

Chronology of the mine.

1903- : F.Kerforn, of Rennes University discovered samples of tungsten in Montbelleux.

1903- 1906: Research work between the Collet-Pintiaux and Surcouf shafts. The work involved two master-miners and eighty workers.

1907 – 1908: First period of ore extraction. On 10th October, work was interrupted because of the collapse of the price of tungsten. Before closure, the mine employed 204 workers, 118 of whom were miners.

1910 – 1911: Second period of activity under the company name of Gruzard – Clolus and Courtois under the management of Mr BAYLE. An average of 120 workers were employed in 1911.

1916 – 1918: Third period of activity, using three shafts. Personnel included 42 Frenchmen mobilized for the war effort on level 97 and in tracing operations, 90 prisoners of war on levels 27 and 62, and 10 prisoners of war at ground level.

07/04/1938: the licence to exploit the site was given to Edgar BRANDT.

1942 – 1944: Fourth period of activity, ensured by the German company Krupp with the support of the Todt organisation. A gantry was built over the Surcouf pit (10/09/1942). 300 men were employed, including 30 Germans. After, the number averaged 550.

1951-1958: Fifth period of activity, this time under the company Mines de Puys les Vignes (1948 -1950).

Workforce: 140, 84 of whom were miners. In February 1955, 47 workers were laid off and a further 24 out of 56 jobs went in August 1957.

1976: Surveys on the surface of the downward slopes to locate granulites.

1977 to 1980: New exploration phase (pumping out the water that had flooded the old mine, renovation of infrastructure, buildings, numerous surveys).

1980 – 1983: A ramp was built to serve levels 60, 95 and 130 metres. A washing station with a capacity of 40 tonnes per hour was constructed in February 1983.

In November 1982 there were 58 employees; management/administrative 5 personnel, 30 underground workers (miners and drivers). 23 surface workers (washing and miscellaneous).

2006: The owner, Société des Mines de Montbelleux, initiated the procedure to put a final stop to mining activity. Work to rehabilitate the site could begin.

The association 3M, Memory of the Mine of Montbelleux intends to preserve the cultural, social and natural heritage of Montbelleux.

The association collects tools, mining equipment, written, photographic and sound documents, in fact all forms of souvenirs with a view to preserving both concrete and abstract aspects of the heritage.

Today Montbelleux stands out as an unusual industrial site in an agricultural area.



Many hundreds of families lived thanks to the mine.

The mine was regarded as a source of wealth but also produced its own culture: these men knew what hard work means, they knew about sweat and filth and danger but also about fellowship and dignity.

The mine had painful moments, when men were killed or injured in accidents and also when men were laid off because of the decline in the price of raw materials.



The gantry, visible from miles around, marks the landscape, and is the last relic of mining activity in Brittany although the region had always had numerous mines.

Only tungsten, and to a lesser degree tin, were extracted in Montbelleux, but many other minerals are present in the ground fluorite, topaz, etc.