



Lady Victoria Colliery wins Treasured Places vote

In a thrillingly close competition, Lady Victoria Colliery in Newtongrange, Midlothian, has won a public vote to find Scotland's most Treasured Place, as represented by an archive image from RCAHMS' national collection. The online and postal poll attracted over 20,000 votes, and the Colliery surged ahead of former front-runners Glasgow School of Art and King's College Aberdeen in the final days to win the title by 288 votes. It also saw off a strong campaign from St Meddan's Church in Troon, which came fourth in the poll.

Lady Victoria Colliery, one of the finest surviving examples of a Victorian colliery in Europe, is now preserved as the Scottish Mining Museum. The image of the colliery that won the vote, is a survey drawing, prepared in 1999 by Heather Stoddart of RCAHMS for a book entitled 'Scottish Collieries'. After a period of intense decline of coal mines since the 1960's, during which hundreds of collieries were closed and subsequently demolished, the book sought to ensure the work of the mines and miners is never forgotten. The drawn elevations, with their tall brick arches, capture the grandeur of what is essentially a functional building. The Colliery was a working mine until it closed in 1981.

Other 'Treasured Places' in the Top Ten, announced in October, included images of the Falkirk Wheel (which came fifth in the vote), Rosslyn Chapel, two archaeological sites on Orkney, and, controversially, Cumbernauld Town Centre.

Treasured Places was set up by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) to help celebrate its centenary in 2008. The project asked the public to vote for their favourite image of a treasured place from a longlist of one hundred, all drawn from RCAHMS' national collection. The images represent places and spaces that are 'treasured' for many reasons, both on a personal and national level. They are also interesting images in their own right as they show different perspectives and views of well-known places and of Scottish life throughout history.

Siobhan McConnachie, project manager of Treasured Places, said:

'The vote has been such a great opportunity for us to find out what the nation thinks and feels about its built heritage. The RCAHMS archive contains many fascinating drawings, photographs and manuscripts of every aspect of Scotland's architecture and archaeology from pre-history to the present day. We were delighted with the enthusiastic voting across all of the places in the top ten; it really was a close run competition.

'The image of Lady Victoria Colliery is a wonderful drawing produced by Heather Stoddart, surveyor and illustrator for RCAHMS. This highly detailed survey drawing records and preserves this significant site as it functioned as a coal mine, helping our understanding and adding to our knowledge of Scotland's fascinating industrial heritage.'

The Minister for Culture, Linda Fabiani, said:

'Treasured Places has brought together such a range of meaningful and enchanting images. Many people voted on their favourite out of the top ten and I am delighted that the Lady Victoria Colliery at Newtongrange has won the treasured place award.

'Asking people to vote for their treasured place has encouraged the nation to think about its cultural heritage and what it means to them personally. It has evoked memories and stirred debate, and has proved beyond doubt that Scotland's wide and diverse built heritage is something we, as a nation, treasure.'

Fergus Waters, Director, Scottish Mining Museum said:

We were surprised and delighted to find that we had done so well in the first round but to have received support from visitors, locals, ex-miners and people from as far away as Canada to lift us into the winning position for the overall Treasured Places is just brilliant. There is a very rich seam of coal mining heritage just under the skin of Scotland and this result reflects that and is also a tribute to what the Lady Victoria Colliery represents as the last surviving example of a once vast Scottish industry. Thank you to everyone who voted for our 'Lady Vic'.

The strength of feeling from voters on the Treasured Places website (www.treasuredplaces.org.uk) for Lady Victoria Colliery can be seen from the blogs posted by supporters. John Duncan, of Newtongrange, posted the following: 'The Lady is a magnificent monument to what was the life blood of this village. I am very proud to come from 9 generations of miners, and I am glad that Newtongrange was chosen to represent the brave men from all over Scotland, who slaved in sometimes dreadful conditions, to put a 'heat in oor hearth'.'

Craig Weldon, of Edinburgh, said: 'Most people probably wouldn't have a mine on their treasured list, but they should think again. It wasn't that long ago that 1/5 of the population of the UK worked in mining! Now the Lady Victoria is the only one left in Scotland that people can see. Such a major part of our heritage should be recognised and indeed, enjoyed.'

The winning image of Lady Victoria Colliery will be celebrated in a poem specially written by the Edinburgh Makar, Valerie Gillies, which will be published in February 2008. All of the Top Ten 'Treasured Places' images will feature in a major Treasured Places exhibition at the Edinburgh City Art Centre at the end of 2008 and in a touring exhibition around Scotland.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Siobhan McConnachie, project manager of Treasured Places for RCAHMS, is available for interview.
2. The full top ten list is (with number of votes for the top five): Lady Victoria Colliery at Newtongrange, Midlothian (3,276) Glasgow School of Art (2,988); King's College Aberdeen (2,790); St Meddan's, Troon (2,553); The Falkirk Wheel (1,051); Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow; The Standing Stones of Stenness, Orkney; Skara Brae, Orkney; Rosslyn Chapel, Midlothian; and Cumbernauld Town Centre, Strathclyde.
3. Copies of the winning image (and the Top Ten) are available electronically from Colman Getty on 0131 558 8851 or Rebecca@colmangetty.co.uk
4. The Lady Victoria Colliery opened in the 1890s and became renowned as one of the first Scottish 'super pits' and a showpiece for the industry. Named after the wife of the Marquess of Lothian, the 'Lady Vic' formed part of the vast mineral empire of the Lothian Coal Company, and at its peak, had a workforce of almost 2,000 men and women. Closed in 1981, the surface buildings, which were built on a grandiose scale and which are home to a vital part of the nation's heritage, continue to dominate the surrounding countryside.
5. Voting closed at 12 noon on Monday 10th December. The total number of votes counted was 20,042. More than one vote per person was permitted.
6. **Treasured Places** is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Scottish Government, and run by RCAHMS. The public vote was online at www.treasuredplaces.org.uk and by post to RCAHMS.
7. RCAHMS is the national record of Scotland's built environment, whose mission is to identify, survey and interpret the archaeological, architectural and historical environment of Scotland, to preserve and add to the collection, and to promote public understanding and enjoyment of items in the collection.
8. RCAHMS was established by Royal Charter in 1908 and has been collecting and commissioning information, drawings and photographs of Scotland since then, documenting Scotland's places past and present. It is now one of Scotland's National Collections and celebrates its centenary in September 2008.
9. The images for **Treasured Places** were selected by RCAHMS experts from the national collection.