

Somerset Archives & Local Studies

Information Leaflet

Mining and Quarrying in Somerset



Extraction industries, such as mining and quarrying, have been important to Somerset for a very long time. The Romans mined calamine on the Mendips, and coal mining has taken place for centuries around Kilmersdon and Norton Radstock. There has also been widespread quarrying around Whatley on the Mendips. In West Somerset the Brendon Hills iron mines were very successful, and there were experiments to extract shale oil from the rocks at Kilve during the 1920s. Somerset Heritage Centre has a number of useful collections to help with research into extraction industries in the county.

Official Records

Records of the National Coal Board (DD\NCB)

The National Coal Board (NCB) was set up in 1946. It took over from the Coal Commission and had responsibility for property and rights owned by colliery concerns. In 1987 it was renamed the British Coal Corporation and its assets were later privatised. After privatisation, records about local mines were sent to local record offices, and the administrative records of the Board were divided between The National Archives and the National Coal Mining Museum (see further contacts below). The National Coal Board records relate mainly to mines in the north east of the county, including Pensford, Norton Hill, Radstock and Bromley collieries. The records include coal mine schemes, wages books, output registers, accident books, minute books and cash books, from 1835 to 1953. This collection also includes title deeds for the Board's mining assets in the area, from 1544 to 1938.

Records of the British Coal Corporation (A\BDM)

The British Coal Corporation was created in 1987 when the National Coal Board was privatised. It was eventually wound up in 1997 after the closing and selling of most of its mining assets. The Corporation had responsibility for licensing coal mining and monitoring coal assets. The record collection contains schemes for Somerset mines, photographs, local plans, reports, minutes, papers about mine closure, production ledgers and some staff records, from 1890 to 1989.

Records of the Health and Safety Executive (DD\HSE)

These are a small collection of plans of abandoned mines containing or producing metals, mainly drawn up in about 1880.

Inland Revenue valuation records (DD\IR.z)

These are files created by the Bristol Inland Revenue Office about the valuation of minerals in the Somerset Coalfield. After the 1910 Finance Act, landowners had to complete a form listing the location and value of mineral deposits they owned. The returns give brief details about the value of the coal and whether mining was taking place or if the seam was exhausted. These are the draft records; the final versions are held at The National Archives.

County Council records

These are records about the County Council's administration of mines and quarries. You can find records relating to Underwood and Dial Quarries among the County Surveyor's records (C/S).

Other records

There are many privately deposited collections which have information about various mining activities carried out in Somerset, either from a family interest or from present day research into the industry.

Family papers

If a Somerset family owned a colliery or there were mineral deposits under their land, then their family papers often contain useful information. If you are interested in a particular mine or quarry it may be useful to try to discover the owner, to see if we have any relevant estate papers.

Some of the main family collections are:

- **Beauchamp** (DD\BE): includes papers about their ownership of collieries in and around Midsomer Norton.
- **Mogg** (DD\MGG): includes documents about their mining interests in High Littleton, Timsbury, Welton, Midsomer Norton and Farrington Gurney.
- **Waldegrave** (DD\WG): includes information about their ownership of mines in Radstock.
- **Hylton** (DD\HY): includes information about their ownership of collieries around Kilmersdon and details about mineral deposits under their lands.

Business papers

A small number of extraction industry businesses have also deposited their records, for example, Callow Rock Quarry, Cheddar (A\AYL). If we do not hold records for the business you are interested in, they may still be with the organisation itself or its successor.

Privately collected papers

Some of the more notable collections include:

- The papers of **Marie Clarke** (A\BIB), who extensively researched archaeology and mining in North Somerset, especially on iron oxide and ochre mining.
- **The Brendon Hills Industrial Survey** (A\CUV), which surveyed all the remains of the iron mining industry and West Somerset Mineral Railway on the Brendon Hills.
- The papers of **Roger Sellick** (A\ADB, A\BAZ), compiled from his research for various books on The West Somerset Mineral Railway and the Brendon Hill iron mines.
- The papers of **Stephen Savery**, relating to quarrying in Somerset and nationally, including consultancy records for various national quarries (A\CTM).

How to find the records

As well as the collections listed in this leaflet, we have many other items relating to Somerset's extraction industries. You can find these in our catalogues, which are available at www.swheritage.org.uk/somerset-archives. To search, you should use key words such as *mining*, *mineral* or *iron*, or specific colliery or business names.

Where else to look

- **The National Archives**: for administrative records of the National Coal Board and its predecessors, and records about government owned mines and quarries. See www.nationalarchives.gov.uk for more information.
- **National Coal Mining Museum**: for records about the National Coal Board and other mining records. See the library section on www.ncm.org.uk for more information.

Further reading

- Bye, R. and Taylor, S. (1974) *The iron industry of the Brendon Hills*
- Down, C. and Warrington, A. (1971) *The History of the Somerset Coalfield*
- Greenhill, B. (1970) *The Nailsea Coalfield*
- Gough, J. (1967) *Mines of Mendip*
- Sellick, R. (1962) *The West Somerset Mineral Railway and the story of the Brendon Hills iron mines*
- Somerset County Council, (1971) *Quarrying in Somerset*

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