

Cornish Miners Association



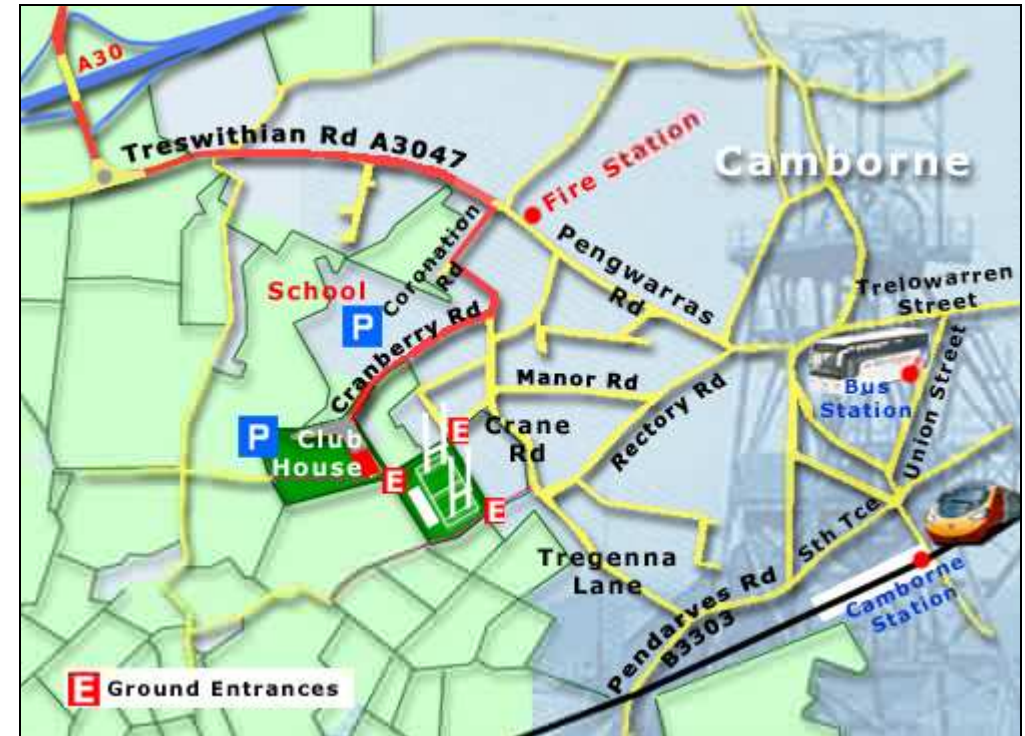
**NEWSLETTER
of the Cornish Miners Association**

May 2008

CMA AGM 2008

Map of Camborne Rugby Football club: site of the 2008 AGM 7.30pm on Wednesday May 21st 2008. We encourage all members to attend and to invite potential members to come along and join the CMA.

See inside for more details and directions.



(map courtesy of CRFC)

CORNISH MINERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER No.14

Chairman's Comments

For the last ten years the commonest question any of us has been asked is: What is happening at South Crofty? When the tin metal price began its inexorable rise past the £6,000 a tonne mark, and then passed the £8,000 and by April had reached £11,000 and then £12,000, the questioning took on a new significance. Could this really mean the restart of mining for tin in Cornwall?

For Cornish mining the first few months of 2008 have proved to be very interesting. By the end of last year Baseresult, the owners of South Crofty Mine, had received large financial backing. This was due to the spectacular rise in the tin metal price, fuelled by demand from such places as India and China. With the influx of capital the mine company changed its name to Western United Mines, and together with its new partner Cassiterite LP, Baseresult's management moved from the planning stage into serious development work. The drive from Tuckingsmill Decline Shaft to New Cooks Shaft had already been completed, and drives to Cooks Kitchen's Middle Engine Shaft was well on the way. This is to improve ventilation. Two more drives were then started, using the large, high-tech drilling machines purchased for the purpose of opening the mine up at a fairly shallow level. The northern drive, which has an ultra-modern Atlas Copco drilling rig operating in it, is 4m high and 5m wide – which is extremely large! Mucking out is by an equally impressive scoop tram, capable of lifting 10 tonnes of rock in one scoop. The southern parallel drive is slightly smaller,

and this is also worked with very modern drilling rigs and scoop trams.

These two tunnels are being driven west toward Camborne, and as they approach the Red River crosscourse (part of the Great Crosscourse zone), they will start to sink, to keep a safe distance below the river. As lode structures are located, they will be examined by means of the new diamond drill now operating on the mine – this high-tech and very sophisticated machine cost £250,00. Already a significant tin bearing lode, between Old Engine and New Cooks shafts has been drilled and the results analysed. Other interesting and potentially valuable metals have been discovered in the lodes being examined, including wolfram, zinc and arsenic ores, and of course cassiterite (tin ore). Saw Pit Lode of old Cooks Kitchen is also being drilled, and it is hoped it will prove valuable.

Something in the region of £5,000,000 is being spent – most of it already – and with the increasing workforce the future is beginning to look far brighter for Cornish mining than it did a year or two ago. The workforce has increased from 17 a few months ago to over 40 by early April 2008. Several former Crofty, Pendarves and Jane miners, fitters, electricians and technical are now employed, and even more former Geevor men. Several men working underground have never worked in the industry before and are being trained to operate the expensive machinery there. All in all for the first time since 1998 there appears more than a glimmer of hope for the old mine, and that will certainly bring smiles to the faces of Cornishmen everywhere.

This year's AGM of the Cornish Miners Association will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday May 21st 2008. We encourage all members to attend and to invite potential members to come along and join the CMA.

A map showing how to find Camborne Rugby Club can be found on the back cover of this newsletter.

Getting to the AGM in Camborne by Car

Leave the A30 Westbound at the 'Camborne West' junction, take the first left, and left again at the roundabout into Camborne.

Carry straight on for approx ¼ a mile, turn right into Coronation Road (bungalows), opposite and before the Fire Station to be seen on the left, and then right when you reach Cranberry Road.

Don't miss it this year and tell your friends and former workmates to make it an evening we will remember.

The **last Friday in every month** we meet in the lounge bar of Tyacks Hotel, Camborne, at 7.30pm. There is usually some of us still there by 10.30pm, so if you can't make it early on, there is usually someone to talk to about mining until late. The numbers have varied over the months from a handful to over a dozen, but all new ones are welcome and nothing can be better than having a drink with old workmates. If you've been in the past, come again! If you've never been, you're welcome! If you come regularly – its your round!

Membership

All well-wishers are encouraged to become associate members. Let us unite to remember the past, celebrate our friends and work mates who have gone, and look forward to a future for a great industry. *Fortun da than bal.*

MEMBERSHIP AND EVENTS: Full members of the CMA must be people who have been employed in a metalliferous mine in Cornwall. **Associate Membership** is open to Mining Students and **anyone** who wishes to support the group, and participate in the various activities and functions that the CMA organises.

The CMA organises get-togethers for former and current employees of Cornwall's mines. Talks will also be given on all aspects of mining around Cornwall. The CMA will, when ever possible, produce a newsletter to inform members and associate members of forth coming events and to let them know what the CMA is currently doing. Local press will also carry details of any planned events, such as miner's re-unions, the AGM (for members) and talks (open to all).

The annual membership fee for the CMA is £5.00, with family membership available for £10.00 (one per household). This is payable on the 1st of April each year. OVERSEAS membership is £7.00 per year for a single person, or £12.00 for a family (one per household).

If you would like to join the CMA, please e-mail the Membership Secretary at:- **kpbray@ukonline.co.uk** or call on **01209 218831**.

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES AT THE AGM**

TREVITHICK DAY

This year the CMA stand was back where it belongs, in ‘Tally Warren’ Street. For the last two years we have been consigned to the back of beyond, by the Post Office – and hardly saw a soul! This year we were busy throughout the whole day, with scores of people coming to the stall to talk about Cornish mining. Everybody had at least one relative who had worked at South Crofty, Wheal Jane, Mount Wellington, Wheal Pendarves, Wheal Concord, Geevor – and even some at mines which closed before the Second World War! It was a very successful day and we sold over £220 worth of books – all on mining! The weather was good, the crowds were more numerous than ever, the engines noisy and smelly and great, the music was good, the atmosphere was universally friendly, and everyone had a great day. The whole town exuded an air of confidence and optimism – perhaps the possibility of mining resuming where it has dominated for centuries helped give the atmosphere a lift!

MURDOCK DAY

In June Redruth celebrates Murdock Day to remember the Scottish engineer and inventor who lived and worked in the town 200 years ago. He was a brilliant man, who modified and invented many useful things, including, and most importantly, the use of gas for domestic lighting. Although his memory tends to exist in the shade of that great Camborne engineer and inventor, Richard Trevithick, Murdock was a man of significant achievements and is rightly celebrated. We will have a stall in Fore Street for the occasion, and look forward to seeing many of you there.

COMMENTS on THAT STATUE by Former Miners & Others.



“Marcum Angelus Borealis (Mark’s Angel of the North)”

“What is it?”

“Cornish miner? Bloody embarrassment more like!”

“Angel of the North”

“Redruth needs more than that!”

“They supposed to be candles round his neck?”

“ Looks like MK bragging about the fish he nearly caught!”

“Why’s he trying to stop the traffic?”

“What’s the bugger got in his hand?”

“Goes well with those bloody stupid welly boot dogs!”

“Glad the bugger’s in Redruth and not Camborne!”

“Who ever made it has never seen a miners’ pol pick!”

“Actually, I quite like it, but what is it supposed to be?”

“What’s that strange necklace thing he’s got on?”

Note that the CMA does not necessarily endorse the views expressed by the people quoted above ☺

OBITUARIES

In the last issue we had incomplete information on those of our former workmates who had died since the previous issue and so to try to avoid missing out any names, mention was held over until now. There have been so many of our former comrades whom we miss, and as it would be invidious to say more about some than others, it is thought appropriate to just give their names in no particular order.

Ronnie Earle
Raymond Ellis
Garfield Hitchens
Glen Bucknole
Vivian Smolden
Ian Northmore
Robert Sherratt
John O'Neil
Tom Ledden
David Smith
Vivian Mitchell
Jim Buzza
Anthony Taylor
Ivor Wills
Neil Mullins
Franco De Seta
Norman Driver
Alec Salmon

Our sincerest, although belated, condolences go out to all the families of these men who will be missed by their families, relatives, friends, neighbours and workmates.

CMA Website: www.cornishminers.com

Mike Davis continues to run the website for the CMA. He encourages all the membership to send him information which can be loaded onto the website. Mike's email is: cornishminer@homecall.co.uk

Many interested people have contacted the website and Mike reports some fascinating chats with miners and former miners there. Please, take advantage of Mike's Message Board and talk about the subject which turns so many people on – Cornish mining!

Don't forget to sign the Guestbook when you are there and browse through it to see comments and news from old workmates at home and abroad.

EARLY MINING IN CAMBORNE & REDRUTH

Most books which look at the history of Cornish mining tend to concentrate on the 18th and 19th centuries – on the great copper mines and the massive influence Cornish miners had on the British Industrial Revolution. However, the story of tin working in the Camborne, Illogan and Redruth area began much earlier than that. From the late-medieval period onwards we have an impressive record of the tin industry hereabouts. When Henry VII defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth, in 1485, major changes in how the industry was operated were put into motion. One change was to bring in rules on the registration of tinworks, so that these were recorded and kept on a more regular basis than hitherto. Because of this we know of the locations of

those tinworks, the names of the tinworks and the names of the tanners who worked them. We also have the Camborne Churchwarden's Accounts, which furnish us with even more information on the tanners and their works.

Some idea of the size of the local tin industry in the 1530s can be gauged from the number of registered tanners in the parishes of Camborne, Illogan and Redruth. There were 86 in Camborne; 91 in Illogan and 156 in Redruth: a total of 333 tanners. The higher figure for Redruth reflects the fact that whereas Redruth Parish (St Euny) had a town in it, the other two parishes could not even boast a large village.

The Connor Stream, with Gwinear and Gwithian on its west bank and Camborne Parish on its east bank, was anciently a rich source of alluvial tin. The stream which fed it, that lay between Crowan and Gwinear, had no less than five tin streams operating between 1490 and 1520: they lay on the moor below Halgarrack, Trenoweth, Bosprowal, Penhale and Cathebedron farms. They were mostly worked by the farmers themselves, with the help of full-time, skilled tanners and 'spaliers' – or day labourers. These farmers regarded the tin on their moorland as a crop like any other, to be exploited in due season and as the weather permitted. Two significant tin streams lay on the Connor Stream, one below Penponds and the other near Roseworthy. The one below Penponds was at Bejawsa and was registered as 'While an Piece' and the one at Roseworthy was called 'Polmidoe'. The former was worked by a David and John Redruth, and the family were still living in Camborne a generation later.

The Red River Valley was also worked for tin throughout the medieval period and artefacts found on Newton Moor and at

Reskadinnick, together with the Roman Villa at Magor, adjacent to the river, indicate that tin was worked along the river at least from Roman times. There was a tin blowing house beside the river at Trevenson in the middle of the 16th century (1542). Tin was worked along the small stream which runs through Pool to Tehidy, and some of the works beside Pool School and at Halgoss appear to have been quite important in the early 1500s.

The valley between Redruth and Illogan parishes also was a rich source of tin. During the late 13th century there were complaints about the destruction of the bridge at Barncoose, and tanners were convicted in 1301 of this offence. They had to pay for its repair. Similar complaints were heard in the 1350s about damage done to the corn mill leats at Vauxhall (by the brewery) by tanners. All in all, every stream and river valley in the district appears to have been worked for alluvial tin over the millenia, and this continued until well into the 19th century, by which time most of the tin streams were merely working the tailings from the mines upstream. In the 1870s there were over forty tailings tin streams on the Red River between Bolennow and Godrevy, with literally thousands of workers involved. Some of the stream works were far more profitable than the mines from which the tailings came.

We will look at the ancient lode mines in the next issue. Sufficient to say that most of them in the 15th and 16th centuries lay along the high granite hills in the southern parts of the parishes of Camborne, Illogan and Redruth; on the flanks of Carn Camborne, Carnkie, Carn Brea and Carn Marth.

JAB