

Abstracts

A number of papers were presented at the conference for which papers have not been submitted to Mining History. Where available abstracts of these presentations are provided below.

PDMHS - 50 years 1959-2009

Jim Rieuwerts:

On the 14th February 1959 the Society was formed at an inaugural meeting in the Geology Department of Sheffield University: originally envisaged as a low-key group of members with shared interests, it began to grow and became Britain's first successful mining history society. This talk will discuss some of the early activities which led to its growth.

Mining in a landscape context: escaping simple cataloguing and moving beyond inventories, lists, maps and plans of individual monuments

Martin Roe

Although competent and detailed surveys of mining landscapes are occurring across the UK the interpretation and understanding is ignoring non-visible properties of the landscape such as the underlying geological structures, the underground landscape and the control and administration of mineral resources. This current approach to landscape has been criticised as a theoretically poor approach to landscape archaeology. This paper will discuss problems with current approaches and demonstrate how much extra understanding can be extracted from mining landscapes. Illustrated with case studies from the Yorkshire Dales lead mines and coal mining sites in West Yorkshire.

Factors controlling the underground landscape at the Kolar Goldfield, India.

Lynn Willies

The Kolar Goldfield began its modern phase in 1881 after rediscovery by consortia led by John Taylor and Sons (John Taylor III) of London. Operations commenced with deep sinkings below the ancient workings on, especially, the Champion Lode over an eight kilometres strike. Grades were often very high, as were the returns to shareholders. The principle mines were the Mysore, Champion Reef and Nundydroog whose history will feature in the paper and which eventually reached depths of some three kilometres (11,000 feet) before closure in 2001. Initially mining followed the Cornish pattern, but as depths increased, successively below 3000, then 5000, then 8000 feet, so did the support problems and, notably the incidence of rockbursts. Rock temperatures at the deeper parts reached 150° F (about 65° C, roughly the operating water temperature of a modern gas central heating boiler). These had a major impact on mining methods and techniques evolved empirically to cope with them. In this cheap labour was also a major factor and it is likely that otherwise the mines would have closed decades earlier.

'Icons of Industry': the Cornish-design engine house, symbol of nineteenth century British industrial prowess

Martin F. Critchley and Sharron. P. Schwartz

Built to accommodate high pressure steam engines, there were once well in excess of 3,500 such structures in the far south west of Britain, particularly Cornwall, where the technology was perfected in the early nineteenth century. Today there is a survival rate of around 8 per cent of these structures in this part of Britain. In 2005 the Cornish Mining Landscape was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (WHS) this means that many of the extant engine houses within the WHS, a vital part of the mining landscape, will be consolidated

and conserved. Yet there are numerous examples of Cornish-design engine houses outside South West Britain which are an indicator of the worldwide dissemination of British mining technology and the relative impact this region had on the global metalliferous mining industry, recognised by UNESCO as being of considerable significance. However, many of these structures are threatened with collapse, vandalism, divorce from their landscape surroundings, falling prey to unsympathetic development and inappropriate conservation techniques. It is imperative that they are recorded for posterity. In this paper we look at a variety of engine houses worldwide, noting the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities presented. We then analyse ways to capture the data on these surviving engine houses, from traditional desk-based research and field survey work to new technologies using GIS total station and Lidar scanning to capture vital data before it is lost.

The Coal Mining Inheritance — Snibston Colliery as a gateway to history

Fred Hartley

Since the 1960s museums both national and local have struggled to cope with the task of commemorating traditional industries as they disappear. Coal Mining has presented perhaps the biggest task of all. At its height in the early to mid 20th century it dominated the landscape of large parts of Britain. While thousands were killed and maimed in underground accidents, millions were helped to improve their standard of living by the industry and the fuel it produced. The National Coal Board closed hundreds of mines but invested in improving the remainder. They wanted fewer and larger mines, often increasing the attendant pollution and subsidence problems. As fewer men worked in the industry, its environmental costs became less acceptable to local community. By the 1980s coal could be bought more cheaply from foreign sources, and the government was keen to offload the remaining British mines back into the private sector. The final disastrous Miners' Strike, supported with passion in some areas, was just a mystifying irritation to most people in Britain, leaving a memory of violent demonstrations and police baton charges. The headstocks and winder houses, workshops, offices, stockyards and railway sidings were dismantled and the land ploughed flat by bulldozers. Only a few mine buildings were spared, and on them has fallen the task of interpreting what used to be, for the benefit both of those who were involved in the industry, and those who have never known it. This talk looks at one of that handful of mines - Snibston Colliery - and how Leicestershire County Council and its museum staff have attempted that task.

Canada's Crow's Nest Pass coal mining disasters before 1914: British connections.

Lorry W. Felske

The Crow's Nest Pass coal mining district in western Canada experienced several coal mine disasters during its development period from 1898 to 1914. Three major incidents alone claimed 350 men and boys. These calamities, and others, as well as a high accident rate, were the result of a variety of factors. The speed of development was one issue: Pass mines opened quickly to serve Western Canada's growing railroad network, other industrial steam coal users, and the coke markets created by metal smelter operations. The treacherous nature of the area's geology also contributed to these catastrophes. The combination of extremely dusty coal deposits releasing large quantities of gas was lethal. As a new mining district, the Crow's Nest Pass developed without prior local knowledge of possible dangers. An unevenly practiced mine inspection regime supervised by the

government, a belief by miners and companies that safety was an issue of a miner's individual competence, a wage scale based on the quantity of coal produced, and a highly mobile workforce composed of many different nationalities, all compromised safety in an extremely dangerous district. In these circumstances of Crow's Nest Pass development, a number of British immigrants were present as mine workers and supervisory personnel. This paper looks at their involvement.

Mining, Archaeology and the Historic Environment - the way forward
Peter Cloughton

The need for an informed strategy for archaeology in Britain had been recognised since the early 1980s and a number of regional and specialist groups have already carried out studies to consider their research objectives. English Heritage has asked NAMHO to carry out a similar exercise for the extractive industries.

Overall the archaeology of the mining and quarrying industries is a relatively understudied subject area. Some areas have been covered by detailed studies but many remain largely untouched. In addition, it is apparent that some areas of mining history are under-represented, in terms of documentary research, whilst there is evidence to suggest there might be significant survival of physical remains. Unfortunately there are no statistics or relevant examples to illustrate the state of mining archaeology in Britain and that fact must encourage us to look to the first two stages of a research framework, particularly the assessment of resources, as a process of self education. One particular aspect which a research framework must address is virtually unique to mining and quarrying - the underground archaeology. Its practitioners are few in number, but it has enormous potential. In developing an archaeological research framework for the extractive industries, NAMHO, the members of its constituent organisations, and the expertise inherent within mining history interests have the opportunity to inform the future direction of research into the historic environment in England, and possibly in the UK as a whole. Taking on such a project will be time consuming but rewarding. Publication of the working papers and the full research framework will provide the Association and the mining history and archaeological community with a blueprint for the future.