

# Carn Brea Mining Society

## News Sheet

### PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In March, Dr Duncan Pirrie, who was until 2007 the Associate Professor of Geology at the Camborne School of Mines at Penryn, gave an illustrated talk entitled "Cornish Estuarine Sediments – Human Impact Versus Natural Process." Since 1987 he has produced over 200 research papers and reports on mineral identification in a diversity of estuarine deposits such as Cornwall's offshore deposits from past mine workings (Red River). Dr Pirrie currently leads Helford Geoscience and has a wide range of field and analytical expertise.

After the Annual General Meeting in April a rare film of the Levant Disaster was shown. Kevin Baker introduced the film and conducted a short discussion at the end. This year is the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disaster. On 20 October 1919 the man engine at Levant suffered a disastrous accident, resulting in 31 men being killed in what was the second worst mining disaster in Cornwall. Between 50 and 100 miners were ascending by the man riding rod when a portion broke sending many men to their deaths. After the accident Levant went into terminal decline.

At the May meeting Geoff Treseder, a member of the St Just Mines Research Group, gave a fascinating illustrated talk about the mines in the St Just area. He showed many old photos of mines in the St Just area, explained the geology of the area, the types of lodes, the methods of working and told of what can be seen in the area today.

In June, Tony Clarke, a former staff member at the Camborne School of Mines who specialised in milling techniques to separate the tin from the rock, gave an illustrated talk entitled 'The History and Technology of Shaking Tables.' He explained the history behind this important process and the various methods evolved over hundreds of years.

At the July meeting Nigel McDonald, who is a qualified mineral processing engineer, gave an illustrated talk on Mineral Processing. He described the

various techniques and criteria and machinery (old and new), in this complex side of the mining industry. Nigel is a member of the team which keeps the mill at King Edward Mine Museum running.

Recently there have been three excellent field trips led by Society members Geof Purcell and Peter Benbow.

### FIELD TRIPS

In June, Geof Purcell led a field trip to the Luxulyan Valley. Members walked up the western side of the valley looking at the clay dries at Trevanney China Clay Kiln, the leats and the remains of small mines and their associated buildings. At the northern end of the walk was the iconic Treffry Viaduct/Aqueduct. The viaduct was built between 1839 and 1842 to carry a horse drawn tramway and water to feed the Carmears Water Wheel, but no water was running at the time of the visit due to a leak in the leat.



Members at Carmears Water Wheel Pit

The weather was hot and dry for this field trip but thankfully most of the walking was shaded under trees. This was an excellent trip and thanks go to Geof Purcell for providing leaflets, maps, photos and much technical information about the valley.

By Lawrence Holmes

In August, Peter Benbow led two field trips to the River Cober Area. For the first trip, on a pleasant Saturday afternoon, approximately 15 Society members met leader Peter Benbow at Coverack Bridges and were shown the uses to which the River Cober had been put in the past. Leats had been constructed to take the water from Coverack Bridges to feed the tin workings on the east side of the

valley below Trelubbas Wartha Farm. A previous Society expedition had uncovered evidence of wheel pits, dressing floors, settling ponds and a burning house. Nature had now reclaimed the area and some hacking was required to reveal the remains once again. Peter produced maps and photos with added graphics to show what the site may have looked like when it was working.



Crossing the leat below Trelubbas Wartha Farm

The second trip was less well attended and again commenced at Coverack Bridges. Unfortunately the path to the area to be explored was still blocked by a landslip. Undaunted, the group, once again led by Peter Benbow, moved to Lowertown where remains of wheel pits and water wheels can still be seen.

Jon Nurhonen



An 'excited' group of Society members by the River Cober below Lowertown

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

I would like to thank all members who have renewed their subscriptions promptly. Also thanks to the numerous members who have made additional donations. At the moment the Society is in a healthy financial position.

Jon Nurhonen (Treasurer)

## Filming at Wheal Owles

In June the BBC were filming for the new TV Poldark Series at West Wheal Owles Engine House, just south of Botallack. Prior to the filming a 'film set' was built by adding certain structural items to the old pumping engine house – a new timber platform on the bob wall, a small headframe over the shaft and some shaft covering; wooden 'shacks', a door and some windows were also added. Nearby on the dump was quite a large wooden windlass.

In the late 1980s the CBMS leased West Wheal Owles and Wheal Edward Engine Houses from a Mr Jenkins because he was threatening to knock them down. The lease was relatively short lived because the National Trust purchased the site and carried out a very good restoration scheme. On 7 November 1993 the CBMS placed a memorial stone at Cargodna Shaft down the steep cliffside just below the engine houses commemorating those killed in the disaster of 10 January 1893. The film crew appeared to know nothing about Wheal Owles, the disaster, or what lay beneath their feet. Like most people they were amazed.

By Lawrence Holmes



West Wheal Owles Engine House looking north showing the wooden 'shacks' added to the house as well as a door and some window frames. The large windlass is on the right.

## The Communion of the Ring

Lincoln James wonders if any members of CBMS have information about the "Communion of the Ring." He comments, "We have all heard of the hardships experienced by Cornish miners following The Great War. In February 1922 the Camborne correspondent for the monthly magazine "Mining World" submitted the following contribution under the heading -

'UNEMPLOYED PROSPECTING'

'The "Communion of the Ring," a religious body formed for the purpose of mutual help amongst the unemployed in mining operations is actively engaged in prospecting an

eastern extension of the Wheal Busy and Wheal Daniel Lodes. Certain pits are being put down, as well as prospecting shafts, and it is hoped that success will reward their earnest endeavours.' "

(Note from the Editor, "There are a few details on Wikipedia which I have forwarded to Lincoln, but if further information is known please let me know.")

## BOOK REVIEWS

### A Complete Guide to the Engine Houses of West Cornwall

£18.00 + P&P

Damian Nance and Kenneth Brown, SB, 184 pages. 210x210mm. Printed in full colour throughout on gloss art paper, perfect bound with laminated card covers.

This book introduces these remarkable engine houses by providing an illustrated guide to those in West Cornwall using contemporary and archival photographs supplemented with brief descriptions of the engines the buildings once contained simple interpretations of some of their key features, and short histories of the mines of which they were part. It is not an exhaustive treatment, nor is it meant solely for the enthusiast, but rather, it provides an overview intended for all those interested in these historically important structures. Together, the authors bring over a century of expertise to this fascinating guide.

I understand this is the first of 3 books on the subject

By Tony Brooks

### Ding Dong Mine - A History

Peter Joseph and Gerald Williams, SB, 240 x 170, 218 pages £15.99

A striking landmark in West Penwith is the Greenburrow engine-house of Ding Dong Mine, visible in all directions from its lofty moorland perch. In contrast the story of the mine itself is relatively unknown. Numerous small tinworks were operating in this area in the 17th century while Ding Dong Mine is mentioned as far back as 1751. In the 1790s it was the scene of legal wrangles between Richard Trevithick and Boulton & Watt. In the early 19th century Ding Dong Mine amalgamated with the adjacent Wheal Malkin and worked more or less successfully until 1877. In its final 20 years of operation Ding Dong produced nearly 3,000 tons of black tin at a value of just under £155,000.

## Condurrow Update

The ladders on Vivian's Shaft have now been replaced; some with traditional style ladders with wooden sides and steel rungs, whilst others ladders are now aluminium. Timber sets have been replaced and strengthened. Work is now going ahead to replace the skip guides. The timber has been purchased for this and the steel joining brackets have been fabricated. All that is now needed is a dry Autumn to enable us to work in the shaft without getting wet and cold. Thanks go to the Friends of King Edward, who are helping to finance this refurbishment. The croust hut now has a new door, supplied and fitted by CBMS Member David Burkitt.

By Jon Nurhonen

### From West Briton 11-12-1884

*Lost, stolen or strayed from New Cook's Kitchen Mine on the 5th inst, a she goat, with long light-coloured hair, having a leather collar on with a dog's chain attached. Any person bringing the same, or such information as shall lead to its recovery, to the above Mine will be rewarded.*

Submitted by David Froggatt

## FUTURE MEETINGS

**7 Oct** Committee Meeting at 7:00 at KEM

**21 Oct** "Harveys of Hayle" by Kingsley Rickard

**18 Nov** "The Human Consequences of the Wheal Owles Disaster" by Lincoln James

**9 Dec** Members Medley led by the Vice-Chairman of the Society. Members will present a series of short talks about projects or subjects of their choice. Note subject for talks to Vice-Chairman by September meeting if possible.

**2015**

**20 Jan** "The St Just Project 20 Years Later" by Jon Brookes. Jon will describe the latest mining work carried out by the National Trust in West Penwith

**All meetings are in the Lecture Room at King Edward Mine at 7:00p.m.**

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**The next Newsletter is due to be published in early December 2014. The latest date for articles to the Editor is Saturday 15th November.**

(This is **your** Newsletter, so please send in a contribution.)

**Visit the new Society website on :-**

[www.carnbreainingsociety.org.uk](http://www.carnbreainingsociety.org.uk)