

# Poignant tribute as miners are remembered

**by Sandish Shoker**

News Reporter

Former miners, families and schoolchildren gathered at a historic spot in Great Barr this week to mark the centenary of the Hamstead colliery disaster.

It also marked the start of work on a monument to commemorate the 25 miners who died in the pit fire in 1908.

Members of the Hamstead Miners Memorial Trust had been campaigning for six years to build a lasting tribute to the mining community.

And last week it was revealed there would finally be a monument on the corner of Hamstead Road and Old Walsall Road to act as a reminder of Hamstead's mining history.

"It has been a long journey but it has been very worthwhile," said Tony Ward, secretary of the Trust.

"All the members of the Trust have worked really hard and this monument is not going to be something little and insignificant.

"It is going to be very striking. And it will be the only one like it in the country."

Relatives of former miners, residents and pupils from Ferndale Primary and St Mark's Primary Schools were at the special ceremony to watch the first hole being dug for the memorial.

Margaret Floyd from Hamstead Road, said: "The miners should be honoured. And I think something like is good as long as people respect it."

John Harrison who lives in Rocky Lane, said: "It has taken a long time to get this but they've got there. "My mother was part of the



• Former miners Robery Archer, Reg Hackett, **Frank Ward** and William Parker with members of the Hamstead Miners Memorial Trust, Tony Fowler, Maureen Dacey, Val Ward and Tony Ward **at the spot** where the new monument **will** stand.

founding group for this memorial so I'm here on her behalf, and she will be very pleased and excited about this."

The monument has been made possible with the help of large building company, Connaught, who will spend the next two months building the memorial.

Costing around £11,000 the monument will also include benches and a garden area, plus plaques with the names of all the miners who once worked in the pit.

Former miner, William Parker said it was important to have a reminder of the Hamstead colliery.

The 82-year-old from James Road in Great Barr, said: "The Hamstead colliery was famous, so I think it is important to have something like this.

"There's not many of us miners left now so in another 10 years time it will help people to continue to remember."

Robert Archer, 62, who started as an apprentice in the mines in 1962 said: "It is great for something like this to remember those who died in the disaster and remember the mining industry that was here.

"Things have changed over the years so hopefully this will remind people of what was here."