

Mining History



Past mining activities have left many tracks in the Gailtal and Carnic Alps. Indeed, this region was rich in poor mines. However, one exception exists: Bleiberg-Kreuth. Based on documents this mine operated through more than 660 years but actually it dates back to much earlier times. It closed on October 1, 1993. During the preceding time mainly zinc spar was mined.

Among numerous other occurrences lead and zinc was mined on the mountain Jauken above Dellach, near Radnig close to Hermagor, on Leitenkogel south of the village of Kirchbach, in the Nölbling Valley, on mountain Zollner, at Judengras and on Judenkopf in the Wolayer Valley. In the vicinity of St. Daniel copper and iron was mined, at Tschintemuntalm in the Angerbach Valley copper and silver, on Raimundaalm at "Muggelnig" iron and on Guggenberg southwest of Hermagor graphite. On the southern flanks of Gitschtal (near Wulzentratten and on Sattele) there was even a search for gold which is bound to quartz veins of the Gailtal Crystalline Complex. The content of noble metals, however, was rather low and thus unimportant in an economic sense.

Background: Without doubt, the most important mining district was the vicinity of the village of Dellach in the Gail Valley. On Gurina above Dellach mining activities for iron and copper were carried out by the local population prior to the Kelts and continued by the Romans. The nearby Mayengraben and the Knappengraben are old mining areas with several galleries, as was the Mühl- and Pfarrgraben, St. Helena on Wieserberg, Monsell, the hills above Leifling and Grafendorf Creek. Here the ores are bound to gneisses. South of the river Gail iron occurred in the Nölbling gorge and on Zollner in black shales and lydites from the Silurian and Lower Devonian which also contained some manganese.

During the early 18th century more than 300 miners worked in the mining industry in and around Dellach. Their main task was the production of munitions for Prince Eugene of Savoyen, the leader of the Austrian army, in his fight against the Osmans. According to chronical reports Belgrade was conquered from the Turkish by means of bullets and artillery shells derived from the weapon industry of Dellach. Over more than 40 years the mining industry flourished, since the year 1730, however, the production decreased until it was finally closed down in the second half of the 19th century.

On the mountain Jauken exploitation of lead and zinc culminated between the 16th and the 18th century. According to reports in 1786 the extraction of zinc spar amounted some 2.000 tons and 4.400 pounds of lead while in 1867 some 2.500 tons with a content of 30 to 35 % zinc in the ore were mined. Between 1884 and 1891 the mining stopped due to the new technology to use coal instead of wood. Since the supply of coal was too expensive and thus uneconomic, mining had to be shut down on the mountain Jauken in the year 1901.

The most important coal occurrences are found in the Auernig Formation of the Naßfeld and Stranig areas in the eastern Carnic Alps. However, such coal seams do not exceed 1 m in thickness at most. They were mined in times of need. Among others they occur on Tomritsch, at Stranig Alm and at mountain Krone. In addition, there is a lignite horizon near Nieselach east of Presseggersee. It represents an old valley floor below a thick gravel bed deposited during the Würm ice age. Another small coal seam can be found near the small village of Podlanig in the Lesach Valley. Similar to all other lignite occurrences these deposits were only exploited for a few years. The same is true for small occurrences of gypsum in the Lammergraben above Kötschach and near St. Daniel being intercalated in continental Permian deposits.