

LEARNING TOGETHER

Bell rings - start of class
Expectant faces, excited, eager
‘What’s in the box?’
Objects from an industry long gone
One by one pulled out
Placed into young hands.

Smooth shiny checks
Markham clearly embossed in the metal
A lantern - glass and brass
Dry wick still intact
Leather boots and well-worn belt
Dudley and snap tin still attached.

A miner fashioned in brass
Too heavy to lift
Remarkable detail
In the tired, weather-beaten, work-worn face.

At the bottom of the box
The heaviest, most important item
Left until last.
Coal.
Black Gold!

Tales ensued of the brave men
Who risked their lives daily
To source this valuable commodity.

Poetry written by old miners
Shared.
Imaginations ignited, set free
To write and draw their own interpretations
Of a miner’s life.

Inquisitive minds ...
“Why is the snap tin shaped like that?”
“What were the checks for?”
“Why was coal so valuable?”
“How dangerous was life underground?”
“What? No toilets?”

Question followed question until
Bell rings - end of class.

Bell rings - another class
Older faces - mid-teen secondaries
Different students - same sharing of tales and poetry
With three Markham disasters added.

Different questions ...

“How many injured?”
“How many dead?”
“What caused the explosion?”
“How did families cope?”
“How were communities affected?”

Students absorb the information
Soaking it up, mature beyond their years
Take up the challenge to write their own accounts
Conjure up stories, illustrate their words.
Inspirational work.
Remarkable!

Produced by young people who never knew the industry
Some never having seen coal
And the most recent '73 disaster
Thirty-five years before their births.

Yet they understood
Grasped the horrors, the implications
Brought history back to life in their interpretations.
Bell rings - end of class.

Heritage ...
Pass down
Share across generations

Keeping the memory of
106 brave men alive.

Walking Together.