



ALBION DISASTER REMEMBERED



ALBION COLLIERY

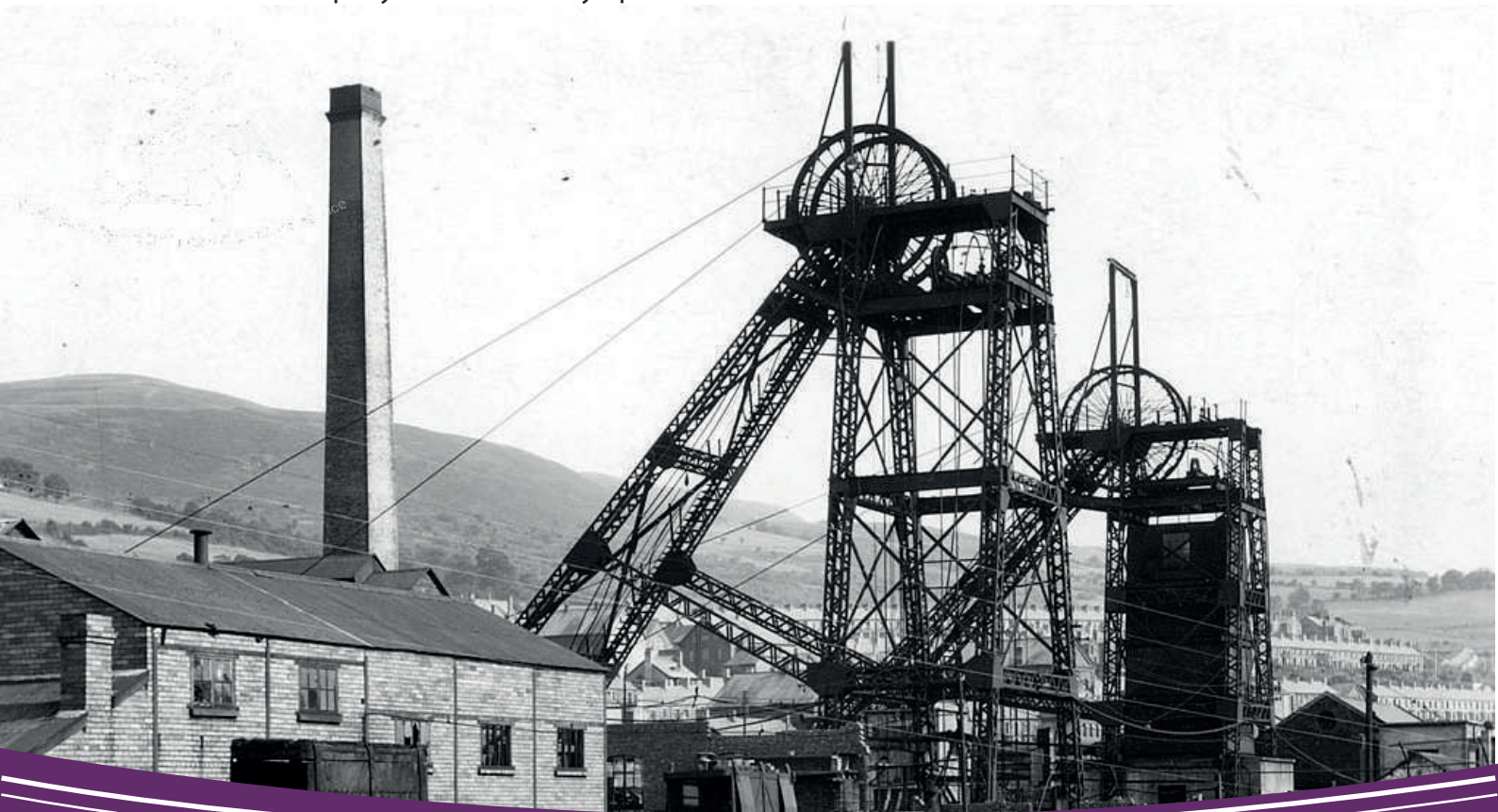
THE COLLIERY SITE

The Albion Colliery was located on the site where our School is today. Unfortunately the colliery is best remembered for the second biggest mining disaster and loss of life ever recorded.

150 years ago there was a huge demand for coal because this was the main way of heating a house, cooking a meal and all machines were powered by steam, something you could create by burning coal. In South Wales there was a huge amount of coal beneath the ground, including our school site. Mines were opened all over South Wales. The Albion colliery was opened in 1887 by the Albion Steam Coal Company. Coal was transported to parts of the UK and around the world. At this time Cardiff became the biggest port in the world.

Mines were sunk to begin the Albion Colliery in 1884 on the site of Ynyscaedudwg Farm. Land was owned by the Albion Steam Coal Company and the colliery opened in

August 1887. Production at the colliery quickly flourished and its average weekly output soon reached 12,000 tons. This was the largest tonnage for a single shaft coal-winding colliery in the whole of South Wales. By 1893, 1,500 men and boys were employed at the Albion.



IN 1875...

Situated on the banks of the River Taff, the village was named after Cilfynydd farm, which was on the east side of the valley.

Cilfynydd Farm was farmed by the Lloyd family, most recently Gwun and Lewis Lloyd, who are now both deceased. Cilfynydd was originally a farming hamlet, consisting of some cottages built along the Glamorganshire Canal. These properties, according to the 1881 census, housed about 100 people, but this all changed over the next two decades.

Ynyscaedudwg Farm was bought by the Albion Company to build the colliery. The Glamorgan Canal was the main way of transporting things – just like the A470 road is today.

When the Albion Company opened the in 1887 Cilfynydd grew rapidly. By 1901 the population was 3,500 as people moved with their families to find work in the mine. By this point, the village also had four chapels, three public houses, a school, a church, a post office, and a workman's hall.



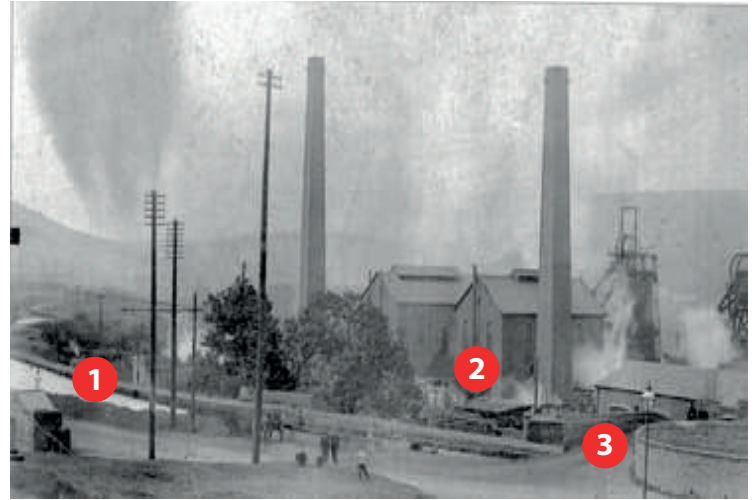
THE GLAMORGAN CANAL

MOVING THE COAL

The Glamorganshire Canal, opened in 1794 and linked Merthyr to Cardiff, skirting the village on its western side. The canal allowed coal to be transported down the valley to Cardiff Bay.

The Cilfynydd Inn, built in the early 19th century was conveniently located alongside canal and road communications allowing coaching or canal horses to be stabled for the night.

However the coming of the railways meant that the canal's days were numbered. The section between Abercynon and Cilfynydd was closed in 1915 and between Cilfynydd and Cardiff in 1942. The canal's path could be followed until it was swept away by the building of the A470 in the early 1970's.



1. The Glamorganshire Canal now the A470 road
2. Now Lower Block
3. Now a footbridge over the main road



The Glamorgan Canal can still be seen when you use a subway to cross under the main road (image on left) alongside Cardiff Castle to the Hilton Hotel.

THE TAFF VALE RAILWAY

TAFF VALLEY RAILWAY

The Taff Vale Railway linked the Albion Colliery to the docks in Cardiff.

The photographs below and right show the trucks being loaded with coal. The trucks would be where our playing fields are today.



The Taff Trail is close to our School and it marks the former route taken by the Taff Vale railway. This can be followed south to Cardiff and north to Brecon.



THE ALBION COLLIERY DISASTER



SAT JUNE 23rd, 1894

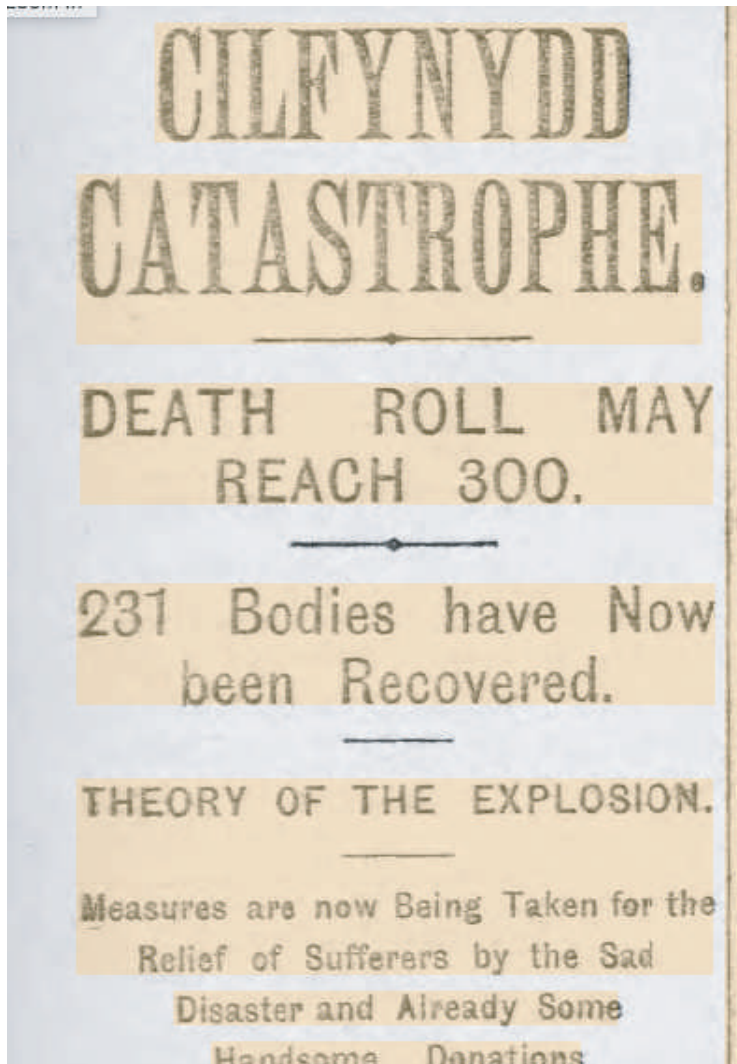
On Saturday, June 23rd, 1894 workers crossed the bridge over the Glamorgan Canal to go to work at the Albion Colliery.

As it was a Saturday, most of the workers were not miners but maintenance workers, fixing and repairing. At 3.50 pm two loud explosions were heard followed by plumes of dust and smoke from the mine shafts.

The effects of the explosion were appalling. It caused the deaths of 290 men and boys, the worst mining disaster in South Wales at that time and only to be surpassed by the explosion at Senghenydd Colliery in 1913.

Very few miners were brought out alive and the majority of them subsequently died of their injuries. Many of the bodies were badly mutilated and many were almost impossible to identify. Some relatives incorrectly identified the wrong bodies as their relatives. As it was a Saturday, another source of confusion was that nobody knew the actual number of men and boys below ground when the explosion occurred.





On Tuesday 26th June an article about the disaster was featured in the Evening Express newspaper. The article also listed 187 names and addresses of the miners who's bodies had been identified.

A large number of those who died were from north and west Wales, working to raise enough money to bring their families to Cilfynydd. Nearly every house in the village would have lost someone in this disaster. Thousands gathered for the many funeral processions through the village (photograph bottom).

The Government appointed a barrister Mr J Roskill to look at the evidence. Mr Roskill was of the opinion that an explosion of gas had occurred, which was made worse by coal dust igniting. However, they could not agree on who was to blame.

Eventually the Site manager on that day, Mr Phillip Jones was fined £10 and William Anstes, the chargeman, £2. The report said that the explosion had been made worse by the lack of water to keep the dust down.

The colliery was reopened within two weeks of the explosion and the workforce grew to 1,735 by 1896, increasing to 2,589 by 1908. After that the Albion Company found it difficult to make a profit and it went out of business in 1928.



REMEMBERING THE PAST

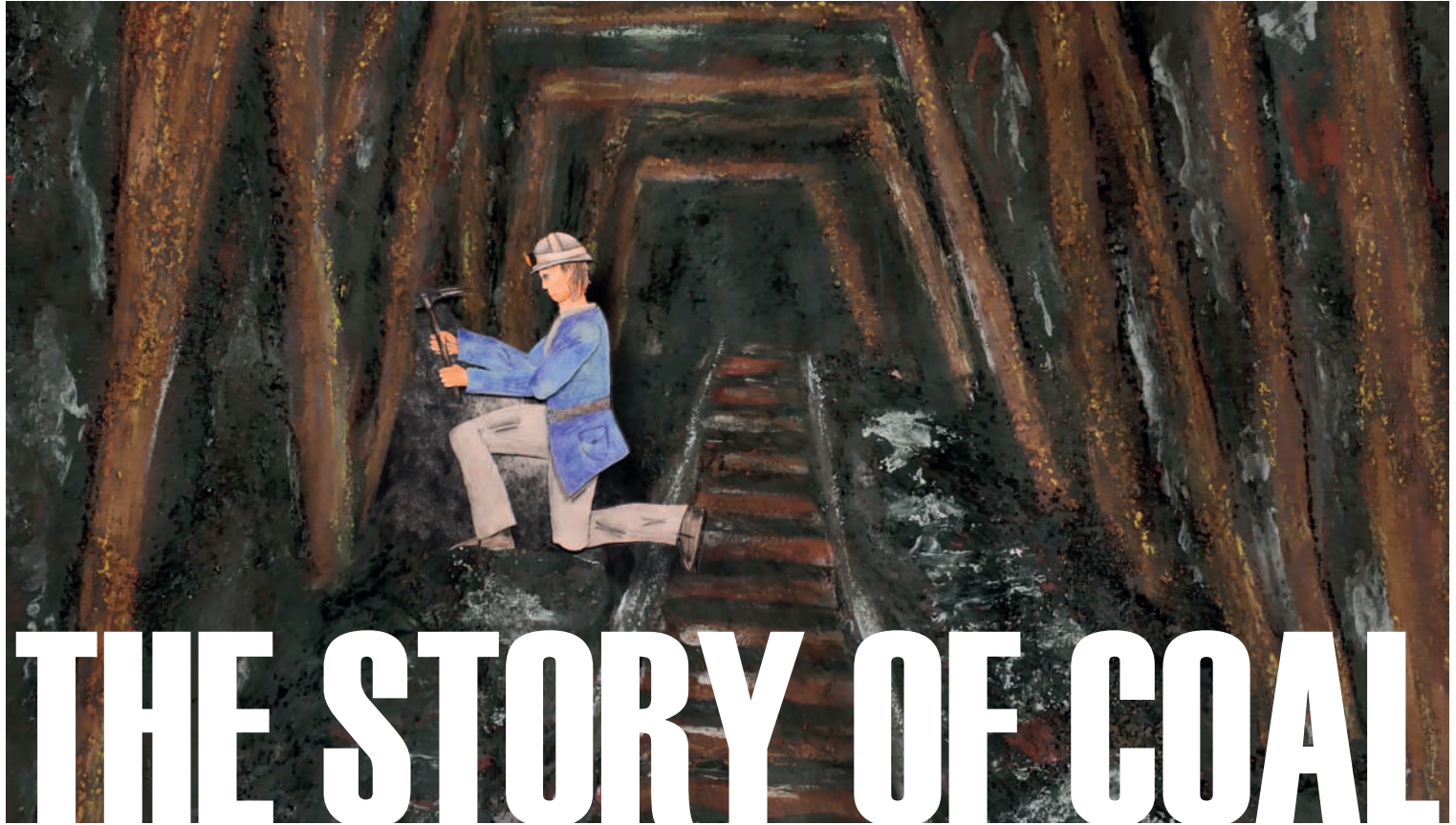
MEMORIAL

The pit shaft wheel and coal truck remind us of where the Albion Colliery was located on our school site. Beneath our feet, it is likely that the bodies of people young and old still remain, killed where they were working 125 years ago.

Just as those workers at the Albion were looking to improve their lives so we are doing the same today. It is important that we remember all 290 people killed and all those who suffered as a result of the Albion Colliery disaster.

Eleven of those killed were never identified and a memorial for them now stands at St Mabon's Church, in Llanfabon. To mark the 125th anniversary of the disaster Seren Hopkins and Jay Bowler who were part of the 'Story of Coal' animation laid flowers at the memorial.





THE STORY OF COAL

By Mr Craig Husband

With changes in the curriculum, and expansion in the creative arts industries, it is becoming apparent that the young people today need more exposure to and training in the relevant skills to equip them for post-school opportunities.

Due to this, back in 2016 an idea was formed to create a cross curricular project which integrated creative and digital media skills into the local heritage of the South Wales Valleys, with an emphasis on the Cilfynydd area and the Albion disaster. With Pontypridd High School being situated on the site of the old Albion colliery, it was clear that this was the place to start.

The idea of an animated documentary captured the imagination of staff and pupils, but where to start? With no funding or equipment to start up the project, something needed to be sourced. It was at this point that the idea of Heritage Lottery Funding arose. The project linked perfectly with their ambitions of raising young peoples' involvement in their heritage, and any

secured funding would provide a platform for the school to develop an animation studio, along with funds to take the pupils to local heritage sites and immerse them in the somewhat forgotten history of the South Wales Valleys.

After the long process of applying for the grant, it was finally approved, and the pupils could start thinking about what they wanted to create. They enlisted the help of professional animators and filmmakers to develop their ideas and bring this amazing project to life. In the beginning, the thought was to create a short documentary that encompassed video interviews and hand drawn animation. The idea of a 20-minute film was considered to be almost unattainable, with professionals highlighting how much work would be involved, especially when the project itself had a time sensitive deadline of 12 months. However, due to the incredible talent, commitment and determination of the pupils, this deadline was extended twice, and the final film now stands at 46 minutes.

Participants worked towards producing a visually

ANIMATION PROJECT



striking animated output that emphasises issues of historical importance and represented them in an educational, contemporary and engaging way. This in turn enhanced the engagement of the young pupils and the community, heightening their awareness to historical roots and the area in which they live. In essence, this project endeavoured sustain the memory of such historical events, their effect on local communities and the legacy they have left behind.

Through animation and digital media, pupils researched their community roots gaining an insight into the lives of the people that came before them. As part of the research process, participants engaged with personal histories and stories of the local community through interviews of historians and individual studies (including links to the surviving mining community). The young people involved investigated existing evidence and artefacts and displayed their findings coherently in an informative, educational manner. With participation from local museums and galleries, pupils delved deeper into the history of Welsh coal mining from its origins to the legacy left behind. Particular

emphasis was placed upon the Albion mining disaster (1894) due to the significant links with the Cilfynydd community and those involved. Due to the school being built on the original site of the Albion Colliery, mining heritage takes a strong hold in the area, though some pupils and many in the community seemed unaware of its significance. Therefore, this was the perfect way in which to highlight and preserve that history.

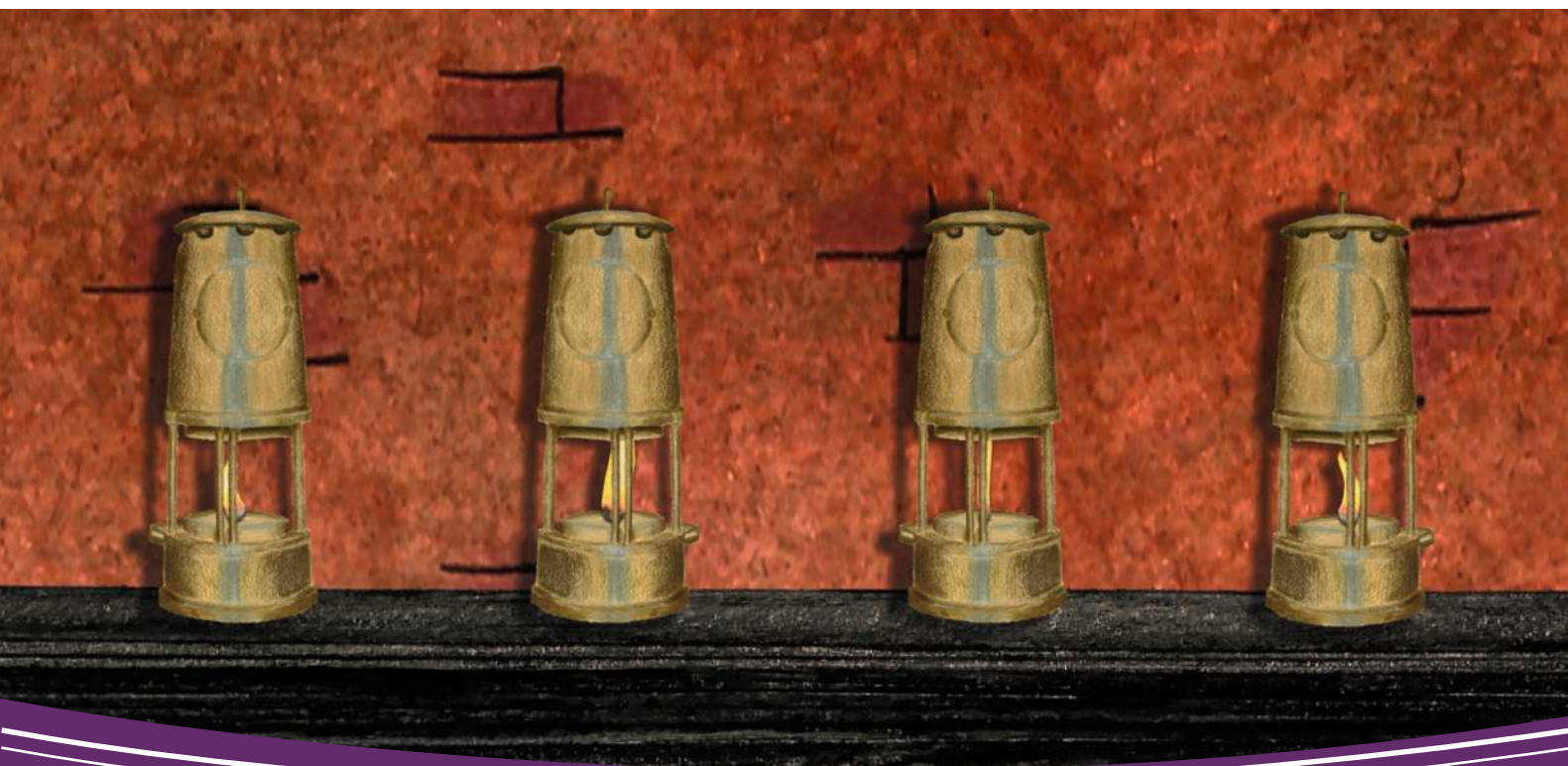
With creative industries being one of the largest growth sectors in Wales, this project had added value in terms of upskilling pupils and providing them with further opportunities to enhance their future career prospects especially in the fields of history, research, animation and other visual arts. With participation from professional animation companies alongside museums, galleries and libraries, pupils refined their research skills, fully engaged with and shared their heritage, and enhanced their digital literacy skills exponentially. As a part of the animation process, those involved engaged in professional storyboarding, narrating, directing, animation techniques and intricate creative processes to gather and collate the vast resources needed to



produce a high-end animated documentary. Pupils were also encouraged to participate in an enterprise component, learning how to utilise graphic design and creative marketing to produce DVD sleeves and booklets that provided further educational information about their local history.

Taking almost three years to complete, the film stands as a testament to the drive and ambition of the young people of South Wales and proves that nothing is

impossible. The 44 pupils who participated in the project have successfully preserved our history and provided a way in which it can be shared for years to come. Not only have they created a film which will be available to all, but the funding received has also allowed for the school to develop a successful creative media studio, which will continue to help develop and train our pupils in the future. The opportunity now stands to involve many more pupils in film and animation production. Who knows what will be next!



THE STORY OF COAL

PUPILS INVOLVED

The 44 pupils involved in the Story of Coal were:

Aysha Khalid, Benjamin Cousins, Briar Rose Allen, Caitlin Powell, Cory Short, George Simons, Jay Bowler, Jessica Hunt, Joe Osborne, Kane Tutssel, Kerianne Jones, Kira Jean Bines, Aleksandra Pawlowska, Lowri Thomas, Mia Morgan, Seren Hopkins, Tom Jenkins, Abby Rowlands, Abby Watkins, Lauren Robinson, Bree Evans, Camron

Davies, Cara Watkins, Chloe Hyde, Coby Wiosna, Dax Ellis, Dylan Wert, Emilie Williams, Ffion Davies, Ieuan Gulwell, Jay Beasley, Jessica Edmunds, Joseph Barnes, Josh Benjamin, Kaitlyn Matthews, Maddison Baldwin, Megan Burgess, Megan Jones, Megan Thorne, Menna Witney, Mia Harris, Olivia Jones, Rachel Birch and Rachel Lane.

