

The Research Framework for the Archaeology of the Extractive Industries in England (Mining and Quarrying)

NAMHO has embarked on a project which will benefit mining history and help with the making of decisions about future archaeological research and the heritage of mining landscapes in England. Crucial to its success will be the support of NAMHO members, who it is hoped will wish to become involved.

The Research Framework is a two-year project, jointly funded with English Heritage, which will enable NAMHO groups and individual members to contribute towards and help influence research priorities. It will also provide guidance towards conservation and education strategies, and raise awareness of historic extractive industries as part of the wider heritage agenda. At its core will be a coordinated effort to collate the results of previous archaeological research, which will provide the information needed to achieve these wider aims. NAMHO members can support this project by helping with the supply of this information and by contributing to discussions at the series of regional seminars planned for next Spring and Winter/Spring of 2011. Members with regional or specialist expertise, who are willing to provide contacts and advise on less well-known sources of information, are particularly encouraged to attend these seminars.

The first task will be to undertake a comprehensive review of existing archaeological data. Initially this will involve exploring county historic environment records (HERs) and collating bibliographical sources but also vital to the success of this project will be the expertise and knowledge contributed by NAMHO members.

The scope of the project will include all archaeological data associated with mining and quarrying under the following general headings:

Energy Minerals: coal, oil shale, lignite etc

Metals: ferrous and non-ferrous

Bulk Minerals: building stone, aggregates, lime, sand, gravel etc

Other Industrial Minerals: evaporites, clays etc

Miscellaneous minerals: graphite, arsenic, talc, abrasives, pigments etc

The assessment will include surface and underground archaeology of all periods of extractive activity, from prehistoric flint mines to 20th century gravel pits. Infrastructures, such as mineral railways, water supplies and aspects of smelting will also be covered, as well as the social impact on the landscape of extraction, including housing and other material evidence of mining communities.

Once the resources have been collated the next process will be to evaluate the data and the results will be used to inform discussions on a range of issues. Mainly however, we hope to identify:

- strengths and weaknesses in the existing record for the archaeology of mining and quarrying, in particular any conspicuous gaps in our knowledge
- skill shortages in areas needed to further the study of the topic
- common themes in the study of the different extractive industries, including cultural impact, underground archaeology, conservation and education

After the evaluation, the focus will turn to how these issues may be addressed through targeting future research and establishing where priorities for investigation and the allocation of resources may best lie. Through this process the research framework, informed by the results of the resource assessment, will incorporate the views and aspirations of a wide community of researchers.

If you wish to assist the steering group please contact the Project Director, Dr Peter Cloughton at P.F.Cloughton@exeter.ac.uk If you have data or expertise to offer or would like to contribute to the seminars please contact the Project Officer Phil Newman at projectofficer@namho.org Details of the seminars will be available soon. Please check regularly on the NAMHO website for information and updates - www.namho.org