

Landscape Legacies of Coal



It is not so long ago that coal had a place in everyday life in Central Scotland. At its peak in the post war period, the industry employed around 140,000 workers and met roughly 90% of the Nation's demand for fuel. The local landscape of the colliery towns and villages were dominated by the bing, the headstock, colliery buildings, the railway sidings and the associated housing, clubs and bowling greens. Rapid decline from the 1960s brought closure, demolition and subsequent repurposing and/or redevelopment of the colliery sites that erased much of the industrial archaeology of one of Scotland's foremost industries.

The aim of the project is to establish official and unofficial landscape biographies of these ex-colliery sites. How they have been re-purposed and redeveloped, how the industry has been remembered or commemorated, or not as the case may be, and how the sites have been understood, experienced and used by the local communities from closure to present day. The study is led by Catherine Mills (History) and Ian McIntosh (Sociology).

If you currently live, or have previously lived, in an old colliery village/town and/or you have memories that you are willing to share, such as watching the demolition and/or landscaping of the bings; if you played on the sites as a youngster, you still visit the sites today or you simply miss the headstock in the landscape we would love to hear from you. The project combines traditional archival research with ethnographic approaches. These include oral testimonies, questionnaires and on-site observation. If you would like participate in an oral history interview please contact either Catherine or Ian (details below). Alternatively if you have 10 minutes to spare and prefer anonymity please complete our on-line questionnaire at <https://stirling.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/landscape-legacies-of-coal>

Running in conjunction with the study is the identification of the remaining industrial archaeology of the local coal industry. Although often hard to discern, visible traces of coal mining do still remain in the landscape today, ranging from sunken hollows, patches of colliery waste and piles of building rubble through to communication networks, reclaimed bings and repurposed buildings. The aim of this strand of the project is to identify, record and celebrate this often hidden, but nonetheless, valuable legacy in a series of heritage walks that narrate the story of coal through the physical remains of the industry. These will shortly be launched as a free to download smart phone app initially focusing on two routes: 'Devonside' covering the Devon and Tillicoultry Collieries and the Meta Pit and Brickworks and 'Polmaise' covering Millhall and Fallin.

Aside from promoting local connections and engagement with the historic coal mining landscape, the app will also provide a rolling and comprehensive record of the physical remains of the industry. Users of the app will be encouraged to share their stories and images of the sites, to discover additional feature in the landscape to include and suggest ideas for additional routes. Further information can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/landscapelegaciesofcoal/>

The app was generously supported by the Macrobert Arts Centre <https://macrobertartscentre.org/> as part of their community heritage initiative in September 2017 that was based around the theme of coal. This consisted of a series of creative workshops, a contemporary dance performance 'Coal' produced by Gary Clark that depicted life in the colliery communities during the miners' strike and a visual arts exhibition 'Under-Mined' by Philip Gurrey that reflected the impact of the industry on the working people of Scotland.

If you have any further questions or would like to contribute to the project please email Catherine Mills c.j.mills@stir.ac.uk or Ian McIntosh ian.mcIntosh@stir.ac.uk