

Stone Stories - Len Lewis

My name is Len Lewis, I started in Penallta Colliery in 1940 and I finished in July 1986. On my first day at the colliery I didn't work underground, I was on the surface slacking empty trams back down the pit for the miners to fill up again and bring up. After that I was given an apprentice job in the fitting shop. I was for a while then driving the overhead crane in the shops and after that every machinery that was available.

I wasn't a regular down the pit, I went down the pit quite often, when there was problems. On many occasions I had to go down on top of the carriage to maintain the main pumps that pumped the water from the pit up to the reservoir at the top of the pit.

They were closing the collieries all round, so that one morning I came to work and the manager sent for me and he said, "would you like to finish?" and I said, "Well, I don't know, I'd have to talk it over with my wife." It happened so sudden really; and from that moment I came back to Penallta Colliery twice: once as a Councillor, and the other the day it closed. They invited us all back and you work somewhere for 46 years you're bound to miss it. For a while I didn't know where to go, because I was a regular worker, but being a Councillor it took the strain off being, if you like, down and out. Sad day all round.

Penallta Colliery was a wonderful colliery. The morale in Penallta Colliery was outstanding. Everybody stood by everybody else. Anyone in trouble, they all helped and no-one liked, on occasions, doing what they had to do but I have got to say this: from my experience at the colliery level the average man was happy with what he was doing and looked forward to going to work. You can't beat that can you, wherever you go?