

# PRESS RELEASE

## Touching tribute to mine victims

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A poignant reminder of the hazards of mining, was being unveiled today at the Woodhorn museum and archives centre.

Ninety-eight aluminium doves cast from an original piece of artwork that used a pair of men's gloves to form the shape of the bird in flight, have been attached to the stone gabion wall of Woodhorn's main *Cutter* building, each one representing the life of a miner lost at the pit during its 90 years a working coal mine.

*Farewell* as the artwork is entitled, has been sponsored by Alcan Aluminium UK Limited, whose managing director Wyn Jones formally opened the memorial.

Yorkshire-based artist and lecturer Paula Chambers was commissioned by **Inspire**, the South East Northumberland Public Art & Design Initiative, to create *Farewell* as a unique and contemporary architectural memorial to the miners who died in accidents at the colliery.

She has already completed the Cappella Piece for the Wildspace Network near Seghill, and she says she drew her inspiration for her original Woodhorn artwork, from the gloves, which symbolised the hard physical and manual nature of mining.

Paula says much of her work is concerned with traditional female activity such as sewing. "But this commission has given me the opportunity to explore new themes," she said.

"Creating this memorial has been a unique project and an important subject. The bird shape itself, is a well known symbol for the human

soul, and has a strong presence in the art of many cultures and religions as a metaphor for the passage from this life to the next,” she said.

“The way we have installed the artwork on the wall mimics the flocking patterns of bird communicating ideas of community and collective transcendence.”

Managing Director from Alcan, Wyn Jones said “ We are very pleased to be able to support a truly beautiful and contemporary memorial”

Denis Murphy, MP for Wansbeck, who also took part in the opening ceremony, commented: “It is a wonderfully simple yet moving and lasting tribute, to the many men, and indeed boys, who lost their lives in accidents at Woodhorn Colliery.

“Every single life lost would have been a personal tragedy for one family, but would also have been felt very deeply by the mining community. To have those miners remembered in this way is very special, and I hope the many thousands of visitors who come to Woodhorn will stop for a moment when they see the memorial, to think of the human cost of an industry which formed the backbone of our economy for generations.”

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