

Cornish Miners Association



NEWSLETTER of the Cornish Miners Association

November 2007

CORNISH MINERS ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER No.12. November 2007

Chairman's Comments.

Since the last Newsletter things have progressed much as before. The monthly meetings in Tyacks Hotel Lounge Bar, on the last Friday of the month, have continued with varying support. New faces occasionally appear – or rather, old faces not seen for a while! The numbers vary from two up to a dozen or more, but the conversations continue on the subject of mining past and present. Men return from abroad to discuss their recent experiences, and old farts continue to repeat their triumphs of yesteryear.

One topic, which often dominates the discussions and arguments, is the future of South Crofty and its owner, Baseresults. Recently, the workforce there has been increased from seventeen to twenty-five, with plans to increase further to thirty-five by next summer. Two tunnels are being driven at the moment, with miners working two shifts. One drive is toward Middle Engine Shaft, in old Cooks Kitchen, and the other, having holed through into Old Engine Shaft, of New Cooks Kitchen, is pressing on toward New Cooks Vertical Shaft – the one so many of us have travelled through on hundreds of occasions.

The mine is being re-equipped at a fast pace, with new (or second-hand) scoop trams of impressive size, new (or second-hand) drilling booms and other expensive and up-to-date gear. Investment in the mine has been increasing as their plans are fleshed out. Now, at the beginning of November, it has been announced that a major commodities company (Galena) with tens of millions of pounds to invest, have become part of the company running the mine. The company has a new name Western United Mines. Suddenly, with world-wide demand increasing, with China and India becoming net importers of tin and other raw materials, instead of exporters, and with the price of tin holding at over £8,000 a tonne and set to continue to rise, all looks rosy at the old mine. The Western Morning News wrote of £3.5 million to be spent in the next nine months and £50 available as the mine moves toward production in the summer of 2009.

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This all looks good for the future of Cornish mining, and we can only hope that this is not just another false alarm. The price is right, the capital is in place, the plans appear advanced, and we can only watch and hope that the twenty-five Cornish families currently supported by the wages paid to them by the mine may soon become many more. If the mine's success sounds the death knell for some of the ridiculous plans those manic outsiders in the regeneration lobby have put forward, then good luck to the good ship Crofty and all who sail in her!

Books.

Recently, there have been several new books released on Cornish mining. John Peck's book of photographs from Wheal Jane, **Painting a Mine with Light**, has been well-received and many former Janers have experienced emotional and nostalgic thoughts as they looked at Peck's excellent pictures. Some of the machinery used there was very impressive, especially the electro-hydraulic Robins 61R Raise Borer. Alan Beattie and the Wheal Jane fitters assembled the machine which was purchased second-hand from South Africa. The raise being mined was 60m in depth and took six months to complete. This 60 page booklet is good value at £6.95 and can be purchased at any good book shop.

Princes of the Working Valley is a book which many will find of interest. It is based on the 'day and night' book of two Dolcoath mine captains. Covering the period 1822-23, this journal by Capt. James Thomas and Capt. William Petherick, touches on every aspect of copper mining in the early 19th century. It is irreverent, hilarious, witty, rude and at times outrageous. Accidents, deaths, funerals, health and safety, relations with the manager, coping with awkward miners, dealing with stropky bal maidens, jokes, obscenity, wind ups, the discussion of Sunday's sermon, what happened at Camborne Fair, Redruth Fair and Penzance Fair, and so on. Everything is included without thought for political correctness or offence. The original 201 page manuscript is dealt with topically, subject by subject and tells us more about how an early 19th century copper mine operated than almost any other source. It is sold for £9.99 in all good book shops. A booklet which

Crofty and Geevor miners will find of special interest is **Hazards and Heroes in Cornish Mines**. It deals with some frightening accidents and near accidents during the last couple of hundred years, and concentrates particularly on heroic rescues of miners by their mates. Jimmy Clemence, Dennis Browne, Winston Edwards, Dennis Bray, Howard Mankee, Bob Stevens, Terry Mankee, George Curtis, John Hendra, Tony Pope, David Ellisdon, Bill Prisk, Geoff Sullivan, Roy Thomas, Roy Hooper, Maurice Shore, Jack Jervis, Mark Hoskin, Fred Williams, Eddie Leak and a host of others from Crofty are mentioned here. From Geevor also several miners involved in heroic rescue attempts are included – Alan Brewer and Steve Ainsworth were given medals for their bravery. This 48 page booklet sells for £3.99 and is well worth buying. Most book shops stock it, usually on the Tor Mark stands.

OBITUARY

Gerald Crosland Pengilly (1924-2007)

Gerald Crosland Pengilly, who died on the 4th September at the age of 82 years, was probably the most respected Cornish mine manager of the last fifty years. He was born in 1924 and attended the Camborne School of Mines where he distinguished himself as an outstanding mining student. After working as a mine captain and manager in Africa, Mr Pengilly returned to Cornwall to apply for the job of manager of Camborne Tin, a mining exploration company set up in 1962 to promote a revival in Cornish metalliferous mining. Having failed to obtain the job, which was given to Jack Trounson, he returned to West Africa only to receive a message to return to Cornwall in the far more important role of manager of South Crofty.

His became manager of the mine in May 1963, asking to work alongside the current manager, N K Kitto for a few months while he acquainted himself with the extensive workings of the old mine. When he took over the reins he exploded into action, reorganising almost every aspect of the mine's management and mining methods. He organised a mine rescue team; he

reintroduced electric cap lamps (previously rejected after a half-hearted attempt to introduce them a few years earlier); he improved ventilation through Roskear and Taylors shafts; he replaced the old steam whim with an electric winder; he introduced Hunslett diesel locos and Granby wagons onto 380fm level; he ordered a pickling plant to treat timber; he installed a geo-chemical laboratory; a training school was started, with Howard Mankee in charge; the diamond drilling programme was expanded; Cooks Shaft was given new runners for new aluminium skips; new pumps were put into the 340 pumping station; a 40 hour week was introduced for miners; injury and sick pay was introduced; long-hole drilling was brought into use in Robinsons and Cooks Complex lodes; ear muffs and reamer steels came into use; £1,000,000 was spent modernising HMS and the rest of the concentrating plant; Robinsons Shaft was deepened to 380 and East Pool was drained and ready for exploitation.

As all this work to modernise the mine progressed the annual profits rose inexorably throughout the 1960s and '70s. In 1970 the mine was visited by Prince Charles, the Duke of Cornwall, and Gerald Pengilly was proud to show him around the underground workings. In 1972 Mr Pengilly was awarded the MBE for services to Cornish mining, and few could have begrudged him the honour. By then he was a director of St Piran Mining Co., the owners of Crofty, and shortly afterwards he became Managing Director. He continued to take overall charge of the mine, despite mine managers running it on a day-to-day basis. In July 1979 Mr Pengilly resigned as Managing Director of South Crofty. He remained the most highly respected mining man in Cornwall and sat on various committees and boards, including the Board of Governors of Camborne School of Mines, of which he was, for a couple of years, Chairman, using his enormous knowledge and experience of mining for the benefit of all those in the industry. Members of the Cornish Miners Association were pleased and proud when Mr Pengilly accepted the presidency of the Association. He was an active and enthusiastic member, sometimes attending meetings in Camborne, despite living in Liskeard and being in poor health. He will be greatly missed by the former mine workers of South Crofty and all those who knew him.

Of course Gerald Pengilly was not the only former colleague lost during the last twelve months. There have been too many to list here and all of them will be missed by their families, former work mates and friends. Former mine captains, shift bosses, machinemen, trammers, fitters, crusher men, timbermen, electricians have all passed away during 2007 at an alarming rate. It would be invidious to attempt to list them because some would inevitably be missed. Sufficient to say that we all regret their passing and will miss their company.

The CMA website at www.cornishminers.com has an expanding list of **words used in Cornish mines** and is always on the lookout for more. Here is just a small sample:

Gad	A thin chisel used to chip rock when forming a hitch, removing loose ground or similar activities
Gelatine Dynamites	The most common form of nitro-glycerine based explosives used in the mining industry before the use of AN-FO based slurries and prills. They are still used for specific purposes, having better water resistant properties and velocities, etc.
Gangue	The waste materials in the lode, generally quartz, fluorspar, oxides of iron
German Key	A 2 to 3ft. long, square section steel bar with right angled crook at one end, used as a spanner for large (3 to 4 inch) screw thread 'steam union' joints in pipework.
Grade	Two meanings as below Grade and Line – The means of setting the correct gradient and direction of a heading, particularly for cross-cuts and access drives. The grade being set by strings across the drive and the line by strings hanging from the back. These lines were strung from pegs put in and advanced, when required, by the survey department. Mill Grade – The grade, by percentage, of the metal contained in the treated ore produced by the mill, as deduced from samples. Mine Grade – As above but applying to the average amount of metal contained in the ore as sent up the shaft. Ore Grade – As above but applying to any batches of ore produced, for example that trammed from a stope in a shift.
Granby	A type of wagon to transport broken rock. The granby wagon has a side opening door that, by a system of levers, opens up as the wagon butt is raised at the other side. At SC the granby wagons were of 40 and 65 cu ft capacity.

Pasty Facts (courtesy of www.Wikipedia.com & associated authors)

It is generally accepted that the pasty originates from Cornwall, where pasties evolved to meet the needs of Cornish tin miners. Tradition claims that the pasty was originally made as lunch ('croust' or 'crib' in the Cornish language) for Cornish miners who were unable to return to the surface to eat. The story goes that, covered in dirt from head to foot (including some arsenic often found with tin), they could hold the pasty by the folded crust and eat the rest of the pasty without touching it, discarding the dirty pastry. The pastry they threw away was supposed to appease the knockers, capricious spirits in the mines who might otherwise lead miners into danger.

A traditional Cornish tale claims that the devil knew of Cornishwomen's propensity for putting any available food into pasties, and would never dare to cross the River Tamar into Cornwall for fear of ending up as a pasty filling.

The word "oggy" in the popular British rhyme "Oggy Oggy Oggy, Oi Oi Oi" is thought to stem from "*hoggan*", the Cornish word for pasty. When the pasties were ready for eating, the bal-maidens at the mines would shout down the shaft "Oggy Oggy Oggy" and the miners would shout "Oi Oi Oi" meaning yes, or alright. The Welsh comic Max Boyce apologised to the Cornish nation for taking the rhyme from Cornwall and claiming it to be Welsh. It is often sung at Cornish rugby matches where it is accompanied by a second verse.

Pasties are the subject of various competitions and festivals. In Fowey, Cornwall a large pasty is paraded through the streets during regatta week. It is 6 foot long and is so heavy that it needs to be carried by four men - normally in fancy dress. Similarly, a giant pasty is lifted over the goal posts of the Cornish rugby team when they play an important match. Calumet, Michigan holds "Pasty Fest" each summer to celebrate the regionally famous food.

Although there is no official world record for the largest pasty, in 1985 a group of Young Farmers in Cornwall spent 7 hours making a pasty over 32ft long. This was believed to have been beaten in 1999 when bakers in Falmouth made their own giant pasty during the town's first ever pasty festival.

The Cornwall Records Office in Truro has a recipe for a Cornish pasty of 1746. This is the earliest record of a true *Cornish pasty* recipe.

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!

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.

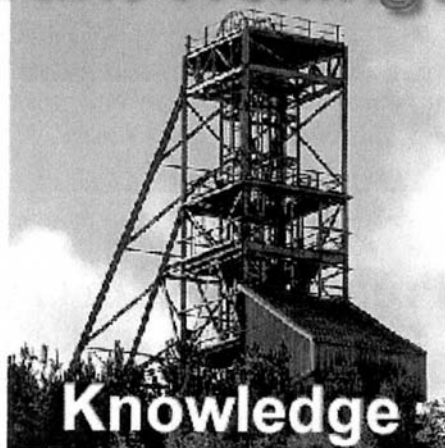
The CMA organises get-togethers for former and current employees of Cornwall's mines. Talks will also be given on all aspects of mining around Cornwall. The CMA will, when ever possible, produce a newsletter to inform members and associate members of forth coming events and to let them know what the 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**.

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Mount Wellington



Richard Freeborn says....*"We bought the Mount Wellington Mine site in January 2007. Cornwall has four large modern mines, Geevor, Jane, Crofty and Wellington. Unlike the other three, sadly, there is virtually no history at all of Wellington, as it operated in the latter years as a satellite of Jane."*

"I'd be very pleased to have copies of any photos, plans or anything else to do with Wellington."

"We have renovated two buildings so far (the office building at the top, and the old Engineering/Loco building). We plan to renovate the Mill Building, and the other dry".

Richard Freeborn

Tel: 01872 862140

Fax: 01872 862440

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.

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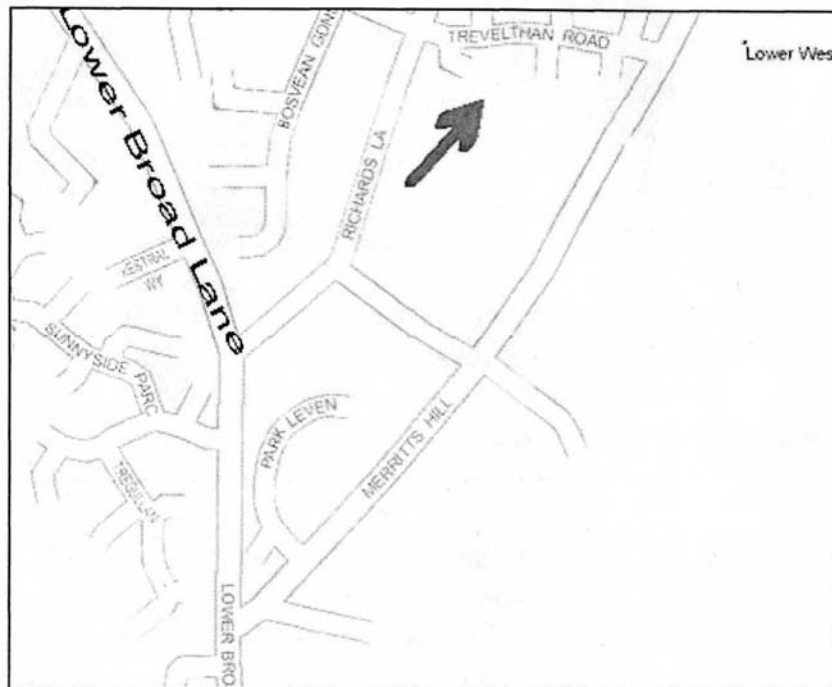
Mining Reports

Contact: Derek Morgan, 07772 688 110

CMS Xmas Drink

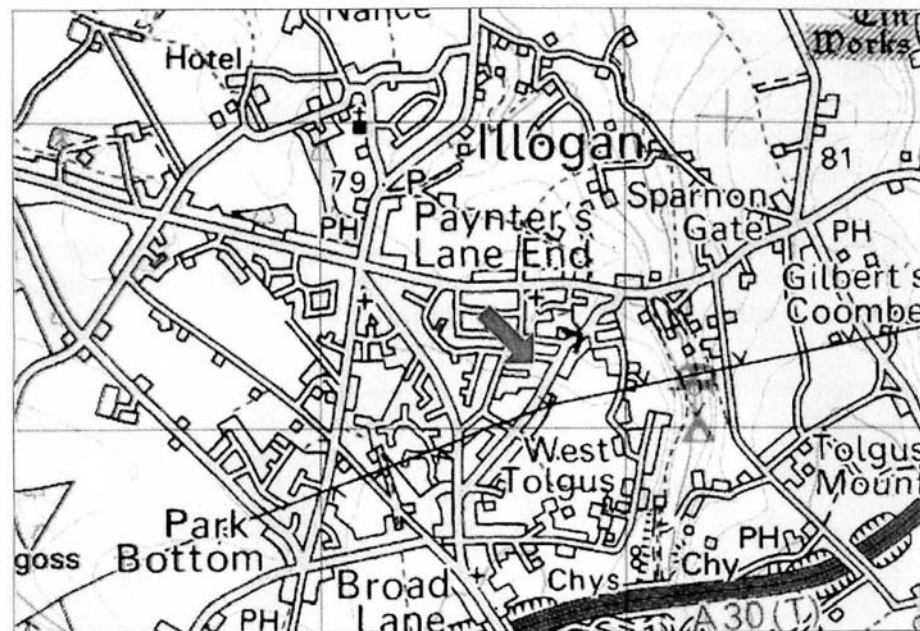
The annual event many of us eagerly look forward to – the end of year get-together – will be held at the same venue as last year – ILLOGAN FOOTBALL CLUB, Richards Lane, Illogan. This year it will be the last Friday in November, 30th at 7.30 pm. NOTE: THE LAST FRIDAY IN NOVEMBER!

Last year was a bit noisy due to the loud music – this year there will be none – and the fact that the Club was double-booked. So all come and bring your partners and friends for a QUIET NIGHT of chat and reminiscence.



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

CMA Xmas Drink



Map of Illogan Football club: site of the 2007 Xmas drink, 7:30pm, Friday 30th November.

See inside for more details.

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.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR ANNUAL CMA MEMBERSHIP FEES.