



more interesting typical model'



■ Iris, aged 72, retired, poses at the bus and coach station. She is wearing sunglasses by Moschino

and didn't enjoy the making process.

My tutor encouraged people from the course to find other ways of communicating fashion so I started

Will you be bringing the exhibition to the town?

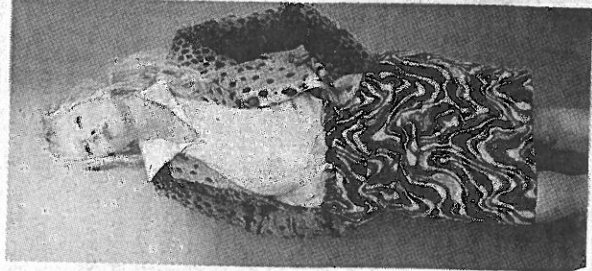
Yes I can't wait. Me and Tom are hoping to show it at this year's Merthyr Rising Festival.

Find out more about Charlotte James at www.charlotte-james.co.uk and Tom Johnson at www.tom-johnson.co.uk



■ Terry and Lee, age 58 and 68, an ex-coal miner and a construction worker, at the bus station, wearing Antipodium and Alexander McQueen

■ Below: Phyllis, age 92, a retired dinner lady, wears Pleats Please by Issey Miyake on Swansea Road



■ Donna, 40, poses at the Labour Club. She wears a jacket by Moschino and a skirt by Dries Van Noten

Academics call for a more balanced view of Merthyr

RESIDENTS of what is often described as one of the most deprived towns in Wales have been saying it for years, but researchers have followed suit and called for a more balanced account.

Young people from Merthyr Tydfil feel more positive about their area than recurring negative media representation would suggest, according to research from Cardiff University.

But researchers still warned negative images of the town - like in last year's Skint programme from Channel 4 - could be having negative effects on young residents.

Skint hit the screens last April as it headed to Merthyr for a series about the town's deprivation and its long-term battle with unemployment.

Documenting the lives of those on the breadline, it got viewers talking and caused uproar with locals who insisted it didn't show the reality of what their town was like.

Academics from Cardiff University and Manchester Metropolitan Univer-

sity have since worked on a joint project to see how growing up in a stigmatised place impacted on young people's health and wellbeing.

A new research paper by Dr Gareth Thomas, from the school of social sciences at Cardiff University, features interviews with 14 and 15-year-olds in Merthyr who scorn the negative image their hometown holds in the media.

They cite the many benefits of living in Merthyr, including the activities on offer, close-knit community and a strong sense of belonging.

Dr Thomas said: "Outside of Merthyr, there is often a stigma attached to the town, thanks largely to problematic government policies and negative media representations promoted in outlets like the recent television documentary Skint."

"This means that the positive powers and assets of young people frequently go unrecognised. We wanted to work with young people in Merthyr to explore

their own broad sense of health and wellbeing with this backdrop of place-based stigma.

"The young people we spoke to were mostly very positive about their lives in Merthyr and some scorned the media and others for presenting negative images of their hometown.

"Many of them discussed their positive sense of health and wellbeing by pointing to the public resources available, friendly residents, family alliances, the town's rich history, and the open landscape."

But he also argues the stigma may still affect the health of youngsters, causing stress, affecting life chances and limiting access to resources that can improve health.

He added: "Cuts are shaping policies and practices in ways that may worsen young people's health, both in the near and distant future."

It's not that bad: Stigma, health and place in a post-industrial community is published in the journal Health and Place

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