World’s First Vinyl Record Made with Coal Dust

Monday 3 November, 2025

What’s thought to be a world-first - a vinyl record embedded with coal dust - launches at a landmark renewable energy transition conference at the Pitman’s Parliament in Durham today [3 Nov].

Ancestral Reverb features the voice of Newcastle’s indie folk troubadour, Richard Dawson, speaking the words of former miners and their families.

The 20-minute track uses colliery music spanning over 100 years, and the verbatim words of coal miners and their families.

To listen to the track, go to: https://threadsintheground.bandcamp.com/album/ancestral-reverb

Richard Dawson said: “I'm honoured to have had the chance to lend my voice to this important, strange, and stirring work. The long poem, assembled from recordings of interviews with mining families and set to a lushly crackling suite of electronica, is beautifully balanced and thought-provoking. It evokes conflicting feelings - pride and dismay, hope and fear, community-spirit versus abandonment - by placing layer upon layer of crucial little details one on top of the other to create a sort of intoxicating cascade. I find it very moving.”

It’s produced by the climate hope organisation, Threads in the Ground.

Adam Cooper, director of Threads in the Ground, said: “We collected chunks of coal from Blackhall colliery beach, which we smashed up and are visibly embedded into the transparent records. We also used the smashed-up coal to ‘carbon print’ documentary photos of the project. We believe this may be the first time that coal dust has been used as part of a creative production process.”

As well as being produced literally with coal dust embedded into the vinyl, *Ancestral Reverb* features the ‘sound of carbon’ as musicians journeyed down an old drift coal mine at Beamish Colliery to digitally capture the ‘reverb’ of the mine, used in the track.

The evocative piece has been dubbed as ‘Moby meets Brassed Off’ as the track features spoken word, colliery bands, and electronica.

The record will be previewed in front of delegates at the conference hosted by the Durham Energy Institute.

Ancestral Reverb aims to engage former mining communities and families in shared discussion around their heritage of solidarity as a powerful tool when talking about climate change.

The project features an array of northern talent. The spoken word piece on the track is curated by the poet Jacob Polley, consisting of interviews with some of the last living deep coal miners in the North East, alongside their children and grandchildren, discussing coal mining heritage and climate change.

The project was also documented by the acclaimed North East photographers, Andy Martin and Rachel Deakin.

Just 100 copies of the unique records will be pressed.

Copies will be held in the archives of Redhills, The National Coal Mining Museum, and the British Library; as well as a copy being held by each of the families interviewed for the project for future generations to enjoy.

Adam said: “We want to honour the past we inherit, to inspire more people to have their voices heard to build our future. We are at a crucial moment in history where the changes we set in motion now around our energy infrastructure will shape the future for all our communities.”

Adam added: “Music and photography have a visceral and democratic power that can amplify conversations around our carbon future in a meaningful way.”

The music was produced by the DJ Bert Verso and includes some of the oldest known recordings of colliery pit bands from 1903, and new performances by the Durham Miners’ Association brass band.

Media:







Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Entertainment & Arts :: Environment & Nature ::

Related Keywords:

Ancestral Reverb :: Richard Dawson :: Coal Mining :: Brass Bands :: Durham :: Pitman's Parliament :: Threads In The Ground :: Carbon Energy :: Climate Change ::

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Please find photos for press use in the Google Drive, including photos from Ancestral Reverb's listening party, the vinyl artwork, community coal picking, and tintype portraits of Lorraine Malyan (activist during the Miner's Strike) and Steve Fergus (retired miner)

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1V2MdfTgun4IXXyL8qWbWkZlHyBvkshk6?usp=sharing

For further media enquires please contact Ann, ann@causeuk.com m: 0753 489 2715.

Notes to Editor

About Threads in the Ground

Threads in the Ground is a climate hope organisation dedicated to unearthing powerful climate stories to inspire action for future generations.

Their goal is to engage communities through arts, culture, and education, aiming to involve 8 million people in climate hope by 2030. Their initiatives include unique projects like the world's first fungal sculpture trail and various community engagement activities focused on sustainable practices.

Threads in the Ground

Ancestral Reverb

Ancestral Reverb is an exploration of our Carbon Heritage, through sounds, words and pictures.

The piece was made using music spanning over 100 years, and the words of coal community members whose ages ranged from age 5 to 94. It contains sounds captured in a coal mine, photos taken with a Victorian-era camera, and stories passed through generations. The records are embedded with fragments of coal, scavenged in big chunks from the beach at Blackhall Colliery.

Each record is an heirloom, entrusted into the care of families and institutions who carry parts of our collective Carbon Heritage. We hope they care for them and hand them down with hope and pride.

The project was commissioned by the Durham Miners Association, as part of the Redhills creative residency programme. Ancestral Reverb is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

The Artists

Andy Martin: Photographer

Andy Martin is an award-winning photographer and filmmaker from Sunderland. With a strong passion for the North East, its industry and its people, his extensive body of landscape and portrait work spanning 20 years is an unparalleled record of the area seen from a unique perspective. He is especially drawn to working alongside marginalised communities, who are still living through the cultural, social, and economic changes of the region, giving them a platform to tell stories that would otherwise go unheard.

In 2024, Andy's photography won the British Journal of Photography's Portrait of Humanity Award, as well as being chosen as winner of their Portrait of Britain Award.

Andy primarily works with older, higher quality analogue processes – medium and large format film cameras to tell these stories. He is also one of a handful of people in the world specialising in a photographic technique known as the wet collodion process which dates back to 1851. The resulting images are produced entirely by hand on sheets of metal and glass – tintypes and ambrotypes – with no two the same. The majority of Andy's work is produced at his dedicated studio and darkroom in Hendon, where he has been based for over 15 years.

For the Ancestral Reverb, Andy photographed some of the participants using the wet collodion process.

Rachel Deakin: Photographer

Rachel Deakin is an artist based in Middlesbrough whose practice draws inspiration from her immediate surroundings. Working across photography, collage, found objects, and elements of the everyday, she explores the subtle intersections between landscape and memory.

Through paired photographic works, Rachel captures layered narratives embedded within post-industrial environments. Her work reflects on environmental fragility and the quiet persistence of change, inviting viewers to consider how we structure the landscape.

Jacob Polley: Writer

Jacob Polley was born in Carlisle, Cumbria. His most recent book of poems is Material Properties (2023). His fourth book of poems, Jackself (2016), won the T.S. Eliot Prize. His previous books are The Brink (2003), Little Gods (2006) and The Havocs (2012), and a novel, Talk of the Town (2009), all published by Picador, UK. Talk of the Town won the Somerset Maugham Award in 2010. Jacob received an Eric Gregory Award in 2002, and both The Brink and The Havocs were shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize.

In 2011, he was Arts Queensland's poet-in-residence, and he was Visiting Fellow Commoner in the Arts at Trinity College, Cambridge, 2005-7. He has also held residencies at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation and at the Wordsworth Trust.

In 2004, he was named one of the 'Next Generation' of the twenty best new poets in Britain. He teaches at Newcastle University and lives with his family on the north-east coast.

Jacob curated the interviews with miners and their families for the spoken word element of Ancestral Reverb.

Richard Dawson: Vocalist

Richard Dawson is an English progressive folk singer-songwriter from Newcastle upon Tyne, born in 1981.

Known for his narrative, experimental songs with emotional depth and a sense of humour, he has released numerous critically acclaimed albums, including the trilogy Peasant (2017), 2020 (2019), and The Ruby Cord (2022). Dawson also contributes to the experimental pop band Hen Ogledd.

Richard provided the male voiceover for Ancestral Reverb's spoken word element.

Case Studies

If required, we have more extensive case studies of:

- Lorraine Malyan – an activist during the Miner's Strike and daughter of a coal miner

- Alison Paterson, manager of the Blackhall Community Centre and daughter/granddaughter of coal miners.

Both engaged and contributed to the project.

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Additional Assets:
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