

Cornish Miners Association



NEWSLETTER of the Cornish Miners Association

November 2006

What's Happening

In May we had our AGM. We thanked Sheila Beattie for her long and loyal service as Treasurer, and welcomed Roger Davey to the post. Sheila has been a most hard-working Treasurer and has kept our accounts in perfect order. Her contribution to the Association has been immense. We think that Roger's effort will likewise be appreciated by the members. Mike Davies re-organised the web site to improve our links with the world and advertise what we do and what we stand for. Clarence Matthews brought a film on mining to the AGM, which stirred a few memories for all involved in the fascinating history of Cornish mining. Our regular monthly drinks at Tyacks lounge bar, in Camborne, have continued to attract a variety of former mine workers. Anything from five to thirteen people have attended these during the last few months, and much ground has been broken and trammed to the shaft. Our stall at Murdock Day, in Redruth, was again a success, with Paul Bray and the other helpers raising a fair amount for the Association's funds.

Some of the regulars at our monthly drink have had periods of illness during the last few months. David and Jennie Aimable have both been poorly as has Alan Taylor. We are glad to see them back and fit again.

Most of us read with interest, and occasional irritation, about the on-going saga of Baseresult and South Crofty. Will they wont they will they wont, seems to be the question nobody can answer. Undoubtedly, most Cornish people and certainly all former miners would love to see the old mine work again. It managed over 300 years without serious interruption, and it would be quite something if it were to reopen. We all have our own opinions on the likelihood of this happening in the near future, but we must all agree that should the tin price reach a high enough level, and if the financial backing was there, it would be an achievement we would all applaud if Crofty was once again to work for tin.

Profile of a Miner

Jack Jervis is a miner from a mining family. His father, Bill, left mining to join the DCLI in the Great War and was awarded the Military Medal for rescuing his wounded company commander from 'no man's land'. After Flanders Bill returned to civy street and as there was little work in the Cornish mines, headed for South Wales to try his luck. He got a job with the company who won the contract to sink New Dolcoath Shaft at South Roskear, and returned to help sink the shaft. When Jack was 14 years old he left school to work on a farm, but as soon as he was 16, in 1932, he got a job mining. By then his father was stoping at East Pool but Jack decided that Crofty was the place for him. His first job was mucking an inter under the 260fm level, which he did all alone. His shiftboss was Tom Williams, known generally as Cap'n Dicks or Tommy Dicks, for when he was a mine captain his favourite expression referred to 'every Tom, Dick or Harry'. After working as a general labourer for a while Jack went to work with an underhand stoper called Carlos Robins, whose mate was home sick for a couple of weeks. They used hammerjack machines in the stope, and Jack remembers Carlos as a kind and easy-going miner. With the return of Carlos' mate Jack went with Monk Wethered, a well-known Crofty 'character'. Part of their regular job was to carry the sharpened drill steels up from the 160fm level to the ends and stopes of three pares of machinemen. Each pare had 18 steels of various lengths, and the highest they had to climb with the tools was 480 feet to the 80fm level – there being no connection above the 160 to the levels being worked. Monk was a big, strong man, but Jack was a small 16 year old, and the going was tough. On one occasion a miner called Bill Mann was blasted, and Jack was sent back to the 160 station to ring 15 bells for help. When it arrived, in the shape of Dick Jory, a St John's man who managed the tinyard, Jack had to assist the unfit first aider up the 480 feet to where the seriously injured miner lay. The older men sent Jack back to 160, after which they man-handled Mann, who was large and heavy, down through the ladderways to 160 level station. Bill Mann died on the 160 station and Dick Jory conducted a short service over his body. Bill's wife and mother were waiting at surface when his body was brought up.

In about 1934 Jack went to work with another underhand stopper called Mark Hoskin, this time under the 290 level. They worked together for 7 or 8 months before a serious accident nearly cost Jack his life. The mine captain arrived in the stope as they were clearing off the point, and he borrowed Jack's lifeline. He asked Jack to pass him a drill steel, and as the youngster stretched for it, his boots slipped on the loose rock, and he fell about 20 feet into a boxhole. He lay there unconscious, with a large rock embedded in his skull, and his legs and lower body trapped in the fallen rock. He still carries the deep indentation in his head, 70 years later! Fortunately for Jack, at the crucial moment, a miner called Fred Williams arrived and immediately swung down on a rope and despite great danger to himself, started to dig Jack out and with the help of the miners above them he was hauled to safety with the boy on his back. Jack was home for 6 months before returning to work in the tinyard for 12 months. When he returned underground he went to work with the redoubtable Bert Rule, the top developer at the mine. With Jack, Bert drove the 290 and 315 levels on No.2, 3 and 4 lodes west, toward the Great Crosscourse. He always advanced faster than any other miner and despite taking several days a month off after every 'contract pay day', he remained the top developer at Crofty. Bert, Jack says, was a brilliant miner and a prodigious drinker – not an untypical combination at Crofty!

After about 1936 Jack was often the 'taker' and from then on he put into practice the skills he had been taught by those men he had worked with. In 1939 there was the great strike at Crofty, in which Cooks men, for the most part, worked on and Robinsons men went out on strike. Despite the hostility and many clashes between the two groups, Jack went on strike with the men from the other side of the mine – on principle. Bert worked on, but Jack refused, even when the manager, Clarence Paull, spoke to him personally. Jack then went to East Pool to work, and after the War broke out he went up-country to learn bricklaying, so that he could help re-construct the bombed cities of England – his earlier injuries prevented him joining the armed services.

After the War Jack returned to the mine, but then he went to work in the copper mines of Rhodesia, before coming back to Crofty for a few years before going to West Africa, where as a shiftboss, he first met Gerald Pengilly, who was a mine captain. Jack reckons he continued to learn new

techniques whilst mining in Africa, and some of these new ideas he brought back to the old mine. Some were welcomed and some were not – but, Jack persisted anyway! Jack remembered being questioned by N K Kitto, the mine manager, about his use of a burn cut when raising. Kitto thought it shook the mine up too much, and that Jack should stick to the stope cut – Jack continued with his system and broke six foot a day, not bad for the time! He also claims to have introduced inclined raises to Crofty – they had mostly been sub-vertical, up the dip of the lode. His method was safer and easier to mine, he believed.

During the time of Gerald Pengilly Jack saw many changes to working practices and safety at Crofty, with better training, under Howard Mankee, as well as first aid cover and mine rescue. Electric cap lamps came as did more locos and Eimcos. In the early 1960s Jack's son, John went to work with him, driving into East Pool and seeing the old workings Jack had worked in so many years before. Francis Thomas worked with Jack after John left, and eventually his other son, Chris, went to work with Jack. After another couple of years Jack became a shiftboss, and was mostly to be found on 360fm level, where many of us still remember him. He was shiftboss there from 1970 to 1980. Jack's memories and experiences could fill a book – and perhaps should!

We are always on the lookout for material to go in the newsletters. If you have any stories, photos or articles that you want to put forward or suggest then please do. Remember this is YOUR association and YOUR newsletter, so tell us what you'd like!

CMA Website: www.cornishminers.com

Due to work commitments of Derek Morgan in his new business, the handling of the CMA website has now been taken on by Mike Davis (our 'web site coordinator'). Mike has done a sterling job in bringing the site up to date, working with a web-designer.

Mike is building up the reciprocal links on the site (linking to and from other related sites), so if you know of anyone with a website that might be interested, please get them to email: [**cornishminer@homecall.co.uk**](mailto:cornishminer@homecall.co.uk).

We are also after sponsors for the site, currently we have The Mining & Management Consultancy (the trading name of Layco Ltd) and the South Crofty Jewellery Collection who have kindly come on board. Businesses can be featured here for as little as £100.00 per year, or £10.00 per month by standing order. The obvious advantage is that they will be seen by people interested in, or linked to, the Cornish mining industry!

The site is always looking for new material, so if you have something that you think might be of interest to members, just email it to Mike at the above address or post it on the forum (see below).

The Message Board.

A special note here is the use of our message board. On the CMA website there is an on-line forum where anyone interested can post questions (and hopefully answers!) for members to read and reply to. "When did Pendarves Start?" "What's a 'shifter'?" "What were 'checkers' underground and why did no one like them very much?", "There's free beer at my pub tonight!" or just about anything you can think of.

If you're not quite sure how this works, just go to [**www.cornishminers.com**](http://www.cornishminers.com), click on [**message board**](#) and have a look. It's a lot easier to use than you might think, and fun.

There has been a good chat recently on drilling hard rock other than granite and 'track headers' posted by Robin Whale and Mike Davis.

Obituaries.

Since the last Newsletter we have lost more of our former workmates. In September Guiseppe 'Joe' Salamone, aged 82, and Colin Williams, aged 65, passed away. Joe was born in 1924 in Aragona, Sicily, and along with several other Sicilians he was recruited to work at South Crofty in the early 1950s, when the mine was desperately short of labour. He started in 1953 and finally finished at the mine in 1985, having spent 32 years as a Cornish miner. All who worked with Joe will remember him with respect as a skilled and able miner who worked in several capacities at the mine including a long period as a stoper. We offer his family our sincerest condolences.

Colin Williams was an Illogan man. He started his working life, as did most of his family, in the butchering trade. He worked locally and in Wiltshire as a butcher. Returning to Cornwall he started at Crofty in about 1974, working for a long time with Ted Wilson as his mate, stoping. Latterly he became a trammer. He finished at Crofty in 1986, having spent twelve years underground. All who knew Colin found him a friendly and easy workmate. He had a great sense of humour. We shall miss him. We know that Maggie and his family will get the support they need from all of their friends and former colleagues.

In October we lost Tony Harris, a well-respected miner, whose large family and many friends will miss him. He was 65 years old. Tony was born in Gwennap Parish and lived all his life in and around the villages which surround St Day. He started work underground at Crofty in 1962, when he was 21 years old, and remained there until 1984, when redundancies were bringing many mining careers to an end. All those who worked with Tony will remember him as a skillful miner with a keen sense of humour. His great love was riding trials motorbikes and he was well-known among other bikers. His funeral at Gwennap Parish Church was attended by several hundred friends, neighbours and former workmates, and of course, his large family.

On October 30th Dennis Evans died at the age of 69. His funeral took place at Penmount on November 7th. Dennis first worked as a miner at Wheal Pendarves, before coming to South Crofty to work. At Crofty he worked on the day shift, performing many tasks and working with many different men.

All those miners who worked with him underground will remember Dennis and miss him. We offer our sincerest condolences to his family at their loss. In order to include the obituaries of former workmates, we do need information. Frequently we hear of the death of one of our work colleagues long after the event and too late to include it in the Newsletters. If you have such information please communicate it to Peter Hughes on (01209) 717922 or Allen Buckley on (01209) 218779, so that it can be included when a Newsletter comes out.

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**

The CMA has teamed up with the South Crofty Jewellery Collection. All paid up members of the Association can now enjoy a 10% discount on the complete range. Sales will be dealt with direct, but interested members will only get the discount after they have had their membership verified by the CMA. To do this either email cornishminer@homecall.co.uk, or phone 01872 573299.



Please note there is no discount on P&P, however orders can be collected from Wheal Jane Offices, Baldhu during office hours.

Associated Property Solutions Ltd

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Associated Property Solutions (APS) offers a wide range of services to anyone buying, selling or building property in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, including:

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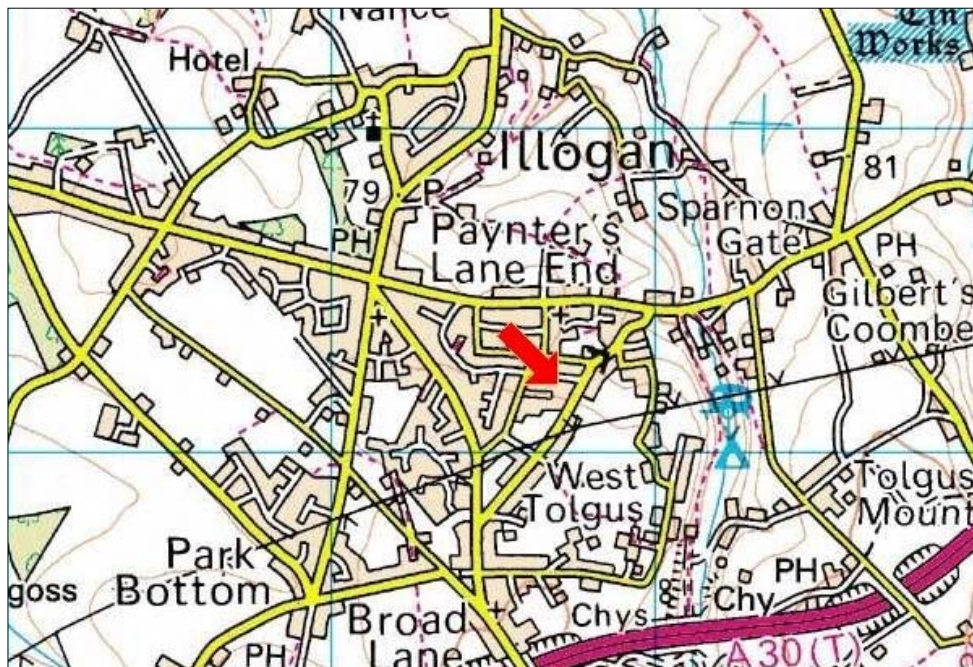
Contact: Derek Morgan, 07772 688 110

The annual event many of us eagerly look forward to – the December get-together – will be held at the same venue as last year – **Illogan Football Club, Richards Lane, Illogan, at 7.30pm on Saturday 9th December.**

Last year was another success with well over one hundred former mine workers and their partners enjoying a great night.



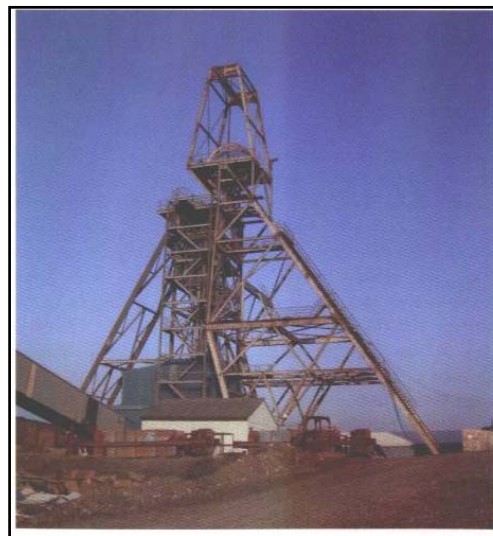
Don't miss it this year and tell your friends and former workmates to make it an evening we will remember.



Map of Illogan Football club: site of the 2006 Xmas drink, 7:30pm, Saturday 9th December.

Don't forget the CMA also has a regular monthly get-together at the Tyacks Hotel in Camborne (remember to check both bars!). This happens on the last Friday of every month throughout the year and is a great place to catch up with your mates.

Underground Trip



A number of members have been on the underground trip into the old workings at South Crofty Mine and would highly recommend it.

The trip is an easy walk, suitable for most ages and even families (check with South Crofty Mine for details). Prices range from £3.50 to £7.00.

CONTACT: 01209 715777 (Base Results)

Other worthwhile underground trips are available at Geevor Mine and Poldark.

And remember: its always fun to surprise the guides when they discover that there's a real miner amongst the 'tourists'!

