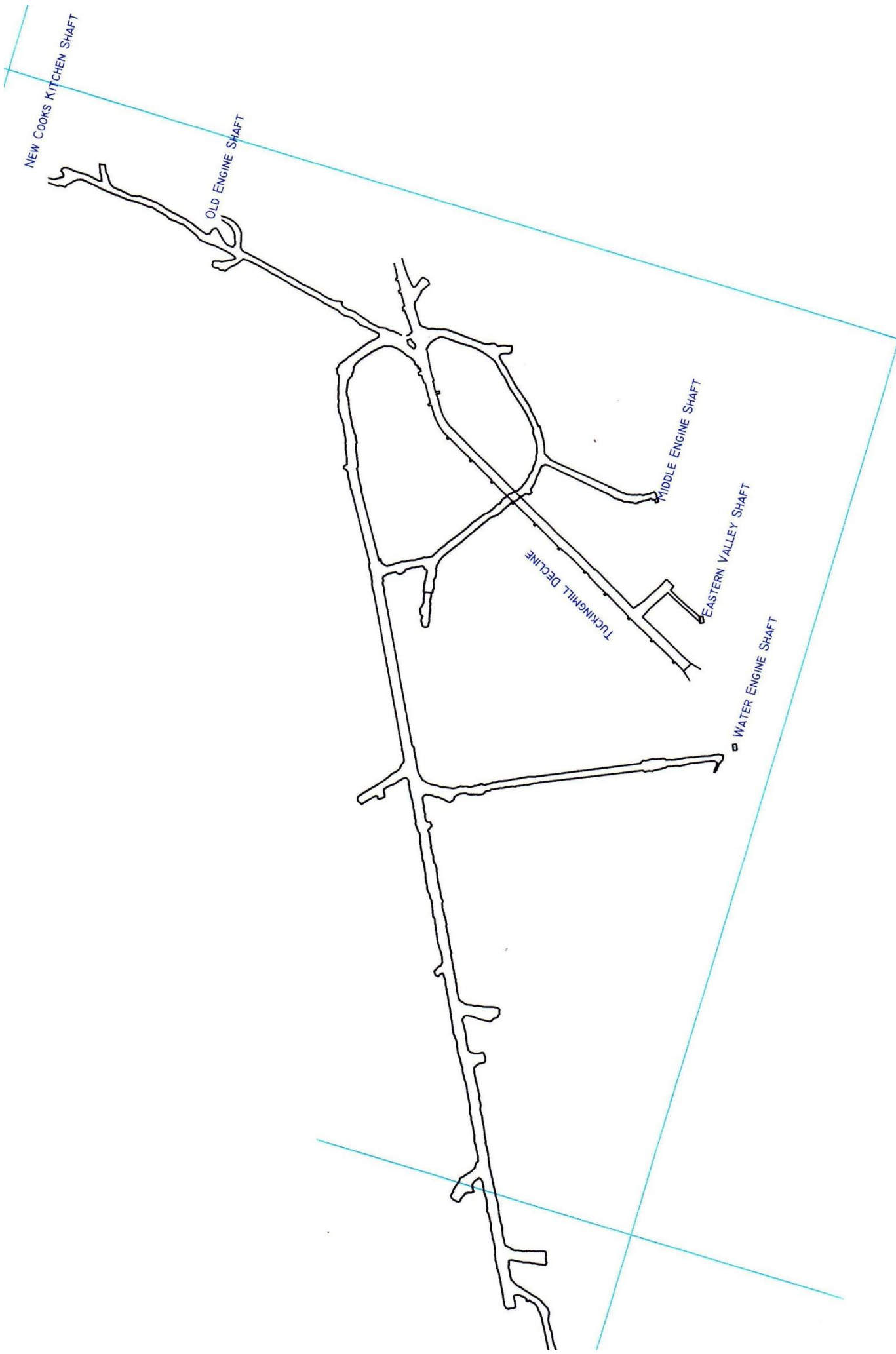


PROGRESS AT SOUTH CROFTY

Exploration drilling continues to dominate the activities of the mine workforce. Diamond drill holes have been put out in various locations in a northerly direction from the underground workings. There has also been a continuation of the surface drilling programme, with some of it from locations well to the north of the mine, at Duchy College. Underground mining has restarted with a drive westward from the end of the decline shaft. This is aiming to intersect the Wheal Bryant crosscourse, which runs north-south beneath Dolcoath Road and Dolcoath Avenue, just to the east of the old Kerrier District Council building. From this extension it is intended to expand the exploration diamond drilling operation considerably.

Some months ago a drive south from the decline shaft intersected old workings of Dolcoath Mine. A stope was cut just north of Water Engine Shaft and not far south of Old Valley Shaft. These workings date from about 1908, when Dolcoath Mine was re-examining lode close to the surface which had not been fully exploited in earlier centuries. A rich copper lode was cut by a south crosscut from Old Valley Shaft, and a connection was made to Water Engine Shaft. These workings were above the Dolcoath New Deep Adit, driven in the late 18th century (c.1775). An old windlass frame was found to be still in place above a winze sunk to the old adit level. As work progresses to open up the original Dolcoath sett, undoubtedly many other finds of historical interest will be uncovered.



THE MONTHLY DRINK AT TYACKS HOTEL

We continue to meet every last Friday in the month in the lounge bar of Tyacks Hotel: 7.30pm to chucking out time. As in the past the numbers attending have continued to vary, with anything from 4 of us up to nearly a dozen. No matter how many come we always have a good old yarn about the days when we were younger and fitter and mining. Why not try to join us one Friday and enjoy a chat and a pint of beer? Every so often a new face appears – usually one we have not seen for years or even decades!

OBITUARIES

Once again it is sad to report the deaths of several of our old friends and work colleagues. Jimmy Sedgemore, Fernleigh Mitchell, Willie Uren, Fred Mankee and Paul Bertie, have all died since the last Newsletter was printed. Jimmy was a machine man who will always be remembered for his constant, friendly smile. He followed his father and uncle into the mine. Willie has a permanent memorial at King Edward Mine, where he built from memory so many of the pieces of machinery on display. There was no part of the tin milling operation with which Willie was not totally conversant. His two brothers, Sid and Dennis, who also worked in the mill, predeceased him. Fernleigh was a shift boss who never failed to show kindness and patience to those working under him. He supervised the 315fm level for a considerable period, and knew every inch of it and everybody working on it. Fred Mankee, universally known as 'Bones', was always a cheerful workmate who will be sorely missed. He was one of Crofty's 'rope men', responsible for the installation and maintenance of the shaft ropes – those enormously strong cables used to haul the ore, men and materials to and from the surface. To lose Paul Bertie at such a young age is a particular tragedy. Paul was only 53 when he died suddenly. He worked in HMS as a teenager, and worked in Angola where he suffered from a vicious strain of Malaria. Like these other Crofty men, Paul will be missed by his many friends.

BOOK REVIEWS

The three books reviewed here are all published by the Trevithick Society to celebrate 75th anniversary

Hard Graft: Botallack Mine in the Twentieth Century by Peter Joseph. Published by the Trevithick Society. 238 pages. Many photographs, some coloured. Many maps and illustrations. £16.99 Softback.

Peter Joseph, who has a masters degree from CSM on industrial archaeology and one on geology, has written an extremely useful book on Botallack Mine during its last period of working – before the Great War. The historical account is excellent as he traces the story from 1906 to 1914. It was owned by the same company which ran South Crofty from 1906: Cornwall Consolidated Tin Mines Ltd. It did not enjoy the same success as Crofty, however, and was virtually finished before the Great War ended so much enterprise in Cornwall and elsewhere. The book deals with the various interested parties in the mine, the introduction of new and innovative machinery, the techniques used in the mining operation and the way Botallack intended to dress the ore once on surface. Many of the miners, the mill men, the managers and the other skilled craftsmen are also shown and sometimes identified.

Perhaps the best part of this book is that which deals with the remaining industrial archaeology of the site. Mr Joseph had the opportunity, when living at Botallack several years ago; to survey the remains after a major fire had destroyed most of the gorse, bracken and heather covering the surface workings. He was able to examine in detail many features it was impossible to even locate previously. His drawings, maps and plans of the site furnish us with one of the most comprehensive surveys of a long-abandoned mine site in existence.

For all those interested in Cornish mining history, and particularly those who love to walk around the sites and identify discernible features, this book is a must. At £16.99 I feel it is a useful and valuable addition to any library.

The Mechanical Methods of Dressing Tin Ore, etc by Leon Moissenet (1858) Translated into English by Tony Clarke (2010) Published by the Trevithick Society. Pages 173. Many very useful illustrations, diagrams, etc. Hardback £18.99

In 1857, Leon Moissenet, a distinguished French engineer, visited Cornwall and examined the workings of several famous mines, including the great Dolcoath. Moissenet was particularly interested in the way that tin ore was raised, crushed and dressed. His extremely careful and intelligent observations of these processes led to the book he published in French the following year. Tony Clark was a senior mineral processing technician at Camborne School of Mines for 25 years. His translation of this book is a tremendous achievement, and the value of it to researchers cannot be exaggerated.

This is a book that will be most appreciated by the connoisseur: those men who love to discover the way science and mechanics have developed over the centuries. No industry displayed more ingenuity at the 'grass roots' level, historically, than the Cornish mining industry. Every part of the tin ore dressing process witnessed constant improvements over the centuries, and most of these innovations resulted from the efforts of the ordinary men who operated the systems. Moissenet observed and described the state of play in the middle of the century, which saw most of these improvements. Contrary to a widely-held, but inaccurate belief, Cornish mine managers were constantly trying new methods and improving on old ones. The idea that they were universally 'old fashioned', reactionary and reluctant to change is a myth which is quickly dispelled once the evidence is examined. Moissenet described an industry which was fundamentally forward looking and constantly seeking improvements in both economy and efficiency. The sheer variety of systems and processes he found in the many mines he visited proves the desire for improvement evident throughout the industry.

This book is highly recommended and for all those interested in how things worked, it is a must at £18.99.

Dolcoath Mine; A History by Allen Buckley. Published by the Trevithick Society. Pages 462. Many photographs: coloured & black & white. Many maps, plans & illustrations. Hardback £36.99. Softback £25.99.

From the start, this book has to be viewed as the first truly comprehensive account of the history of Cornwall's premier mine. Other notable attempts to document this vast and complex enterprise have been made since the 1800s, but none have achieved quite what the author of this book has.

The evocative Dolcoath is a legend in Cornish mining, viewed as a grand and stately mine and is thought of with much pride amongst those whose families once toiled there. The name is synonymous with the good and the great of Cornish mining history, and to some extent even *world* mining. Famous engineers, inventors, assayers, miners, adventurers and families all appear in the history of Dolcoath.

The book has the author's trademark attention to detail and prolific use of original source material, the latter requiring an inordinate amount of time in searching for original documents and trawling through cost books and other records. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this well-presented book is the result of many years of research.

The book gives one a great sense of the people that made Dolcoath what it was. Every aspect of the mine's activities are included, from the contracts of miners and other workers, to their working conditions, the formation and running of the mine and its mineral sales and profits and how they all interacted to form a working metal mine. The book also touches on the daily lives and politics of the people involved, both local and international, that affected the mine through its long and illustrious history.

The printing quality and layout combine to produce a very readable tome in a nicely manageable size (18x24 cm), despite being over 460 pages long. The photographs used in the book are well chosen and are of excellent quality, in both black and white and colour. **Dolcoath Mine: A History**, is an essential purchase for those even remotely interested in Cornwall and its mining history.

The Trevithick Society has published this book to celebrate their 75th anniversary – they were formed as the Cornish Engine Preservation Committee in 1935.

Derek Morgan October 28th 2010

MINING HISTORY: SOUTH CROFTY

Accidents make up an important part of mining history, and South Crofty has seen its share of such incidents. Perhaps the worst accident at the mine in the 20th century occurred at 10 am, on December 12th 1924. A gang of men were sinking New Cooks Kitchen new vertical shaft below the 245fm level, when the staging they were working on collapsed, precipitating them to the bottom of the shaft. They were inserting timber sets in the shaft, when a large rock fell from the side and struck one corner of the staging. The stage was supported by four chains, and the rock caused one of these to break, tipping the miners into the open shaft. Seven men were involved, three of whom died as a result of the accident, and three of the others were seriously injured. At the inquest it was stated that the chains were tested to 16½ cwt, and should have held. However, the Mines Inspector believed that each man should have been attached to a life-line or safety belt.

The Accident Book's account is brief and graphic, for it tells the story of the accident in as few words as was possible in the space available on the page.

The six injured men were named as Ernest Luke, aged 46, whose weekly wage was given as 53s 9d. He lived on East Hill, Tuckingmill. William James Mitchell, aged 37, whose wage was 61s 3d a week, lived at Wheal Gerry, Camborne. David Vincent, aged 25, of 4 Kings Road, Camborne, earned 48s 9d a week. Telfer Mitchell, aged 23, of Roscroggan, Camborne, was paid 43s 9s a week. Harry Pendray, aged 28, lived on Illogan Highway. Frederick Richard Daniell, of 33 Cross Street, Camborne, was aged 35. No wages were given for these last two men.

The account states simply: "Whilst fixing timbers in New Cooks Shaft the stage collapsed causing him (Ernest Luke) and his partners to fall to the bottom of the shaft." Luke was seriously injured, both ankles being fractured. He was paid £225 compensation. William Mitchell suffered a fractured skull and other injuries, and died in Redruth Miners Hospital the following day. His family was paid £600. David Vincent suffered severe shock and cuts to his face. He returned to the mine after 87 days and received £16 9s 10d injury pay. Telfer Mitchell had a fractured skull and a badly injured leg. He did not return to underground work, but went to work in the local tin streams on the Red River. Years later he featured on the brochure of Tolgus Tin, where he acted as a tourist guide. He was paid £175 compensation. Harry Pendray suffered a fractured skull and dislocated shoulder. He died in the Miners Hospital the following day. His family were paid £532 16s compensation. Frederick Daniell was killed instantly by the fall. He had fractured ribs and a ruptured heart. Inexplicably, the record states that his family received no compensation.

All of these men, except Daniell, were taken straight to hospital from the mine. Daniell was taken to the 'mortuary on mine'. The man in charge was named as John Thomas. This was the redoubtable 'Captain Johnny Boo', long remembered at South Crofty as a stern but very eccentric mine captain.

During the first half of the 20th century both Robinsons and New Cooks Kitchen shafts were being sunk, and there were several accidents involving the men sinking them. In 1911 two men were killed by a blast when sinking New Cooks Shaft. In June 1924, a miner engaged in sinking Robinsons Shaft was killed when a hole exploded before he could get to safety. There were of course many less-serious accidents involving the shaft sinkers. Despite these accidents, South Crofty had a good accident record, with far fewer serious and fatal accidents than in other similar mines of the period.

THE ANNUAL DRINK

As in previous years, this year we will be meeting at Illogan British Legion Football Club on the **last Friday in November**. Once again there will be no music, so that we can brag about our past successes without interruption. Undoubtedly, many thousands of tons of ore will be broken and many thousand fathoms of drive completed before the end of the night. All are encouraged to bring their friends, former workmates, wives and girl friends. Last year, as in previous years, we had a good turnout, with scores of old friends meeting for the first time in twelve months. Try to make it, and tell all ex-miners and those interested in mining to come and enjoy a great night.