

MINING DISTRICT LINARES - LA CAROLINA

A LANDSCAPE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Jaen Journal
on Approximation

ISSN: 1889-3066
vol. 2 (1) (2010), 21M-24M

José Dueñas Molina.
Departamento de Ingeniería Gráfica,
Diseño y Proyectos.
Universidad de Jaén, Jaén (Spain)
jduenas@ujaen.es
Colectivo Arrayanes

After a visit in 1999 by several members of the European project MINET to the mining district of Linares - La Carolina, they could appreciate the importance of heritage that was later described in an article published in a local newspaper in Cornwall (United Kingdom) as “Europe’s best kept secret”. It was a confirmation of exceptional historic, cultural, environmental, socioeconomic and technological aspects of one of the largest concentrations of mine spoils of our continent, representing a unique and intense example of the late arrival of the “Industrial Revolution” to our region.

For four thousand years, mining has created a unique landscape, showing how humans have been

linked with their environment since the Bronze Age when Argaric culture colonized the territory following a systematic pattern of settlement, establishing large settlements, such as the Penalosa, along the rivers flowing from the Sierra Morena, in order to exploit the rich veins of copper.

Thus the constant presence of the great civilizations began in the area throughout history. Later, Romans and Carthaginians sought collaboration with the Iberians exploiting rich deposits of copper and lead, which posed a strategic resource of great importance. The Romans established numerous mining sites, both in the area of Linares and in Sierra Morena, giving great importance to its production, as evidenced by the existence of



defensive fortifications associated with these mines. They applied technological breakthroughs of the era with mining, such as Archimedes screws found in the mines of El Centenillo in 1911.

The Iberian town of Castulo became the capital of the huge mining district of Roman times and the importance of the mines was described by Pliny and Strabo. Although there are references to the existence of mining exploitations in the Middle Ages and during the Arab domination, the records of grants made in 1563 suggest the continuity of mining in many areas of the district.

By 1749, in time of Ferdinand VI, the crown decided to settle in the district and lead and control activities through the purchase of the Mines of Arrayanes. This active presence coexisted with a model of small private exploitations, many of them family business, and boosted the lead production.

A number of mines, some of them also famous in antiquity (as La Cruz, Pozo Ancho Tortilla), suffer from

a renewed activity in 1830, coupled to the presence of foreign capital, made possible by the confiscation and new liberal legislation, and the acquisition of technical advances aimed at solving the drainage problem.

The arrival in 1849 of the first steam pumping machine from Cornwall, installed in the mine of Pozo Ancho, led to a period of great splendour and the extraordinary expansion of this type of equipment. These machines filled the area with chimneys and industrial buildings which are now an icon of identity, and have left their unmistakable mark in the area. Big companies from England, France, Germany and Belgium settled in the district, which led to maintain consulates from these countries in Linares.

The marketing of lead and its transport to international markets through various ports and the need for the coal needed to fuel the big machines, caused the installation and development of railways (up to five) and internal transport lines for the operation of mines.



The railway then started to have a major role in the industrial activity in the region. Meanwhile the vicissitudes of the market -the lead of Linares set its value by listing on the London Stock Exchange- generate both periods of success and of difficulties that the people bore as they developed a special way of living, thinking and feeling.

All this led to a remarkable demographic transformation, urban planning, infrastructure and the emergence of new industries (food processing, iron foundry, metal processing, etc.).

Since the second decade of the twentieth century there was a rise in the area of La Carolina in the mining district, but after the First World War, the decline in the production activity is relentless until the end of the last mine, closed in April 1991. The depletion of some reefs, the difficult access to others and the stagnation in the price of lead gives way to the crisis and the systematic closure of exploitations.

This activity has resulted in a unique cultural landscape, which coexists with a rich environment of dumps, more than 200, and the tailings dam, about 30, recovered and integrated in nature, and which has exceeded the deforestation of the industrial times.

Following the success of the first Cornish steam machine, dozens of these giant machines were installed in sturdy buildings, which make the district one of the largest concentrations of such buildings in the world.

There has been an identification of 34 of the more than 48 pump houses that were built around 1885, one of type “bull” unique in the world and some 220 houses for mineral extraction machines, mostly from the time of the use of steam and 26 masonry winches, typical of our mining, and 20 derricks and lattice metal still in good condition.

An extensive network of roads connecting the mine sites in eight towns allows now to visit the

whole industrial architecture. In Linares a trail network of 58 kilometers has been conditioned, allowing visiting 25 of the 125 sites that are already part of the Andalusia Historical Heritage. In the area of La Carolina there is a project to make 11 routes with a very similar length, which includes the route of the railroad from La Carolina at Puertollano.

The recovery of the railway from La Carolina to Linares will complete this joint planning and will connect the two main areas, making it much easier to visit more than 450 mining sites, together with remains of archaeological metallurgy that have been recorded in the District, while enjoying a varied natural environment and of great ecological significance.

References

- CONTRERAS CORTÉS, F; DUEÑAS MOLINA, J. (Eds.):
La minería y la metalurgia en el alto Guadalquivir:
desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días. 2010.
(Preprint)
- COLECTIVO PROYECTO ARRAYANES. Documento de
propuesta para la inclusión del antiguo distrito minero
Linares – La Carolina en la lista de nominación como
Patrimonio Mundial. 2006
- COLECTIVO PROYECTO ARRAYANES. El Valor
universal del patrimonio minero –industrial. PH
Boletín del Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico,
nº 61. 2007
- PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, A. A. & SCHWARTZ. S.: «Mining a
shared heritage: The cornish and the lead mines
of Linares, Spain». In The Cornwall Family History
Society Journal, 2006

