

Coal has historically formed an integral part of British industry. British trains and factories required huge amounts of coal each day just to keep running. Since the end of the Second World War, the amount of coal mined and consumed in Britain has fallen considerably. The number of deep mines dwindled from thousands to the last one closing in 2015. Now, all coal mining in Britain is done in open pits.

## Working Shifts



In Victorian mines, workers would be in the pit for twelve hours a day. They would have very few breaks and very little fresh air.

In the last of the modern pit mines, workers would work an eight-hour shift. It would take them up to an hour to get from the entrance to the coal and back again. This meant that they only mined for six hours.



## Workers Everywhere

There were nearly a million people employed in Victorian mines, which rose to 1.2million in 1920.

Despite much better health and safety conditions in modern mines, this figure had dropped to 2,000 by 2015 due to mine closures across Britain.

## Tools Of The Trade

Mining for coal in the Victorian era was back-breaking work. Anybody strong enough to lift a pickaxe would be responsible for hacking coal out of the coalface.

The excavation is done by machines or explosives in modern mines. This is then loaded onto conveyor belts.



## A Lot Of Coal

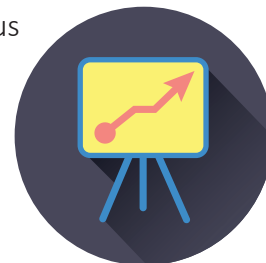
At the end of the Victorian era, Britain was producing over 200million tonnes of coal each year. This made it the largest producer in the world. The peak came in 1913 when Britain produced 287million tonnes. Britain was still producing over 200million tonnes a year until the 1970s. This had dropped to a little over 4million tonnes in 2016.



## The Future?

Demand for coal is falling across the world. A greater focus on renewable energy means that the use of coal may continue to dwindle.

On 21st April 2017, Britain went an entire day without using coal-powered electricity. In 2019, a new record of just over 18 days was set.



## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. When did the last deep mine close in Britain?
2. In which year did Britain produce 287million tonnes of coal?
3. Who had more breaks, Victorian or modern miners?
4. How many miners were there in 1920?
5. What important event happened in 2017?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**S**

Why is the use of coal likely to keep going down?

**I**

Why did Britain need to produce so much coal?

**V**

Which word has a definition closest to “digging out”?

**S**

How did mining change from Victorian Britain to modern Britain?

**V**

What does the word “dwindled” tell you about the number of mines in Britain?

Answers:

1. 2015
2. 1913
3. Modern miners
4. 1.2million
5. Britain went a day without using coal-powered electricity

S: Renewable energy is becoming more popular

I: Their trains and factories needed it to keep running

V: Excavation

S: Conditions were safer and shifts shorter. The work is now done by machines.

V: It went down dramatically/a lot