

quarrying
today

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a quarry disappears

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review the failing levy

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full of holes again

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the cost of contributing

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few do more

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attracting school leavers



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Levy fails the test

CALLS for a fundamental view of the controversial aggregates levy across the whole of the UK have reached a crescendo following the Government's decision to do a u-turn on its implementation in Northern Ireland.

The case against the £1.60 per tonne tax has been at its strongest in Northern Ireland where, despite strong demand, production declined by 2.7 million tonnes in 2002 as tax-free aggregates flooded across the border from the republic. QPA Northern Ireland identified no fewer than 38 illegal suppliers – equivalent to 25 per cent of registered quarries.

Prior to introduction of the tax, QPA proposed an extensive package of voluntary proposals as a more effective alternative. Having rejected such ideas then, it is ironic that it is now considering an environmental agreement in Northern Ireland.

In the remainder of the UK it is estimated that the levy is adding £200 million annually to the cost of infrastructure and public services, funded by the government from taxpayers' pockets.

"It has become increasingly obvious that the levy isn't working environmentally and is causing significant economic damage," says QPA director general Simon van der Byl. "It has self-evidently failed the government's own tests of good environmental taxation.

QPA's case is made in a 111-page report (www.qpa.org/new_iss.htm#tax), which says the levy has failed because it was introduced with no detailed environmental objectives, targets, or benchmarks. It also says that the levy fails the government's own tests, which state that 'economic instruments must deliver real environmental gains cost-effectively' and 'environmental policies must not threaten the competitiveness of UK business'.

A key impact has been the replacement in the market of lower quality rock, which is being stockpiled and replaced by untaxed, extracted materials. With overall extraction having increased by two to three million tonnes, it appears the levy has actually generated an increase rather than decrease in quarrying.

Meanwhile, there is no incentive for operators to reduce environmental impacts. In reality, independent evidence suggests that such impacts are already low and are continuing to decline. The Environment Agency report *Spotlight On Environmental Performance* identifies 1,468 serious pollution incidents in 2002 of which just two were attributable to the aggregates industry.

As this issue went to press, QPA discovered that DEFRA has decided to cut Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund allocation in England by 30 per cent in 2004-05. It is campaigning to get the funding restored.

CPRE scare full of holes

QPA has hit back strongly at "another tired scare story" from the CPRE claiming that the industry is about to excavate an area the size of Birmingham.

"Yet again, the CPRE has resorted to using the same misleading and inaccurate miscalculations about future aggregates demand that it trots out every few years," said Simon van der Byl, director general of the Quarry Products Association.

"In the past, it has run campaigns based upon holes the size of Manchester, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and the Isle of Wight and on every occasion these claims have proved to have been grossly superficial and exaggerated."

He added: "As CPRE has chosen to focus on Birmingham, perhaps it would like to comment on the benefit that city gets from aggregates products sourced from local quarries. Take for example the new Birmingham Northern Relief Road, the improvements to the West Coast Mainline and the proposed expansion of the Heartlands Hospital which treats half a million patients every year."

Mr van der Byl added: "It is typical of CPRE's distorted vision that it attacks quarries as 'holes'. Perhaps if its superficial research dug a little deeper, it would see that quarries mean homes, schools, hospitals and much more and it would recognise that Britain's quarrying companies have some of the best environmental records in the world.

"The industry works closely with a range of environmental and conservation organizations and values these relationships, so it is a matter of regret that the CPRE is again choosing to campaign on the basis of inaccuracies and scaremongering. We look forward to a more rational and constructive approach from them in the future."



QPA has knocked holes in CPRE scare

Claims and reality

Claim – We aren't using enough recycled materials.

Reality – In fact, the Government forecasts that most future growth in the aggregates market will be from recycled sources. The market share of recycled materials has more than doubled from 10 per cent in 1989 to 24 per cent in 2003. The rate of recycling in Britain is already three times higher than the European average, and the aggregates sector is a real recycling success story.

Claim – Future demand would require the equivalent of 125 million trucks travelling around the country.

Reality – The industry uses a fleet of between 12 and 15,000 trucks and that is unlikely to change significantly over the next ten years. We move up to 30 million tonnes of material each year by rail and water.

Claim – The quarrying industry is destroying countryside.

Reality – In addition to its latest exaggerated claim of future land use, the CPRE has ignored the industry's widely praised land restoration programme and the huge benefits many of its sites are creating for nature and for local

communities. Some 700 of the UK's important conservation sites (SSSIs) were created by quarrying and many are still managed by quarrying companies.

Claim – The industry will create holes equivalent to an area the size of Birmingham.

Reality – The CPRE calculation is absurd. The surface area involved in future quarrying will be a fraction this size because the majority of aggregates will come not from new quarries but from existing ones. To compound this error, CPRE bases its calculations on new quarries averaging five metres deep, but two thirds of aggregates come from rock quarries that can be well over ten times this depth, further reducing land use. In addition, any new extraction will take place gradually and be subject to progressive restoration.

Claim – The Government must plan to reduce the demand for aggregates.

Reality – The Government's forecasts actually predict a flat level of future demand for quarried aggregates, not the increasing demand implied by the CPRE. Aggregate demand in Britain is 30 per cent down on 10 years ago, aggregates are used 30 per cent more efficiently than a decade ago, and use per person is actually running 40 per cent lower than the overall European average.



Learning from **the past**

As chief archaeologist with English Heritage, David Miles is closely involved with the quarrying industry

GRAVEL pits attract archaeologists like rhinos attract tick birds. And for the same reason. There are good pickings on both.

It has not always been like this. In the early days of archaeology, Britain's major river valleys were of little interest. It was only between the two wars, when archaeologists first took to the air, that the incredible wealth of ancient monuments in the river valleys began to appear.

Between 1945 and the early 70s, large areas of historic landscape disappeared into gravel pits with little attempt to record them. It was not until the late 70s in the Cotswold Water Park, for example, that archaeologists began, with the financial assistance and cooperation of the minerals industry, to record the network of Roman settlements, temples, cemeteries, roads and fields that stretched for ten miles eastwards of Cirencester.

The appearance of planning policy guidance note 16 in 1990 formalised a system that requires developers to assess and mitigate the archaeological impact of their proposals. In other words, either preserve the archaeology or pay for its excavation and publication.

For the aggregates industry, it may appear that the boot is now on the archaeological foot. From where I stand, I see decades of destruction. Having said that, as soon as archaeologists got their act together and made their case, the industry listened. Thanks to that co-operation, the early history of Britain can be rewritten: the age of Stonehenge, the origins of farming,

Romano-British settlement and the origins of the English all look very different thanks to work on gravel pits.

The industry asks archaeologists for the maximum of clarity and predictability and the minimum of surprises. This means evaluating land as soon as possible, even before it is purchased – as archaeology can influence land values.

Archaeology has gone through an expensive phase – after the age of destruction comes the age of discovery. This should not continue – after the rapid learning curve there should be no need constantly to repeat data for the sake of it.

Thanks to the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, we are now able to develop more

strategic approaches to aggregate-rich historic landscapes. A major unexplored area is the seabed. The *Wrecks on the Seabed* project, for example, aims to provide both industry and regulators with guidance, while another project is mapping marine aggregates with high-resolution sonar. Flooded landscapes have enormous potential.

The history of Britain has been re-written by archaeological work in gravel quarries. Yet the public is scarcely aware of this. So, through the ALSF, we are also promoting public outreach projects.

Archaeology cannot be physically regenerated; once it is dug away it is gone. But archaeologists and the industry can work together to tell the story of our past which is constantly being revealed by our cooperative efforts.





Mammoth costs

Quarrying contributes in a big way to a better understanding of our past – but the upfront cost can be substantial at a stage when planning permission is not guaranteed

AS a woolly mammoth's skull was found in Gloucestershire early this year, the quarrying industry as a whole was taking stock of the pressures placed upon it by some county archaeologists in advance of planning permission.

The quarrying industry is well aware of its responsibilities in terms of conserving valuable archaeological finds. Indeed, it can point to many major discoveries that would not have come about without its ground-opening activities. However, planning specialists in the industry are now reporting an increasing demand by some county archaeologists to carry out major site work at the planning application stage.

"We are often asked to do extensive site trenching on an application site even though the study included in the environmental assessment by an independent archaeologist, may indicate little of any significance," says Mike Courts, group planning and development manager with Robert Brett & Sons Ltd .

"This can be very expensive and speculative, and of course we could still have the planning application turned down for reasons that have

nothing to do with archaeology. The reality is that if we don't agree to do these investigative works the planning application will not be determined favourably."

The industry believes planning authorities already have the answer under current legislation: planning permission can be made conditional. A granted permission could call, for example, for specific work to be carried out or the appointment of an independent archaeologist to take on a watching brief on future activity through the various stages of overburden stripping and extraction.

This pragmatic approach would allow an operator to move forward knowing planning permission had been granted and that the archaeological costs could be offset against future revenues.

In fact, co-operation between the industry and archaeologists is already excellent. Through an informal agreement with the operator of the Gloucestershire gravel pit where the complete mammoth skull was found, palaeontologist Dr Neville Hollingworth of the Natural Environment Research Council makes regular visits to the site on a watching brief basis.

It was during one of these visits that Dr Hollingworth made his outstanding find of what is thought to be only the second complete mammoth skull to be found in this country. Probably 50,000 years old, it is so well preserved that Dr Hollingworth hopes it may be possible to obtain a DNA sample.

Meanwhile, on the educational front, Hanson Aggregates is working closely with the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on a project focussing on archaeological work at two of the company's operations in East Anglia, Earith and Needingworth.

Through a £40,000 study funded by English Heritage through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, the CAU is launching a programme this spring to explain the Roman and Bronze Age finds at the operations. Local exhibitions, an education pack and a website are elements of what is being planned.

For its part, the Quarry Products Association, while concerned at the scale and timing of potential costs facing some projects, is keen to promote further co-operation with the archaeological cause ensuring that the public enjoy the full benefit of the work undertaken.



Swinden quarry as it looks today and (right) as it used to be

Hiding in **the Dales**

How can a quarry that annually removes two million tonnes of natural resources from a stunning landscape achieve sustainability? This quarry did it with a £16 million “disappearing act” – and with a long-term promise to become a nature reserve

IT’S just after 7am and the first trucks are making their way along the picturesque route from Swinden quarry, high in the Yorkshire Dales, towards the A65 and the historic market town of Skipton.

On their way, they pass cottages built in the local stone with its trademark variation in colour between battleship grey and creamy pearl. The stone the lorries are carrying may well end up as part of new homes that will themselves sustain the Dales and neighbouring urban communities well into the next millennium.

In the tiny village of Cracoe, the lorries pass the village hall, for which Tarmac provided the materials, and the new bridleway link to nearby Rylstone, for which it donated the stone. A few

of the quarry’s 29 employees live in the immediate area. In the wider area, many more rely indirectly upon Swinden for their jobs including haulage contractors, engineering services and even caterers.

Further down the B6265, the trucks cross the railway line that carries Swinden’s crushed limestone as far afield as Leeds, Dewsbury and Hull. With more than 900,000 tonnes of the annual output of 2.2 million tonnes going by rail, the environmental benefit is substantial.

In recent months, the quarry has supplied the stone from which a much needed extension for the Airedale General Hospital in Keighley was built. It has also helped to bring relief to the neighbouring town of Bingley through dry stone, ready-mixed concrete and asphalt for a

by-pass. And it has contributed to the purity of local water supplies through new work at the Ingleton treatment works.

In Leeds, Tarmac also has a recycling plant which is successfully returning crushed concrete and other building site waste for re-use. In doing so, it substantially reduces the demand on primary aggregates from quarries like Swinden.

Back at the quarry, manager Steve Barker is checking the weekly water monitoring report on three local streams. It shows that water pumped from the quarry into one of them is not harming the supplies that local people rely upon (or the crayfish that live there). As a failsafe back-up, Tarmac has sunk a second borehole which could be used to supply Cracoe’s needs.



The approach to the quarry

The plant itself continually recycles water for use in its dust suppression equipment and for the lorry wheel-wash. Also on Steve's desk is correspondence from landscaping contractors who will be employed to ensure that the 10,000 trees planted over recent years continue to flourish. He will also today talk to the recycling contractor who takes away and re-processes oil, oily rags and grease cartridges.

Swinden is a lot like the great majority of UK quarries in its pursuit of sustainability. Yet Swinden is also very different from most in that it is a site that has over recent years undergone a £16 million "revolution".

Recognising that, by the 1990s, more than 100 years of quarrying had left its mark on one of Britain's most beautiful landscapes, Tarmac applied itself to the seemingly intractable challenge of maintaining a two million tonne-a-year output while making the harsher elements disappear.

Tarmac Northern MD David Baxter takes up the story. "Our first major step was to replace all the old processing equipment located on the external quarry flank with a new environmental and energy efficient plant hidden within the quarry floor.

"This radical step – coupled with extensive landscaping and planting work – means that the quarry now blends almost seamlessly into the surrounding countryside."

Cracoe parish meeting chairman, Gordon Jackson, was one of the people delighted with the outcome. "The work is outstanding," he says.

"The work is outstanding ... a real commitment to improving our locality now and in the future"

"It shows a real commitment to improving our locality, both now and in the future. Where we once saw an ugly scar and all the dusty quarry workings, there is now a grassy hillside with trees and wildlife.

"What is most impressive though is the involvement we have had in every stage of the project – as a community we have been consulted and our voices listened to and acted upon."

But perhaps the most sustainable aspect of the Swinden story is that, when the tradition of quarrying here comes to an end, the buildings and plant will be removed, and the quarry floor allowed to become a lake surrounded by wetlands, woodland and grassland.

The entire site will become a nature reserve, which Tarmac plans to donate to a conservation group, along with sufficient funds to maintain it into perpetuity.

Tarmac chief executive officer Robbie Robertson

is proud of the Swinden achievement. "It sets a world-class benchmark in quarry management and restoration," he says.

"We know we will be judged in the future by our actions now. It is our responsibility – not our choice – to invest in the environment so that future generations can benefit from our activities."

SWINDEN QUARRY FACT FILE

- Output 2.2 million tonnes pa
- 900,000 tonnes by rail cuts local road traffic
- £16 million investment in new concealed plant
- 10,000 new trees and shrubs
- Quarrying to end around 2020
- Site then becomes a nature reserve.



Pearl bordered fritillarie butterfly – Holme Park



Bloody cranesbill – Holmes Park

Fighting nature's **cause**

At a time when over 40% of England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest have been identified as being in need of improvement, quarrying is one industry that stands out for its positive input to nature's cause

ENGLISH Nature has set itself a "huge" new challenge in ensuring that 95 per cent of all England's legally protected wildlife and geological sites are in good condition by 2010.

With a new survey revealing that 42 per cent are currently not in favourable condition, it admits to needing all the help in can get from industries that work in the countryside. Few more so than quarrying, which is the origin of some 17 per cent of the nation's 4,112 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). But the industry didn't just create this richness, it is also still managing many sites and doing so with great care.

English Nature's first definitive survey of England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) does, however, ring some alarm bells over other activities such as farming, and especially over-grazing.

Quarrying stands out not so much for its inclusion in the report as for the fact that, despite the nature of its work and the number of SSSIs for which it is responsible, it is not singled out for adverse comment.

On the positive side, however, the report does note that many geological SSSIs don't just tolerate quarrying but actually benefit from its creation of fresh exposures of rock. The report also acknowledges the importance of beach repairs such as those on the east and south coasts where gravel dredged from the seabed is providing much needed protection.

Dr Andy Brown, English Nature's chief executive, told Quarrying Today: "Many SSSIs rely on quarrying to create or maintain them. We work closely with the quarrying industry to ensure that existing quarries that are SSSI are managed to the highest standards."



Dr Andy Brown: many SSSIs rely on quarrying

English Nature's science director, Keith Duff, has paid tribute to the quarrying industry's role in supporting biodiversity. "Few, if any, industries have delivered more in terms of contribution towards the UK's biodiversity targets over recent years than quarrying," he said. "No-one should under-estimate what is being achieved."

Typical of the industry's commitment is the work carried out by QPA members Aggregate Industries and Tarmac. Aggregate Industries manages land that falls within 25 SSSIs.

One of its most notable sites is at Holme Park in Cumbria, where quarrying began in the 1930s and will continue until at least 2023. In the middle of the active site is an island of 26 million tonnes, capped by a surface of protected limestone pavement.

"This is now actively managed by English Nature and is home to some very rare plants and creatures, such as Rigid Buckler Fern, Solomon's Seal and limestone species of plants including Bloody Cranesbill. Also living in successful population are the rare High Brown and Pearl-Bordered Fritillarie butterfly

Action speaks loudest

When it comes to conservation, few industries are more action-orientated than quarrying

Its commitment was set out in a partnership formed between QPA, the Silica and Moulding Sands Association (SAMSA) and English Nature six years ago. The agreement pledged all three organisations to work together to achieve environ-mentally sustainable development within the UK minerals industry.

Since then, the partnership has produced two highly detailed hand-books to guide operators on how best to take advantage of the opportunities facing them in terms of biodiversity and geodiversity. Both are now in active use by operators as they develop their own projects.

For further information visit www.qpa.org/natureconservation



An early purple orchid and a young ash tree – Holme Park

and the narrow mouthed whirl snail,” said AI’s area production manager, Jonathan Campbell.

“The island benefits from the fact that it is isolated from the surrounding fells within the quarry. This means it is not grazed by sheep or trampled on by ramblers and has been able to create a micro-habitat.”



Holmes Park with its island of limestone pavement

Tarmac is another QPA member company that takes its SSSI responsibilities very seriously, as evidenced by its £500,000 investment in carrying out works within a protected site at Lound near Retford in North Nottinghamshire.

George Elliott, restoration manager for Tarmac Central, explained that the company is working closely with English Nature and the Notts Wildlife Trust to seek planning for restoration of the 300-hectare site, which is home to a wide range of birds such as the bittern, kestrel and little grebe.

“In the BTO-Hanson Business Bird Challenge 2002, we were second only to Rutland Water when it comes to the number of different birds seen on site,” said Lound quarry manager, Peter Butterworth.

Lound, is a sand and gravel quarry that was, at one stage in its life, going to be filled with ash from power stations in the Trent Valley. Events beyond the company’s control meant that never happened. Now, Tarmac is seeking planning approval for restoration of the site to create shallow lake margins, reedbeds, wetland meadows, woodland and open water areas. The work is expected to take around three or four years because it has to be fitted around the birds’ nesting and breeding season.

Meanwhile, at Needingworth in Cambridgeshire, Hanson is partnering the RSPB on a reedbed creation project that is set to become a wildlife site of international significance. The aim is to use quarrying as a means of reversing the draining of the Fens some 350 years ago and create a habitat that will benefit threatened species such as the bittern, which was hunted almost to extinction by the Victorians.

Reed beds have also been created by RMC at its Amwell quarry in Hertfordshire, which was originally due to be restored for amenity use.

Martin Isles, QPA’s environment, health and safety officer, confirms the industry’s continuing commitment to biodiversity and points to a joint statement of intent with English Nature and the Silica and Moulding Sands Association which commits to encouraging environmentally sustainable development.

“The quarrying industry is proud of the work we do to create and maintain Sites of Special Scientific Interest and that work will continue unabated,” he says.





Quarry art

A SCOTTISH quarry set in some of Britain's most stunning scenery is being officially hailed as a work of art.

Place of Origin is an artist-led initiative that recognises the historic Kemnay quarry as an art form in the wider Garioch landscape in Aberdeenshire. Its basis is the placement of thousands of tonnes of quarry waste to create a new public viewing platform at the southern rim of the quarry. From there, visitors will be encouraged to enjoy the view down into the quarry and across the wider granite workings to the landscape beyond.

In addition, neighbouring community woodland incorporates features that highlight use of granite in the landscape. Once complete, *Place of Origin* will be opened to the public as a visitor attraction managed by Aberdeenshire County Council and is projected to attract thousands of visitors.

Artists John Maine, Brad Goldberg and Glen Onwin lead the initiative with support from quarry operator Aggregate Industries, the Scottish Sculpture Workshop and a host of partners and funders.

The decision to base the initiative at Kemnay was an easy one for John Maine. "At one time Aberdeenshire had the highest number of working quarries of any Scottish county, all producing high quality granite to support the demand for building projects at home and abroad," he says.

"Kemnay has been a core part of the local community for more than 150 years. But despite its importance to the local economy, there has been no official recognition given to the stone industry in this area – until now.

Kemnay's prime operation is the supply of light grey granite and dimensional stone. Supply projects include the new Scottish Parliament building."

The munch bunch



LAFARGE and English Nature have come up with a novel way to ensure the ecological balance at an important National Nature Reserve in County Durham.

Exmoor ponies – as rare as the giant Panda – have been introduced onto the 23-hectare reserve at Thrislington to eat unwelcome species of grass which is hindering the growth of rare blue moor grass. After initially introducing sheep to the site, which refused to eat the coarse grass, experts say the ponies seem to be doing the trick!

On the wild side



photographer: Mike Richards

MOTH-EATING nightjars (above), elusive natterjack toads and warbling woodlarks could soon return to the restored part of a working quarry thanks to a major new conservation project.

Lafarge Aggregates and the RSPB have agreed a special management agreement to continue the restoration of large areas of Lafarge's Sandy Heath Quarry, near Sandy in Bedfordshire, doubling its area of heathland and fulfilling the county's biodiversity action plan target for this scarce habitat.

An 85-hectare area of new heathland, the size of 85 football pitches, will be created over the

Minister beaches erosion claims

THE industry has been saying it and independent experts have confirmed it. But now the government has reiterated that marine aggregate dredging does not cause coastal erosion.

The verdict came from Keith Hill, a minister at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, who said in a written answer that there was no evidence of a link. He added that every environmental statement accompanying an application to dredge must include a comprehensive coastal impact assessment.

Meanwhile, environment minister, Elliott Morley, confirmed to an Environment Food and Rural Affairs select committee that dredging took place only in tightly defined blocks and that the requirements for environmental impact assessments were rigorous.



Mr Morley told the select committee: "Even where dredging has been approved we may, for example, stipulate controls that they can only dredge in particular parts of the block. He went on: "Dredgers carry satellite positioning so that they are very carefully controlled in the areas where they are active."

That's stretching it! The need for a new generation of dredgers that can operate further from shore has been illustrated by RMC Marine's decision to extend its Sand Falcon by 20 metres. The work, undertaken at a shipyard in Holland, increases capacity by 25 per cent to 9,500 tonnes and dredging depth to some 50 metres. Longer than a rugby pitch, the Sand Falcon is now the largest dredger in the UK industry.

It's a gift

THE quarrying industry's capacity for giving back restored land that then becomes a priceless asset for generations to come is well established.

But it isn't too often that it hands over 50-acres that still has five million tonnes of unworked reserves. Tarmac Central did just that, however, when it presented the

deeds to a site that has now become a valuable extension to Bestwood Country Park in Nottingham.

Sandstone quarrying last took place there in 1981. Tarmac gave up the land in December 2001 and agreed with Nottinghamshire County Council to undertake detailed restoration works including fencing, planting and seeding.

The £100,000 project has seen dormant sandstone land and trials bike tracks turned into lush, acid grasslands and heath lands. Much of the vegetation has returned naturally but has been complemented with planting of oak and birch. An area of heath land is also being planted as a habitat for unusual species of insects and butterflies.

"We faced a lot of local opposition back in 2001 over the possible quarrying of sandstone at Bestwood," says Stuart Haines, aggregates and asphalt director for Tarmac Central. "While the land is extremely valuable in that it still contains some five million tonnes of sandstone, this was balanced carefully with our growing commitment to minimise the quarry's impact on the local environment and community."

Pictured at the hand-over are: MP Paddy Tipping, Councillor Colin Bromfield of Notts County Council, Mayor Gordon Tunnicliffe of Gedling Borough Council and Stuart Haines of Tarmac.





Vicky Cox



Nathan Hammond



Gemma Stafford

Lessons in **rock and role**

We meet some of the youngsters who joined the quarrying industry from school and whose stories are featured in an ambitious new careers initiative

YOU don't have to join the quarrying industry with a degree to build an exciting and rewarding long-term career.

That's one of the key messages from the new *Your Role in Rock* initiative, which was introduced in our last issue and comes from the industry's training organisation, EPIC, with support from QPA and the Institute of Quarrying.

In recent weeks, the campaign's website www.careersinquarrying.co.uk has gone live, and thousands of CD's carrying case study videos have been distributed via one of the UK's leading careers magazines.

Included is Vicky Cox, 19, a management trainee with Lafarge. Once her A-levels were over, she tried some temporary work but didn't consider a full-time career until her father (a civil engineer) suggested quarrying.

"There are a lot more women in the quarrying industry than I was expecting and it surprised me how many there are in senior positions," says Vicky. "I never wanted to go to university but was keen to undertake some form of further training. I am going to college to start an HNC

in civil engineering that will be funded by my company, so it has worked out really well."

When Gareth Randell came into the industry with Tarmac at the age of 19, his main skill had been achieved as an apprentice at Reading Football Club. But having magic in your feet and operating a weighbridge are worlds apart!

"I enjoyed the camaraderie of the weighbridge, it gave me the confidence to move on to other jobs across the company and to the sales role where I am today," he says.

Gemma Stafford, 17, joined Tarmac Northern as a human resources clerk when she left school. Although continuing education was not something that appealed, she didn't want to disregard it completely and was conscious of making herself academically attractive to employers.

"Although I started work straight from school, I've still got the option to do my A-levels part-time or out of working hours," she says. "This was an important factor in choosing the position as I didn't want to limit my opportunities."

For Nathan Hammond, a 17-year-old apprentice

maintenance engineer with Midland Quarry Products, the quarrying industry was a natural choice when he left school as other members of his family had gone the same route.

"When I left school I knew I wanted to do something practical and the quarrying industry appealed because it employs other members of my family. I certainly haven't been disappointed and I'm surprised by the amount of variety within the job.

"I don't feel I've missed out on further education because, as part of my job, I am studying for a BTEC in electrical and electronic engineering, and after that I will go on to do an NVQ level 3 and an HNC. Training on the job with Midland Quarry Products means I can see the benefits straight away."

Many of the youngsters who join the industry do so on the recommendation of family or friends. If you know of a suitable young candidate for a school leaver or graduate career, guide them to www.careersinquarrying.co.uk or get them to call the helpline run by EPIC on behalf of the industry on **0845 600 9692** for a CD and some friendly advice.