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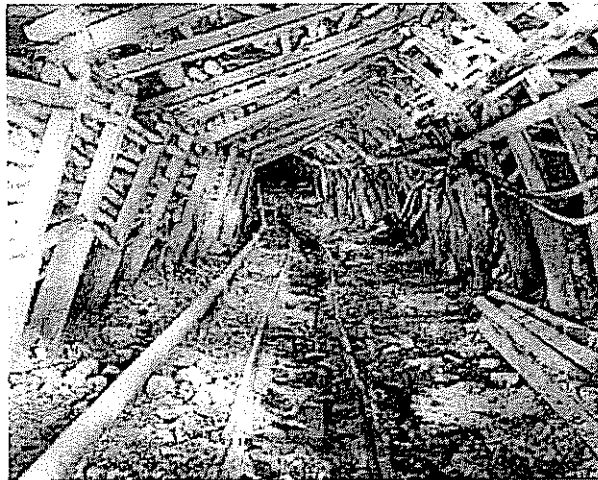
35. *Association of Coal Mine Methane Operators, [www.acmmo.org](http://www.acmmo.org)*



See ACMMO's video "Time for Action" which compares the successful German CMM initiative with the ongoing problems in the UK. [i](#) [v](#)

## What is Coal Mine Methane (CMM)?

CMM is a waste gas consisting of approximately 70% **methane**, 15% nitrogen and 15% carbon dioxide. It escapes to atmosphere from operating and abandoned mines and is now estimated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to have a global warming effect 23 times that of carbon dioxide.



Underground methane extraction pipe (bottom left of picture)  
*Photograph © Scottish Mining Museum*

In a typical UK coal mine up to 80% of the coal may be left behind when the mine is closed. **Methane** trapped in the coal is either vented to the surface in a controlled way or escapes haphazardly to the surface. **CMM** takes

over 50 years to decay to negligible levels compared with an average life of 20 years for landfill gas.

Since the large-scale mine closures of the 1970s and 1980s, **methane** from most closed pits has been continuing to seep into the atmosphere from pithead vents, fractured rock and geological faults.

The Coal Authority is responsible for ensuring that these emissions do not vent in an uncontrolled fashion, which means the cost of this essential safeguard is borne by the Government.

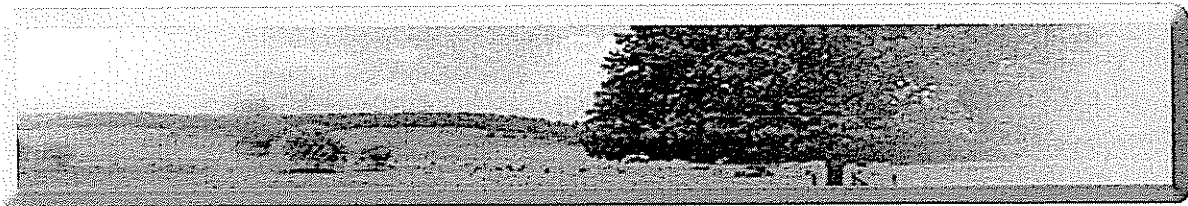
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ASSOCIATION OF COAL MINE METHANE OPERATORS

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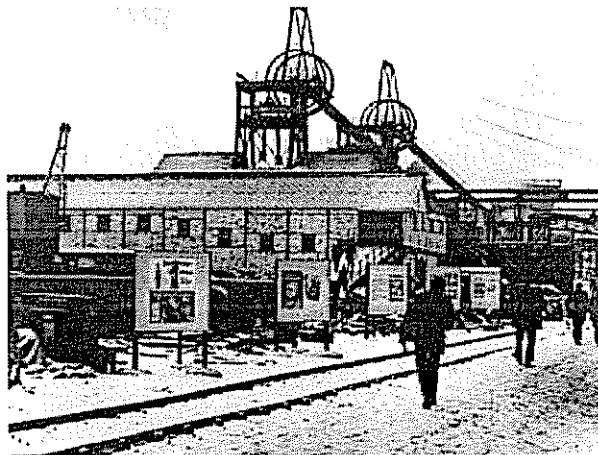
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## What was Coal Mine Methane used for?

When Britain's coal mining industry was at its most active, the **methane** produced by the pits was used to heat water for the miners' baths and to provide heating for pithead offices, although some collieries also produced electrical energy from their methane vents. The Cardowan Colliery in Lanarkshire famously provided the nearby Black & White Whisky distillery with **methane** for use as the distillery's fuel.



Cardowan Colliery Pithead, c. 1960s Photograph © Scottish Mining Museum

Any remaining gas was allowed to escape, doing untold damage to the atmosphere by adding to greenhouse gas emissions throughout the working life of the colliery and after its closure.

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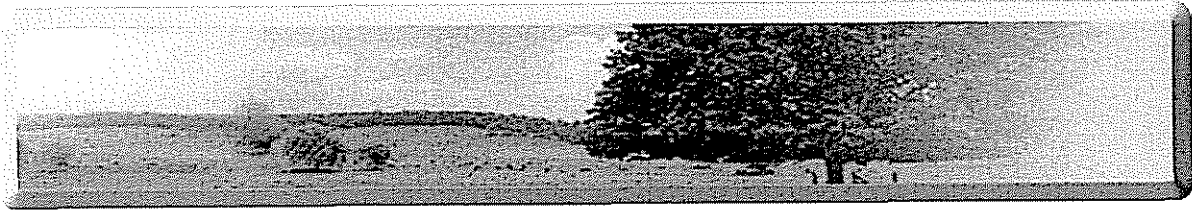
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