



■ Symbol of heritage: Ky Warren unveils the statue of the miner with artist Antony Dufort and the watching crowds.

Photo: Martin Perry

Tribute paid to Forest miners

HUNDREDS of people gathered in Cinderford to witness the unveiling of a £20,000 bronze statue paying tribute to the mining heritage of the Forest of Dean.

Dignitaries from throughout the Forest, including the district's four mayors and representatives from Cinderford Labour Party and Cinderford Partnership, all attended.

A grand opening ceremony saw the New Forest of Dean Emerald Jazz Band and folk singers entertain the crowds before the statue was unveiled by one of the oldest surviving free-miners, Eric 'Ky' Warren.

Cinderford Labour Party felt Mr Warren – once a hod boy at the Lightmoor Colliery and now in his 80s – was a fitting choice to perform the unveiling.

Graham Morgan, secretary of

Cinderford Labour Party, said the bronze represented the history and heritage that had shaped much of the way of life of people in the Forest.

"We wanted to do something for Cinderford and we wanted to pay tribute to the Forest of Dean miners."

He explained the project had been funded not only by the Labour Party, but also Cinderford Partnership and the town council.

Cinderford town councillor Bill Reed, himself a miner for 11 years from the age of 14, cut short his holiday in Weston-Super-Mare specially for the ceremony.

Coun Reed said: "All my family were miners. I think it is important people remember the miners and their way of life."

After unveiling the bronze, Mr Warren said he thought the statue was a fitting tribute and agreed it was

important to remember the mining communities.

Mr Warren went to work in the Forest coal mines from the age of 14, as a hod boy, dragging heavy boxes of coal out of the shafts for seven-and-a-half hour shifts in all conditions – work he described as 'very, very hard'.

"I hope the young people all appreciate the statue and look up to it," he said.

The statue was made by Antony Dufort, an artist with strong Forest connections, and modelled on another ex-Forest miner, Dave Harvey, who was also at the ceremony.

One of the last free miners still working in the Forest, Nick Bull, said it was ironic the industry should be honoured now, when it had all but disappeared.