal coming towards you to judge the speed, and just go with that speed". I eventually did manage to hurl myself forward, was a bit too enthusiastic in my fright, I ended up with my face in the coal - my helmet plus lamp flew off. My companion leapt onto the belt hurried forward to grab my helmet and see if I was okay. I said I was fine but I wished someone had a camera!





Fe wnes i sawl tirlun o byllau glo hefyd, weithiau'n uniongyrchol ar gynfas, dro arall yn frasluniau i'w datblygu'n ddiweddarach yn fy stiwdio. Un diwrnod, roeddwn i'n gwneud braslun o Lofa Merthyr Vale ac wedi ymgolli'n llwyr yn fy ngwaith, pan sylwais ar ryw siâp petryal gwyn ar ochr y bryn gyferbyn. Sylweddolais mai beddi'r plant a fu farw yn nhrychineb Aber-fan oeddynt.

Yna, cefais wahoddiad gan British Coal Opencast i wneud casgliad o luniau ar y testun; treuliais flwyddyn yn ymweld â Ffos Las (maes rasio ceffylau heddiw), East Pit Extension a Nant Helen. Tipyn o olygfa oedd y loriau dadlwytho'n mynd a dod yn ddi-baid a gweld y safle'n newid o ddydd i ddydd. Roedd yr haf yn chwilboeth a'r gaeaf yn rhyllid ar y safle siâp powlen. Tra'r oeddwn i ar y safle, cefais set radio symud a siarad (*walkie-talkie*) er mwyn gofyn am lifft yn ôl i'r swyddfeydd, ond weithiau byddwn i'n cael lifft gan lori ddadlwytho. Y tro cyntaf i mi weld ffrwydrad ar y safle, roedd yna fwg oren yn codi a meddyliais ei fod yn lliw gwych i'w ychwanegu at fy lluniau – ond esboniodd rhywun gyda chywilydd mai arwydd o danio gwael oedd hynny. Ond fe'i defnyddiais yr un fath! Roedd croeso i mi weithio yn lle mynnwn, gyda'r peiriannau'n mynd a dod o'm cwrpas. Roeddwn i wedi ymgolli'n llwyr yn fy ngwaith yng nghanol y swm byddarol pan deimlais ryw hen wynt oer, a throis i weld bod y sied fawr ar slediau a oedd union tu cefn i mi wedi'i symud – doeddwn i fawr callach oherwydd y dwndwr! *Cacophony* oedd yr enw a roddais ar y llun.

Dros y blynyddoedd, dwi wedi astudio pob math o destunau gwahanol, o flwyddyn gyda'r Central School of Ballet, Llundain, llwyfannau olew yn anialwch Patagonia, dilyn Syrcais Wladol Moscow o amgylch y wlad, chwe mis yng Ngharchar Abertawe, gwyliau jazz ac, yn fwy diweddar, cerddorion clasurol. Ond roedd y project gwaith glo, yn enwedig y flwyddyn a dreuliais yn Six Bells, yn wych yn ogystal â'r cyfnod ym Mhwl y Tŵr pan oedd yn nwylo'r gweithwyr. Dyna'r profiad mwyaf gwerthfawr a gefais erioed, sef cipolwg go iawn ar fyd mwyngloddio ac mae gan y pwnc apêl arbennig i mi hyd heddiw. Mae gennyf tua 300 o lyfrau braslunio sy'n llawn o luniau o'r holl brojectau y bues i'n gysylltiedig â nhw, ac mae'n amlwg pa rai sy'n perthyn i'r glofeydd – y rhai mwyaf brwt!

Mae Cymunedau yn Gyntaf yn cymryd camau breision wrth helpu i adfer Six Bells yn sgil y bwll anferthol a adawyd ers difodiant y diwydiant glo. Un o'r camau mwyaf beiddgar a chyffrous oedd comisiynu'r cerflun Gwarcheidwad, yn yr un modd â chreu canolfan amlwrpas ar gyfer addysg, twristiaeth a hamdden sy'n prysur droi'n ganolbwynt i ymwelwyr niferus Six Bells.

Valerie Ganz

Ewch i [www.valerieganz.co.uk](http://www.valerieganz.co.uk) am ragor o wybodaeth am Valerie Ganz.

The men were the usual crews of hardworking, good-natured men with a bizarre sense of humour. I was drawing one face worker, he was the butt of the usual humour from passing crew, and one of them said "don't forget his earring, he has only been wearing it since his wife found it on the back seat of the car".

I also made several landscape paintings of mines, sometimes direct onto canvas, at other times sketches to be developed back at my studio. One particular day I was sketching Merthyr Vale Colliery and was totally engrossed in what I was doing, when I became aware of a white oblong patch on the hillside opposite. I realised it was the graves of the children killed in the Aberfan disaster.

I was then invited by British Coal Opencast to make a collection of work on the subject; I spent a year visiting Ffos Las (now a race course) East Pit Extension and Nant Helen. It was fascinating to see the dumper trucks constantly on the move and the way the site changed from day to day. In summer it could be sweltering in the site bowl and in winter absolutely freezing. When I was on site I was given a walkie-talkie so that I could tell them when I wanted a lift to go back to the offices, but sometimes I got a lift on one of the dumper trucks. The first time I saw blasting on a site, I saw orange fumes coming up and thought it was great colour and would add to the subject, but I was told with some embarrassment, that that was a sign of a bad blast, but I still used it! I was allowed to work wherever I liked with the machinery moving all around me. The noise was deafening, and I was engrossed in my work when I became aware of a cold draught and turned around

to find that the big shed on sledges that had been directly behind me, had been moved away, the noise had been so loud I had not heard any extra activity. The resulting painting I called "Cacophony".

Over the years I have studied various subjects, a year in London at the Central School of Ballet, at oil rigs in the Patagonian Desert, followed Moscow State Circus around the country, six months at Swansea Prison, Jazz festivals and more recently classical musicians. But the coal-mining project especially the year spent in Six Bells was fantastic then leading onto to working in Tower colliery when it was owned by the miners. This was a most rewarding experience that gave me real insight into the world of mining and still holds a special fascination for me. I have about three hundred sketchbooks full of work from all the projects I have been involved with, but you can always see which the collieries ones are as they are so dirty.

The regeneration of Six Bells by Six Bells Communities First is making amazing strides in developing the area to replace the huge void left by the demise of the coal industry. Commissioning the sculpture "Guardian" was a bold move as is creating a multi purpose centre for education, tourism and recreation, which is becoming a focal point for the many visitors to Six Bells.

Valerie Ganz

For further details of the work of Valerie Ganz visit - [www.valerieganz.co.uk](http://www.valerieganz.co.uk)

## Y Gof

Cefais fy ngeni yn Nhretomas ym 1930. Dwi'n dod o deulu glofaol, a bu fy nhad, Idris Thomas, yn oferman yng Nglofa Bedwas. Pan adewais i'r ysgol ym 1944, roeddwn i am weithio ar Ystâd Fasnachu Trefforest ond, er i mi gael gwaith fel ffitiwr, ni fyddwn wedi dechrau tan fis Hydref, felly cefais swydd yn y lofa yn lle hynny. Glywes i erioed y fath iaith anwedus tan i mi gael cyfweiliad gyda'r lofa – roedd y fforman yn dweud, 'If you can't work \*\*\*\*\* seven days every week, you're no \*\*\*\*\* good to me!'. Wrth gwrs, rydych chi'n clywed pobl yn rhegi yn gyson heddiw, ond yn y dyddiau hynny, roeddech chi'n gadael y rhegi yn y pwll.

Dechreuais weithio fel morthwyliwr gyda'r gof, ac ym Medwas y bues i am y deugain mlynedd nesaf – roeddwn i'n nabod pob twll a chornel o'r lle! Gweithiais am ddwy flynedd gyda gof o'r enw Frank

Cotrell a ddysgodd bopeth i mi – a'm cario mewn gwirionedd, gan nad oeddwn i'n dal iawn, ac ni fyddai byth yn gadael i mi godi unrhyw beth trwm. Roedd yn gwneud ei dŵls ei hun, ac roedden nhw mor dda nes bod rhai o'r gofaint eraill yn eu benthyca nhw. Roedd cryn dipyn o waith rhybedu ym Medwas, gyda'r holl dramiau a chaetsis wedi'u rhybedu at ei gilydd bryd hynny, a dysgodd Frank fi i dwymo rhybedion ar y tân. A dyna wnes i gydol fy nyddiau gwaith.

Ar ôl dwy flynedd, gadawodd gwas y fforman cynorthwylol a chefais innau fy newis yn ei le. Dyma'r ychydig fisoedd mwyaf diflas a dreuliais erioed gan mai gaeaf 1947 oedd hi, ac roeddwn i ar rewi yng ngefail y gof. Roedd yr efail yn gynnes braf, wrth gwrs, ond fel morthwyliwr, roeddwn i'n gweithio y tu allan i'r efail ei hun. Hen fochyn o ddyd oedd y

## The Blacksmith

I was born in Trethomas in 1930. I come from a mining family, my father, Idris Thomas, was an Overman in Bedwas Colliery. When I left school in 1944 I wanted to work in Trefforest Trading Estate but, although I got a job as a fitter, I wouldn't have started until October so I got a job in the colliery instead. I had never heard bad language until I had the interview for the colliery – the foreman said "If you can't work \*\*\*\*\* seven days every week, you're no \*\*\*\*\* good to me!" Today you hear swearing all the time but in those days you left it behind in the pit.

I started in the blacksmiths' shop as a striker and spent the next 40-odd years in Bedwas – I knew every nut and bolt in the place! I worked for two years with a smith called Frank Cotrell and he taught me everything, in fact he really carried me as I wasn't very big and he wouldn't let me lift anything heavy. He made all his own

tools and they were so good some of the other smiths used to borrow them. There was a lot of riveting work in Bedwas, the trams and cages were all riveted together then, and Frank taught me how to warm rivets on the fire and I did that all my working life.

After two years the assistant foreman's boy left and he picked me in his place. This was the most miserable couple of months I spent as it was the winter of 1947 and I was freezing to death in the blacksmiths. The forge was warm, of course, but I was the striker and worked away from the actual forge. The foreman was a pig of a man who had been a scab when the scab union was at Bedwas. This particular fellow shouldn't have been allowed to have a dog let alone look after a boy, he used to criticize me all the time even though he didn't take any pride in his own work. I wanted to leave but my father persuaded me not to as I would have been conscripted into the Army.



fforman, a fu'n 'scab' pan oedd undeb y 'scab' ym Medwas. Ni ddylai fod yn gyfrifol am gi heb sôn am fachgen, a byddai'n fy meirniadu'n ddi-baid er nad oedd ganddo unrhyw falchder yn ei waith ei hun. Roeddwn i eisiau gadael, ond llwyddodd fy nhad i'm darbwyllo i aros neu byddwn wedi fy listio i'r fyddin fel arall.

Ar ôl i was y gof pedoli adael, cymerais innau ei le. Bues i gyda'r gof pedoli am ryw flwyddyn cyn iddo dorri gair â mi. Byddwn i'n cynnau tân iddo ac yn rhoi'r morthwyl ar yr einion, ac yna'n gorfod sefyll y tu fas i'r efail oherwydd doeddech chi ddim yn cael bod yn agos iddi heb wahoddiad. Ar ôl ychydig flynyddoedd, fodd bynnag, roeddwn i'n sefyll yno un diwrnod pan ddywedodd y gof, 'Dere i mewn i gynhesu' ac o hynny ymlaen, roedd e'n iawn ac yn methu gwneud digon drosta i. Roedd gof pedoli'n gwneud llawer o waith gof cyffredinol hefyd, yn enwedig wrth i ni ddefnyddio llai a llai o geffylau. Ef hefyd oedd yn cynhyrchu'r 'bachau bar' a osodwyd ar gefn dramiau i'w rhwystro rhag dianc i lawr y llethrau. Ar ôl i'r gof siapio'r bachyn, byddwn i'n ei rathellu'n llyfn er mwyn ei gaboli'n dda, er mai dim ond i lawr y pwll yr oedd yn mynd. Roedd ganddo gryn falchder yn ei grefft.

Roeddwn i'n hoff o geffylau ers yn ifanc iawn. Ceffylau, nid merlod, oedd ym Medwas – roedd ganddyn nhw draed anferthol. Roedd y ceffylau'n cael eu trin fel brenin ym Medwas, ac yn cael pythefnos o wyliau bob blwyddyn ar ôl i'r Bwrdd Glo ddod i rym, er eu bod nhw'n cicio a gwichian pan oedd rhaid iddyn nhw ddychwelyd i lawr y pwll. Roedden ni'n arfer mynd danddaear rhyw ddwywaith neu dair yr wythnos i'w pedoli'n oer gan nad oedd modd i ni ddod â'r ceffylau yn ôl i'r brig bob tro roedden nhw angen pedol newydd. Byddai'r pedolau'n cael eu creu o'r patrymau a gadwyd ar y wyneb. Roedd enw pob ceffyl wedi'i ysgrifennu ger yr efail, a maint eu pedolau oddi tano. Roedd gen i lamp cap, ond lamp law drydan oedd gan y gof fel y gallai ei gadael ar y llawr wrth bedoli.

Gan fod yna faddondai pen pwll ym Medwas o 1939 ymlaen, es i erioed adre'n frwnt, ond roedd fy ngwraig yn gallu gwynto'r ceffylau arnaf bob amser – yn enwedig os oedden ni yn y pictiwr! Roedd gan y lofa ei fferm ei hun hefyd, ac roeddem yno'n aml oherwydd dyna ble'r oedd y ceffylau sbâr. Cyn gwladoli, roedd y glofeydd yn llefydd tra gwahanol – roedd gan y rheolwr ei arddwr ei hun a'r swyddogion i gyd yn byw mewn lle o'r enw 'White City' heb orfod talu trydan gan mai'r lofa oedd yn ei gyflenwi. Daeth hyn i gyd i ben pan gymerodd y Bwrdd Glo Cenedlaethol yr awenau, a gwelsom fyd o wahaniaeth mewn ffyrdd eraill hefyd. Cyn dyddiau'r Bwrdd Glo, roedd popeth yn dueddol o gael ei gynhyrchu yn y lofa ei hun, ond dechreuodd pethau ddod o'r tu allan

wedyn. Er hynny, roeddem yn dal i wneud pethau fel proceri tân (neu 'foreigners') i bobl yn answyddogol.

Ar ôl troi'n ddeunaw oed, cefais ddyrchafiad a'm gefail gof fy hun, er na fyddent yn talu'r gyfradd lawn tan i mi gyrraedd un ar hugain oed. Derbyniais y swydd, ta beth, a'r unig ffordd y gwnaethon nhw fy ngwobrwyo i oedd trwy roi digonedd o oramser i mi. Roedd y profiad o weithio gyda bradwr wedi fy nysgu sut i drin bechgyn yn dda – ond roedd ganddyn nhw job o waith i'w wneud, hefyd. Doedd y bachgen drwg yna ddim yn cael yfed yn unrhyw un o'r tafarnau ger ei gartref ym Machen, roedd ei 'local' rhyw ddwy filltir o'i dŷ. Yn answyddogol, arferai'r gof wneud geingiau glo dur i'r colliers am chwe cheiniog, sef hanner y pris yn siopau'r lofa. Yn ystod streic 1932, dangosodd bradwr i'r swyddogion diogelwch lle'r oedd y gof yn cuddio'i bentwr o eingiau, a cholodd ei swydd. Bryd hynny, roedd y bradwr yn gorfod cael cylch o heddwision o'i gwmpas i'w amddiffyn ar ei ffordd adref.

Yn ystod streic 1984, fe wnes i waith diogelwch ar adegau fel capio rhaffau ac ati. Roedd yr undeb yn caniatáu hyn, ond roeddem yn talu cyfraniad i gronfa'r streic. Caeodd glofa Bedwas ym 1985, a phenderfynais ymddeol ym mis Mehefin yn 55 oed. Cynigiwyd arian diswyddo da i ni, ond allwn i ddim cael swydd arall neu byddai hynny'n golygu colli fy mhensiwn a'm lwfans glo. Pe na bai'r swydd newydd yn para, byddai'n rhaid aros tan i mi gyrraedd 65 oed i gael pensiwn. Dwi'n eithaf bodlon fy myd erbyn hyn, ond dwi'n gweld eisiau'r cyfle i wneud pethau yn y pwll i'w defnyddio gartref.

Ron Thomas

The shoeing smith's boy moved on and I took his place. I was with the shoeing smith for a couple of years before he actually spoke to me. I used to light the fire for him and put the hammer on the anvil and then had to stand outside the forge because you weren't allowed near the forge unless you were invited. However, after a few years, I was standing there one day and the smith said "Come on in and have a warm" and from then on he was ok and he couldn't do enough for me. The shoeing smith didn't only make horse shoes but did general smithing work as well, especially when we were making less use of horses. He was also responsible for making 'bar hooks' which were attached to the back of a tram to stop it running away on slopes. The smith used to shape the bar hook then I had to rasp it smooth to give it a good finish even though it was only going down the pit. That was the pride he had in his work.

I liked horses having been around them since I was a kid. They were horses not ponies at Bedwas – they had enormous feet. The horses had first class treatment at Bedwas, after the NCB came in they had a fortnight's holiday every year, although they used to kick and squeal when they had to go back down the pit. We used to go underground two or three times every week to cold shoe the horses because we couldn't bring the horses up the pit every time they needed a new shoe. The shoes were made from patterns kept on the surface. Every horse had his name written by the forge with the sizes underneath them. I used to have a cap lamp but the smith had an electric hand lamp so that he could put it on the ground when he was shoeing.

Bedwas had pithead baths from 1939 so I never had to come home dirty but my wife could always smell the horses on me – especially if we were in the pictures! The colliery had its own farm and we were

often down there because that's where they kept the spare horses. Collieries were different before nationalisation, the manager had his own gardener and the colliery officials used to live in a place called White City where they didn't have to pay for their electricity as it was supplied by the colliery. All this stopped when the National Coal Board took over and we saw a big difference in other ways as well. Before the NCB everything tended to be made on the colliery but after things tended to be brought in. However, we still used to make things like pokers for the fire (we called them 'foreigners') for people unofficially.

When I became eighteen I was promoted and got my own forge, but they wouldn't pay me the full rate as I wasn't twenty one. I took the job anyway and the only way they rewarded me was to give me plenty of overtime. Working with the scab taught me how to treat boys right – they still had to do their jobs though. That bad fellow couldn't drink in any of the pubs near to where he lived in Machen, his 'local' was about two miles away from his house. Unofficially, the blacksmith used to make steel coal wedges for the colliers for six pence compared to double that price in the colliery stores. During the 1932 strike the scab showed security where the blacksmith's stash of wedges was hidden and the blacksmith was sacked. At that time the scab used to go home with a ring of coppers around him to protect him.

During the 1984 strike I often did safety work on occasion such as rope capping etc. This was allowed by the union but we used to pay a contribution into the strike fund. Bedwas closed in 1985 and I retired in June because I was fifty five. We were offered a good redundancy but I couldn't get another job as I would lose out on my coal allowance and pension. If the new job didn't last I would have had to wait until I was sixty five to get my pension. I am quite happy with my life now but I miss being able to make things in the pit to use at home.

Ron Thomas



Glofa Bedwas  
Bedwas Colliery





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