

Parc Cwm Darran Audio Trail Script

8. The North shaft

Where we're standing here now is the north shaft, which was termed as the intake shaft. Where the fresh air was pulled into the mine with the mine fan and then it travelled through all the roadways of the mine getting rid of the dust and the gas and then it came up the south shaft or the upcast shaft and into the atmosphere. It was big, huge fan it is about 12 foot in diameter, a fan, an electric fan and it worked 24/7, 365 days of the year.

Water, stored in a reservoir now hidden by the trees beyond the shaft, was also employed to tackle the dust and as Mike recalls another serious situation...

And I always remember, Wales were playing up in Scotland, rugby and we heard it on the car radio coming home. That there was a serious underground fire down the south shaft, and that was the beginning of the end for the colliery really. It went on for about 4 years after, but the reserves of the coal was down in the area where the fire was.

It took nearly a week to fill the mine with water, initially from the reservoir and then the stream below, and it was only once all the air had been removed could the fire be deemed extinguished. With the fire occurring in the most profitable section of the mine it changed the fate of both this and nearby Taff Merthyr colliery as Mike recalls.

The mines inspectors wouldn't allow them to re-enter that area again. It wasn't worth loss of life or anything you know because it was such a serious fire. They could pinpoint where the fire was but they couldn't within a quarter of mile of it. Because the steel arches were melting, they were buckling under the heat and that was about, well not a quarter of a mile sorry, I will say about 2-300 metres from the source of the fire. That was the downward slope of Ogilvie colliery then that fire. In the south pit, what we called the south pit we were working towards Taff Merthyr colliery because the plans were if that fire hadn't happened they were going to close Taff Merthyr colliery because Taff Merthyr didn't have any tipping space, like we had acres of it here. I say we, Ogilvie colliery had acres of tipping space up here. But when this fire came then it gave Taff Merthyr a reprieve and Taff Merthyr went on then for another 15 years afterwards.

As you make your way to stop 9 have a think about how you would transport all the waste material high up onto the mountainside.

Head along the path immediately to the left of the bench and over a small wooden bridge. Listen to track 9 on the other side of the half-buried, black winding wheel, looking back towards the lake. Do take care walking around the wheel as it is set in a hollow.

Key: Narrator | **Interview excerpts** | *Directions*