

Appendix 3.1

In order to deliver a diverse heritage programme for the residents and visitors of the County Borough, the need for employing a team of heritage professional with a diverse range of skills became evident when the service transferred to the Visitor Attractions Service in 2018.

In 2020, the opportunity arose to undertake a staff restructure and utilising existing budgets, the process began in creating a new heritage service team who could deliver for the future.

Our Educational officer left the Service in July, as all other team members are on parttime contracts as stopgap these hours were redistributed between the other team members. It is however our intention to fill the post as soon as we are able.

Heritage Service Team:

- **Darren Macey** - Heritage Operations Manager, P/T – Qualified & experienced historian, specialist in race & equality heritage, educational specialist & lecturer, and funding.
- **Rhiannon Seymour** – Memorials & Monument Officer P/T – qualified and experienced Archaeologist, community engagement and funding.
- **Rhian Hall** – Collections & Artefact Manager P/T – qualified historian and in Collections Care. Experienced curator and in funding applications.
- **Kath Lewis** – Outreach Officer P/T – experienced schools and community outreach

The following information are examples of exciting community focused projects delivered by the Heritage Service.

Community engagement

Lead – Darren Macey

As a service we are acutely aware of both the financial restrictions and statutory responsibilities of the Authority. We see our role in terms of both income generation, supporting and advising funding bids across RCT and 'interest' generation. Addressing the latter we consistently seek the most cost effective way to generate interest via

external funding, working with colleagues across the Authority including in our town centre regeneration, highways and engineering teams. To that end we are supporting the delivery of heritage interpretation on the following projects.

- Robertstown Bridge
- Castle Bridge
- Rhondda Fach Active Walkway

We are, as per the below examples display, focused on working with community groups across the Authority seeking to use heritage as a tool for regeneration and community cohesion.

Rhondda Radio Heritage Trail

When, some months ago, Rhondda Radio won a major grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop a Rhondda Heritage Trail and associated broadcast and audio archive, the support of Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage and Outreach Services was absolutely crucial.

Not only did we receive a really helpful letter of support, but the whole ethos of our application was inspired by a number of discussions we were privileged to have with RCT's Heritage and Outreach team before submitting our bid, and especially by the guiding principle which they talked about of transforming heritage 'from nostalgia to relevance'.

I believe it was this idea which gave our bid its convincing coherence in the estimation of the NHLF and won the grant.

Since the award of the grant, RCT's Heritage and Outreach Services has continued to offer us a fantastic level of support, as a sounding board for our ideas, as a guarantor that our plans accorded with Council strategy and policy, and at a very practical level in determining where to locate the 'Heritage Stations' which are at the heart of our Project.

Operational Manager Darren Macey and the team could not have been more helpful in making themselves available on numerous occasions, and often at short or no notice, to give us advice, to pass on useful local contacts and for site meetings etc.

We are truly grateful to them.

Dr John Geraint

Project Overview

The **Rhondda Heritage Project** is funded by a major grant awarded to Rhondda Radio, the Valley's community radio station, by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The grant was secured with a letter of support from Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage and Outreach Services, and we have been in constant dialogue with council officers, both before and since the award of the grant.

The Project has three interconnecting strands: a **physical Heritage Trail**; a **training programme** upskilling volunteers to identify and record oral testimony related to Rhondda's heritage; and a year-long 'festival' of **heritage programmes** which will be broadcast by Rhondda Radio in 2024, and available online in perpetuity.

The **training programme** is now complete, and more than 100 pieces of oral history have been recorded and prepared in audio form for broadcast and online publication.

Broadcasts of the weekly 'live' **heritage programmes** began on 3 January 2024. We are liaising with RCT's Heritage Project Co-ordinator to incorporate the online archive of our audio within a dedicated website which is being developed for the 'Altered Images' project.

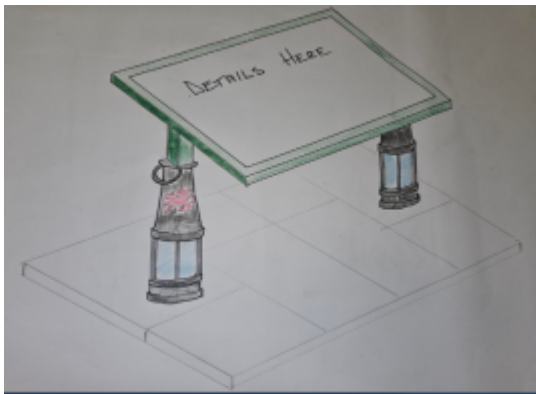
The **physical Heritage Trail** is intended to reconnect this iconic mining valley to its past. We are confident that it will prove to be an attractive, popular and educational feature, for both residents and visitors alike.

The Trail will be organised thematically with twelve 'Heritage Stations' at key locations throughout both Rhondda Valleys.

This document gives details of the proposed sites.

At each site, the Project will install an information board similar to many already in place throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, but with a distinctive design element incorporated into the box section legs. At each site, the design of the legs will reflect a particular heritage theme, appropriate to the location.

The frames, including the box section legs, will be manufactured in stainless steel. Sitting atop the legs will be an aluminium panel measuring approximately 1200mm wide by 850mm (covered by 3mm sheet of acrylic for protection). This surface board



will carry fully bilingual information (in Welsh and English) specific to the site and a QR code linking to the online audio archive.

An impressionistic drawing of one of the information boards – the one intended for the Rhondda Heritage Park site – is pictured

here.

The design element on the legs is purely illustrative and will be varied from site to site. The following pages detail the suggested locations for the twelve 'Stations'.

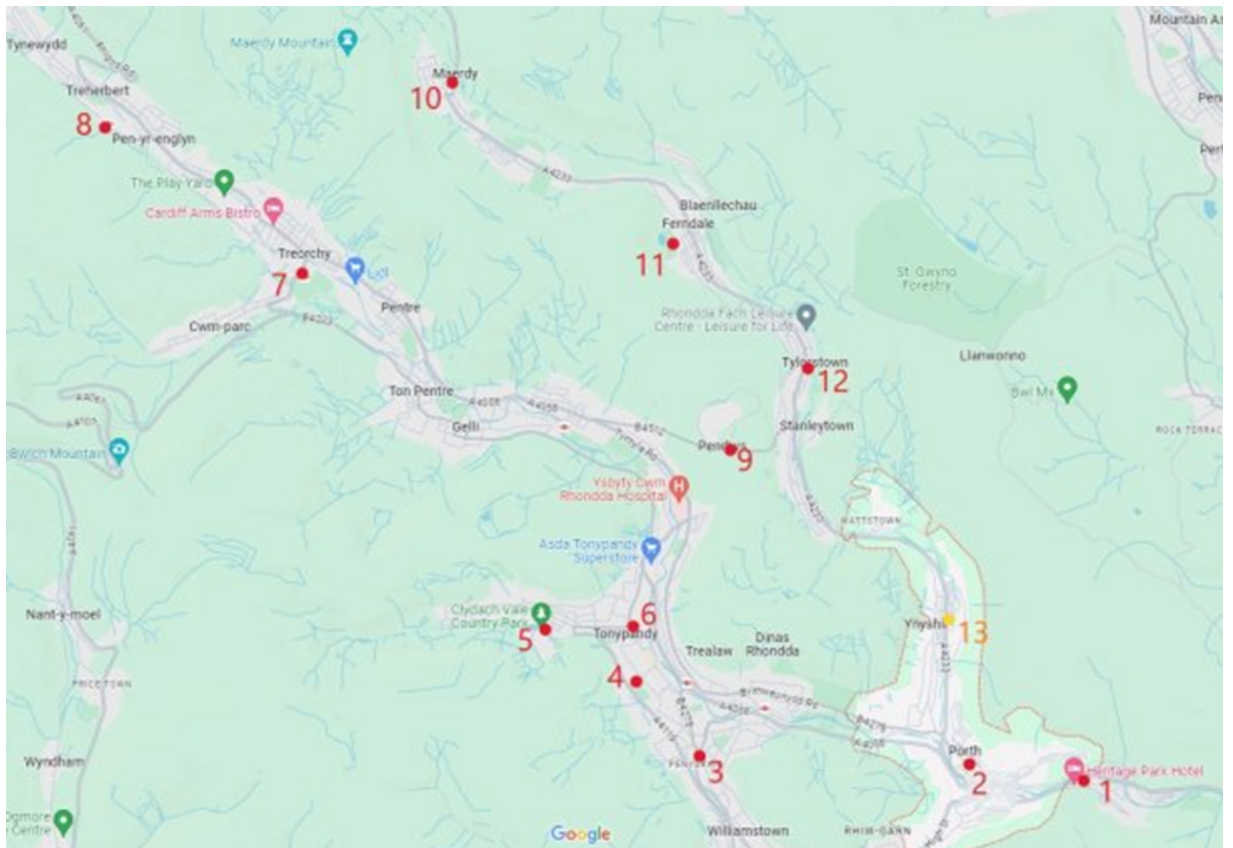
1. Rhondda Heritage Park Mining Museum at Trehafod
2. Porth Transport Hub
3. Soar Centre, Penygraig
4. Mid-Rhondda Athletic Field, Tonypany
5. Cambrian Lakes, Clydach Vale
6. Pandy Square, Tonypany
7. Treorchy Park and Dare Theatre
8. Welcome to the Woods, Treherbert
9. Penrhys Statue Car Park
10. Maerdy Gateway Miners' Memorial

11. Darran Park, Ferndale

12. Tylorstown Welfare Hall

Bonus station

13. Workers Gallery, Ynyshir (this will not be a physical structure, but an image displayed in the Gallery)



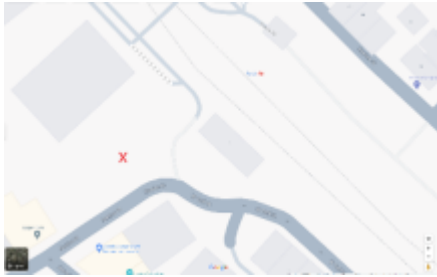
1. Rhondda Heritage Park Mining Museum at Trehafod



Off the public highway, adjacent to the main entrance doors of the Museum

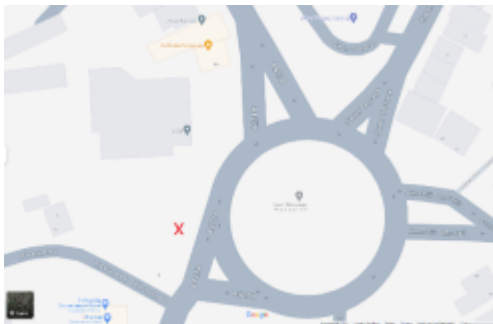
(exact location to be discussed)

2. Porth Transport Hub



On the 'island' outside the passenger terminal building

3. Soar Centre, Penygraig



Off the public highway, near the entrance gate, within the perimeter of the Valleys Kids property.

4. Mid-Rhondda Athletic Field, Tonypany



Off the public highway, within the perimeter of the Athletic Field.

(Exact location to be discussed)

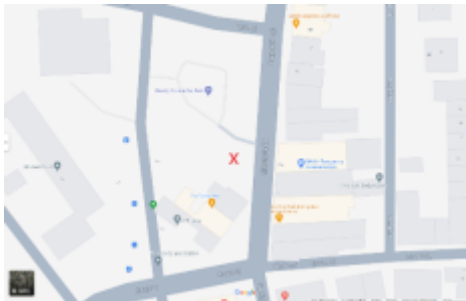
5. Cambrian Lakes, Clydach Vale



Off the public highway, within the Cambrian Village Trust site.

(Exact location to be discussed)

6. Pandy Square, Tonypany



Set back from the public highway, on the paved area next to the existing visitor information board.

7. Treorchy, Park and Dare Theatre



Set well back from the public highway, against the back or side wall of the existing open and paved seating area between the north-east side of the Theatre and the bridge over the river.

8. Welcome to the Woods, Treherbert



Off the public highway, on the Welcome To The Woods site, beyond the railway level crossing.

9. Penrhys Statue Car Park



On the grass verge, next to the existing visitor information board.

10. Maerdy Gateway Miners' Memorial



On the slightly flatter grass area uphill beyond the pit wheel and planters.

11. Darran Park, Ferndale



Near the entrance opposite Tudor Street, on the grass near the existing information board.

12. Tylorstown Welfare Hall



Over or behind the grey railings, so as not to obstruct the pathway.

Project outcomes include:

- Oral history recordings
- Educational output - education materials.

Mid Rhondda partnership

The Heritage Service are supporting several organisations writing an initial funding bid for £250,000 with the intension for a further bid of £4-5 million in 2027.

Tylorstown Welfare Hall

The Heritage Service are currently supporting a funding bid if £5 million.

Appendix 3.2

The following information gives an indication of the duties carried out by the Collections Manager.

Raising the care standards - National Museum of Wales Accreditation Status.

It was important that in 2018 at time when the management of Heritage transferred to Visitor Attractions that the change signified a change in direction and aspiration within the service.

Achieving a national standard of excellence had been discussed since the opening of Rhondda Heritage Park Museum in 1993 but had never achieved despite previous support from National Museums Wales.

In 2018, after working with advisors from the National Museum Service, significant work was undertaken, creating safeguarding systems and processes, which ensured that the Museum now operates to the highest of nationally recognised standards and once implemented were subject to a quality audit by NWS inspectors.

Rhondda Heritage Park achieved National Museum Accreditation status for the first time in 2018 and continues to maintain and retain this status.

Managing work of the Collections Manager consists of managing the three museum artefact collections based at Rhondda Heritage Park, Cynon Valley Museum and National Lido of Wales, consisting of over 34,155 artefacts.

Managing and maintaining the Rhondda Artefact Collection to National Museum Accreditation standards, and to ensure reaccreditation in 2025.

Undertaking a rationalisation programme to better improve the quality of the Rhondda Collection.

To work with the Cynon Valley Museum Trust in managing and presenting the artifacts of the Cynon Collection.

To provide guidance and support to public enquiries in relation to managing artefacts.

To develop volunteer opportunities in support undertaking maintenance and research of the Councils Collections.

Collections and Museum interpretation

Lead- Rhin Hall

The Rhondda Heritage Park Museum received Capital Transformation funding of £150,000 from the Welsh Government in March 2023 to upgrade the 'Black Gold' (coal history) exhibition and develop a digital exhibition space. This exhibition will consist of

touch screens containing interactive digital content (interpretation text in timeline and map formats, relevant images of objects from our collection, historical videos, and audio files) mirrored on to large TV screens. For example, one screen will cover the female experience of the 1984-85 miners' strike and feature portraits of the women and oral history interview files of their memories. Visitors will be able to interact with this in multiple inclusive ways, via multiple languages and BSL, which will improve access and understanding for current and new users.

Furthermore, the digital equipment will improve collections care practice by providing the opportunity to share digitised objects that cannot be displayed due to fragile condition, allowing access and preservation for future generations.

The digital format will improve the efficiency and speed of creating and manipulating content in a way that would be impossible with physical interpretation. This will also create endless opportunities to collaborate with regional and national museums and organisations by featuring their content and objects in the exhibition, or as part of events, workshops, and lectures.

Appendix 3.3

Following the transfer of management responsibilities of Rhondda Heritage Park Visitor Attraction in 2016, it was found that the infrastructure at the Council's main heritage visitor attraction was in desperate need of safeguarding and product development.

The Council's cabinet committed to safeguarding, preserving and developing the facility for its visitors and future generations, and a significant investment of £500k was undertaken in 2016/17, which resulted in significant improvements to both the visitor experience as well as safeguarding the facility's key heritage infrastructure.

This investment and subsequent improvements led to a significant increase in visitor numbers as well as a reduction in operational costs as indicated below, and the expectations are for this trend to continue.

In addition to reducing costs and increasing visitor numbers, the attraction benefits from superb customer feedback.

As part of the development, the introduction of cutting-edge technology was introduced as part of the guided tour, enhancing the visitors experience and presenting heritage in a new and interactive manner.

Temporary Exhibitions

This permanent exhibition space was designed in a manner that also created a temporary exhibition space at its centre. This space would enable the development of a range of temporary exhibitions that delve deeper into the subject matter and enable a celebration of the mining and community heritage in a wider sense.

Fourteen exhibitions have been produced so far and are displayed on a rotational/ seasonal basis in order that the heritage offer at the facility remain fresh for visitors, as indicated below.

1. Land of Bards and Singers
2. Miners Fortnight
3. Women of the Valleys
4. Wildlife and industry
5. Making Medicine
6. From Pit to Port
7. Education: A Class Act
8. Rhondda Remember
9. A Christmas Carol 2019
10. When war came to the Rhondda
11. Last Voices of Rhondda
12. Proud Valley
13. Hidden Voices
14. Lewis Merthyr Colliery 60th Anniversary

March 5th, 2024 sees the opening of an exhibition featuring the sights and sounds of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. The exhibition features images taken by Richard Williams, a young photographer working for the Western Mail at the time. The photographs are combined with a soundscape that includes contemporary music, speeches, news reports and oral testimony created by former BBC producer John Geraint.

The Coal Society Exhibition area.

The creation of the Coal Society Exhibition area outlines the impacts that came with the creation of new communities including home life, religion, births deaths and marriages and unionism. The use of digital technologies again features throughout the exhibition space.

Current projects

The following outlines a range of the key projects that are currently being undertaken.

Safeguarding the Miner's story - Digitisation of guided tour

One of the biggest challenges that lay ahead in terms of customers and future generations getting to hear the real-life experiences of former colliers.

Due to the fact that the majority of Coal Mining finished in the early 1990's in South Wales, the vast majority of those who worked as miners are well beyond retirement age. The current tour guides age range from 65yrs - 82yrs of age.

Recruitment of former miners has proved almost impossible in recent years, and it is anticipated that we are likely to lose half our current staff to retirement within the next two years, and before the end of this decade there will be no former coal miners available to act as guides.

The Visitor Attractions service have embarked on an ambitious project to safeguard the precious heritage, by digitally capturing the existing guides delivering their tour, in a way that that will ensure that at the point in the near future when the last of our guides retire, we will still have the ability to ensure

that customers of the future will be able to digitally meet with, see, and listen to the experiences of our current guides, providing a very similar experience to that currently available, albeit through a self-led tour.

3.4 Memorialisation in RCT

Lead Rhiannon Seymour

The recently created post of Monuments and Memorials Officer has begun the process of cataloguing all the memorials, scheduled monuments, blue plaques and listed buildings within RCT.

The purpose of the role is to document all Monuments and Memorials, recording details of all listings, undertaking conditional surveys, producing long-term safeguarding maintenance processes, undertaking funding applications and also creating engagement and interpretational opportunities for residents and visitors and in particular working with armed services personnel, both serving and veterans along with Royal British Legion and other interested parties.

This year the Councils Cabinet has supported the creation of this new post, along with an additional £100k capital fund that will be used to undertake essential maintenance on Memorials, create community engagement projects and friends' groups in support of maintaining and celebrating memorials.

In addition, the creation of a dedicated website that will enable greater engagement, interpretation, and research opportunities for future generations.

Blue plaques

The Heritage Service works with a committee made up of representatives from our community, the Blue Plaque Committee. Applications are made directly to the Heritage Service who pass these on to the Blue Plaque Committee which sits biannually, April and October, to consider applications. All decisions regarding the recipients of Blue Plaques are made independently of the Heritage Service by this autonomous committee. Applications received between October and March are assessed in April, with those received between April and September assessed in

October. Each application is considered on its own merit as evidenced by any and all information provided to the committee.

Usually, the council fund four blue plaques per year but during September 2024 round, two plaques were tied. It was decided that, on this occasion, the council would fund an additional blue plaque to represent the views of the blue plaque committee.

The blue plaques funded during the last year are for:

Name of person plaque dedicated to	Date of person plaque dedicated to	Location of plaque	Date of unveiling	Information regarding person
Gwilym Elfed Davies	1913-1992	Stanleytown	14/10/2023	Lord and Baron of Penrhys Labour Party Cabinet Minister Advocate for mineworkers' rights Chair of Tylorstown Colliery N.U.M. Lodge
John Haydn Davies	1905-1991	Treherbert	21/10/2023	Headteacher, historian, and conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir
James Egan	1858-1916	Treforest	24/01/2024	A Rorke's Drift defender in the Anglo-Zulu war (22 nd -23 rd January 1879).
Keith Gregory	1936-2004	Pontygwaith	Waiting for date of unveiling	The Rhondda Valley's only apprentice cooper at Fernvale Brewery, Pont-y-Gwaith, in 1957

Ceridwen Brown	1896-1976	Aberdare	08/03/2024	Activist, campaigner, and community organiser
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To be considered for one of the four blue plaques the council fund a year, there is a set of criteria which must be met. The blue plaque officer will check this basic criterion before the application can be sent to the blue plaque committee - criteria outlined in table 1. Once it is determined these have been met, the blue plaque committee will take additional evidence into consideration to determine who has been successful. These applications are decided on twice a year (April and September). The monuments and memorials officer will then have to decide on the wording for the blue plaques, ensure this is translated, design the plaque, liaise with highways to ensure it is placed on the correct building at the correct time and liaise with the applicant to insure there is a successful unveiling event. The blue plaque coordinator will also ensure all relevant councillors are invited to the event.

Blue plaque type	Criteria
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evident the person has completed work worthy of lasting recognition. - Prominent in a public sphere. - Deceased for at least 10 years. - Strong connection with the building/structure plaque is being placed on.
Place/ location/ building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be locally or nationally recognise as having special significance worthy of lasting recognition.
Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 10 years must have lapsed since the event. - Event must be demonstrably important on a local or national scale.

War memorials

The monuments and memorials officer has set up a programme ensuring all war memorials are visited and checked annually. This ensures any issues regarding the structure can be identified early.

Example

The Maerdy war memorial head was removed and required replacing. Due to the urgency in replacing the memorial and that unfortunately, no financial help was available from the war memorials trust the Authority has had to fully fund a replace memorial. A local stone mason is currently working on the memorials to ensure it is placed in Maerdy within the next couple of months.

Due to the work on memorialisation being predominately focussed on military personnel, there has been close collaborative work between the monuments and memorials officer and local veterans. The memorials officer regularly attends veterans meeting to discuss how they can work together to ensure memorials are protected. A group of volunteers from the veteran community, alongside the memorials officer, have begun cleaning the memorials within RCT. The volunteers focus of memorials where inscriptions have been obscured by mould. The volunteers use soft cleaning techniques to ensure there is no damage to the memorial. They also sand/ paint any metal railings and weed the area surrounding the memorial. For more technical issues, the memorial officer liaises with the trees department to cut back trees surrounding memorials and the highways department to repoint the area and replace slabs. It was during one of the cleaning sessions it was noticed the railings from Ynyshir cenotaph had been damaged. The memorials officer liaised with the highways department and replaced the railings with funding from the war memorials funding.

The primary focus of the monuments and memorials officer, regarding war memorials, is the war memorial digitisation project. This was launched in November 2023 with the aim to digitise all war memorials within RCT and provide each person with a base line level of information. This project is an extremely successful initiative with where there are almost 200 volunteers taking part. These volunteers range from school year groups to WI groups, and individuals. The role of the monuments and memorials officer is to project manage and fact check all the research. Two regular research groups have been set up in local libraries, school visits including object handling, and a guest speaker from the women's peace petition has been arranged for the volunteers.

Young archaeologist club

A monthly, free, archaeology club is run by the monuments and memorials officer. This club had been partly subsidised by the council of British archaeology, to ensure the club is free for participants. The club is open for participants aged 5-15 and each session focusses on a different archaeological theme each month. During the session participants will then complete a complimentary craft to take home. There are currently 15 participants who attend the club.

3.5 Education projects delivered at Rhondda Heritage Park Museum

Lead- Kathrin Lewis

A range of educational workshops are delivered by the Heritage team. The new Curriculum for Wales provides a real opportunity for both RHP and the Heritage team to significantly increase schools' engagement as the new curriculum is adopted within schools.

Range of school's workshops and loan box scheme.

List of school workshops & loan boxes

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. A Head for Heights | 11. Victorian Household |
| 2. Coal - A Titanic Story | 12. Victorian Schools |
| 3. Coal Scientists | 13. Meet the Romans |
| 4. Gallery Worksheet | 14. Tudor's |
| 5. Making a Miners' Helmet | 15. WWI |
| 6. Mrs Thomas' Washday | 16. WWII |
| 7. Rhondda Landscapes | 17. Mr Thomas' Day |
| 8. Rhondda Portraits | 18. Women's' Voices |
| 9. Tramroad Walk | 19. Paul Robeson |
| 10. Victorian Toys | |

'Pwll Back Cwm Rhondda: Virtual Interactive Coal Mine'.

Funded via a successful Heritage Lottery Fund application (£50,000) the first educational virtual reality mining experience in the UK. The VR mine consists of a valley vista, a lamp room, and an outside courtyard area. The drift mine itself

consists of over 200 meters of tunnels, which includes an interactive coalface, two horse stables, and five short educational films.

<https://www.visionfountain.com/virtualengagement-3d-vr/>

Project outcomes included:

- Educational materials- the VR Equipment is now offered to schools as a loan following a site visit to RHPM.

Technology and heritage engagement

Richard P Jones of Vision Fountain.

In our commitment to modernizing education and aligning with the evolving priorities of the Welsh curriculum, we embarked on a multifaceted approach to integrate virtual reality (VR) and 3D modelling into educational settings whilst collaborating with museums (namely Rhondda Heritage Park and Amgueddfa Cymru). Our initial extension and outreach efforts saw us bring VR experiences to various educational settings, including Zen Fest, local primary schools, youth groups, and additional learning needs (ALN) environments, as well as libraries in the valleys. Approximately 700 children were able to engage with virtual reality, with overwhelmingly positive feedback indicating its popularity among young people.

Building upon these outreach endeavours, our subsequent pilot program, in collaboration with RHS funded by GEM (Group for Education in Museums), further explored the potential of VR and 3D modelling in education. Engaging 40 young learners from year groups five and six, alongside five teachers, our program centered on Welsh paleontological history, emphasizing the concepts of "place" (cynefin) and the digital competency framework (Cymhwysedd digidol).

Through the "Welsh Fossil Library," students had the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in high-resolution 3D scans of Welsh fossils using Oculus Quest 2 headsets. Despite challenges such as age-related restrictions for VR usage and varying levels of technological familiarity among teaching staff, the program yielded promising results, highlighting the potential of XR technologies in enhancing learning outcomes.

However, alongside the successes emerged challenges and considerations. While VR offers an immersive and highly engaging educational tool, questions arise regarding its effectiveness compared to traditional teaching methods.

Moreover, there is a clear need to bolster digital competency among teachers and museum staff to fully leverage gaming technology and XR in education. Technical and operational challenges, such as managing VR headsets and ensuring software updates, underscore the importance of collaboration with third-party organizations to facilitate smooth operation. This could be overcome with an increase in capacity specifically with regard to provision and understanding of XR tech systems within schools and museum staff.

Looking ahead, there is a pressing need for further exploration of XR integration in education and the cultural sector, particularly to attract new and younger audiences. An expert in the field of XR on returning from Scotland estimated Wales to already be five years behind. We have found, almost universally, that the young love this technology and love to engage with it. Despite logistical constraints and funding challenges, we remain optimistic about the transformative potential of XR and virtual engagement in enriching educational experiences and fostering a deeper connection with our cultural heritage. Furthermore, virtual engagement offers huge potential for those who are geographically or physically isolated to engage with their culture. As we navigate the digital revolution, seizing these opportunities is paramount in addressing societal challenges and ensuring inclusive access to knowledge and learning. - ends

Vision Fountain have collaborated with Rhondda Heritage Services (RHS) on several Virtual Reality community-based projects.

See supporting documents - GEM Cymru Learning Support Grant funded project.

3.6 Heritage Strategy

The Heritage Services, working in collaboration with colleagues from the Libraries Services, have been successful in their application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund that will contribute towards the development of Heritage based activities across RCTCBC. The total project cost is approximately £250,000 and will look at the theme of Altered Images – How views of the past change over time and how understanding the past can challenge our assumptions about where we come from and how our communities developed.

A key 'Project Purpose' is the development of a formalised heritage strategy that will build upon both existing and new partnerships within the heritage and cultural sectors (£37,000).

The Heritage Service are currently in the process of creating a new Heritage Strategy.

Heritage strategy engagement

- Snap survey One (June- August 2023) – 87 responses. (See attached)
- Snap survey two (November – February) – 420 responses. (See attached)
- 'Bagsy: Between the Lines' Heritage and art sessions at Cynon Valley Museum, Rhondda Heritage Park Museum and Calon Taf Pontypridd.
- Craft of Arts sessions at Rhondda Heritage Park Museum. X 3
- Vision Fountain VR Schools and YEPS engagement sessions (See attached)

With several sessions still to run, over 700 residents with ages ranging from 10-94 years old have offered their opinions concerning the future of heritage in RCT.

3.7 Inclusive heritage

Building on our previous projects we strive to work with and represent all sections of our community.

We're collaborating with Myya Helm, Cardiff University Postgraduate Researcher, 2022 British Marshall Scholar. Who is currently creating a database of Black colliers who worked across South Wales from 1861-1980. This database forms part of her comparative PhD research "Beneath the Surface: A Case Study on Migration, Labour, and the Legacy of Black Coal Miners in West Virginia and South Wales,"

which explores the untold stories of Black workers in two areas rich with coal mining heritage.

Her objectives are,

- to investigate the historical and socio-economic factors influencing the migration of Black coal miners.
- to analyse the working conditions, labour dynamics, and community life of Black coal miners.
- And to understand the lasting impact and enduring legacy of Black coal miners on local histories and cultural memory.