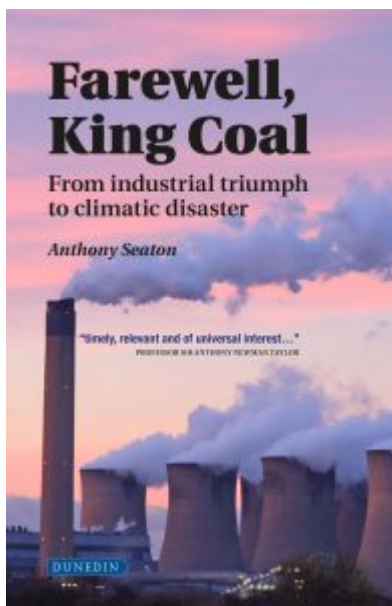


Books – ‘Farewell, King Coal’

‘I look back on the decline and death of the coal industry with mixed feelings and say, echoing the words of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, ‘Farewell King Coal’....it is an important part of the story of mankind’s unending struggle to survive on this restless planet in harmony with the animals, microbes and plants that share it with us.’

In March 2016 the last deep coal mine in Britain, Kellingley Colliery in North Yorkshire, was capped off. (It had closed for production three months earlier). Scotland’s last deep mine, Longannet in Fife, had been closed 14 years earlier after catastrophic flooding.

The capping of Kellingley brought to an end at least four hundred years of deep coal mining in the UK – but what had been the cost, in terms of the health of miners and those who worked with coal products, and for the public in general, of those centuries of ‘the most disruptive technology ever introduced by mankind’? Should we mourn its loss or celebrate its passing? Did the prosperity that coal brought to the western world outweigh the havoc it wreaked?



Next month Edinburgh resident **Professor Anthony Seaton**, a leading expert in lung diseases and environmental medicine, will launch his new book, ***Farewell, King Coal: from industrial triumph to climatic disaster***, with events at **St Mary’s Cathedral** and **Blackwell’s bookshop**.

Professor Seaton looks at the rise and fall of the coal

industry, focusing not only on the dangerous life of the miner but also the hidden adverse consequences of mining and other consequential transformative technologies, all implying hazard to workers, from pneumoconiosis and emphysema to industrial cancers. Coal and other fossil fuels have also become recognised as causing ill health to populations and the planet more widely, through air pollution and climate change. Professor Seaton traces the early history of the discoveries that led to a better understanding of fossil fuels' impact on mankind and the planet. As we attempt – some more enthusiastically than others – to turn away from these fuels, he discusses the converging threats to civilisation from uncontrolled technological advance, and concludes that;

'Now it is up to us.'

Anthony Seaton has been involved in research into lung diseases and air pollution for most of his career; he has co-authored numerous publications and in 1998 was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. He is Emeritus Professor of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at the University of Aberdeen, was Director of the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Edinburgh, and has also worked in Cardiff and West Virginia, USA.



Farewell King Coal will be launched at a reception in the beautiful Song School of St Mary's Cathedral, Palmerston Place on Monday 5 November at 6.30pm. A limited number of free tickets are available via Eventbrite [here](#). Professor Seaton will also talk about his book at Blackwell's, South Bridge at 6.30pm on Thursday 1 November: free tickets [here](#).

Farewell, King Coal: from industrial triumph to climatic disaster by Professor Anthony Seaton is published by [Dunedin Academic Press](#). It will be available to purchase at both

events, and may also be obtained direct from the publishers later this month. Professor Seaton is generously donating all royalties from sales of his book to St Mary's Cathedral and the Institute of Occupational Medicine.

Our featured image above *The Last Shift* by Anthony Seaton.