

Press release

Blegny-Mine • Bois du Cazier • Bois-du-Luc • Grand-Hornu

UNESCO World Heritage Candidates

October 2009 - Belgium is proposing to inscribe four historic sites related to coal mining on the list of world heritage: Grand-Hornu, Bois-du-Luc and Bois du Cazier in the Province of Hainaut and Blegny-Mine in the Province of Liège.

These four historic sites mined the coal field which extends from Nord-Pas-de-Calais to the Aix-la-Chapelle valley. They belong to the same chronological period, from the early 19th to the end of the 20th centuries and offer a condensed insight into all aspects of **mining, technical and social heritage**. They also complement one another. Blegny and Bois du Cazier cover the “work and workers” component, whilst Grand-Hornu and Bois-du-Luc relate to the “social” component, illustrating through their **architecture the relations of power and social organisation**.

Walloon mining heritage fully complies with UNESCO's criterion II: **“to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design”**.

In the technological, social and architectural fields, it represents a **cultural melting pot** which assimilated elements of very diverse origins which have had a considerable influence in Europe and throughout the world.

From a technological viewpoint, mines, which were active since the Middle Ages, have integrated techniques from across Europe, notably the British processes which brought about the Industrial Revolution. But the Walloon collieries became an international model, copied notably in Russia and China. Its Mining Colleges have trained engineers from all over the world.

In social terms, the Walloon collieries are multicultural centres, owing to the immigration of the Italian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Russian and Turkish labour force. Architecturally speaking, the two sites of Grand-Hornu and Bois-du-Luc reflect the major international trends in architecture and urban development.

This mining heritage also fulfils criterion IV: **“to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history”**.

Indeed it is a microcosm of the Industrial Revolution, in its twofold technological and social aspects. The various stages of technological evolution are all represented, together with the evolution of social relations, from paternalism to workers' struggles. Furthermore, redevelopment of the four sites has been achieved in different ways, which illustrate various possibilities for promoting heritage.

Through their chronology and content, the Walloon collieries form a unique example and fill a gap in world industrial heritage.

The proposal dossier for inclusion in the world heritage list

The proposal dossier for inclusion in the world heritage list is based on two lines of argument: the evidence in these collieries of a wide-reaching exchange of influences, which contributed to the development of techniques, urban development and cultures on the one hand, and on the other the extensive representativeness of an important period in human history offered by these sites in terms of their architecture, technology and the landscape.

The preparation of the application dossier was only made possible through the close cooperation of the Walloon Region and the managers of the various sites, not forgetting of course the assistance provided by the Centre d'Histoire des Sciences et des Techniques at the University of Liège.

Through this joint effort, it was possible to submit the application dossier to the World Heritage Centre on 29th January this year. Having been acknowledged as complete, it can pursue its course and be transferred to Icomos, the consultative body responsible for evaluating the sites, reporting on and submitting a recommendation to the World Heritage Committee. This Committee will then decide on the Walloon application during the 34th session in early summer 2010.

The "Coal Route"

Following the decision by the Walloon Government to present the candidature of 4 major mining sites in Wallonia for inclusion as UNESCO World Heritage, the managers of the 4 selected sites immediately established a new form of cooperation, reflecting their joint capacity to work together to create a "**Coal Route**", which symbolises the importance of black gold in the history of Wallonia and more widely in northern Europe. This joint work has of course been supervised by the relevant administration of the Walloon Region, and more specifically its representative, Ms. Gislaine Devillers.

Grand-Hornu is the first chapter in this history. It demonstrates the audacity and inventiveness of industrialists of this era, the cathedral builders of their time, who turned Belgium into the second industrialised nation in the world! The neoclassical architecture of the site and its terraced housing which was directly inspired by it and is closely connected with the creation of the colliery, along with its cultural redevelopment in the field of contemporary creation, make it a unique example.

The Bois-du-Luc site represents the phase of social organisation of labour. The exemplary fashion in which society was organised there offers a sort of symbolic model of the industrial era, illustrating both the shortcomings of an almost feudal system but also the early beginnings of social progress, notably in terms of respect for human dignity. The geometric rigour of its architecture and the isolation of the site which it brings about is the flamboyant reflection of its paternalistic ideology, characteristic of the industrial world in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Bois du Cazier in turn stands out as a symbol of the memory, labour and immigration of workers. Through efforts to raise awareness about the 1956 disaster in Marcinelle, we can no longer ignore the harsh conditions of miners' work and the dangers they faced in the mine, which at the same time contributed so much to the wealth of a prosperous Wallonia. As well as the 8th August 1956 Space, the memorial of the disaster, the site also houses the Museum of Industry and the Glass Museum, which thus reinforce its status as a symbol of industrial work.

The history of Blegny-Mine certainly dates back a long time, but its outstanding feature is its longstanding industrial operations, as it was only closed in the final quarter of the 20th century. It is the only one of the four sites not to be dismantled and abandoned, and thus offers a unique opportunity for the public to complete their discovery of two centuries of coal mining history with a visit to a modern mine. Not forgetting of course that whilst they are there, visitors can undertake the symbolic journey of "going down the pit", like millions of miners previously, as the safety of the modern installations permits this.

Action plan

In practical terms, before the decisive meeting of the World Heritage Committee in July 2010, the collaboration between the 4 major mining sites in Wallonia is taking place as follows:

Autumn 2009: creation of a logo and preparation of a bilingual dossier (in French and English) to present the sites and the application dossier

Autumn 2009: creation of specific joint advertising material

Autumn 2009: creation of a joint website
(www.sitesminiersmajeursdewallonie.be)

Autumn 2009: preparation of a bilingual press release (French and English)

March 2010: publication of a joint bilingual brochure (in French and English) to present the dossier

Winter 2009: meetings with local inhabitants

March 2010: publication of a "Coal Route" flyer for the general public, presenting the 4 sites

May 2010: organisation of a conference in Paris with representatives from all 4 sites to discuss the issue of industrial heritage and its redevelopment.

For all information regarding the application dossier, please contact the project coordinator, Ms. Gislaine Devillers, 1st Attachée to the Department of Heritage in the Walloon Region (tel: +32 (0)81 33 21 64, mobile: +32 (0) 477 58 59 79).

For all information on the activities at the various sites, please contact their respective spokespersons.

The four major mining sites of Wallonia

Blegny-Mine, the witness of two centuries of coal mining

Located between Liège and Visé, the **leisure park** of Blegny-Mine is today one of the main tourist attractions in the area of Liege. It has conserved two pieces of evidence of mining activity in the Liège region which date back to very different eras: the **Marie Pit**, where certain rooms date back to the mid 19th century and is representative of coal mining at that time, and **N°1 Pit**, which is still used for taking visitors down to the mine's underground galleries (at -30 and -60 metres), and whose oldest sections date back to 1942, encapsulate the the era of the "Coal War".

Blegny-Mine fact sheet

Chairman: Abel Desmit

Director: Jacques Crul

The administrative departments can be contacted on working days from 9.00 to 17.00.

The reservations department can be contacted from Monday to Sunday between 9.00 and 17.30 (in summertime) and from Monday to Friday between 9.00 and 17.00 (in wintertime).

Management: +32(0)4/237 98 00

Address:

Blegny-Mine asbl
Rue Lambert Marlet, 23
B-4670 Blegny
www.blegnymine.be
Tel: +32(0)4/387 43 33
Fax: +32(0)4/387 58 50
E-mail: domaine@blegnymine.be

Opening times in 2009:

Individual visitors:

- for the mine:

weekends and holidays from 22nd February to 29th November

weekdays from 6th April to 11th September and during the spring and autumn half-terms holidays (Carnaval and Toussaint)

- for the other activities :

weekends and holidays from 4th April to 8th November

weekdays from 6th April to 11th September

Groups (minimum 15 people):

every day from 16th February to 23rd December (by reservation). Further information can be found on the website.

Entrance fees - 2009 prices:

Individual visitors:

for the mine:

Adults: €8.60

Children (from 6 to 12 years): €6

Seniors and youngsters (from 13 to 18 years): €7.50

Children under 6 years: free

Superprogramme (visit of the mine, the mining museum, train ride and nature trail on the slag heap):

Adults: €12.80

Children (from 6 to 12 years): €8.50

Seniors and youngsters (from 13 to 18 years): €10.65

Children under 6 years: free

Groups (minimum 15 people):

By reservation. Further information can be found at www.blegnymine.be. The "Group" programmes are available on request.

Reservations: +32 (0)4 387 43 33

The Blegny-Mine site has a large, free car park, a cafe, two restaurants, a function room, a mini-golf course, playgrounds, a park with pools and a small zoo with aviaries, an archive centre and a centre to accommodate groups (58 beds).

Access:

By train and bus: on arriving at Liège-Palais, take the TEC bus n° 67 Liège-Visé [via Blegny] at the Léopold station. Stop at: "Charbonnage de Trembleur".

By car: E40 motorway junction 36, follow signs to "Blegny-Mine", or E25 motorway junction 26, follow the signs to "Blegny-Mine".

The Bois du Cazier... a Museum, a Memorial and a Message

The Bois du Cazier colliery in Marcinelle has been since 2001 a memorial dedicated to the casualties of the accident which happened on August 8th 1956. Following a human error combined with a technical problem, a fire started at the shaft station at the 975 level of the air entry shaft. The toxic fumes had soon reached all the galleries and works of the mine, and had asphyxiated all of the workers blocked underground: i.e. 262 men of 12 nationalities, including 136 Italians and 95 Belgians.

Aside from its tragic aspect, this disaster was also seen as terribly revelatory. It highlighted both the limits reached by an industry which knew that it was ultimately doomed, but also the effective absence of a Belgian State immigration policy. As a direct consequence, the coal industry from then on had to turn to other countries besides Italy to ensure it had a sufficient workforce.

Following the conclusions of a conference held in September 1956 by the High Authority of the ECSC relating to security in mines, legislation in this field was entirely revised in the following year. Furthermore, the Italian community, finally acknowledged by the enormous price it paid in this accident, was to be perceived differently and their integration was made easier. Herein lies the twofold lesson to be drawn from Bois du Cazier. By bringing about a general increase in awareness, the disaster was the basis for a profound reappraisal, both in the world of work and in society in general. From then on, there would be a "before" and an "after Marcinelle".

Bois du Cazier fact sheet

Chairman

Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe

Director

Jean-Louis Delaet

The administrative departments can be contacted from Monday to Friday, from 9.00 to 12.00 and from 13.00 until 17.00.

Management

+32 (0)71/88 08 52 or 58

Address

Le Bois du Cazier

Rue du Cazier, 80

B-6001 Marcinelle

www.leboisducazier.be

Tel: +32(0)71/88 08 56

Fax: +32(0)71/88 08 57

E-mail: info@leboisducazier.be

Opening times

Open all year round except for the week between Christmas and the New Year

- Tuesday to Friday from 9.00 to 17.00
- Saturdays, Sundays and holidays from 10.00 to 18.00

Entrance fee

Individual

Adults: €6

Children under 18 and students: €4.50

Free entry for children under 6 years.

Groups

Adults: €5

Children under 18 and students: €3.50

Guided visits

Guided visits in Fr.-Nl.-En.-It. (groups of 10 to 25 people): €45

Reservations: +32(0)71/29 89 30

Facilities

Restaurant, shop, café serving light meals and a picnic area

Access

By car: via A54 or R3, take the A503 - exit 34 Marcinelle-Haies

Train: Charleroi-Sud station and TEC Buses n° 1 and 52

The site is accessible to persons with reduced mobility, except for the slag heaps.

The Bois-du-Luc Mining Site, a Landmark of Industrial Heritage

Some 60km from Brussels, and 6km from La Louvière, the exceptionally well preserved mining site at Bois-du-Luc is an outstanding witness of the past. Located in the heart of the industrial valley of the Centre Region, it extends across the two banks of the Thiriau du Luc river and spans all of the technical and social achievements of one of the oldest colliery companies in continental Europe: the Société des Charbonnages du Bois-du-Luc. The company is notable owing to its longevity, having expanded its mining activities to more than thirty pits, and because of its patrimonial legacy located specifically in Bois-du-Luc, where an entire industrial community model was devised (an industrial village including a housing district and public facilities built at the initiative of the employers). **The Bois-du-Luc Ecomuseum** has been located in the former offices of the Société des Charbonnages du Bois-du-Luc since 1983.

Bois-du-Luc Ecomuseum (Bois-du-Luc mining site) fact sheet

Chairman: Robert Tollet

Director: Daisy Vansteene

The administrative departments of the Ecomuseum can be contacted on working days from 9.00 to 17.00.

Management: +32 (0) 64/28 20 00

Address:

Ecomusée du Bois-du-Luc
Site minier du Bois-du-Luc,
2b Rue Saint Patrice,
B-7110 Houdeng-Aimeries (La Louvière)
Tel: + 32 (0) 64 28 20 00
Fax: + 32 (0) 64 21 26 41
E-mail: info@ecomuseeboisduluc.be
Internet: www.ecomuseeboisduluc.be

Opening times:

Closed on Mondays

From mid-April to the end of October

During the week: open from 9.00 to 17.00

Weekends and holidays: open from 10.00 to 18.00

From November to mid-April

During the week: open from 9.00 to 17.00, upon reservation and for groups only.

Closed at weekends

Times of the visits

During the week: 9.00, 10.00, 11.00, 13.30 and 15.00.

Weekends and holidays: 10.00, 11.00, 13.30, 15.00 and 16.00.

Entrance fee (guided visits):

Individuals

Adults: €7.50

Seniors: €6.20

Children: €5.00

Groups

Adults: €6.20

Seniors: €5

Schoolchildren: €3.50

Centre Urban Community

Adult: €6.20

Children: €3.50

Family price (2 adults + 1, 2 or 3 children): €13

Children under 6 years: free

Reservations: + 32(0)64/28 20 00

Access:

From the E19/E42 (Brussels-Mons-Paris motorway), exit at junction n°21 (Le Roeulx) and follow directions to Houdeng-La Louvière. Drive under the canal bridge and continue along the Chaussée du Pont du Sart. At the first traffic lights, turn right then continue straight on to the rue Sainte-Barbe, where you will see the "carrés" (the yellow, workers' houses) on your right. Turn right directly after the carrés. You have reached the Ecomuseum (rue Saint-Patrice n°2b) near the guillotine doors.

Possibility to park cars and coaches in the rue Saint-Patrice.

By public transport

Train: alight at the La Louvière Centre station.

Bus: buses n°37 and 39 serve the La Louvière Centre station to Bois-du-Luc.

Grand-Hornu... Between Utopia and Wonder

Located in the heart of the Province of Hainaut, a few kilometres from the cities of Mons and Valenciennes, Grand-Hornu is one of the most beautiful neoclassical industrial heritage sites in Europe. The history of this remarkable site began in the 19th century when Henri Degorge, a French captain of industry tempted by the coal venture, decided to develop a colliery business at Hornu, at a time when "black gold" was only a relatively secondary source of energy. The site was opened in 1810, in the context of the early industrial revolution, which turned the region where it is established into the second largest industrial centre in the world! Also at this time Degorge began the construction of the terraced housing—some of the oldest in Belgium—which still surrounds Grand-Hornu and punctuates the landscape. In spite of initial difficulties, the Charbonnages du Grand-Hornu very soon became one of the largest collieries in the newly independent Belgium, producing and exporting over 50% of the coal requirements for a wide territory extending from northern France to the south of the Parisian region.

After being one of the jewels of Belgian industry, the Grand-Hornu site has now become one of the major cultural centres in Belgium. The Grand-Hornu site occupies a surface area of 6 hectares and includes approximately 10,000 square metres of various constructions. It is organised by two cultural structures:

- **Grand-Hornu Images** : the cultural activities undertaken at Grand-Hornu Images explore the relations between art and industry. Design, industrial creation and applied arts are given a predominant place here, out of a respect for the site's initial vocation.
- and the **Museum of Contemporary Arts of the French-speaking Community of Belgium**.(opened in September 2002)

MAC's fact sheet

Chairman: Claude Durieux

Director: Laurent Busine

The Museum's administrative departments can be contacted on working days between 9.00 and 17.00.

Management: +32(0)65/ 61 38 50 or 52

Address: MAC's

Site du Grand-Hornu

Rue Sainte-Louise 82

B-7301 Hornu (Mons)

www.mac-s.be

Tel: +32(0)65/ 65 21 21

Fax: +32(0)65/ 61 38 91

e-mail: info.macs@grand-hornu.be

Opening times: every day from 10.00 to 18.00, except Mondays, 25/12 and 01/01.

Entrance fee:

- combined ticket Grand-Hornu Site / MAC'S / Grand Hornu Images: €6.00
- Group price (minimum 15 people) or reductions: €4.00
- School group: €2.00
- Free for children under 6 years and adults accompanying school groups.

Guided visits:

- €50.00 for a group of max. 25 people during the week
- €60.00 for a group of max. 25 people during the weekend

Reservations: +32(0)65/ 61 38 81

Access:

To reach MAC's by road, from the E19 Brussels-Paris motorway, exit at junction n°25 "Saint-Ghislain-Tertre-Hornu" and follow directions to Saint-Ghislain, Hornu. Then follow the signposts to the site entrance. The car park is free.

The closest stations are at Saint-Ghislain and Mons. From the station at Mons, you can reach the MAC's by the TEC buses (n° 7 and 9 – Grand-Hornu stop) and by taxi. From the station at Saint-Ghislain, we would recommend you take a taxi to the museum.

Grand-Hornu Images fact sheet

Chairman: Claude Durieux

Director: Françoise Foulon

The administrative departments can be contacted on working days between 8.00 and 17.00.

Management of Grand-Hornu Images: +32 (0)65/ 61 38 84

Address: Site du Grand-Hornu

Grand-Hornu Images

Rue Ste Louise, 7301 Hornu

www.grand-hornu.be or www.grand-hornu-images.be

Tel: +32 (0)65/ 65 21 21

Fax: +32 (0)65/ 61 38 97

e-mail: info.ghi@grand-hornu.be

Opening times: every day from 10.00 to 18.00, except for Mondays, 25/12 and 01/01.

Entrance fee: - combined ticket for the Grand-Hornu Site / MAC'S / Grand-Hornu Images: €6.00

- Group price (minimum 15 people): €4.00 / School groups: €2.00

- Free for children under 6 years

Guided visits (by reservation) of exhibitions and/or the historic site (FR/NL/DE/EN).

Contact number for reservations: +32 (0)65 61 38 81

Audio-guide to discover the historic site (FR/NL/DE/EN/IT/ES): €2.00