

IX. Concluding remarks and future investigations

At the start, the excavators of the Rijckholt-St. Geertruid flint mines had to face the problem of not having an established method of excavating prehistoric mines. Practical experience enabled us to develop a sound method as we went on. The disadvantage of such a procedure is that in the course of time the style of reporting changed. Such changes make the reports difficult to read.

During the excavation observations were made which at that time were probably not duly noted, e.g. the occurrence of chalk hammerstones. Amongst the chalk blocks these hammerstones went unrecognised. Subsequent to the discovery of one of these hammers, other examples were recognised during the excavation. Thus, during the first part of the excavation the apparent lack of hammerstones does not mean that none were found, but rather shows that they had not been recognised as such.

One of the goals of the excavation was to construct a tunnel connecting the two previous excavations and examine as many galleries as possible from that tunnel. As the excavation was carried out in the spare time of the participants, limited time was available. Keeping this in mind, we never attempted to examine a gallery in minute detail because of the time needed to do so. This work was deferred to a later occasion. Firstly, as many data as possible had to be acquired and the mine field made accessible. The more detailed investigations, however, have not been carried out to this day.

Throughout the excavation we attempted to record all phenomena in detail. Naturally, this resulted in a lot of documentation. In addition to the original journals and registration forms, a total of 39 reports were written, assembling all data. These are all deposited at the Provincial Depot for Archaeological Finds (Maastricht).

The total data set of the excavation is so extensive that it is impossible to include it in the present publication. During the excavation extensive records were made of the percentage of fill of the galleries. Combined with the sections of the galleries these data may possibly be used for a detailed reconstruction of methods employed in these mines. During a future, more detailed excavation campaign one should make sure to record more cross sections. It may thus

prove possible to recognise crawling floors, such as the ones we subsequently noted at Grimes Graves.

Much time was devoted to discussing and categorising the stone picks found. At the start views differed as to whether or not these picks had handles. The discovery of voids corresponding to decayed wooden handles ended this discussion. Soon the picks were assigned to three types (of triangular, quadrangular and oval cross section). Later these forms were further subdivided, although the original threefold subdivision was adhered to. In a number of reports this aspect of the excavation was written up. At this time, we think that an impartial outsider should have another look at the picks.

Flakes did not receive much attention, especially the smaller ones which resulted from the resharpening of picks. These were not collected, or noted. In future excavations, these should be considered in more detail.