Losing our mines: Scotland’s coal mining legacy

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Abstract

In 1955 over 90% of Scotland’s energy was provided by a domestic coal industry that employed over 100,000 people. All the industries for which Scotland was famous such as iron and steel, shipbuilding, engineering, chemicals, textiles and even brewing and whisky distilling, were utterly dependent upon this energy. Collieries were so much a part of the landscape in the central part of the country that they were almost invisible. From the 1960s, however, this position of supremacy was eroded at an accelerating rate, primarily caused by competition from alternative energy sources such as oil and gas, and heavily subsidised nuclear energy. By 2002, Scotland’s 200 collieries had shrunk to zero. The physical remains of the industry had also receded in the face of major environmental programmes that cleansed the landscape of recognisable evidence of industrial activity. Significant parts of the country had therefore entered a phase of denial in which the fundamental role of the mining industry in the history and culture of communities was deliberately overlooked.

This paper will briefly explain the chain of events that led to the destruction of the coal industry, identify what has disappeared, and then discuss some of the conservation challenges that remain for the significant mining heritage sites that have survived.

Introduction

As we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century, public attention is, understandably, focused on climate-change issues, carbon dioxide emissions and sustainability, so it will be surprising to many people that not much more than half a century ago much of the developed world remained hugely dependent upon coal for its energy. In the case of Scotland, which had grown to become the ‘Workshop of the British Empire’ by the early twentieth century (Hume and Moss 1977), other major industries have tended to dominate public consciousness, but even here, the dependence on coal was absolute, and the industry was entering a new era of optimism in 1960.

This optimism was justified in the circumstances. Scotland’s outstanding industrial development during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries would not have been possible without a large and increasingly sophisticated coal industry. Great industries, including iron and steel, shipbuilding, engineering, chemicals and textiles were all intense energy users and depended on local supplies of high-quality coal. Prior to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, Scotland had gained the confidence to shed its label of ‘North Britain’, and hosted a sophisticated industrial economy that was completely reliant on the daily output of miners across the coalfields of the central Lowlands.
Yet by 2000, a country which took over 200 collieries into state ownership on ‘vesting day’ (the day of nationalization) in 1947 had only one surviving deep coal mine, the remainder of its production being accounted for by open-cast ‘sunshine’ mining. Even the last deep mine, Longannet, survived only two more years before the accidental flooding of its workings brought to an end Scottish deep coal mining in 2002.

Coal was therefore a central part of life in Scotland. As well as the energy-hungry heavy coal-consuming industries that dominated the Scottish economy, over 100 000 people were employed in the mines and associated industries during the 1950s. The collieries were themselves also an important part of the landscape across large swathes of the central Lowlands, where they could be seen scattered across the countryside in towns and villages, many of which owed their existence to the coal industry. Coal mining was therefore such an endemic feature of the landscape that its familiarity rendered it invisible. Few people paused to contemplate the possibility of life without coal.

Against this background of stability and confidence, the rapid decline and disappearance of the coal industry is remarkably rapid. Yet, primarily as a result of press and media coverage, most attention today gravitates towards the strife and strikes that accompanied the decline, with little thought being given to the industry itself, and the positive contribution that it made to the quality of life in Scotland and the UK as a whole. The intention of this paper is therefore to put the last five decades into context, and to describe some of the conservation issues that have arisen from the survival of key coal mining sites.

The era of optimism

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 brought with it economic depression in subsequent decades, the intensity of which has never been felt since, despite the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. In the UK, this resulted in decades of decay and decline within the coal mining industry, within whose communities political activism gave birth to the Labour Party. Indeed, it was a Scottish miner, James Keir Hardie, who first proposed to Parliament that coal be nationalised, but it was not until after the end of the Second World War under the leadership of the Labour Government of Clement Atlee that the UK Parliament passed the Coal Industry Nationalisation

Figure 1. Celebrating the birth of the National Coal Board (NCB) on ‘Vesting day’, 1st January 1947, Newcraighall Colliery near Edinburgh. (SC706648, David Spence Collection, East Lothian Council).
Act (1946). This created the National Coal Board (NCB) which assumed the management of Britain’s collieries on ‘vesting day’, 1st January 1947, and took into public ownership the principal assets of the coal industry. In the context of the deteriorating condition of the coalfields and the low investment brought about by six years of war and the decades of depression that had preceded it (Supple 1987; Scottish Home Department 1944), there was a new optimism (Figure 1) within the Government and amongst the Unions in particular. They believed that huge improvements in working and living conditions were now possible, and that these would lead to substantial increases in productivity and prosperity which would benefit the nation as a whole.

Without doubt, nationalisation brought about a huge improvement in working conditions, combined with the introduction of safety programmes which significantly reduced the incidence of accidental death and injury and established a health-and- safety culture that has since been emulated across many industries. From 1947 the NCB also briefly took over many of the responsibilities of the Miners’ Welfare Fund, which had begun the process of improving surface facilities at collieries in the 1920s and 30s, most prominently through the construction of pithead baths, many reflecting the Art Deco style of the period. Responsibility for the workers’ welfare was subsequently transferred to a new organisation, the Coal Industry Welfare and Social Organisation (CISWO), which still supports the former coal mining communities today.

The NCB inheritance also included large numbers of miners’ houses. Much of this housing stock was built by mining companies to accommodate their workforce and dependents, and was later transferred to local authorities. Where the Board retained housing, it proved ineffective as a landlord as it had little or no expertise managing issues away from the pithead. In the picturesque village of Newtongrange in Midlothian, for example, significant portions of the village fell into disrepair, and subsequently only survived through community action, the imposition of a ‘Conservation Area’ by Midlothian Council, and by intervention of a Housing Association in the 1980s.

Meanwhile, massive demand for coal to fuel economic and industrial reconstruction and for exports to earn foreign exchange resulted in severe shortages in the immediate post-war period. Nevertheless, coal remained the primary fuel for almost all energy needs, only shipping and road transport relying on petroleum-based fuels, together with a growing aviation sector. Electricity and gas, which were expanding towards the creation of their national grids, continued to depend entirely upon coal. Facing massive demand, The Plan for Coal (NCB 1950) sought to increase coal production as rapidly as possible both to meet domestic demand, and to recover exports in order to generate desperately needed foreign exchange.

On Vesting Day in Scotland, nationalisation transferred 200 collieries into State ownership. This left approximately one hundred smaller mines, most with less than thirty employees, in the private licensed sector. The unavoidable truth was that a large proportion of the older collieries, particularly in Lanarkshire, were reaching exhaustion, or could not be modernised effectively through mechanisation. These were instantly earmarked for closure, or were merged with neighbouring collieries to work through single surface facilities. To compensate for the lost capacity, a programme of sinking short-term surface drift-mines was commenced, based on similar ventures in North America. These were driven into shallow inclined seams of coal that were relatively easily accessed with a minimum of capital expenditure. The new mines resulted in the numbers of working collieries not dropping as quickly as would have been anticipated given the extent of the cull, and in consequence, the numbers of miners within the industry in Scotland grew during the first ten years of public ownership. At this point, the NCB published Scotland’s Coal Plan (NCB 1955), which outlined a new and bold phase of investment and modernisation.

Scotland’s Coal Plan earmarked for closure those collieries that had served their time whilst also identifying others that could be resurrected and ‘reconstructed’ through new investment. The latter were subsequently re-developed in a process that often involved the re-building of surface and underground infrastructure, increased mechanisation, greatly enhanced welfare facilities, and where feasible, merging with neighbouring collieries. However, by far the most
ambitious plans were for the sinking of fifteen brand new collieries, known as ‘The New Sinkings’. The development of the new generation of collieries and some of the larger reconstructions was co-ordinated by the NCB’s Scottish Division production architect, Egon Riss. Poached from the Miner’s Welfare fund in 1947, Riss was a Jewish Austrian émigré who had fled the Nazis in 1938. Born in 1901, he had been educated at the Weiner Technische Hochschule, and early examples of his work include the Tuberculosis Sanatorium in the Lainz hospital complex in Vienna, which was completed in 1931 (Robertson 1988).

His first new project was Rothes Colliery in Fife, which had previously been planned by the Fife Coal Company, one of the most progressive mining companies in Scotland prior to nationalisation. The layout of the surface buildings and ancillary components of the pithead influenced the design of subsequent new Scottish collieries sunk in this era, and it is possible that they also influenced projects elsewhere in UK as well as new sinkings in Germany, Poland and the Netherlands. More than anything, they reflect the desire of the NCB to project a dynamic, modern and confident image (Figure 2).

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II formally opened Rothes Colliery on 30th June 1958 (Figure 3). The confidence vested in the project by the NCB was reflected not only in its imposing architecture, but also in the construction of the adjacent New Town of Glenrothes in anticipation of a long working life for the colliery.

Unfortunately, the confidence was misplaced: unanticipated severe geological difficulties had led to persistent drainage problems to such an extent that as the sinking continued at Rothes, the water drained into the new mineshaft allowing neighbouring existing collieries to switch off their pumps. Much to the embarrassment of the NCB and to the government of the time, the colliery was forced to close after only four years of poor production. Similar difficulties not far away at Glenochil Colliery, Clackmannanshire, which also closed in 1962, constituted a major setback for the coal industry. However, these failures were not typical of Scotland’s other new sinkings, many of which were comparatively successful.

Depending on the local circumstances, the successful new sinkings varied in scale and form. All, however, reflected Riss’s belief in the importance of putting miners’ welfare at the heart of colliery design. The deeper bigger collieries were dominated by magnificent headframes or towers of concrete and glass, reflecting the huge scale of public investment. This was also manifested below ground in the networks of spacious permanent roadways at and near to the pit bottom, designed to handle much larger volumes of output and materials than normally occurred in traditional pits. The new Scottish superpits became potent industrial landmarks representing a period of optimism within the coal industry and the economy as a whole, engaging with the ethos of ‘white-heat’ technology that evolved in the 1960s.
The enhanced productivity of the successful new superpits and reconstructed collieries generated new capacity which allowed for an accelerated demise of the older collieries. By far the largest number of closures occurred during the 1960s under both Conservative and Labour governments as new large superpits were opened, reconstruction projects came online, mechanization was introduced and many smaller, unproductive pits were closed, in what was was a traumatic period for the industry. Inevitably, there were significant job losses, but substantial numbers of miners were transferred to new or reconstructed collieries, some of which employed over 2,000 men (Halliday 1990: 44). In the space of a few years, the geography of Scotland’s coal production shifted west to east with closures in the traditional coal mining areas of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire being balanced by new collieries commencing production in Fife and the Lothians. The industry was also going deeper, as new more powerful technology permitted sinking to previously inaccessible seams in the coalfields.

Although the nationalised era brought about massive improvements in safety and working conditions, deep coal mining was never safe. Accidents and disasters were less frequent but still occurred. A shocking reminder of the hazardous nature of the industry occurred in September 1967 when spontaneous combustion of a coal seam at Michael Colliery in Fife caused a fire that killed nine people and the future of the mine itself (Stephenson 1968). Michael had been easily the largest mine in Scotland at the time of nationalisation, and at its peak in 1957 employed over 3,000 people. Its demise marked a turning point, after which the decline of coal accelerated. The era of optimism was over.

**Decline and fall**

With the loss of Michael Colliery in 1967, the number of nationalised collieries working in Scotland had shrunk to sixty five but this dwindled to twenty four by 1977. A decade later, the number had fallen further to eleven, and by 1997, only two were still operational. Inevitably, there was a simultaneous decline in the numbers of miners employed in the industry which was exacerbated by the mechanisation programmes that had commenced in the 1950s and 1960s.

At the heart of this steep decline was the volatility and downward trend in demand for Scottish coal. When the industry was nationalised in 1947, the market for coal was unchallenged, and the priority was to assist the post-war recovery of mining to help maintain energy supplies and achieve national post-war reconstruction. This was the principal justification for the massive state investment in the industry. Coal was itself undermined by the diversification of available energy sources (e.g. petroleum, gas and uranium), by changing government policy, and by the internationalisation of the coal trade (Hudson 2002).

Amongst the many factors that conspired against coal was the impact of a sequence of ‘pea-souper’ smogs in the early 1950s in British cities, during which thousands of people died. These resulted in the introduction of clean-air legislation in 1956 and 1968, banning the burning of coal in towns and cities by both domestic households and industry. At the same time, the domestic market for coal dwindled further with the loss its railway business. This was the period when the British railway network was radically cut back in the aftermath of Richard Beeching’s *The Reshaping of British Railways* report (British Transport Commission, 1963), which accelerated the withdrawal of coal-burning steam locomotives in favour of diesel and electric units.

The deadly city smogs helped coal to acquire a reputation for being a ‘dirty’ fuel, but the industry rapidly reacted by introducing ‘smokeless’ fuels. Realising the increasing allure of modern central heating systems, the NCB focused on the promotion of solid-fuel domestic boilers and launched publicity campaigns promoting coal as now being a ‘clean’ fuel. The initiative involved the purchase of fleets of new delivery lorries with glossy liveries, and the re-branding of its fuels such as ‘Nuggets’. Photographs used in advertising at the time depict coal delivery men dressed in white overalls like milkmen, emphasising the purity of the new fuel. Another campaign involved the installation of a prototype coin-operated automatic vending machine, *The Fuelomatic*, which was designed to dispense sacks of coal to passing passengers at St Andrew’s Bus Station in Edinburgh. Unfortunately, the advantages of travelling home on the bus with a large sack of smokeless coal never caught the public imagination.
Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for household coal continued to decline, driven down by competition from cheap heating oil and more affordable electricity. Electricity was emerging as the cleanest and most flexible form of energy, and with the rapid expansion of the National Grid, was now available to most industries and householders. This was not entirely bad news for the coal industry because much of the UK’s electricity supply was still generated in thermal power stations burning coal, and was even referred to as ‘coal by wire’. The big worry, however, was coal’s increasing dependence on the electricity generators, and the growing possibility that cheaper coal might eventually be sourced more cheaply from outside the UK from countries like Australia.

A further complication arose with the introduction of nuclear power in the 1960s, which posed the additional threat of attracting huge government subsidies away from the coal industry. However, perhaps the most important setback occurred in the form of natural gas from the North Sea. With its arrival onshore from the late 1960s, all of the UK’s coal-consuming town gasworks were closing, and the Gas Board oversaw the conversion of over 30 million gas appliances from coal (town) to natural gas. A simultaneous decline in Britain’s high-energy-consuming industries such as iron and steel further undermined domestic demand for coal as they struggled to compete with the newly industrialising nations and the expanding European Union.

As the market worsened, so coal’s dependence on the electricity generating companies deepened. At nationalisation in 1947, electricity generation accounted for almost 15% of the coal market, but by 1971, this had risen to over 50% (Ashworth 1986: 41). The problem was that there was no guarantee that in the long-term the coal-burning power stations would always burn Scottish or even British coal. The situation worsened in the 1980s following changes in policy resulting from the return of the Conservative Party to government in the 1979 general election. Successive governments led by Margaret Thatcher de-regulated the markets and then privatised coal and other state-owned industries. The privatisation of the electricity industry had the greatest impact because the new power companies were no longer obliged to buy domestic coal. At the same time, the Government transferred energy subsidies to the nuclear energy and a cross-Channel ‘Connector’ was also established, permitting electricity generated by France’s nuclear power stations to be imported into the National Grid.

The terminal decline of deep mining in Scotland took hold from the mid-1980s, where the 1984-5 miners’ strike, which also deeply scarred and divided the mining communities, failed to stop the flow of pit closures. In addition, knowledge of the wider environmental damage caused by burning fossil fuels and coal in particular had started to emerge. New environmental legislation added to the costs of coal-burning power stations by forcing the installation of flue-gas desulphurisation units. However, the biggest blow for the domestic coal industry was the decision by the Government to issue licenses for several natural-gas burning power stations, which were considered to be far cleaner than their coal-burning equivalents. This was known as the ‘Dash for Gas’, and later resulted in the accelerated depletion of the UK’s offshore gas reserves.

The tide of privatisation and deregulation brought about by the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s eventually reached the coal industry in 1994. At this time, only 15 deep mines remained in operation in the UK, two of which, Monktonhall...
and Longannet, were in Scotland. At the former, a buy-out by miners and management was unsuccessful, and those involved lost most or all of their redundancy payments and savings. Subsequently, the colliery buildings, which were once a landmark on the east side of Edinburgh, were demolished using high explosives in November 1997 and February 1998 (see Figure 4).

To the west meanwhile, the Longannet complex near Culross in Fife, Scotland’s last surviving deep coal mine, continued operations having been bought over by a private company, Scottish Coal. The new owners successfully negotiated contracts with Scottish Power, the private utility company that had taken over the local electricity authority, the South of Scotland Electricity Board (SSEB). However, the mine, which worked coal measures deep under the Firth of Forth, suffered catastrophic flooding in March 2002 in an incident that brought to an end hundreds of years of deep coal mining in Scotland.

Has anything survived?

Coal mining tends to create distinct landscapes both because of the often substantial surface buildings and equipment required to haul the coals from the strata beneath, and because of the infrastructure needed to prepare and distribute the coal to its industrial and domestic markets. It also tends to generate a large volume of waste material that can form spoil heaps or ‘bings’, creating distinctive landmarks in mining regions. With the deeper mines of the twentieth century came more powerful and efficient haulage equipment, so the scale of the buildings and of the spoil heaps tended to be much bigger.

The early post-nationalisation closure programmes in the 1940s and 50s did not necessarily induce instant destruction, but an appetite for erasing mining landscapes was born with the aftermath of the Aberfan Disaster in south Wales on 21st October 1966, when a colliery’s spoil heap became unstable, forming a mudslide that engulfed a local school causing the deaths of over 140 people. Thereafter, every substantial spoil heap was eyed with suspicion, and resources were set aside for landscape ‘rehabilitation’. The process was assisted by the rewards gained by the re-working of spoil heaps for coal, clays and road-building materials, and by European funding designed to encourage land reclamation in mining areas. The introduction of contaminated land legislation, and a substantial increase in open-cast mining added more pressure, and the destruction was further accelerated by coal privatisation from 1994. From this point on it was usual for colliery surface buildings to be demolished within a year of closure, and this fate also caught up with older surviving structures such as the towers at the iconic Rothes Colliery, which were demolished both to minimise potential liabilities and to permit the maximum realisation of assets prior to privatisation.

Preserving the physical remains of the coal industry instantly presented major challenges. For the most part, the vast majority of people within the industry never contemplated the possibility that colliery buildings and associated features might ever be seen as heritage assets. The industry was generally seen to be too omni-present to be special, and was associated with too many negative memories to be worthy of such respect. Furthermore, the buildings and structures associated with deep coal mining were not generally built with longevity in mind, most having a finite function usually expected to extend for a maximum of a few decades. Even then, continuous care and maintenance was rarely a top priority. Most collieries comprised a functional mix of brick, steel and reinforced-concrete structures which, if not well maintained, tended to deteriorate rapidly when exposed to the windy and wet climate of the Scottish coalfields.

For this reason, successful attempts at preserving coal mining remains have been rare in Scotland. So, despite the fact that in the last sixty years over 300 large-scale collieries have operated in Scotland employing hundreds of thousands of people, only two, Lady Victoria Colliery at Newtongrange and the Prestongrange Colliery, both in the Lothians near Edinburgh, have survived in any recognisable form. To these can be added six colliery headframes or winding towers where the remainder of the surface structures have been demolished.

Further afield, there are incidences of surface buildings surviving randomly as a consequence of opportunistic re-use, such as conversion to deal with open-cast coal preparation, or mutation
into a range of other industrial uses. Unfortunately, the destruction did not spare even the best architectural examples of pithead baths such as those at Michael, although an unusual survivor at Ramsay Colliery in Midlothian can still be found in the midst of a scrap yard. There are also sites where more ruinous remains of an earlier phase of the coal industry have survived, but most of these have prevailed because of statutory (Scheduled Monument) designation, which was never applied to more recent surface buildings and structures. Important examples of early survivors include two isolated beam-engine houses in Fife at Kilmux and Thornton, the remains of the surface buildings and associated salt pans at Preston Island and of the Moat Pit near Culross in the Firth of Forth. The most significant substantial remains in the west of Scotland are the early engine houses at Auchenharrow near Stevenston (Hughson 1996) and Caprington near Kilmarnock, both in Ayrshire.

One of the responses to the impending final loss of the coal industry was the creation of an inventory of the post-war industry (Oglethorpe, 2006), created by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Mining Museum (now known as the National Mining Museum Scotland). Aware that the physical remains of the industry were quickly disappearing, the project attempted to gather as much standardized information on each colliery as possible, and the data gathered and eventually published in 2006 has since been used in a variety of ways, not least by the National Union of Mineworkers for compensation cases. Many miners were moved around from pit to pit over a lifetime of mining, so it has been difficult to recall with precision exactly where and when they worked. The inventory has therefore been a big help, providing accurate information on when the various collieries were in operation to support their claims.

There is, as these compensation claims demonstrate, much more to the coal industry than the collieries themselves, many of which have been outlived by the mining communities that worked and depended upon them. As well as miners’ dwellings, a broad range of buildings have also lived on, such as Miners’ Welfare Institutes, meeting halls, libraries, sports and leisure facilities, colleges and convalescent homes. Many communities also contain memorials to the thousands of miners who died as a result of accidents or work-related diseases. Perhaps the most impressive and cohesive surviving evidence of mining can be found at East Wemyss in Fife and Newtongrange in Midlothian where entire mining villages have been preserved through the imposition of listed building and conservation area protection. Both villages remain very much alive.

Another under-recognised legacy of the coal industry has been the range of heavy clay products produced by brick, tile and fireclay works adjacent to or part of many collieries, and in many cases, inherited by the NCB. Scotland is not well known for being a country of brick buildings, but the kilns of the coal industry’s brickworks churned out millions of bricks during the twentieth century, and they were widely used in huge numbers of buildings, many of which were not obviously built from brick. A variety of other clay products were also produced by coal companies, including refractories (for which Scotland was especially famous), sanitary ware, drain pipes, sewers and architectural products such as wall copes, ridge tiles, paviors, special facing bricks and chimney cans (Douglas et al. 1993). Most of Scotland’s villages, towns and cities contain great quantities of these materials, a significant proportion of which takes the form of invisible infrastructure.
Much less survives of the collieries themselves, and even where buildings were protected by listed-building status, pressure exerted on the local planning authorities resulted in listed building consent being granted and the buildings being lost. As a consequence, only one coherent, recognisable and complete example of a colliery has survived the carnage. It is Lady Victoria at Newtonrange in Midlothian (Figure 5), an extraordinary example of a Victorian superpit that survived in production until 1981.

At that point, it was earmarked for destruction along with its contemporaries, but a combination of people within the NCB, the local authority and the community combined to save it. It was initially protected as a Scheduled Monument by Historic Scotland, but was later given ‘A’ listed historic building status instead. Lady Victoria has since evolved to become the National Mining Museum.

There is no doubt that the comprehensive disappearance of the industry elsewhere in Scotland has rendered Lady Victoria even more important, so its survival in the form of the National Mining Museum Scotland has become a major issue. The colliery’s surface arrangement is made up of steel-framed, brick-clad buildings that have outstripped the lifespan that was originally envisaged. However, this was a superpit of its time. It represents the moment when the scale of deep coal mining changed gear and went genuinely deep. Lady Victoria’s shaft was sunk to the very bottom of the coalfield’s basin, into the Lower Carboniferous strata. The shaft was one of the biggest and deepest of the period, and the Kilmarnock-made steam engine that was installed was also the biggest in the country at the time. All the buildings reflect the fact that this was a showpiece pit—a flagship of the Lothian Coal Company. They are therefore more robust than many of the industry’s contemporary buildings. Much of the problem lies not with the brickwork but with the mild-steel sub-structure which, when exposed to the elements, has rusted and failed in several key areas. Roofs and floors in certain parts of the complex have proved to be especially vulnerable, posing the greatest challenge to the museum’s conservation strategy. Other issues have included the safe removal of asbestos.

There are also additional challenges that are conspiring to put the future of Lady Victoria at risk. The local authority, which was one of the founding partners but is faced with a severe financial crisis of its own, has withdrawn all its revenue funding, so the museum is now heavily dependent on the continuation of an annual subsidy from central government, which itself is under pressure caused by the current recession. At present, the annual stream of paying visitors (less than 20 000 per annum) is not large enough to generate sufficient revenue. However, the Scottish Government has intervened with a £1.3 million capital grant to ensure that a major block of decaying processing buildings can be stabilised. It has also provided an annual £150,000 grant to support revenue funding, but discussions continue on finding a more sustainable future for the museum.

In the meantime, there are signs that the incredible contribution that the coal industry has made to the culture and prosperity of modern Scotland is better recognised than was previously thought. In 2008, Lady Victoria Colliery came top of a poll of historic sites in Scotland run as part of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland’s centenary ‘Treasured Places’ programme, beating many established cultural icons. This would seem to confirm that almost everyone in Scotland has personal links to the coal mining industry in some form. This manifests itself in many ways, not least a multiple legacy of community spirit, culture, sport, health and safety and political activism that is rooted in the coal mining communities of Scotland. In this context, the survival of Lady Victoria Colliery as an imposing and hugely symbolic physical manifestation of the industry is immensely important.

Bibliography


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