

Mining tribute 150 years after disaster



Tribute: Carolyn Lord from GMI, Coun Peter Riggott and artist Peter Maris with the carved stone panel

A MINING disaster which claimed the lives of 23 men has been commemorated for the first time - with the unveiling of a new plaque.

The carved stone panel, featuring a pair of scarred hands, pays tribute to the men killed in the 1861 tragedy in Clay Cross, Derbyshire, when the No. 2 Pit was flooded by water from another mine.

The artwork, which was unveiled by Coun Peter Piggott from North East Derbyshire District Council, is the first of several pieces to be completed as part of the £22 million Bridge Street regeneration scheme in the village.

Artist Peter Maris was commissioned by developers GMI, to work alongside the community to develop public art.

His piece was created after locals took part in a consultation asking them what the village's public art should reflect.

The carving also features a poem by former miner, Ian Winstanley, called Scars.

Peter said: "Local historian Cliff Williams told me the 1861 disaster had never been commemorated and so it was fitting to dedicate the work to the miners who died.

POLLY RIPPON
News Reporter

"It is foremost an artwork paying tribute to the commitment of individual workers and their suffering, and a localised memorial to the industry as a whole."

He said the scarred hands represented the hard manual labour involved in being a miner and the dangerous nature of the job.

The panel fronts on to Bridge Street in Clay Cross and is carved out of magnesian limestone, which was also used for the regeneration of York Minster.

Coun Riggott, NEDDC's member champion for the Clay Cross regeneration scheme, said: "This is a very fitting tribute to the miners who lost their lives, and is a very attractive addition to Clay Cross town centre, as part of the overall project to create several pieces of artwork in the town."

He urged residents to have their say on future art projects by logging on to www.clay-cross2020.org.uk and taking part in the consultation exercise.