

Alum was used in the textile industry. It was an essential ingredient, being the only substance known at the time to have the ability to fix natural dyes to fabrics. During the Middle Ages, the secret of this process was jealously guarded by the Vatican in Rome. To begin the process, large heaps of alum-bearing shales were slow roasted in the quarries in a process called calcining.

If time and tide allow, a visit to the secluded Hummersea beach via the incline steps will be most rewarding. For anyone wishing to experience Cleveland's ironstone past, a visit to the Cleveland Ironstone Mine at Skinningrove is highly recommended. Parking can be found at the coastal car park via Cliff Terrace, Skinningrove.

What followed was a long period of soaking and settling of the ash in liquid-filled pits to produce the final alum crystals. Flat bottomed boats would be moored at Hummersea to ship out the final goods.

Detailed information about all footpaths in the area can be found on the Ordnance Survey Explorer NORTH YORK MOORS Eastern Area OL27 map.

The Miners Way



From sleepy villages on the Yorkshire Coast, the population of East Cleveland exploded with the inrush of workers, following the discovery of alum and ironstone.

The Iron Era

The ironstone industry began in 1848 and lasted for over 100 years, transforming the character of the whole area. It provided employment for generations and supplied steel to the world. Most of the communities which served the mines still survive today, as do the terraced houses, built for the mine workers when the need for accommodation was at its height.

Alum

The coastal quarries close to Loftus are remnants of the alum industry, which operated between 1656 and 1863. Hundreds of men, women and children worked together, pushing wheelbarrows full of shale to the processing areas.

