

Ardennes Cross-Border Slate Mine Trail and its
Travelling Exhibition

TOPOGRAPHICAL GUIDE

Ardennes Cross-Border Slate Mine Trail



OIGNIES

-EN-THIÉRACHE
VIROINVAL



FUMAY



HAYBES

OFFERT PAR
LA MUNICIPALITÉ
DE RIMOGNE

NATURE AND HERITAGE

Interreg



Co-financé par
l'Union Européenne
dans le cadre du
Programme de Développement
Régional de l'Europe



Ardennes
wallonne



France - Wallonie - Vlaanderen

Micro-projet | Microproject
CATAREX

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A cross-border cooperation slated for success!

COVID separated us, slate brought us together!

After the end of the pandemic, several projects were launched in our three villages to explore our slate mining heritage, some by the local authorities themselves or by non-profit associations such as GASCOT and Ardenne Wallonne. The various inaugurations or events were a chance to come together and share our passion for the topic. These meetings and discussions spawned an Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen micro-project, CATAREX, the Ardennes Cross-Border Slate Mine Trail and its Travelling Exhibition. The intense teamwork resulting from this project, supported and financed by Europe, deserves to be highlighted. We worked together not only on developing the hiking trail that takes walkers to the slate mining sites of Fumay, Haybes and Oignies, but also on putting together an extensive travelling exhibition on the slate mining past, comprised of more than 40 panels that can be brought to a wide audience.

Just like the slate veins that run under our Ardennes soil and connect our three villages, it is vital that we also nurture these ties from a bygone era that, despite having been unravelled 50 years ago, still mark our forest and urban landscapes: remains of mine buildings, heaps of slate cuttings (the slag heaps), houses, walls, roofs...

Slate, our blue gold, is still everywhere around us and we have a duty to keep this heritage alive by passing it on to present and future generations! The CATAREX project plays an essential role in this transmission by sharing this past with our inhabitants but also the growing number of tourists who come to discover this part of the world.

We would like to thank all the people whose unbridled enthusiasm for this important project made it possible, with a special mention for Viviane Delizée who oversaw the essential coordination between the various partners throughout the project.

Their efforts to keep this past alive are a worthy tribute to our slate workers, our revered scailleteux!

We hope you enjoy discovering the cross-border trail and travelling exhibition!

Le Maire de Fumay
Mathieu SONNET

Le Maire de Haybes
Jean-Claude GRAVIER

Le Bourgmestre de Viroinval
Jean-Marc DELIZEE



A word from the project team.

The members of the Board of Directors of the non-profit community group behind the project, the Groupement d'animation socio-culturel de Oignies-en-Thiérache (Belgium) are delighted to witness the rollout of their treasured project that explores the cross-border past of the slate mines and developed hand in hand with the Association Ardenne wallonne and the villages of Fumay and Haybes.

All the partners were intent on sharing the local and cross-border history of their industrial past with the local population, younger generations and newcomers alike.

Rimogne also signed up for the project, allowing us to promote it as effectively as possible.

Our shale soil, on both sides of the border, is steeped in tales of a harsh and arduous past, of workers toiling away for a pittance, in difficult conditions, with a life expectancy of 35 to 40 years... The villages of Oignies, Fumay and Haybes all felt an acute need to pay a tribute to all these men, women and children and joined forces around this shared vision to promote our common heritage. The creation of the cross-border trail, complete with information boards on twenty sites, of a brochure including a topographical guide, of a travelling exhibition, as well as the information relayed via our website, our Facebook and Instagram pages, have been a labour of love for all involved.

This work was made possible thanks to the valuable collaboration of the project partners, the staff of the local authorities and associations of the three villages, as well as the volunteers who devoted their time to research the subject in depth. This cross-border project was ultimately made possible within the framework of the call for Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen micro-projects and the co-financing of the European Union!

Viviane Delizée, President of the non-profit association GASCOT.

Ardennes Cross-Border Slate Mine Trail and its Travelling Exhibition (CATAREX) invite you on a journey to the heart of an industrial heritage shared between France and Belgium. This trail is more than just a walking path. It is our tribute to the men, women and children who risked their health and their life in these hostile environments to extract the slate below.

This topographical guide, the fruit of a collaboration between the villages of Fumay and Haybes, the non-profit association GASCOT in Oignies-en-Thiérache and the Pointe de Givet "Ardenne wallonne" Regional Historical Society, is a predominantly forest trail that complements the local trails already laid out in these three villages.

At each slate mine, a board informs hikers about the historical importance of slate mining, an activity dating back to the 12th century (or even before) and which continued until 1974.

A dedicated website provides more in-depth information about the mining activity, giving hikers a richer insight into this unique cross-border heritage.

This website also allows access to English and Dutch translations via QR codes.

Enjoy discovering this heritage as you follow this forest trail among a selection of our slate mines.

Guy LEPINE,

President of the Pointe de Givet "Ardenne wallonne" regional historical society

Ardennes Cross-Border Slate Mine Trail and its Travelling Exhibition CATAREX

Our cross-border trail is an Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen micro-project, co-financed by the European Union, and developed on the initiative of the non-profit association Groupement d'Animation Socio-Culturelle de Oignies-en-Thiérache and in partnership with the Association Ardenne Wallonne and the villages of Fumay and Haybes.

The shale seam from which the slate is extracted weaves its way without boundaries between our three villages. The history of its industrial exploitation is characterised by similarities but also differences from one village to another...

With the closure of the slate mines, each village has tried to build on its legacy and history through various initiatives. The idea of a joint cross-border project appealed to all the partners, with each proving to be a "mine" of information as it came to life.

This achievement was supported by a large number of partners and volunteers.

Our warmest thanks go to the village of Rimogne for its support and its donation of two wagons for each of the villages, the Local Council of Viroinval, Icare non-profit association, Viroinval Tourist Office, the Belgian Nature and Forestry Agency, the National Forestry Office, the Musée du Malgré-Tout, the Écomusée du Viroin, Charleville Tourist Board, the Ardennes Regional Nature Park, the association 87 AD Prod, the Maison de l'Ardoise slate museum in Rimogne, the Musée de l'Ardoise slate museum in Fumay, the Chimay-Wartoise Foundation and the Maison des Associations de l'Entre Sambre et Meuse.

Starting point of the Oignies - Fumay - Haybes Cross-border Slate Mine Trail.

Each hiker is free to choose their starting point, in Oignies, at the Trou du Diable car park, in Fumay, on Place d'Auchel and in Haybes, at the Maison de la Randonnée hiking centre.

Nineteen former slate quarrying sites and information points dot the 20km route. Obviously, these trails cannot cover all the slate quarrying sites in these three villages. Each village has its own local trail, following in the footsteps of its own slate mining past. You can find all this information on the joint website: **"The CATAREX Cross-border Slate Trail"** and on the **CATAREX Facebook and Instagram pages.**

A brochure provides information on all the routes in the form of a topographic map guide with a photo and presentation of each site. It is available **free of charge** in French, Dutch or English. It also features the 19 information panels with QR codes that link to our website with a wealth of additional information.

The brochure can be downloaded from our website. It is also available:

- In Oignies: from the GASCOT non-profit association and from the Épicerie des Ardoisières grocery.
- In Fumay: from the Town Hall, from the Musée de l'Ardoise Michel Paradon slate museum - Espace Culturel des Carmélites.
- In Haybes: from the Town Hall, from the Maison des Randonnées hiking centre and the Library.
- From Viroinval Tourist Office, the Vireux-Wallerand Community Tourist Office and the Musée de l'Ardoise slate museum in Rimogne.

As part of the Catarex project, an exhibition has been put together on the theme of our shale belt that tells the story of how the industry shaped our regions. This exhibition has been designed to be travelling and can therefore be easily made available on the initiative of our associations and our villages or on request by booking it via the Ardenne Wallonne secretariat: francoise.menage@sfr.fr

THE CATAREX TOPOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO OIGNIES-EN-THIÉRACHE



Départ : DD 49.999637, 4.663831



1 The CATAREX project

The two information boards on this site tell you all about the cross-border project, as well as the history of Oignies-en-Thiérache and its slate mines. Follow the gravel path in front of you for 730 m.

The Ardoisières Saint-Luc

The path will take you to the former site of the Saint-Luc slate mines, which later became known individually as the Notre-Dame slate mine and the Saint-Théodore slate mine.

2 Notre-Dame N 50°00.2515' – E 4°40.3047'

On your left, you will see the Notre-Dame slate mine with its partially collapsed entrance. Continue for another 200 m before turning off onto the small path on your right.



3 Saint-Théodore N 50°00.1278' – E 4°40.3061'

After 180 m, you will reach the Saint-Théodore slate mine. Then, head down towards the Trou du Diable car park.



In front of you, you will see a private dwelling, built in shale blocks, as was the wall lower down. At the time, the roof was also made of Oignies slate.



4 The Trou du Diable slate mine and its offices

N 50°00.0067'- E 4°39.7523'

120 m further along on your right, you will come across a private red brick house that housed the old administrative offices and the café of the Trou du Diable mine.



Continue across the road and, as you walk up towards the end of the car park, at the edge of the forest, you will see the shaft of the Trou du Diable slate mine.



5 The Saveur slate mine and the Trou du Gégène N 49°59.8752' - E 4°39.8752'

Follow the path down for another 270 m and, on your right, about ten meters into the forest, stands the entrance to the Sauveur slate mine. This was a vein previously worked by the Trou du Diable mine. These concessions were always operated together.



Although a second slate mine is mentioned, its location has been omitted on purpose, as the slope is too dangerous and too steep to allow access. This is the concession granted in 1921 to local Oignies resident Emile Goffette, better known as Gégène... earning the slate mine the name of Trou du Gégène (Gégène's Pit).

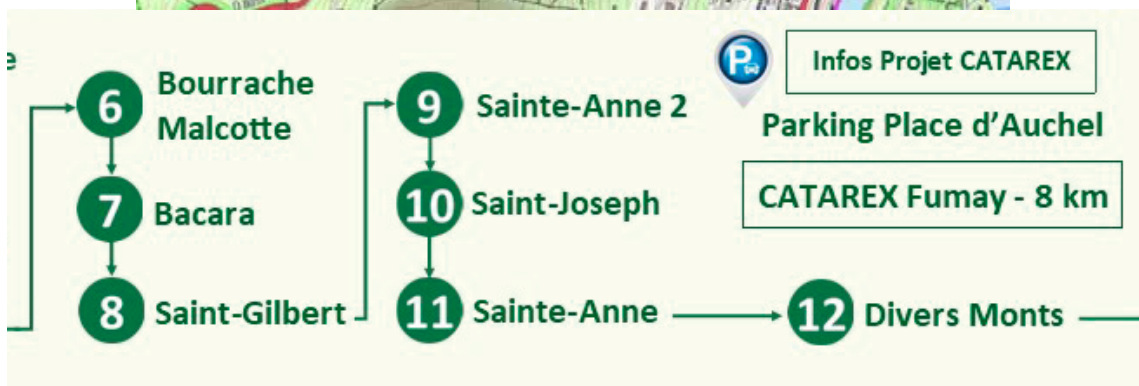


Continue along the road until you reach the first gravel path on the right, which you will follow for 1,420 m along the left bank of the Ry d'Alyse stream, still on the Belgian side of the border.

Cross the footbridge which takes you to the right bank of this stream and leads to the French village of Fumay.

Your path will then continue on the other side of the border...

CATAREX TOPOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO FUMAY



You've crossed the bridge over the Ry d'Alyse stream and left Belgium, welcome to France.



6 Bourrache-Malcotte N 49°99.2456' / E 4°65.3869'

Head off to your left and you will see the former slate mining site of Bourrache-Malcotte with the remains of the head house of the brick winch and its 4 pillars forming arches.

Head upwards, keeping to the right and, ten metres after the head house, on your right, you will find the entrance to the Bourrache-Malcotte mine.



Go straight up the path to the track (wide path that was once a military tactical track) and turn off to the left onto the path that leads downwards for about 500m.

After passing over the stream (150m), turn right onto the path that leads upwards and then turn left onto the hillside trail.

Stay on the gently sloping path. Do not take the paths that lead off to your right or left on your way up or down.

Along the way, you will cross a small stone bridge that spans a practically dry stream.



7 **Bacara** N 49°99.3945' / E 4°65.3869'

The trail takes you around the old slate mining site of Bacara, complete with its slag heap hidden by plant cover. You are on the so-called “water path”.

As you leave the forest, you will come out into a residential area on a tarmac road. Follow this road to the left until you reach the water treatment plant.

Then, take the path on your left, leaving the water treatment plant on your right.

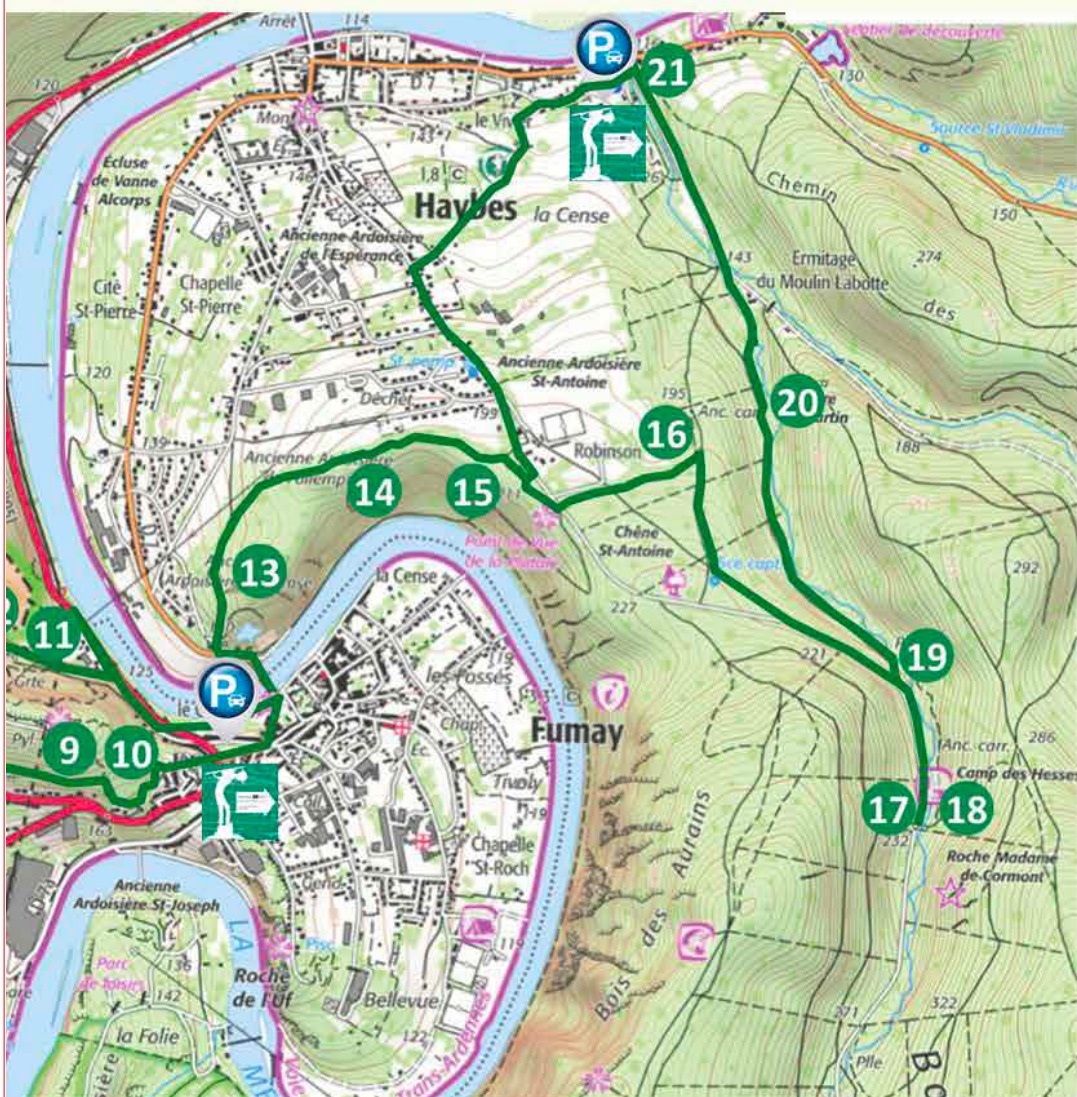




Circuit Ardennais Transfrontalier



des **AR**doisières et **EX**position itinérante



Infos Projet CATAREX

arking Place d'Auchel

CATAREX Fumay - 8 km

12 Divers Monts

13 Saint-Lambert

14 Ancienne Follemprise

15 Plateale

16 Fontaine Gobin

17 Saint-Paul

18 Sondages ardoisiers

19 Trou Cadet

20 Saint-Pierre



Infos Projet CATAREX

7 rue Edmond Dromart

CATAREX Haybes - 8 km

21 Maison des Randonnées
arrivée CATAREX - 20 km

Retour du 21 → 15 → ...

8 Saint-Gilbert N 49°99.3768' / E 4°68.6776'

Make your way through the undergrowth to the remains of the slag heap of the Saint Gilbert slate mine. Go down to the right towards the houses and immediately turn left to follow the edge of the forest.



9 Sainte-Anne 2 N 49°99.1811' / E 4°69.382'

Then, walk along the paved forest road until you come across the entrance into the woods, continue on the path to the site of the Sainte-Anne 2 slate mine, which boasts a beautiful view of the Charnois district that emerged around the Pied-Selle heater factory during the industrial revolution.



Just after this site, still on the slag heap of the Sainte Anne 2 mine, you will see below you the Carrefour supermarket, built on the former site of Fumay's last slate mine, which closed in 1971, the so-called Renaissance slate mine.

10 Saint-Joseph N 49°99.1717' / E 4°69.4176'

Over on the other side of the River Meuse, you can make out the surface buildings of the imposing Saint-Joseph slate mine, now the site of TerrAltitude adventure park. Alongside the remains, the huge slag heap is also visible. Go down a slightly steeper slate-covered path.

In front of you, on the other side of the River Meuse, stands the beautiful Rocher d'Uf, a rock steeped in legend ...

You will come to the small picturesque district of "Terne de l'Haye". Built on a hillside, head down through these small streets while enjoying a superb view of Saint-Georges church.



You will arrive at a big flight of steps that overlooks the place Briand. Take the steps before crossing the road and the square towards the church. At the end of the square, turn left and walk down the street in the direction of Haybes, towards the River Meuse.



Parking Place d'Auchel



Once you arrive in front of the Castle of the Counts of Bryas, you have 2 possibilities:

1. Either cross the bridge and continue the hike along the CATAREX trail to Haybes - see the topographical guide to Haybes for directions;
2. Or go back to the Bourrache-Malcotte site: Take the stairs to the of the bridge, then walk along the Meuse river. Follow the signs to reach the viewpoint over Sainte-Anne.



On the other side of the River Meuse, you can admire the walls of Haybes, former Bellerose slate mine.

11 Sainte-Anne N 49°99.5084' / E 4°69.7221'

Once in front of the petrol station, you will see the old winch of the Sainte-Anne slate mine.

Continue towards Fumay and take the road just to the left of the petrol station heading towards Belgium.



12 Divers Monts N 49°99.6425' / E 4°69.3485'

Just before the beginning of the cycle path on your left, there is a slope that will take you to the chapel - kilometre point 2 of secondary road 7.

After visiting the chapel, take secondary road 7 to the border with Belgium where you can:

1. either continue along the wide path on your left (former tactical track of Franc Bois forest) to reach the Bourrache -Malcotte site;
2. or go up the paved road to Oignies.



CATAREX TOPOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO HAYBES



13 Sainte-Lambert N 49°99.5779' / E 4°70.2257'

After the bridge, continue until you come to the pedestrian crossing and head up the path to join the Saint-Lambert slate mine. From there, join the entrance of the path leading to the site of the Ancienne Folemprise slate mine.



14 Ancienne Folemprise $N 50^{\circ}00.0307' / N 4^{\circ}70.8702'$

Continue the signposted path to the Platale viewpoint.



15 The Platale viewpoint $N 49^{\circ}99.8677' / E 4^{\circ}71.5183'$

Discover the panorama and the slag heap of the Fidèles Trépassés slate mine in Fumay. Cross the road and follow the signs that will take you to the Fontaine Gobin slate mine.



16 Fontaine Gobin N 50°00.1281' / E 4°72.1171'

From this point, go up the path passing in front of the slate mine, always following the signs that will take you to join the road (at the crossroads, turn left).

Continue along the road to the Saint-Paul slate mine.



17 Saint-Paul N 49°99.1611' / E 4°72.9471'

From this site, join the Hesses picnic area (a few dozen metres further) and take the path along the road on the left, at the entrance of the picnic area. Before arriving at the junction with the forest track, you will notice, on your right, slate surveys on the other side of the stream.



18 Slate surveys N 49°99.2687' / E 4°73.0893'

These cavities are not slate mines strictly speaking, but galleries excavated to search for a vein of shale: one horizontal, the other oblique, measuring a few dozen meters.

These surveys did not reveal a sufficient amount of slate to open a mine. You will notice that the water here is very ferruginous.

In other parts of the village, iron ore was mined and worked in the 17th century.

Continue on your way by taking the forest track that runs along the Fond de Morhon stream to the Saint-Martin slate mine, known as the Trou Cadet. You will reach a small slate and brick bridge spanning the stream.



19 Trou Cadet N 49°99.4816' / E 4°72.9132'

After crossing the bridge, discover the remains of a manufacturing workshop, known as a hayon. The two entrances to the slate mine and the remains of other structures are visible a little higher up the hill. Take the track again to reach the Saint-Pierre slate mine.



20 Saint-Pierre N 50°00.3839' / E 4°72.2932'

At the Saint-Pierre or Fond d'Oury slate mine, an entrance dug into the hill invites you to walk the first metres of the slate mine.

The lights in the gallery that used to lead to the extraction cavities come on automatically. Come up close to the grating to activate the lighting.



21 Maison des Randonnées (Hiking Centre)

N 50°01.0030' / E 4°71.8375'

Then continue towards the Maison des Randonnées hiking centre, following the path along the Moulin-Labotte hotel and restaurant.

And to "complete" the trail, from the hiking centre, you have the possibility of reaching point 15 and the rest of the trail to Fumay and Oignies.

To do this, at the exit of the hiking centre, turn left and, after a hundred metres, turn left again and follow the path known as the "Petit Saint-Antoine" until it comes out on rue Madame de Cormont.

Turn left and continue to point 15, which you will reach after the Robinson Hotel



The history of the slate-mining village of Rimogne

The Maison de l'Ardoise slate museum is housed in the old power plant. Now a municipal museum, the building is a unique heritage site in the Ardennes that traces the extraordinary history of the epic slate mining adventure.

An industrial saga, a human tale

Slate was extracted in these parts for more than 800 years, from the Middle Ages to the early 1970s.

The life of the village, its fate, and slate mining have long since been inextricably linked.

Rimogne was once known as a village on France's slate belt.

This history shaped most aspects of social, economic and cultural life.

While slate extraction may have come to a halt today, Rimogne has inherited a rich industrial past that colours its streets and identity and still makes it the village of slate and a valuable heritage site.

The Maison de l'ardoise slate museum in Rimogne, Ardenne, France - guardian of the past

For more information:

95, rue Jean-Baptiste Clément, 08150 Rimogne

Tel: +33 (0)3 24 35 13 14

E-mail: maisondelardoise@mairie-rimogne.fr

Facebook: [MaisonDelArdoiseRimogne](https://www.facebook.com/MaisonDelArdoiseRimogne)

Website: www.village-ardoise-rimogne.fr

Opening times (subject to change)

Open from April to October: Saturdays and Sundays from 2 to 6 p.m.

Weekdays: by appointment only for groups

(reservation 24H in advance)

In July/August: Open Wednesday to Sunday from 2 to 6 p.m.



Jean-Baptiste Périquet, one man's fight

Born in Oignies on 11 July 1868, Jean-Baptiste PERIQUET was 19 years old when the village of Oignies issued him his slate worker's logbook in 1887.

He worked mainly at the Sainte Anne slate mine in Fumay and became a socialist activist from the outset.

Surrounded by his friends, in 1896 he founded the NISMES "Bakery and Food Cooperative".

In 1898, he founded La Mutuelle Socialiste, Oignies' first welfare fund and, ten years later, sections existed in more than one hundred towns and villages of the borough of Dinant-Philippeville. In 1909, he obtained the first legal recognition from the Government to obtain subsidies, followed shortly thereafter by all the country's mutual insurance companies.

In order to help the families of injured and deceased workers, in 1905 he founded the "Free Workers' Compensation Office" to cover benefit claims.

This made it possible to process the applications of thousands of mutilated, injured workers, widows and orphans both in Belgium and France, free of charge.

In 1919, he was elected a member of parliament in the general elections and re-elected in 1921, 1925 and 1929.

Defending the legal and physical needs of his fellow workers, but also of widows and orphans, became his life work.

On 27 April 1922, he worked together with Léon Colleaux to table a bill in the House, which would give slate workers the same rights as coal miners.

The bill was backed up by a report written by Dr. RIPERT from Fumay on 17 July 1909. Introducing his bill, Jean-Baptiste Périquet declared: "This report, which establishes the exact situation of slate workers' lives, shows the dangers to which they are exposed and I can assert from personal knowledge, having worked for 18 years in this industry, that this report faithfully illustrates the work in the slate mines." This bill was not ratified until 1924, after which date the law on insurance for old age and premature death of mine workers was adopted.

In 1929, he became mayor of Oignies, a position he held until 1933, the year of his death.



Jean-Baptiste Périquet

Martin Coupaye, trade unionist and a spokesman for slate workers

Auguste-Eugène Martin, known as Martin Coupaye, was born in Fumay on 17 November 1866, where he died at the age of 59.

His ties with anarchist movements, for which he locally disseminated several newspapers such as *Le Père Peinard* or *La Révolte*, saw him criminally investigated in 1891 for attacks committed in Revin and Charleville.

In 1901, he reconstituted the Trade Association of Slate Workers and Similar Parties of Fumay, dissolved in 1891 and took on the role of secretary. In 1904, the association joined the National Federation of miners. In November 1907, again on his initiative, the various Ardennes slate movements federated within the Union of slate workers' unions of the French département of the Ardennes. In the same year, Martin Coupaye's decisive meeting with his counterpart from the French city of Angers, Ludovic Ménard, led to the creation of the National Federation of Slate Workers. Their objective was to grant slate workers the same rights as miners: the right to a pension, the eight-hour working day and the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease. In 1910, the federation merged with the miners' federation to form the National Federation of Underground Workers and Similar Parties.

The eight-hour day was obtained in 1913, pension rights in 1919. On the other hand, it was not until 1949 that schistos, the silicosis of slate workers, was recognised as an occupational disease.



Martin Coupaye

Saint-Barbara, Patron Saint of slate workers;

The legend of Saint-Barbara

Considered a great beauty, Saint-Barbara was born in the 3rd century in the Middle East, but her refusal to marry a suitor prompted her father, Dioscorus, to lock her up in a tower.

Having converted to Christianity, she pierced a third window in her tower to symbolise the Holy Trinity. In a fit of rage, her father subjected her to horrific torture and ended up beheading her. He was immediately struck by lightning and reduced to ashes.

That is why Saint-Barbara is the patron saint of professions related to fire, lightning and the use of explosives such as firefighters, pyrotechnicians, miners and slate workers.

The Feast of Saint-Barbara is celebrated on 4 December and slate workers are given half a day's leave to mark the occasion. On this date, they work for a few hours before being granted time off. This is the only time of the year when miners can bring drinks and food down into the mine. To honour Saint-Barbara, the mining companies finance stained glass windows or chapels in towns and villages. Each slate mine entrance has a niche with a statue bearing her effigy, and they can also sometimes be found in dangerous galleries.

Church of St. George of Fumay: Rose window financed by Liémy slate mine in 1876

Saint-Barbara chapel in Fumay



The chapel was erected in 1821 by the workers of the Trépassés slate mine. Restored a few years ago, the roof features a cross-shaped pattern made with green slates.

The statue of Saint Barbara was stolen in 1989. The plaster copy that replaces it comes from a donation from the parish priest of Oignies.

Stained glass window and statue of Saint-Barbara at the church of Saint-Pierre and Saint-Paul in Haybes



**Sainte-Barbe of
Haybes**



**Fumay stained glass
window**



**Haybes stained
glass window**



**Oignies stained
glass window**

Church of Saint-Remy in Oignies: stained glass window representing the beheading of Saint-Barbara (donations by the village's slate workers)

In 1890, a chapel in sandstone from the Oignies-en-Thiérache mine was erected by the village's slate workers.

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