

Bob Bassett (Robert George Bassett)

Recording 160919_33

- 00.11 Bob was born on 16 august 1923 in 'The Barracks'¹
- 00.45 Father was an 'ostler'² at New Fancy Colliery
- 01.20 Moved from The Barracks to New Fancy aged 8 years.
- 01.38 Photograph of parents and family members - brother Percy and sisters Barbara, Molly, Peggy and Cissy at three bedroomed family house at New Fancy.
- 02.52 Started work at New Fancy aged 14, left Parkend school
- 03.04 First job working on the 'shaker' getting stones out of the coal, came down a belt. If time go up top to look after the horses
- 04.19 Also drove the steam engine
- 04.34 Father an ostler which involved going underground to look after the 15 horses which worked underground; and 5 horses above ground. The horses pulled the trucks
- 05.25 Describes photograph of Bob, heavy horse and rail wagon. Usually two horses to pull a truck
- 06.17 Coal all move by rail. Horses used to pull the shaker and the drams (trucks)
- 06.50 Started work underground aged 16 years at New Fancy
- 07.00 Driving horses to pull the drams to the depot where coal would come out to surface
- 08.10 Shift 6.00 a.m. till 2.00 pm; food bread and cheese
- 08.20 After would help his father wash down the underground horses
- 09.00 Horses remained underground all the time until no longer able to work, then usually put down. They kept one
- 09.45 Dad had accident – horse stepped on his toe just before the colliery closed³. Went to hospital but got gangrene and amputated half his leg. No compensation or help but able to remain in the house
- 10.55 Brother Percy, also ostler at New Fancy
- 11.10 Rock with plaque and names of several miners at surface, including brother Percy – removed when new one put in place⁴
- 11.55 Colliery closure expected as running out of coal, seam getting thinner.
- 12.15 Produced house coal, sent all over. Offices up by the school
- 12.40 Water in the mine not a problem where he worked; could be in deep mines.
- 13.10 Colliers often joined up underground. New Fancy joined with Parkend Colliery. Entered mine at Parkend
- 13.50 Two mines at Parkend
- 14.00 Deakin⁵ family were owners and Lang the manager
- 15.00 cloth cap worn underground and carbide lamp on the side
- 15.10 Not involved in many accidents – 'bang ups'. One where block not put in place, dram came towards him, sheltered around a corner otherwise would have been squashed, legs broken or killed

¹ The Barracks are a group of miners cottages near Parkend

² Ostler is someone employed to look after horses or mules

³ New Fancy closed in 1944

⁴ Miners memorial to 600 men died in mining industry installed at New Fancy 2005

⁵ Thomas Hedges Deakin managing director till died 1932, followed by his son Thomas Carlye Deakin

17.00 Colliery closed 1944- World War 2 on. Recalls waiting underground for 12 hours for a phone call???

17.52 Not affected a lot by rationing. Fishermen would come from Newport on Fridays.

18.15 Men came from Cinderford for work in the pit.

19.00 did not see any of the Prisoners of War based at Broadwell

19.28 Lorries from Llanwern⁶ - took ashes from top of the mount to make the roads

20.05 Continued living in the house once colliery closed

20.30 Worked at Princess Royal aged 21 years

20.45 Son Trevor born at Lydney hospital .

21.11 Moved to current house when Trevor was two – lived here since 1953 (63 years)

21.34 Princess Royal work different to New Fancy. Back to working with horses . Mined house coal. Worked there a long time

22.30 'Bunching pans over' – putting coal into 6 foot heavy pans and then on the belt for cutting machine. Stopped working with horses.

24.00 Bevan boy⁷ just at Princess Royal. Some people got a badge⁸ but not him. Stayed underground boring⁹ for coal

25.15 Worked in pairs – mate Ken Baggers

25.45 Workers laid off at New Fancy when closed went to work at Princess Royal

26.00 Moved to Norchard Colliery. Worked underground making a road to fetch coal out. No horses then. Machinery was belts and cutters. Safe place to work.

27.00 Seeing the Queen at Llanwern¹⁰ as reward for getting most coal out

27.50 After Norchard mine closed¹¹ moved worked in factory in ??? making tables. Didn't like the work; not the same as the colliery

28.45 Retired aged 64, want to lose workers so went

29.00 Memories of father keeping pigs, pig cot in back field. Kept horse by Burgess garage, jumped the fence. No sheep.

30.20 Playing cricket for The Barracks at Parkend and football for Pillowell.

31.00 Memories of Russell Lee-lived in Blakeney, died two or three years ago. Couldn't keep still. Worked with horses.

32.09 Memories of George Hogg worked at New Fancy in machine shop aged 14 years. His brother got killed

33.11 Coal allowance when finished work at the colliery – not know

33.40 Look back at days in the mines as good days.

33.55 One child only, son Trevor, apprentice carpenter-joiner. Set up his own business aged 20 years.

34.30 Cycling to Princess Royal. Learned to drive aged 50 years. Cycled everywhere Memories of police stopping people for no lights. He and George Mallard stopped for too much light - lights not covered during the war.

⁶ Llanwern steel works, Newport – building started 1959, opened 1962

⁷ Bevin Boys were young British men conscripted to work in the coal mines of the UK between December 1943 and March 1948.

⁸ No medals awarded at the time – Veterans badge award in 2008

⁹ Boring – cutting the coal face by drilling or machine

¹⁰ Official opening of Llanwern steelworks by Queen Elizabeth II on 25 October 1962

¹¹ Norchard coal mine closed 5 December 1965

36.30 Three sisters went to work in Bristol at Wills family factory – Wills tobacco factory owners Molly, Barbara and Peggy. Married and stayed in Bristol, living near the airport. Remembers picking mushrooms there.