

Parc Cwm Darran Audio Trail Script

7. Manager's House (3:30)

07_gantry (0:15)

Just about where we are by here, there was a gantry coming across where the men used to get from the pit-head baths over to the lamp room, to pick their lamp up, before descending the shaft, you know, to start their shift.

These trams mark the site of the south shaft and the bathhouse stood just to the right of what was the manager's house on the valley-side opposite. Today the house commands a prominent position in the landscape with views across the park, the wooded valley sides and the moorland tops. During the days of the colliery, the manager would have used this position to keep his beady eye on activities below.

Both the manager's house and bathhouse were adjacent to the road and the covered gantry would have stretched right across the valley below and almost to our feet.

As with most mines, water ingress was a huge problem and pumps were working away for 20 years after Ogilvie Colliery closed, to prevent water flooding the mines further along the seam. But it was an incident during the operational years that Idris Powell remembers most clearly...

07_idris (1:55)

The incident I am about to record happened at Ogilvie colliery on a day shift in 1970. I went down the pit at 6.30 am and walked in by for about 2 miles. A part of the mine, which was very crucial, was filling up with water. It is out by a coal district but was threatening the dump and bunker area where the coal was being filled into drums.

What had happened, a large pump that was powered by compressed air had failed and was now under water. Fitters, surface mechanics were all at wits end what to do. These were all standing at the back end of the roadway. I came along; I discussed the situation. It meant that someone would have to go in to where the pump was situated, go under water and turn on the compressed air valve which luckily was an on, off valve.

Depth of the water was about 8 to 10 feet, lengths to go in, the roadway was about 20 yards. I stripped off to my under clothes, kept my cap lamp cable in my mouth and went in swimming quietly into the murky pond of water. When I got to where the pump was sited I dived into the water, felt for the valve and turned the compressed air on. Immediately there was a violent surge of great air bubble from the pump, which forced me back from the pump. The pump of course was beginning to do its work and I done the back stroke out of there and everyone carried on as if nothing had happened. I came out, dried myself the best I could and continued with my shift. When I had time to reflect on what I had done, things could have gone very wrong and I would not be here to tell the tale.

Turn right, head past the stone block circle and towards the large circular brick shaft. Listen to track 8 on the bench that is just to the left of this feature.