

Heritage Sites, Forest of Dean

Location: Various sites throughout the Forest of Dean

Client: Forestry England



The Site

The Forest of Dean has a rich industrial history, particularly in forestry and coal mining; it is said that coal from the Dean was amongst the best in the UK. Allied to this are secondary industries

such as steel and iron working. During the 18th and 19th centuries these industries were attracted to the Forest of Dean due to the high-quality coal available. The noted Scottish metallurgist David Mushet was one such individual; Mushet went on to establish the Darkhill Ironworks and Titanic Steelworks near Coleford where he produced the world's first tungsten steel. These sites are now internationally important in the history of the iron and steel industries.

These industrial remains, and others, now come under the management of Forestry England with input from English Heritage and are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Each site has a management plan, agreed with English Heritage. In addition to the heritage interest, many invertebrates, such as the Grizzled and Dingy Skipper butterflies, have made these sites their home, as well as a range of bat species, slow worms, adders and greater crested newts to name but a few.

The Project

Forestry England have engaged Kilmaha to complete works at various sites around the Forest of Dean to preserve the integrity of the remains and to also manage the habitats that have emerged since they ceased working as industrial sites. These works are completed over a number of years and are carried out during the winter months. They comprise of;

- maintenance essential to preserving the fabric of the industrial remains and;
- creating habitats for a range of wildlife

Scope of Works

Due to the sensitive nature of these sites, we employed a variety of techniques to achieve the desired results;

- We used mechanical means, brushcutters and pedestrian flails, to cut larger areas of bracken and other vegetation adjacent to the buildings, as well as footpaths throughout the sites.
- We hand weeded very sensitive areas. These could be where habitats only required a light touch, for example, unwanted vegetation such as bracken growing up through species to be retained such as Common Birds-foot Trefoil and Quaking Grass. It could also simply be vegetation growing close to the walls of the buildings where the risk of damaging them with mechanical means was deemed high.
- In some cases it was deemed necessary to use chemical means to complete works. This was a last resort and only deployed where there was no risk to the habitats. Strict protocols were adhered to, and an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) completed before works could commence. This method was only used to control invasive species such as rhododendron and Japanese knotweed.

Outcome

Case Study

These works have been very successful in maintaining the sites both for preserving the fabric of the industrial remains and the habitats thriving around them. Regular maintenance will ensure these sites will;

- continue to be an important habitat for rare species
- preserve these historical sites for future generations to enjoy and study