

Coal Mining, Celtic Style



This Celtic Region has two extensive coalfields, which have shaped the country and the people in many ways. The first recorded mining for coal took place in 1324, but it wasn't until the 1500's that the industry became extremely important.

Coal is the remains of ancient plants, fossilized into a combustible substance. Coal was laid down in seams

hundreds of millions of years ago, in geological periods known as the Devonian and Carboniferous. At that time, this Region was covered with extensive forests of ferns that could grow to nearly one hundred feet in height. These were, over a period of millions of years, covered by water, and eventually silts, which became the layers of rock or clay between the seams of coal. The land then rose again, growing a new layer of vegetation, which eventually was also buried and fossilized, creating the coalfield of today.

The old method of mining coal was called the "pillar and stall" system. Miners worked in stalls that were cut out at the sides of tunnels. A stall was where a section of coal was removed from between pillars of coal. Eventually this method was replaced with the "long wall" system, which extracted all of the coal. This method comprised of two tunnels running adjacent to one another, with a long open coalface between them. As the coal was cut from the coalface it was carried away by a conveyor.

Coal mining was never an easy way to make a living and the extensive "coal towns" of this Region could be harsh places. But the people of this Region built strong communities and became noted for beautiful choirs, which originated among the miners. Today, few coal mines continue to operate, but thankfully the choirs are still going strong!

Do you know what Region
mined their coal Celtic style? WALES