



PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The 'Friends' are an active Charitable Incorporated Organisation focussed on the heritage of Chatterley Whitfield Colliery. We have secured grants from Stoke-on-Trent City Council which has enabled us to buy equipment for archiving, but we still have the age-old issues of the preservation of the site, and its future as nationally-important heritage asset. We actively work to preserve the past for future generations, and in March 2022 we agreed a new VISION document in partnership with the City Council, Historic England, our local Member of Parliament and other local institutions, including Keele University.

MISSION STATEMENT: "To archive, share and preserve memories and practices of our coal-mining heritage through active participation of members, associates and the community working in unison".

VISION STATEMENT: "Grow to become a leading heritage site within Stoke-on-Trent and the UK, which will educate and involve people in preserving the cultural importance of coal-mining for future generations".

Chatterley Whitfield is an industrial time capsule and is widely acknowledged to be the most comprehensive surviving example of a deep mine site in England. It closed in 1977 as a colliery and reopened in 1979 as the first underground museum in the United Kingdom. This was followed, in 1986, by an equally-unique replacement exhibition in a converted railway siding. In 1993 the museum closed, and the colliery was later designated by Historic England as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

To quote Historic England, Chatterley Whitfield 'retains clear evidence for its historical development and the technologies employed there. It includes a diverse range of buildings, structures and buried archaeological remains which, together, preserve the surface history of the coal industry from the 1860s through to post-nationalisation. Although some of its structures are present at other colliery sites, the significance of Chatterley Whitfield lies in its completeness which is unequalled in any other former or surviving coalfield site in the country. It was at the forefront of mining technology during the 20th century'.

Despite this unique status and significance as representative of an industry that once employed over a million people, the site is routinely cited on lists of 'at risk' heritage – such as that of the [Victorian Society in 2019](#). Historic England similarly considers the site as 'Priority A': in immediate risk of further rapid deterioration and loss of fabric.

While the buildings slowly deteriorate, the site has become a focal point for community-organised ground-up heritage. In 2001, a small group of like-minded people interested in preserving the site, its history and buildings founded The Friends of Chatterley Whitfield. Over the years that followed, we amassed an archive of historic maps, books, documents and artefacts rescued from the site itself. These include over four thousand maps, in excess of ten thousand photographs, books, documents and other items such as information boards, miners lamps and equipment. The collection, now housed in our on-site, volunteer-run Heritage Centre continues to grow through donation, and recent acquisitions have included some of the material lost to auction when the museum was liquidated in 1993/4. Much of the material in the archive is in the process of being digitised by our archive team.

While the Friends have an increasingly global reach and membership in an age of social media, our incorporation as a charity in 2019 also provided an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to working with the local community, schools and colleges to retain the important memories and deeds of miners and mining families. Much of this engagement activity takes place via our heritage centre and linked Memorial Garden, established in 2018, open twice a week, and from which we are licensed to take visitors on (limited) tours of an otherwise inaccessible site.

We realise that eventually the access to the main site will become more restrictive and by developing a Heritage Centre outside of the main site, the HISTORY of the site can be preserved. When the 'Museum'

was open it was operated as a trust and the artefacts which were somehow left when it closed are now in the possession of the 'Friends'. We are charity and in reality operating as a museum, but not recognised as one. We would like to become accredited and are looking for any help and advise a mentor could assist us with.

The Chatterley Whitfield Heritage Centre mentor will:

Advise Chatterley Whitfield on obtaining Accreditation and from then on support the museum in maintaining the standards. In order to provide a framework for this activity the mentor will:

- Work on an annual Accreditation review with Chatterley Whitfield, looking at the forward plan and discussing the museum's advice needs for the coming years
- Help the museum source that advice
- Endorse and sign Accreditation applications and returns
- Visit Chatterley Whitfield a minimum of twice a year of which one visit will be to attend one of the monthly trustee meetings.
- Arrange a discussion with the Chair of Trustees Nigel Thomas Bowers to help explain the accreditation process and the support given by the mentor

In order to support Chatterley Whitfield they will:

- o Make contact details available and communicate with the museum.
- o Be available or let the museum know if their availability changes
- o Keep up to date with current professional standards or know how to access further advice and information
- o Be an advocate for Chatterley Whitfield in relation to the museum
- o Support the museum in accessing networks and engaging with the wider museum community
- o Note advise outside his/ her areas of expertise but direct the museum to other sources of advice.