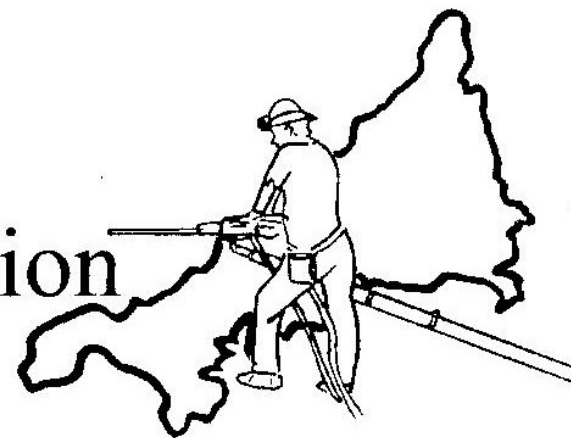




Christmas Drink 2008
Illogan Football Club
7.30pm Friday 28th November 2008

Cornish Miners Association



**NEWSLETTER No.15
of the Cornish Miners Association**

November 2008

CORNTSH MINERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER No.15

Chairman's Comments

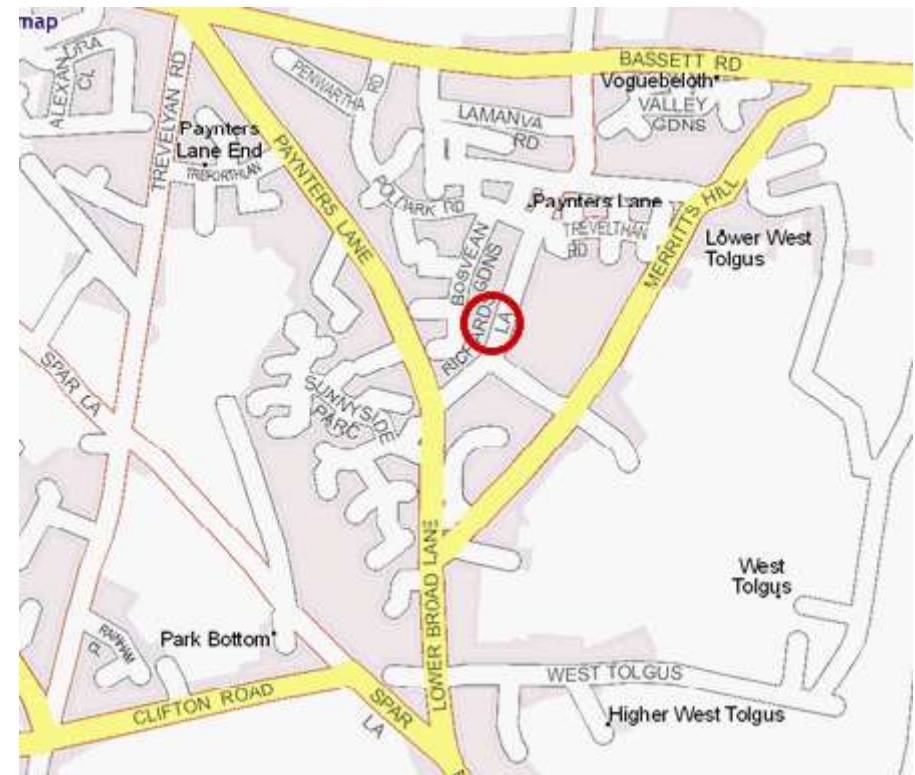
Since the last Newsletter times have been a triile trying. The weather has been appalling - the wettest summer most of can remember — the economy has gone belly-up, and South Crofty Mine has hit unexpected problems. The Great Crosscourse has proved a major test, as has a large and unrecorded shaft directly above the principal western drive. However, the problems are being overcome and the drive west is resuming, so that the drive will shortly become an inclined shaft. Let's hope the impending recession does not have too great an effect upon us - especially those of us whose pensions are vulnerable!

We have continued to meet every last Friday in the month at Tyacks Hotel lounge bar, and we have been a diminishing group. Alan and Sheila Beattie now live mostly up-country and have been unable to attend as regularly as they did; Afan Taylor, another regular, has been seriously ill in hospital, and, regrettably, we have lost one of our staunchest and most regular attendees, with the death of David Aimable. David and his wife Jennie were always there to greet us when we arrived for a drink. We shall miss David's company and dry sense of humour.

MURDOCK DAY

In June we once again set up our stall in Fore Street Redruth for Murdock Day. Once again it was a resounding success, with full-size working engine, Murdock must stand alongside the Frenchman who had similar ideas decades earlier.

The ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DRINK will be at Illogan Football Club at 7.30pm Friday 28th November 2008. All are welcome - bring your mates, your wives, your girl friends and your admirers. Last year was a great turnout with many friendships renewed. Thousands of tons of good ore was broken and trammed to the shaft - just as it should be!



the level or stamped on it at some time — but, he always had a replacement!

David Aimable will never be forgotten by his workmates, his fellow Vincent motor bikers, his neighbours and all his other friends. Those of us who had a drink with him and Jennie every month at Tyacks will certainly miss him. He was indeed unique, a 'one off! All his former workmates will undoubtedly join us as we express our condolences to his widow, Jennie, and his family.

The whole day went off well, with local primary schools displaying their talents with colourful and original floats. The local bands also did brilliantly, creating a happy and relaxed atmosphere in which the people of Redruth could enjoy a day out. The mining and engineering displays in Murdock House and elsewhere were also well-worth visiting. The statue of the 'Angel of the North' Cornish miner came in for many interesting and sometimes raucous comments. Perhaps it really was Councillor Mark posing with arms spread wide to show the size of the fish he had just caught! We will never know!

EARLY MINING IN CAMBORNE & REDRUTH

In the May Newsletter (No.14) we looked at the early tin industry in the Camborne-Redruth-Illogan area, with respect to streaming for alluvial tin. By the middle of the 15th century - certainly by 1450 - attention had turned more to the primary tin lodes in the district - from which the alluvium had originally been washed. By the 1490s many of these small tin mines were well established and overtaking the streams in tin production. At first many of these mines were open-caste "coffin" works, where the surface outcrop of the lodes were worked as long trenches - open to the skies. Soon shaft and level mining became the norm, as with greater depth the removal of the overburden became an expensive and onerous task. In the Camborne-Illogan-Redruth district the first of these lode mines were located on the high granite hills along the south of the three parishes. Here the lodes were exposed by the action of the weather and by farmers ploughing the shallow soil, which covered the underlying granite. The earliest recorded of such mines in Camborne Parish lay at Treslothan, Troon and Beacon, where these mines were recorded in the Camborne Churchwarden's Accounts from the 1540s onward. In 1541 there was a mine recorded at Carn Mough, approximately

where Troon cemetery lies. This became part of South Condurrow Mine in later centuries. Two mines were at Treslothan in 1546, one part-owned by a Tyrag Bolenow and the other by John Antron. There was also a mine at Chytodden, Troon, which was called Goon Antron, and the workings of which can still be seen. To serve these small, local tin mines there was a set of stamps at Chycane, Troon. Another tinwork, possibly a lode mine, lay at Penponds in the 1560s.

The most important 16th century tin mine in the district was at Tolcarne, near Beacon. John Norden, who visited the district in the 1580s, described it as among the most important tin mines in the Stannary of Penwith & Kerrier. There are references to Tolcarne as an important tin mine from that time on, and it continued to operate spasmodically until the closure of Wheal Pen-darves (of which it formed a part) in 1987. Hannibal Vyvyan of Camborne, a member of the Trelawarren family, who still own the mineral rights there, was involved with Tolcarne Mine in the late 1500s. His son, also called Hannibal, was one of the most famous mine engineers of his day, and patented an engine for dewatering mines and moving heavy weights through mine shafts.

In Illogan Parish, the group of tin bounds on Carnkye, known as Carnkye Bal, was extremely important from the late Medieval period. In 1546 and 1556 one of the bounds - St Laurence's Work, paid into Camborne Parish Church accounts sums of money, indicating that the Parish Church had been left a share in the mine. The Miene (Maine) and Richard (Richards) families were the tinnerns working the mine, and these two families both feature in the tinner's lists for Camborne in the 1530s. Carnkye Bal remained very important throughout the 17th century, and in the 1690s an extremely modern water-powered pumping engine was installed there. This was replaced by a state-of-the-art Coster engine, in the 1740s.

OBITUARY:

David Paul Aimable, aged 73.

David Aimable was born in 1935 in Dar as Salaam, in the old British colony of Tanganyika. His father had gone to East Africa to help run the East African Railways, which served Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. David was brought among expats who either were employed in the colonial service, worked on the railways or were miners.

David got involved in mining when he was still a young teenager, bluffing his way into jobs about which he knew virtually nothing - but he soon learned, gaining experience and skill in the tough mining camps of East and Central Africa.

During the Mau Mau emergency In the early to middle 1950s, he served in the local defence forces, and saw regular action against the insurgents. Once the troubles were over, and the British granted independence to those former colonies, David felt it expedient to decamp to England, and he fetched up in London, where he drove double-decker 'buses.

However, the call of mining was too much for him, and in 1962 he moved to Cornwall and got a job at South Crofty Mine.

Early on he was appointed shiftboss, but he soon reverted to his favourite position of machineman, and it was in this capacity that he is best remembered by his many fellow miners. Over nearly 30 years David built a reputation as a highly skilled miner, mostly working on main development, and many of South Crofty's lode drives and crosscuts - now flooded - were driven by David and a series of mates. His many mates over the years retain a vast store of anecdotes — some hilarious and most outrageous - about his eccentricities. Everybody remembers his notorious 'measuring stick', which he insisted had to be used precisely as instructed to place the various 'easers' around his 'burn cut'. Most of us have thrown the thing down

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 01872573299.



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An even earlier tin work - probably a mine - was referred to in 1517 at Forest, right at the southern end of Illogan Parish. Another possible tin mine in Illogan was at Trevenson, where a tinbound registration dated 1507 details a mine called 'Whyle Forth Eglos'. There was a field in Trevenson, near where the SWEB yard now is, which was called 'Forth Eglos' (Vorth Eglos/Feriglis, etc), and in the early 18th century (1712-22) when Pool Adit was being driven, mention was made in the Cost Book, of draining ancient mine workings there. References to other tin working at Trevenson date from the 1540s, when a blowing house just north of Park Forth Eglos was mentioned, and toll tin was shown to be being important there in the 1590s.

In Redruth there was a group of tin mines at the top of the town, between Raymond Road and St Day Road cemetery. The district was called Polpone until the 19th century, and there were four small tin mines there in the 1490s: 'Whyle an Tye', 'Whele Bound Polsyken', 'Polpone' at Polpone Wolas (Lower Polpone), and 'Polpone' at Terrice Park.

It is fascinating to think that throughout this area 500 years ago, there was so much mining activity. The last article mentioned that in the 1530s no less than 333 tinnerns were listed for Camborne, Illogan and Redruth. The locations of most of the mines and tin streams can still be identified. What is perhaps more interesting, certainly for local Cornishmen, are the names of those ancient tinnerns, for their families are still here and many of Crofty's recent employees are members of them.

JAB

BOOK REVIEW

Voices of the Cornish Mining Landscape by Sharron P Schwartz. Published by the Mineral Tramway Heritage Project. 128 pages & many illustrations. Price £6.99.

This is an excellent book, which brings together so much of the history of Cornwall's mines and miners. It seeks, mostly successfully, to recreate for the reader the atmosphere of yesteryear, when the whole of west Cornwall was dominated by mining and its ancillary industries. The Cornish landscape is beautifully described, often through the words of those who have lived in it for many decades. The photographs, some of them wonderful aerial pictures, are outstanding, and the book is probably worth the price for these alone. The chapter on Cornish enginehouses is also excellent, and the admirable advice of Ken Brown, the acknowledged expert on Cornish engines and enginehouses, was used throughout the book. Many of the photographs of enginehouses have not been published before, and make a welcome change from those which are printed over and over again.

The chapter on Cornish migration deals with the area of expertise of the author. Dr Schwartz probably knows more about the Cornish mining diaspora than any living person, and in the chapter entitled, 'Migration: Cornishmen Roam all the Earth', she demonstrates a breadth of knowledge and understanding unrivalled among her academic contemporaries. Here is the story of the export from Cornwall of the many skills necessary for successful hard-rock mining. And not just mining skills, but every facet of engineering was also carried by Cornishmen from Holmans, Climax and a host of other factories, around the globe. Dr A K Hamilton Jenkin wrote that Cornishmen 'taught the world to mine'. And although that may have been a slight, understandably patriotic view, it certainly contained more than

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 forthcoming 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 contact the Membership Secretary on 01209 218831.

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR ANNUAL
MEMBERSHIP FEES**

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 work-mates at home and abroad.



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SWMT LTD is dedicated to providing specialist services to the mining and tunnelling industry; its expertise extends into general rock engineering. The company was formed in 1984. The senior directors have spent their working lives in the mining and construction industry, and maintain a close personal contact with all work undertaken. Since the company was founded it has undertaken work in all parts of the British Isles.

a glimmer of truth. In the second half of the 19th century, every mining field in the world had miners who were trained at Dolcoath, and every mine throughout North, Central and South America, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and Europe had men familiar with the mining landscape of west Cornwall.

The chapter entitled "Mining: The Bal was Life", has some disappointing aspects. Although there is much of it that is good, there are a few pieces of uncharacteristic carelessness. For a skilled researcher and keen observer like the author to fail to make the most basic checks on 'facts' presented from the memories of old men, and the 'romantic' after dinner speeches of light-hearted entertainers, is inexplicable! The description (page 58) of a new miner's first day at South Crofty is hilarious but, bears as much relation to the truth as does the claim that a Cornishman flew to the moon in his Ford Cortina! New miners started every week - frequently the sons, brothers, cousins and nephews of miners. How or why would or could the whim driver possibly know or care who was in the cage? Who would ever have heard of this man? A cage cannot go into 'free fall' its impossible! The youngster's imagined battering in the cage is for the evening entertainment of a crowd in a pub. If it ever happened to a newcomer, as described - none of the miners I have spoken to ever knew of it! Such things were occasional and relatively rare - apart from to the teller of the tale, apparently. The description on page 87 of the treatment meted out to one about to get married is also something of an exaggeration. Such things were very occasional, and the miners to whom it happened usually deserved it - not because they were getting married. The miners asked about such things, were as puzzled by it as, undoubtedly are the general populace. 'Often a small brush would be stuck up your rear end' states the unfortunate miner or I should say, claimed the popular entertainer! The only miner anybody remembers being 'crucified' in the way

described, thoroughly deserved it - after months of irritating his mates.

The practice of sons going to work with their fathers was long-established at Crofty, as at other Cornish mines (page 81). It was not "eased somewhat" to accommodate the father and son referred to - there are scores of examples from the mine, and many miners over the years were taught by their fathers. The above inaccuracies might not be particularly important. However, they do cause embarrassment to former miners, who feel that such exaggerated stories demean them. Historically this is probably not significant - why, after all, should future researchers worry about the accuracy of such things?

There is, however, a more serious charge: failure to check on facts which are historically important is inexplicable and inexcusable. It is not good enough, when an old miner tries to recall something from 60 years ago, to take his memory as gospel (page 111). When asked how many Polish miners were employed at Crofty, from the late 1940s to the 1960s, the old miner replied: 'about a couple hundred' - and the author, without thinking about the statistical improbability of this number, commented, "a third of the workforce"! In fact, examination of the employment records for the mine show that no more than 40 Polish miners worked at Crofty in those years, and never anything like that number at any one time. Only a handful remained for more than a few years, and some of that 40 left within weeks of starting. When asked how many Italian miners were employed, the same old man replied: 'hundred and fifty, two hundred¹'. The Italians were mostly Sicilians, recruited by Crofty's agents in two lots, in 1952 and about 1957. They totalled some 80 men. Many left at the first opportunity, although most saw out their contracts. Some of them remained at the mine for many years, and at least one of them was at Crofty for about 40 years. Again, why not check the facts?

Having said all this, the book remains one well-worth buying. It has much which is valuable and interesting. Undoubtedly, the failure to check facts or give appropriate weight to sources of information, had much to do with shortage of time. There appears to have been a certain amount of pressure to get the book finished and printed, and perhaps this might excuse the research failures and the tendency to take statements at face value.

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 - it's your round!
