



## Pit memorial to the Forest coalminers

FOREST of Dean miners who worked the last shift at the Northern United Colliery, which closed on Christmas Eve 1965, have met once again at the mine shaft entrance.

They were there with fellow ex-miners and their families for the unveiling of a memorial at the former colliery, near Cinderford, which was the last deep mine in the Forest.

The last miner to leave the pit was Roy James, 68, from Cinderford, who remembers dangerous work but a real sense of community.

He worked the last shift with William Jones, 68, of Ruardean who was carried out on the last day after a coal fall – tearing muscles in his arm.

"It was dangerous work – my father died here on May 4, 1951, when seven

tonnes of rock fell on him. But the danger was part of the job."

He was at yesterday's unveiling of the memorial with Alfred Williams, 76, who worked at the pit from 1949 to the day it closed. It was his birthday on Christmas Eve 1965 and he remembers the closure as the end of an era.

At the ceremony, those present stood in silence to remember the men who had died in the mine or who suffered injury and disease as a result of their work.

There was praise for the memorial, by Coalway sculptor Philip Bews, which represents a mine shaft.

The pit, which operated for 30 years and at one time employed more than 500 men, was closed for economic reasons.

■ Surviving members of the last shift at Cinderford's Northern United Colliery with the sculpture.