

10 Years of Walking Together

As part of the **10 Years of Walking Together project supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund**, Creative Writer Lynn Ludditt and a number of Markham Vale Heritage Group volunteers delivered creative heritage workshops. These were bespoke and designed individually for each school. Sessions for primary schools concentrated on coal mining as a local occupation and included three key elements: a day in the life of a miner, living in a mining community, and miners' hobbies, interests and holidays.

The following poems and creative writing pieces are from Woodthorpe Primary School pupils.

Miner's Poem

Sending a canary down there
Sending a canary to test the air.

Finding a bad gas of any kind
I wonder what things that I can find.

From coal to diamonds - it's all a surprise
The smell of garlic we really despise.

Wearing a flat cap to protect our heads
If we get hurt we can use our meds.

Using my snap tin to hold my sandwich
If I get a broken arm I can use a bandage.

My Dramatic Day at the Pit

Every morning at 5am, I wake up in my bed, realising
that my life is coming to an end.
I boil my tea just to realise I need a morning wee.

I get my snap and my tin, get off to work - it's a win, win.
Get my checks and hand them in
Then I saw my lantern hanging on a pin.

I get in the lift making my way down
I started digging and heard cracking and a

massive piece of coal came crashing down.

But I was ok.
Fortunately I made it out alive 😊.

Pit Pony

After two weeks of running in the field the miners took me in, fed me and put me in the pit and left me there by myself until 5am.

Then all the miners come down and started mining.

After a few minutes I was falling asleep. I woke up because a miner's lamp was shining in my eyes. They had tubs full of coal which they put on ME! And it was SOOOOOO HEAVY!

I went back up in the lift but before I could get my back leg in it closed. At the top there was a miner - he saw that my leg was trapped - he helped me and took care of me.

I was replaced and sad and after this I died.

The other ponies talking now:

I love the new mining job but I was so sad that the other pony died and I hope I will live longer.

The end.

One hundred years ago a miner called Wilfred awoke at 5 o'clock like usual every morning. He took his snap tin and left the house, he knocked on all the neighbours' doors. All of his neighbours joined him on the street, walking down to the colliery where they worked.

They all got there and collected their 3 checks, Wilfred was the first to speak to the Banksman, he approved of Wilfred's check and lowered him down the mine shaft. He intentionally passed through the stables to greet his pit pony friend, Finn ... Finn whinnied in pleasure at the sight of his human friend. Wilfred stroked the animal's mane then left the stables to do his job. He picked up a pickaxe that was leant against the wall, he swung the pickaxe with all his might and created a huge dint in the coal seam.

After about 3 hours, Wilfred had forged a large tunnel but his lantern ran out so now he was in pitch black. He was also exhausted but took another hit - however this was a bad hit as the exact piece of coal he hit was holding up another larger slab of black gold. This slab fell and knocked Wilfred unconscious. Meanwhile all the other miners were being hoisted out of the mine marking the end of their shift.

They all placed their checks down. 'Hey, Wilfred's checks aren't here' noticed Wilfred's friend Cyril. "Look - 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10! Wilfred's number is 6!"

"Right, we will send a search party to find him" replied the boss.

Back in the mine Finn the pony sensed danger and broke the rules - he leapt the stable door and trotted under the low, wet ceiling of the tunnel Wilfred had created. When he reached the end he heard heavy breathing underneath him. Finn lifted the rocks in front of him. Wilfred laid there, still breathing but out cold. Finn bit Wilfred's belt and dragged him to the bottom of the lift. The search party came down the lift and saw the pit pony.

"What are you doing out of the stables? You're meant to be ...", then they saw what was at the pony's feet. Finn kicked Wilfred softly and the miner woke with a jump. "Ah Finn, what are you doing here?" Wilfred groaned holding his head.

"I think he saved you" the boss said. "Ah thanks Finn, you're an even better pit pony now." The End.

The Miner and the Rat

Early in the morning the miner woke up and got dressed. Soon after that he walked into the kitchen and found his wife making his snap.

"Ok your snap is ready now. I just have to fill up your Dudley." she said as the miner waited patiently.

"Alright" said the miner.

"Here - I want you to be careful down there" she explained.

"Ok. Bye!"

The miner walked up the the lift. Then the lift went slowly down. The man stepped out of the lift and walked further and further into the pit and then he started to mine.

All of a sudden a piece of coal fell down behind him.

He turned round and saw a rat. "Hello!" the miner said. The rat looked at him in a confused way.

Then everything went silent, all he could hear was the sound of people mining.

Day of a Pit Pony

Hooray! Two whole weeks to roam free. But how can time go so quick? I better flee.

I have been caught - time to go down the pit but first I need to get into my bit.

I'm now fully underground with the miners, time to get to work pulling the carts.

Finally lunch has arrived!

But now we have to look for someone who's been paralysed.

After a long day of work, all the miners have gone home for tea.

Which leaves us time to plea for ours.

I wake up at 5am and go down in the dark.
I can hear someone calling my name,

“Mark!”

I grab my checks and lamp and
step into the damp.

I start to dig then
the hole gets too big.

A stone falls on someone's head
luckily we have meds.

I told him to rest whilst we got him a bandage
to give him energy we gave him a sandwich.

I opened my eyes and I heard the knock on the door and a few snores.

I had a sigh and got out of bed to get my snap tin and said,

“Oh I do wish that I had a day off today to go to Skegness with my family and sit back and relax.”

But I got my Dudley and set off to the mine, with the men.
We got there and put the canaries down the mine to search for poisonous gas.
We heard their sweet songs.

Until they suddenly stopped ...
We pulled the cage up and the canary was dead!
Suddenly we were evacuating - we all had to quickly get out of the mine.

So I headed home for my dinner and my wife said,

“Why are you home early?”

There was poisonous gas in the mine.

Pit Ponies Evening

The pit ponies are down the mine
With the workers who are eating their pie.

The workers finish their pie and give the horses a bit
Before the boss comes to inspect.

The boss is down the mine
He says it's fine but could be better
He goes back up to his house ...

The horses finally get their hay
but there's not enough
They've got to go up and pay
for more.

They all settle down for their sleep
The horses have a peep
The workers are all asleep
Come on - time to escape!

Coal Miners

Over one hundred years ago people mined coal originally called black diamonds.

The bandsman took our miner's checks which we used to get up and down in the lift
and to check that no-one got lost in the mine.

Everyone would get up at 5am and ask their wives or mother to make up their
sandwiches - without onions, garlic and oranges.

They would then set off for a hard day of work with their pit pony and canary.

They would retire at 60 or 66.

My Day as a Miner

The alarm went off - it was 5am
I grabbed my tools and off I went

I lean into my pocket and my checks are bent
I try to give my checks to the Banksman who is having a fit
Because someone snuck into the pit.

A Miner's Schedule

I woke up at 5am when my alarm clock started ringing.
Yawning and stretching debating going down the pit another day.

But as I knew I had to, I got dressed and headed down the stairs to pick up my
checks, Dudley, my snap tin and belt to hear the knocker
tap-tap-tapping on our window.

“Oh no. I guess it's time for my shift to start.”

The Little Mining Book

The miners all used to wake up at 05.00am.
Then they got their snap from their mum or wife.
And they would get their boots, belt and helmet
then left and knocked on people's doors and walked to the mines.

Set off. I don't want to be late as I don't want
the punishment that may await.

I set off to head to the pit, the group I shall join
following the knocker.

We're at the last house. Time to set off.
I guess I'm ready for another eight hours of hard work.

The minute I opened my eyes I heard a sound. It was a figure who had a funny
looking hat and two tins on a belt.

“CHIRP CHIRP” I heard myself screaming. The man was frightened. (HA!)

This man was eating something - ooh that looks yummy. I do wish I could just get
out and be free!

This man was whacking the wall with an axe! Oh no, his hand's
just got cracked. It's fine.

This man was holding some shiny stone of some sort.

But anyway - good luck miner.

Every morning at 5am I get my husband ready for work.
Make him some porridge and pack his snap but oh no -
I can't find his Dudley!

I'm searching about, panicking wondering what I can do but after all that my husband
had left for the colliery. I still didn't have his Dudley.
What shall I do?

I was worried all day but as my husband came home I had some shouting to do.
After being worried sick all day I found out ...

"All this time I've been running around, you've had your Dudley!" I shouted.

"OOPS".

Waking at 5am I get my snap tin with my snap in it.
Say goodbye to my wife and go to the pit.
I give my checks to the Banksman, he takes me down the lift to the pit.

My job is to look after the pit pony but today I got a job as a miner.

I got my shovel and pick then go in the cave to mine.

I look everywhere but I can't find any coal at all but then
I find the biggest piece of coal ever!