Cyril Miles, former miner

Recorded: 1st March 2016 October 2016
Interviewer & Sound Engineer: Jason Griffiths
<u>Glossary</u>
Dram: coal cart
Dramming: handling drams, connecting them to haulage etc.
Dipple: main underground road into the pit / to the ends of he top & bottom roads
Fire-man: responsible for firing [detonating] explosives.

00:00 Born 1928 in Ruardean
01:35 Father was miner and won Service Award from NCB. Worked at Pludds, then Waterloo (aka Arthur & Edward) colliery. Flood disaster.
03:40 Didn't go short as kids. Mum worked as cleaner at Post Office Ruardean, and Knights the Bakery.
04:40 Left school at 14, worked at Waterloo [coal] screens at the surface. I went underground but a law came in you had to be 16. Picked dirt off the conveyor belt – a miserable job, dust, noise and boredom.
06:56 Underground I was dramming and cleaning up airways
08:04 The dipple [main road in the pit] followed the coal seam down into the basin. Conveyor belts were used.
09:39 Worked at Northern United [pit] when the Coal Board [NCB] came in. Waterloo was privately owned when I started.
10:00 [how the coal reached the surface] 2 x haulages to get from the face to the pit bottom.
11:50 Horses were used to get to where the haulage had not got to yet. Horses were stabled underground.
12:20 I had left by time of the flood. My brother was there. He left not long after.
14:00 At Northern you were paid according to how much coal you moved. You had to butty it up according to how many was in the contract – face workers got paid a bigger share.
16:00 I was trained at Northern. It was wet. I went to the East Drivage [area within Northern underground] then on the Incline – working with Les Ruck. We drove a rock heading into the 21 [face].
18:00 Driving a rock heading. Fish oil lubrication for the pneumatic drill.
20:05 Used dynamite – rock powder or coal powder. Also used delayed detonators of different timings – it fetched more down. Electric detonator.
23:00 You had to create a circle [of roadways] to get the airflow.
23:40 Rate of pay at Northern. 6-7 days a week as fire-man or deputy. Had to inspect Sat evenings / night.
25:30 The Deputy was supposed to be responsible for safety, but you were jack of all trades. I finished up as Deputy, and Over-man.
26:40 How coal was worked at Northern. Coal cutter [machine].
28:30 People took risks not putting timber up at correct spacing. Working the coal…
32:28 At Northern you were paid by yardage. Working conditions were better t Waterloo. It was dry mostly. Better atmosphere
34:00 Joined Mines Rescue team. Training was once per month. Later we went down to Crumlin. Was called out once at Waterloo, and once at Princess Royal. There was

black damp (CO_2). Other time at Princess Royal was a fire on a compressor – had to get in the back way from Norchard.

36:30 Breathing apparatus.

38:20 Saw accidents and I had a serious accident. I was blown – in the middle of an explosion. I was at Frenchay [Hospital] for a week. There was a court case about it. My face had to be scrubbed as it had coal stuck in it. Gloucester Infirmary [Hospital] sent me straight to Frenchay. Was off work 5-6weeks.

42:00 I went to college in Gloucester, training on milling machines. I then went to Ranks [Rank-Xerox photocopier factory Mitcheldean]

43:20 Me uncle offered me a job at True Blue so I went there as it was near to home. There was two of you working a small face. It was not solid coal, instead coal thrown back by the old miners worked previously. They had taken out the lump [coal] but threw the small back. The coal we got out was used in the dying works at Tetbury.

46:32 We got 20-25 carts out per shift, sometimes 40 a day with the two of us going.

47:00 We had to stop when the people over the road said the tables shook when we fired [set off explosives] - top of Farm Tump at Walkers Lane. The Hintons went there after, True Blue for that open cast

49:00 Ralph Kibble asked me to put my name down for Freeminers. But I didn't ant anything to do with mining again if I could help it.