



## Vision Fountain cic

15 Neptune court, Ocean Way, Cardiff, CF24 5PJ

**Kings of The Underground - Exhibition by Vision Fountain / National Waterfront Museum until 19<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum of Wales)**



November 2, 2022

PHONE  
07734411358  
02920 610098

EMAIL  
[info@visionfountain.com](mailto:info@visionfountain.com)

WEB  
[www.visionfountain.com](http://www.visionfountain.com)



**Starts - An exhibition of (3D) portraits and audio-visual installations of Welsh Miners called “Kings of the Underground” opens at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, Wales 07th November. The exhibition uses 3D technology used in gaming and virtual reality. The portraits and recording will be become part of the National Archive.**

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Over forty colliers' faces have been captured in 3D using a process called photogrammetry (photogrammetry converts 2-dimensional images into 3D images). A portable photogrammetry studio was set up in community centers across the South Wales Coalfield.

As well as recording their facial features, the “last generation of Welsh coalminers” were interviewed.

The four-year project also photographed relatives of miners and Wales last surviving coalminers at Aberpergym, Glyneath.

Wales underground mining workforce has dwindled from a quarter of a million in 1913 to less than hundred today.

Audio-visual presentations on screens mix 3D portraits with snippets from their interviews along with eight-foot-high printed portraits.

An integral part of the project was the need to capture, what will likely amount to be the last testimony of the “last generation of coalminers”. The portraits and interviews will be stored the National Museum of Wales' archive and Swansea University's South Wales Miners Library for future generations.

Richard Jones, creative director at Vision Fountain, grew-up in the Welsh coal-mining community of Bedwas, but spent 25 years living in Asia, working as a photo-journalist. Richard was struck how most remnants of Welsh coal mining

landscape had been erased after the '84 strike. That provided the initial impetus to preserve the faces and the memories of the last generation of coalminers before they were lost too.

Richard Jones, Creative Director, Vision Fountain said:

“The King’s of the Underground project records the faces and testimonies of the last generation of Welsh coal-miners. As a nation we should never forget that these coal-miners, along with their forefathers, built modern Wales.

“The project has used technology, popular in gaming culture and virtual reality (VR), to create a cross generational project that youngsters can easily engage with.”

It has been a pleasure and honour to work with the Welsh miners. It is sad, but also pertinent, that several of the miners, that were involved in this project at the beginning, have since passed, which underlines the importance of capturing their likeness’ and testimonies for the Welsh archive.”

Jacqueline Roach, Exhibitions and Programmes Officer at the National Waterfront Museum, said:

“It has been a real pleasure to support this amazing project that has captured the important stories of the men and women of these coalmining communities. Through the advanced technology used and stories it has inspired, the project has connected generations through workshops and art.”

The importance of the project was made more poignant with the passing of several of the ex-miners as the project progressed. Around ten percent of the miners passed during the project’s production.

The National Waterfront Museum, Big Pit National Museum, Rhondda Heritage Park and South Wales Miners Museum have been instrumental in the project's production. Project funding by the Heritage Fund. – ends

**Captions for Selected Photos –**  
**please contact: [info@visionfountain.com](mailto:info@visionfountain.com) for images**

Mike Day, 74, Electrician, Afan Colliery & St John's Colliery

"We went to hang cables up in the heading. They fired. The blast came. We were blown-up - peppered with cold-dust, cut face and everything.....I thought it was the end of the world for me."

Richard Pember, 73, Shafsmen at Lewis Merthyr & Hetty

"That Hetty shaft was very unique, a big bend about three quarters of the way up. And the miners they wouldn't go up, if we knew that to come up that shaft. They wouldn't travel up, I think was more frightening than anything."

Ivor England, 84, Lodge Secretary at Mardy Colliery

"My father became a miner my uncles became miners. So it is the tradition of coal mining. All males in my family were coal miners. You also were working with men who you respected, who felt the same as you. The sons and the grandsons of miners and proud of it. Always been proud of the fact that these are hardworking people."

Ron Andrews, 72, Collier, Coedely Colliery

"I got to the point where I considered myself to be, what felt like, Olympic athlete fit. I was one, of maybe 30 colliers, on a face, that would shift a minimum of 20 tons per day, every day. There were men who were doing 40 tons a day. They were that good and they were that strong."

Peter Esposito, 86, haulage operator, South Pit, Glyngorrwg

"I was 17 years old, when there was an explosion in the Panza district. We could see a light coming towards us and there was a fellow still smoking. His clothes

were smoldering and his skin was hanging off.....Dr Hart came down and he was injecting the men with morphine."

Gareth Ford, 63, Collier, Merthyr Vale

"The last stay down strike in Britain was in Lewis Merthyr. We went underground on the Monday and came up on the Friday. One of the boys cracked and had to be taken out. It was hard. No blankets. No sleeping bags. You just slept in a manhole." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Gerald Jenkins, 84, Rhondda Collier

"I remember the first fortnight all my hands were bleeding for days. The coal was so sharp and you were only a young boy. You wasn't used to hard work. I was going to finish on the second day. I was afraid of the dark. Because once you put your light out you couldn't see your hand in front of it. And you were liable to be killed every day. Because of the conditions you worked in."

©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

John Evans, 70, Collier, Lady Windsor and Deep Duffryn

"Not many miners lived up to 70. My grandfather and my father died from coal-dust. I'd see him (my granddad) getting out of breath a lot. And then later in life, he ended up on oxygen. I think he retired at 60 and he died before he was 61. My father he had dust too, by the age of 57 he was dead as well."

©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Jeffrey Bevan, 74, Glycorwg Washery

"The '84 strike lasted for so long. South Wales had the most anti-establishment miners and we didn't go back 'till last. No way could you feed the family and pay your debts." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Ceri Thompson, 68, Collier at Cwm Colliery and Curator at Big Pit National Coal Museum

"I don't think I disliked anybody I work with it. You couldn't dislike somebody when your life depended on them. You used to have a big deployment

board with everybody's name on it. You'd have all sorts of names, Polish, Yugoslavians and Lithuanians, Italians, all sorts of people working together."  
©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Nick Tamlin, 61, Caerau Colliery & Mines Rescue at Gleision in 2011  
"Four team captains went down to recover the men that had drowned at Gleision. It was a case of recovery more than a rescue. When we went in I knew if there was another in-rush of water there would be no way out (for us)."

Lee Williams, 44 Collier, Aberpergym, Wales' last remaining underground mine  
"When I tell people what my occupation is, they tend to say, 'There are no coal mines about anymore'. 'They're all in the past.' I show them some photos.....and see their faces drop in shock." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Robert Owen, 65, Miners Supervisor. Aberpergym, Wales' last remaining underground mine  
"I tried to work outside in the fresh air but I couldn't settle. People have short memories on coal and coal miners. I don't think any of us would be here if it wasn't for the coalminers of years ago. Regarding World War Two and the Industrial Revolution and all that." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Thomas Williams, 20, Apprentice Electrician at Aberpergym, Wales' last remaining underground mine  
"This is the last colliery, so I'm quite fortunate to be able to follow in my ancestors footsteps. I enjoy being underground. I enjoy the banter with the boys down there. You can't beat it. It's completely different from working on the surface." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Eleanor Lee, 77, husband was a miner from Glyncorrwyg, Afan Valley, Wales.  
"The kids were out playing and they could see a lot of men coming over the mountain with a stretcher. One of the one boys had got killed in the pit. They just carried him back across the mountain to his home. And that was it."  
©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Jenifer Thomas, 69, wife of miner, Glyncorrwg

"I remember as a child, the hooters going. It meant there was an accident. They'd be outside the houses waiting to hear who it was. I still find that very haunting. I'm truly glad that my children didn't have to go down there."

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Marlene Hill, 84 wife of Rhondda miner Raymond Hill

"It wasn't the done thing for a miner's wife to be working. So a week before we got married I gave up my job."

"Everybody's front door was open. You could walk in and out of everybody's house. Everybody knew everybody." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain

Sylveen Pember, 68, wife of Shaftman, Richard Pember

"My husband's job was inspecting the shaft. I didn't realize how dangerous it was. I don't think a lot of people realized how dangerous it was to work down the mines." ©Richard P Jones / Vision Fountain



ends For More Info : [info@visionfountain.com](mailto:info@visionfountain.com)

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