Discovering the lead mining heritage of the North Pennines

In Victorian times the North Pennines was Britain’s biggest lead mining area. Although now all is tranquillity and beauty, mining once dominated this landscape and its communities. Lead mining has left behind a rich heritage and there is much to see and explore. This leaflet shows you some key places to start your journey of discovery into the past.

Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project was a community led project to discover, conserve and celebrate the lead mining heritage of Dukesfield smelt mill and the lead carrier ways. Find out more at www.dukesfield.org.uk

Please ask us if you would like this leaflet summarised in another format.
Friends of the North Pennines 07935 337210

The Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project is led by the Friends of the North Pennines in partnership with Hexhamshire and Slaley Parish Councils and has the active support of the landowner, Allendale Estates. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the generous support of other sponsors. www.dukesfield.org.uk

The Friends – working to keep the North Pennines special for tomorrow www.friendsofthenorthpennines.org.uk Charity No:1137467

Weblinks and downloads
There are a growing number of online resources available to help you discover more about the area’s lead mining heritage. Look for the ♣ symbol alongside the featured sites overleaf.

Slitt Mine, Westgate & West Rigg OpenCut
A video trail www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/SlittWoodvideoguide.aspx

Allenheads
3-mile walk exploring geology and mines around Allenheads www.explorenorthpennines.org.uk/sites/default/files/activity/downloads/enp022.pdf

Dukesfield Smelt Mill
www.dukesfield.org.uk/downloads/walks-cycle

Shildon Engine House
A circular walk starts from picturesque Blanchland. Watch a video guide to the walk www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/Blanchland/Geartrailvideo.aspx

Gauless Mini Mill
A circular walk exploring the area can be found at www.thisisdurham.com/outdoors/walking-in-durham/woodland-gauless-valley-heritage-walk-p671331#a-view

For more information:
The Dukesfield website is packed full of information about the Dukesfield project and the lead carrier routes. It also contains a huge amount of material for those who want to delve deeper into the history of lead mining. This includes biographies of key figures and a vast number of letters and reports from the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in a fully searchable database.

www.dukesfield.org.uk

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www.dukesfield.org.uk/downloads/walks-cycle

www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/SlittWoodvideoguide.aspx


The Lead Routes in Eglington

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For a detailed map of the carriers’ routes go to: www.dukesfield.org.uk/history/interactive-map.

There is also an interpretation panel at the end of the route between Eglington and Blaydon. You can also access the carriers’ routes by the Keelman’s Way at Blaydon.

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Discovering the Lead Mining Heritage of the North Pennines

This map shows where the lead mining heritage of the North Pennines has been conserved and interpreted. Each place is different and the wonderful landscape of the North Pennines will make your journeys of discovery a real pleasure.

1. Langley Smelt Mill Chimney
   NY 840 610

2. Allen Smelt Mill, Allendale
   NY 831 566

3. Whitesyke and Bentyfield Mines, Garri gast
   B6413

4. Northhead
   NY 783 433

5. Killhope, the North of England Lead Mining Museum, Wear da le
   NY 825 433

6. Allendale
   NY 840 543

7. Weardale Museum, North Yorks e
   NY 835 385

8. Rookhope Arch
   NY 924 429

9. Dukesfield Smelt Mill, Hexhamshire
   NY 841 529

10. Shildon Engine House, Blanchland
    NY 999 510

11. Smelt Mill, Westgate
    NY 905 391

12. West Rigg Opencut, Westgate
    NY 101 392

13. Eggleston Saddle House
    NZ 086 249

14. Guisnes Smelt Mill, Copley
    NZ 086 249

Killhope is an open air museum centred on the nineteenth century Park Level Mine and washing floor where children to separate lead ore from waste material. The impressive working wastewater catches the eye, but Killhope is very much a hands-on museum with lots to do, including trips down the mine.

www.killhope.org.uk

Langley was an extensive complex of lead smelting buildings. A long horizontal flue carried smoke from the smelting hearths to the impressive chimney. Other mining chimneys survived above Allen Mill in Allendale and Jefferies Mill near Blanchland. Langley was served by a railway, the station is now a garden cafe.

A visit to Nenthead demonstrates the huge impact lead (and later zinc) mining had on this high and remote village. In the village are miners’ cottages, chapel, reading room and school. A short walk away are the smelt mill buildings and a truly astonishing mining landscape covering a vast area.

www.nentheadmines.com

Allen Mill was a massive industrial operation, smelting lead from many mines and extracting silver from the lead. A complete of ruined hearths and the large waterwheel pit survive. The horizontal flues running for miles up the hillside to two chimneys are the most impressive of the North Pennines. www.allenmill.co.uk

A784 mines you can see the mine entrance and the washing floor area where lead ore was separated out from waste material. Rare lead-tolerant plants have colonised this area. A short walk beside the Garri gast burn brings you to Bentyfield mine with its mensup and hypothesis house.

Whitley and West Copley

A well-kept Ledgemen Museum has a recreated cottage room and display about Methodism. Upstairs there is a display of local minerals and resources for geologists and one of the few surviving pieces of smelting lead, found on the site where it had been dropped by a conifer. Next door is High House Chapel, built when John Wesley was still making regular visits to the lead mining area.

www.ledgemenmuseum.co.uk

Rookhope Arch is the last remaining element of Rookhope smelt mill. A long flue carried smoke containing fine particles of lead away from the mill. Valuable deposits of lead were scraped from inside the flue which crossed river and road on a series of stone arches. Only one now survives.

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Most large landowners leased mining rights to mining companies for a percentage of the lead ore called ‘duty ore’. This mill was built by the Earl of Darlington who owned Robey Estate in Teesdale. The Earl had his mineral smelting here using local coal. The tall chimney rising above the woods is a very striking reminder of the industrial past.

Shildon mill is an early smelt mill established in the 1660s. The mill was built a long way from the mines because it needed the abundant nearby timber for fuel. It was also on the way to Tynedale’s markets. The graceful Gothic arches which carried a very early horizontal flue from the mill are now a striking remaining feature. www.dukesfield.org.uk

www.allenmill.co.uk

Weardale Museum has a recreated cottage room and displays about Methodism. Upstairs there is a display of local minerals and resources for geologists and one of the few surviving pieces of smelting lead, found on the site where it had been dropped by a conifer. Next door is High House Chapel, built when John Wesley was still making regular visits to the lead mining area.

www.ledgemenmuseum.co.uk

The small but packed Weardale Museum has a recreated cottage room and display about Methodism. Upstairs there is a display of local minerals and resources for geologists and one of the few surviving pieces of smelting lead, found on the site where it had been dropped by a conifer. Next door is High House Chapel, built when John Wesley was still making regular visits to the lead mining area.

www.ledgemenmuseum.co.uk

This inconspicuous little building is near to Ledgemen small mill. Hundreds of pack ponies were used to carry sacks of lead ore on their backs to the smelting mills. Local tradition has it that this was the only known saddle house in the North Pennines. www.killhope.org.uk

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