

n°4 The Trou du Diable

The *Trou du Diable* slate mine began operating in 1810 but by 1841 activity had already ground to a halt. In the same year, it was transferred by royal decree and re-opened by an entrepreneur from the village of Fumay, whose financial difficulties forced him to sell it to the *Société Bruxelloise d'Oignies*, set up in 1845, which had its share of ups and downs, but mostly downs, before its liquidation in 1862.

Operation resumed only in 1869 under the name *Ardoisière La Persévérante S.A.* or *Société de l'Ardoisière du Trou du Diable*, with production peaking at 6,500,000 slates, before slumping to less than 4,500,000 slates in 1870, then to 3,274,750 slates in 1871, on a seam that was around two metres thick. Actual quarrying ceased the following year.

Despite numerous disputes with the village council, the mine remained open until 1890, when the concession was definitively withdrawn by court order in response to the long-standing complaints about the company's failure to pay workers' wages and the opening of drinking establishments.

In 1896, the concession was granted to a lawyer from Couvin, P.-P. Gérard, who was already operating the *Ardoisière Saint-Joseph* at *the Hamérienne*, and who also opened drinking establishments on the site. His company was dissolved in 1899, and the mine was taken over by the *Société Anonyme des Nouvelles Ardoisières du Trou du Diable*, which, after incessant disputes with the village council, lost its concession in 1909, by decision of the Civil Court of Dinant.

In 1922, a company called *Nouvelles Ardoisières du Trou du Diable* attempted to make a go of the mine and managed to produce nearly half a million slates of various models in some six months, before throwing in the towel... Despite a few repurchase bids in 1943 and 1946, mining at the *Trou du Diable* slate mine came to a definitive halt in 1926.



The Trou du Diable slate mine



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The entrance to the Trou du Diable slate mine

The origins of Trou du Diable

The hamlet's name Trou du Diable, dates back to the witch trials of the late seventeenth century, when the site is believed to have hosted devil-worshipping sabbaths.

Along the Oignies-Fumay road, you can still see the building that once housed the slate mine's administrative offices and its café, now converted into a private home.



Office and Cafe opposite the Trou du Diable slate mine