



# THE TREVITHICK SOCIETY

**KOWETHAS TREVITHICK**  
NEWSLETTER 165 AUTUMN 2014



John Woodward and Sean Oliver, driving the Puffing Devil, as never seen before!

Reg. Charity  
No. 246586

# CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

## Research

Over the years this Society has co-ordinated and published the research of its' members. This has often been a case of laborious hand or type writing to be set and published in our books or journal. These would be taken off a shelf and read by one person at a time. But technology has moved on and there are means by which we can share our work of yesteryear and in the future with thousands at a time.

The initial digitisation of this Society's possessions has just been completed. Our thanks are due to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Alan Renton who has led a team of volunteers to record hundreds of pages of documents, to scan all manner of images and to photograph numerous artefacts. Working with Kenn Shearer, his link to this Society, he has prepared material for Sean Croft, our web master, to make available on his new website.

This worldwide availability of material for education and research is just a beginning that widens the purpose of this Society as a source of information connected to Cornwall's rich industrial heritage. We have many more important maps, drawings and images to share with the world; some help with scanning them would be appreciated.

Research is not limited to digitisation. In the following pages you will learn of a team working South America, a Japanese professor visiting Camborne and a plea for some family history.

**Philip M Hosken**

# EDITORIAL

It is sad to report the deaths, earlier this year, of Dr Hugh C. Hollingsworth, Peter Young, Stuart B. Smith OBE, Claire Leith (see page 14) and Dennis Jenkin (see page 14).

- Dr Hollingsworth was a regular at Society Meetings and had a real fascination with mining history, engineering and geology.
- Peter Young started the Wendron Forge tourist attraction (later renamed Poldark Mine) and filled it with many exhibits acquired from the Holman Museum.
- Stuart Smith was the chief executive of the Trevithick Trust and in that capacity attended Society Council meetings as a guest. Prior to that he was a director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and helped to steer the designation of that historic complex of museums towards becoming a World Heritage Site due to its particular importance in the early years of the Industrial Revolution. He also served as Secretary for the International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage (TICCIH).

**Colin French**

**Copy date for next newsletter: December 10th 2014**



**Established 1935**

## COVER ILLUSTRATION



We are delighted to have an amusing cartoon of Trevithick's Puffin' Devil as the cover of this edition. It was originally prepared for a song book 'Going up Camborne Hill' for the Devoran Gig Club.

The artist is a former design engineer who worked for Rolls Royce at Bristol before, as he put it, he moved to Cornwall and took up doodling silly pictures as a full time occupation. You will have seen Nick Brennan's work in the Dandy and Beano and he has undertaken numerous commissions including an educational booklet in Northern Ireland.

We hope to see more of his skill and, should you have any similar work that needs a professional touch, he will be pleased to hear from you if you contact him through [www.cartoonfun.co.uk](http://www.cartoonfun.co.uk)

**P.M.H.**

## MISSIONARY WORK!

The Railway Division of the Glasgow branch of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers has kindly invited me to speak about Richard Trevithick on December 10th. It's expected that some related organisations will also be there. This could be an interesting evening in the heart of Watt country. It also reveals the growing interest in Trevithick's place in the development of early steam power and open-mindedness in Glasgow, one of the few places to vote 'Yes' in the recent

referendum. Anyone in the area who would like to provide moral support to me, and my daughter who will be there from Edinburgh University, should contact David Shirres, Secretary of the Railway Division at [dshirres@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dshirres@blueyonder.co.uk)

I also expect to be addressing the Newcomen Society at Bristol in April; more of that in due course.

**P.M.H.**

## POLDARK MINE

During the recent summer the famous Cornish mining landmark of Poldark Mine acquired a new owner. David Edwards re-opened underground experience and museum. He has commendable plans to extend the attraction to reveal and explain more of Cornwall's extensive industrial and mining heritage. He intends to develop live steam on site and create true representations of Cornwall's mining past.

It is fortunate that the BBC is remaking the popular Poldark television series based on the novels of Winston Graham of Perranporth and, we believe, will start screening them in April next year. David intends to develop an exhibition based on the first series and this is bound to attract attention.

David has become a member of the Trevithick Society and is anxious to develop links with its members. They are invited to visit Poldark Mine FREE of charge on production of a valid membership card. You will be made very welcome and your input will be appreciated.

**P.M.H.**



## PUBLICATIONS

*The Last Great Cornish Engineer: William West of Tredenham* by John Manley is now on sale after a successful launch at Liskeard on 13th September. This new biography of a hugely significant figure in Cornish mining and engineering history is a 200 page illustrated paperback and great value at £14.99. ISBN 978 0 9575660 2 6.

Selling well too is Pete Joseph & Gerald Williams' *Ding Dong Mine*, also a large format paperback at £15.99. We now have only a very few copies left of the hardback edition of *Devon Great Consols* by Rick Stewart so don't delay and miss out on this definitive history.

Courtney Rowe's book *Marconi at The Lizard* has again been reprinted and is now available at £9.99. By the time this Newsletter reaches you we shall also be offering a new history of *Ding Dong Mine* by Peter Joseph and Gerald Williams. This is the first detailed history of this ancient mine, whose engine house dominates West Penwith, and is excellent value at £15.99.

Two of our earlier volumes have now been reduced in price. Tony Clarke's translation of Moissenet's 1857 volume on *The Mechanical Methods of Dressing Tin Ores* is a bargain at £13.99 and our reprint of the *1884 Harvey Trade Catalogue* is also a snip at £6.99. Finally for members who were unable to attend this year's AGM in Bude, we have a number of the AGM Tour Notes still available for purchase. The Notes cover Delabole Quarry, the coastal slate

quarries between Tintagel and Trebarwith and the Bude Canal. Cost is £6.00 plus postage; orders for these to the Chatline, 01209 716811.

**Graham Thorne**

## LISKEARD BOOK LAUNCH

Some 30 or 40 Society members and friends from Mid and East Cornwall gathered in Liskeard on Saturday 15th September for the launch of John Manley's new life of William West, "The Last Great Cornish Engineer". Those attending were treated to an illustrated lecture by John at the Liskeard Museum which is currently undergoing refurbishment. Then followed a brief guided walk through the Town Centre which amply confirmed, should any doubt it, the huge influence of William West in Liskeard and its vicinity.

On arrival at The Bookshop we were treated to readings from the book by our author punctuated by readings from a splendid Victorian eulogy of the great engineer. These were performed with gusto by John's son, another William.



John announced at the outset that he hoped further to disprove the popular fallacy in engineering that “Watt invented the steam engine, Stephenson the railway and Brunel everything else”. Certainly our West book was given a splendid send-off; thanks go to the Museum and Bookshop in Liskeard and to Cheryl Manley for her contribution, not least facilitating contact with an author literally ‘all at sea’ during the book’s preparation.

**Graham Thorne**

### **HOLMAN BROS. (CANADA)**

Our Holman history continues to generate interest from all over the world. Chris Stacey got in touch from Waterloo, Ontario, in July. A third generation Holman/Compair employee, he had bought a copy of the book while home on vacation and through family knowledge was able to correct the date of the photograph of the Climax Orchestra on Page 261. We had dated it at 1930 but Chris showed that 1944 was the correct date.

Chris came to work for Holman at Kitchener, Ontario in 1968 and says there are still others around from the same era. The Kitchener branch had escaped notice in our history. In further correspondence Chris amplified his Holman career. He began work in the Applications Office of the Maxam Division in 1965, designing pneumatic control circuits. He worked for Ken Jenkin (now deceased) and Alan Chesterfield. Colleagues included Peter Dingle, Carol Collier, Jim Taylor, Malcolm Trestrail and Dolores Hunkin.

He decided to move to Canada and then found by chance that Holman was seeking someone to do his current job in Kitchener. There was no mining in that area but a lot of development with consequent sales of compressors to municipalities. Names from those days were Brian Richmond (d. 2013), and John Tyrell a salesman from Maxam UK. Others employed were Roger Paradise, Mike Davies and Tony Hutchinson, son

of Jim; Dave Blight was manager of the compressor plant.

After CompAir was formed, the plant in Kitchener closed and compressor building moved to Broomwade in Oakville near Toronto, while Maxam moved first to Milton and later to the Broomwade plant. Chris also enclosed an entry in The Montreal Gazette for June 1967 about Holman Bros. (Canada).

Chris was in Camborne for Trevithick Day 2001 to see the Puffin’ Devil, meeting Colin French and Phil Hosken.

**Graham Thorne**

### **MILESTONES AWARD**

*Cornish Milestones*, by Ian Thompson and published by Twelveheads Press, recently reviewed in the Trevithick Society Newsletter, has won the Holyer an Gof Trophy of the Cornish Gorseth for the most outstanding entry in this year’s competition. It was also the overall winner of the non-fiction section.

The Holyer an Gof Publishers’ Awards were launched in 1996 to raise the standard and profile of publishing in Cornwall.

### **GOLDSWORTHY GURNEY VIDEO**

We’ve recently received an enquiry from a film maker concerning the possibility of making a short film about the Cornish engineer, Sir Goldsworthy Gurney. He wonders if we have any information we could share. Anyone who could help him is invited to contact [simon.willis@talktalk.net](mailto:simon.willis@talktalk.net) or [simon.willis.01@bbc.co.uk](mailto:simon.willis.01@bbc.co.uk).

We naturally supplied the timeline being created by the South American team and suggested he might consider making a film about Richard Trevithick, just so long as he didn’t make him look like Crocodile Dundee.

**P.M.H.**

## HENHAM STEAM RALLY

*From Far West to Mystic East*

The Henham Steam Rally in Suffolk celebrated its 40th year in September 2014 and, seeking an unfamiliar attraction, lit upon inviting us to display the Puffing Devil, and so the Devil on its low loader and four Society stalwarts made the long journey across the whole the breadth of England. There we received a friendly welcome and attracted a good deal of interest. Sadly there was nowhere suitable to run the Devil but it was in light steam on the two Rally Days and received many admiring visitors. Kingsley Rickard and Graham Thorne were in attendance with the engine and David Mann and Phil Porter manned the yellow tent. Nor should we forget our driver Wayne Wills who made the journey, 10 hours each way, with great good humour and ingenuity.

The visit was well worth while, raising interest and the Society's profile. Takings at the tent came to over £220 and visitors put nearly £50 in our two donation boxes. Kingsley was interviewed by the



show commentator and also attracted large crowds when producing bacon rolls cooked on the shovel. Weather was kind and the whole weekend was a most enjoyable experience. We met some wonderful characters or 'good ol' boys' as they say in East Anglia. Let the last word go to one of them. After studying all aspects of the engine intently for a while, this worthy scratched his head and then said: "That's very nice, but what do it do? What's it for?" Clearly we still had some explaining to do.

**Graham Thorne**



## LEVANT REPORT

The replacement oil tank adjacent to the boiler house in the blowdown pit is now in service and the new Tiger Loop system worked immediately with no problems.

The daily service tank in the boiler house has been removed and its associated pump and level controls have been disconnected. The oil storage tank in Skip Shaft has also been removed and the block built bund demolished. This has opened up a large area that we hope to develop to improve the visitor experience when the weather is inclement. The roof on the headgear over Skip Shaft needs new felt and some timbers replaced before this other work can progress.

The engine continues to run well with only minor repairs needed. A spring fractured on the lower inlet double-seat valve that took the engine out of commission for just over an hour. As Harveys of Hayle went out of business over 110 years ago, no spares are available so a new one had to be fettled from scrap found in our workshop. A couple of spares have now been made so that the engine could be got going again in under ten minutes.

There has been extensive filming in the Levant area for the new TV series of Poldark. The production company have used the Whim engine house as a back drop, as well as a temporary film set being constructed around the Wheal Edward engine houses which are just beyond the Crowns Mine at Botallack. The first Poldark series used the Electric Winder house at Levant and clad it in hardboard to make it look like a much older Count House. The new Ross Poldark is an Irishman, so I just hope that he and the other actors have been coached properly in the Cornish accent, and don't mumble!

Two familiar faces that appear at Trevithick Society events are Pat and Peter Badger from Hertfordshire. They ably assisted with the removal of the boiler at Trethowell Wood for installation at Levant in 1992. Peter is a very experienced steam

engineer and has his own traction engine and regularly maintains and drives the Levant Whim whilst on holiday. They have now purchased a house in the area so it will be good to be seeing a lot more of them.

The summer season has been very busy with a noticeable increase of Dutch and German visitors, and the engine will remain in steam until after the half term school holidays at the end of October.

**Ron Flaxman**

## KING EDWARD MINE

It has been a busy summer at the museum but by the time you read this we shall have closed for the winter save for booked visits for groups. Group visits are on the increase and are a good advertisement for the site and of course a source of income. We constantly look at how we can use our extensive grounds and do try to encourage organisations to come. One example was an end of season steam up meeting for a few steam engines on October 4th and 5th organised by Ben Ralphs. Many members of the public attended the event and enjoyed the evocative "smell of steam".

The storage building has now been erected and racked out and volunteers have worked hard to transfer stores, artefacts and all manner of gems to fill it. Some "stock" still needs to be moved but this will be done in the next few weeks. It was extremely helpful that the contractor "parked" a teleporter on site for a few days and we happen to have a ticketed driver amongst our volunteers so we were able to move heavy kit easily.

The archaeological dig continues at the stamps boiler house and at the calciner. In both cases so much overburden now has to be removed that it is now beyond the "mandraulic" or shovel stage and we are having a mechanical digger on site to help. Let us hope we find some more exciting remains.

The mill crew have finished

refurbishing the dipper wheel and have now turned their attention to mounting the Cornish stamps barrel adjacent to the stamp heads attached to the west wall of the mill. This is an extremely heavy item and the supporting woodwork is being prepared to display the barrel at head height. It will then be easier to explain to visitors the modus operandi of stamps.

Although not within our jurisdiction the contractors are now working on the refurbishment of the couthouse block at the north end of the site. A void under the old messroom and a very unstable end wall of the couthouse has provoked a bit of head scratching by the contractors. Shortly a trench across the car park field will be dug to accommodate new services for the site.

The winter will be a busy one for the volunteers as we have a number of projects/improvements we wish to implement. Having a digger on site will be a boon to moving kit, spoil, building stone and materials.

We extend good wishes and congratulations to our partner organisation, The Carn Brea Mining Society, who have just celebrated their fortieth anniversary with a social evening and bun fight at King Edward. Sadly I was unable to attend being on duty with the Puffing Devil at the Grand Henham Rally near Lowestoft at the time, however, a modest celebration of bacon cooked on the shovel and a pint of Adnams had to suffice!

Finally we have had changes within the management board structure. Tony Brooks has stood down as Chairman but continues as a board member. The Chairman is now Kevin Baker. The other board members, Nigel MacDonald and the writer, continue in post. We have also welcomed to the board Lincoln James and Phil Porter who both have wide and useful experiences in their former lives and will be an asset to our organisation. I am sure they will find a certain fulfilment and a modicum of excitement in helping to take us into our challenging future.

**K.J.T.R.**

## SHOW AND RALLY PROGRAMME

We were at Camborne Show on 19th. July in sunshine and attracted a modest number of the public including a number of well known characters in the district. All good publicity. On this occasion the unit was manned by Phil Porter and the writer. A week later we found ourselves at the annual Bude Heritage Day. Normally pitched by the Castle, this time we were situated on the Wharf adjacent to the canal. A bright and sunny day with a breeze drew many people to the picturesque site and we had a busy day. This time we were manned by Phil Hosken, Phil Porter and the writer.

As usual in August we attended the West of England Steam and Country Fair, the Puffing Devil and the show tent being situated in their usual place close to the main entrance. For the last three years this rally has suffered extremely poor weather but this time the sun shone on us and it was a pleasure to be there meeting old friends and making new. Staff who gave of their time to man the tent for three days were Phil Hosken, Dave Mann, Phil Porter and the writer.

Tent sales have been flat for the last two seasons, no doubt due to the general financial situation. We are trying to think of any improvements we can make to attract the public to us, so, members, any ideas? Bear in mind, however, that there constraints on volume and weight as to what we can move to shows. It is important we continue to visit such shows as they do provide some much needed income and also good publicity.

**K.J.T.R.**





## PUFFING DEVIL

This year's Trevithick Day saw the crew, once again, dressed in period costume, the first time in quite a few years.

The night before Trevithick Day, The Puffing Devil was parked up on the forecourt of Glassons Garage in West Camborne and as usual attracted lots of interest by passers-by.

We lit the fire before 7.00 am but weather conditions deteriorated quickly forcing us to run for cover from a very heavy rain shower. Fortunately this was short-lived and the day soon brightened up.

Next we had to take the engine off the trailer which required both the driver and steersman on board. Releasing the brakes etc. we then go down the ramps a bit like the Sennen Life Boat but this time there was a big bang which resulted in us coming to a dead stop halfway off. It then transpired that somebody had lowered the tow hitch jack which in turn had raised the tow bar. This is what the front axle grounded out on. Fortunately, I managed to flag down David, a friend, who was passing with a large tractor and he got us off. About 90 minutes later we had sufficient steam to move and proceeded to climb the long hill up College Street into Camborne Town Centre.

All went well until just after 10.00 am when the engine started to sound odd. On inspection it was found that one side of a joint had broken on the rod that controls

the direction of the flow of steam to the cylinder (see photograph below). The rod was removed and taken to my workshop where Sean welded it up and painted it. By 11.00 am it was refitted and the engine was able to run again.

The run up Camborne Hill started well but we did not seem to be going very fast on the steep bit at the top third of the hill. Once we stopped, Sean the driver said that there wasn't the power that there should have been. This was only explained when we pulled out the fire at the end of the day. There was a large amount of clinker covering the grate.

The crew this year consisted of Sean Oliver, Colin French and John Woodward.

**John Woodward** (Custodian)



## DISCOVERING THE SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

With the opening of the exhibition at Heartlands to promote the launch of the new online collections, the Trevithick Society Digitisation Project entered a new phase.

Kenn Shearer (see photo) and I were visited by Radio Cornwall on the opening Monday and various parts of the interview were repeated several times on the Tuesday, in which we described some of the photographic panels used in the exhibition and discussed the aims and achievements of the project.

The image shown here from the exhibition is composed of a number of documents from the Trevithick Society collections including a Cornish Engines Preservation Society list of engine houses from the 1950s that it recommended preserving; a cover article from the Trevithick Society Newsletter about more engine houses being pulled down in the 1980s; and a photograph from 1934 showing demolition of the Cornish engine at South Caudledown.



Heritage Lottery funded projects are about promoting learning, volunteering and community participation and this project addressed these aims with the intention of better understanding what the collections are and how best to develop their potential for learning and enjoyment by making them accessible through online publication.

Much needed appraisal of managing these collections was an important part of the project and all collections are only as important as the knowledge we have of them and how we can use them to extend our understanding.

The Chairman should be applauded for visualising the project and promoting funding application to the HLF. This project has been very successful in achieving the agreed aims and when I say the project is entering a new phase that's because that is the situation! Digitisation of the Trevithick Society Collections is an ongoing approach to managing collections and promoting the knowledge about those collections that is now a permanent part of the Society.

Along with the launch of the HLF funded online collections Sean Croft has made major improvements to the Society



website more generally.

This screen grab shows a typical record: to see the images the user clicks on the PDF icon. The unique identifier shows the nature of the item, it is a document created by CompAir. The number '4' indicates it is a Human Resources record and the number '1' shows this is the first such record, the next being number '2' and so on to identify each successive record.

Each record has images and a summary describing the item in question along with dates and places and keywords and subject and so on. It is possible to search for records by using any of these terms or by company or individuals who may have created the documents, or numbers if known.

Please use the online collections and feed back all perceived failings- we welcome criticism so we can improve the situation!

The online collections include documents from the Cornish Engines Preservation Society and the early days of the Trevithick Society represented in Minutes, Newsletters and correspondence. It is easy to appreciate the usefulness of being able to browse this fascinating material any time you like on the internet and this resource will continue to grow and improve as you use it and contribute to it.

The project remains of crucial importance to the Society and represents a great opportunity for all members to contribute towards. We want you to share

your experience to help us enhance the knowledge of the collections, improving understanding of this legacy and making the collections meaningful and relevant both as a public resource but also to enable the Society to aim higher with standards for the management of its collections. Please do not underestimate the significance of all kinds of information, you don't have to be an expert in everything to be able to contribute!

Members can of course also become involved in the practical work of scanning and photographing items.

My role as Project Manager is finished but I have put in place all necessary procedures to ensure this work can continue and Kenn Shearer wants to hear from you so that you can become familiar with the collections and the procedures involved in digitising them.

In the coming months, digitisation of the Society Journal is a key aim but there are also the C.E.P.S. Minutes and other documents. The collections of Holman Brothers photographic negatives needs your help to help preserve, digitise and add records to the database.

It is fascinating to work with these collections and very important to the Society, so I can't emphasise more than in my previous Newsletter article that "You can become involved with the project and help it to develop in various ways including assisting with the digitising work or assisting with identification of objects and helping to

## New Wages Structure

Supported by



Unique ID Number: DOC\_COMP\_4\_1

**Description:** Brown folder with 81 collected papers, typed and handwritten, relating to regrading for occupations in the Holman works of Compair including Furnace workers, machinists, storemen, painters and drivers; 1975

Multi-page PDF:



<b>Record Number:</b>	753276
<b>Subject:</b>	Human Resources

add information. This developing body of knowledge will shape future decisions about managing collections and enable the Society to be in a strong position to seek funding and support for its projects. This work needs to continue long after the end of the project to encourage new people to become involved in the Society and help develop its' aims and to safeguard its' collections for future generations."

I hope you enjoy browsing through the collections and I hope you feel inspired to help Kenn! Send him an email right now! kernowkenn@gmail.com

**Alan Renton**

## RESEARCH IN SOUTH AMERICA

Just what did Ricardo Trevithick do during those years in South and Central America? We're often asked for details of his activities and his travels of thousands of miles between Chile in the south and Costa Rica in the north. We know that he was a miner, engineer and pearl fisherman. Unfortunately, Capt'n Dick was not one to record his adventures so until recently we have been left with an eleven year gap in his life that Francis, his son and biographer, had attempted to fill, much from his imagination. A lot has been written by others but it is mainly repetitious and there's been little fundamental research. The breadth of our knowledge and study of Trevithick's activities in the Americas could be likened to studies of the Roman emperors or the English monarchs based entirely on the writings of William Shakespeare.

Now we are fortunate to have a team of enthusiastic sleuths who will be pursuing all possible leads to trace Trevithick's movements from the history of the countries he visited.

On the ground in South America we have Ian Thomson Newman 'economista de transporte' who flits around Chile and Peru and Nicholas Neal-Useche, the Project Leader who is into biomass engineering and also has

an interest in Newcomen. He wishes to build a dramatic story to clearly explain Trevithick's activities. Both are searching local and British Embassy records while in the UK Roger Harris is seeking all he can find that is relevant to Trevithick's engineering and adventures in South America. All three have *The Oblivion of Trevithick* as a starting point and they have already produced a comprehensive time line of his life.

This is promising to become very important research and, whenever investigation of this nature is undertaken, it is likely that the outcome will change a number of currently held beliefs. The team will welcome any information that members are willing to share. Please contact Phil Hosken in the first instance.

## TREVITHICK'S FAMILY TREE



We are very grateful to the Research in South America team whose work demonstrates how dedicated research can be undertaken by members of this Society. There are many other facets of Trevithick's life that will benefit from research and one of them is the preparation of his family tree. As people understand Trevithick and his achievements we frequently hear from Trevithicks all over the world. They often claim descent from the great engineer but usually they are unable to prove it.

They would appreciate a Richard Trevithick's family tree. It would be a great asset to this Society and benefit to Cornwall and this country's history if could be constructed. We have a lot of material in this respect that we would be happy to

share with anyone willing to undertake the work. Is there also a possibility of DNA being made available?

As it takes shape, the family tree could appear alongside other material on the new digital website as a benefit to all who are interested.

## ANOTHER JAPANESE LINK

As this goes to press we are expecting a visit from the emeritus Professor Haruo Sakamoto from Osaka to examine our replica of Trevithick's 1801 Puffing Devil. Having examined the replica of Trevithick's 1804 Penydarren locomotive at Swansea he is querying why the inventor fixed wheels to square rotating axles. If this is true it has opened an interesting line of research. At this stage we don't think, having read his draft thesis, he appreciates that he may have stumbled upon the reason why the 1804 replica has broken four axles to this writer's knowledge. Did Trevithick provide the world with the first four-wheel-drive locomotive or is this a mistake in the construction of the replica. We know that Trevithick was aware of the need for differential drive when building the 1803 London Road Carriage. Watch this space for further bulletins or offer some thoughts.

## CORNISH SHIPPING

The research into the one activity that made Cornwall's extensive mining and manufacturing past a reality has taken a step forward. At a recent meeting with Dr Garry Tregidga in the Institute of Cornish Studies at Exeter University, Penryn we welcomed students to research the two centuries of shipping between South Wales and Cornwall.

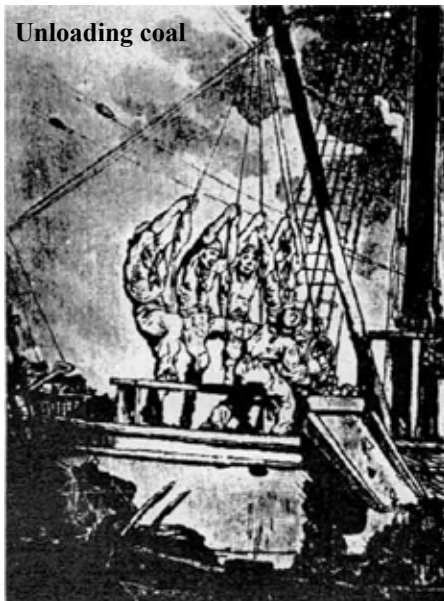
They were Alexa Bowden and Oliver Steer. Their tasks are monumental but rewarding. Initial research by this Society has provided a number of leads and responses from members and people associated with Cornwall's many harbours. The leads included harbour records, types of ships, the families who sailed them and

records of wrecks. We are grateful to the response from members who offered to provide copies of their precious first and later editions of Archive magazine that contained illustrated articles by the late Clive Carter on shipping at Portreath.

Discussions ranged over the links between the two Celtic countries. In addition to the carriage of copper, tin, coal and iron there were the social implications as Cornish families moved to South Wales and took their interests in religion, music and customs. This is such a big subject that the students were recommended to choose whichever direction they wished to take in the sure and certain knowledge that their research would be fundamental and original.

The students, who were offered associate membership of this Society, and those who join them, will have the advantage of modern research material and facilities, even underwater imaging. These are exciting times and any members who feel the urge to join in are invited to e-mail Dr Garry Tregidga at [G.H.Tregidga@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:G.H.Tregidga@exeter.ac.uk)

P.M.H.



## OBITUARIES

*Dorothy Claire Leith 1922-2014*

Society member Claire Leith died on Saturday 12th July 2014, aged 92 years, breaking yet another link in the Society's connection with Levant Mine. I'm not sure when I first met Claire; I do know I met her at Trevithick Day in 2006 when I was approached by a rather severe looking woman. We chatted and she told me that she was writing a book about her grandfather – at that time I didn't know about her illustrious mining background and that her grandfather was Major Frank Oats, major shareholder in Levant and the Basset Mines to name only two, as well as Managing Director of de Beers. Her father was Colonel Francis Freathy Oats, the last manager of Levant.

Claire was brought up in the big house near Cape Cornwall – Porthledden, never Porthledden House – and this seems to have been a very happy time for her. During World War II, when she served in the Women's Land Army, she was married to William Leith and her reception held there. She had a sister and four brothers (Victor was killed in 1945, a Wing Commander flying Mosquitoes over Germany, while John won a Military Cross fighting the Japanese in Burma) and four children, Jenny, Iain, Graeme and Gillian, of whom Jenny died in 1970 at the young age of 24.

Claire's book on Frank Oats required a bit of editing, which I shared with the late Vernon Baldry. I spent some time with Claire, going over family photos and other bits and pieces for the book and we became fast friends, though with Claire's poker face I was never quite sure when she was joking. Claire was much taken with Vernon, always a snappy dresser, and she once said to me "oh, I'd go walking with him!" We often met up in Truro for tea and buns, all very civilised.

The last time I saw her was in March and it was clear that she was becoming more frail. Although we kept in touch by phone I wasn't aware that she

had been taken into hospital for what was to be her final time. Claire will be missed by her family, and definitely by me.

**Pete Joseph**

*Dennis Jenkin 1921-2014*

When Richard Jenkin saw the obituary of Milton Thomas in the last newsletter and the accompanying photographs, he promptly made contact to say that he was amazed to see his late father Dennis standing in the background of one of the photos.

Dennis, who died in February, aged 92, was a long-standing member of the Society, extending back to the 1960s when we were the Cornish Engines Preservation Society. He was Secretary for the C.E.P.S. and continued to serve on the Trevithick Society Council acting as Vice Chairman from 1984 until 1990. He was also one of the much revered Greasy Gang who successfully restored the Levant Engine.

He worked for the G.P.O. at the Penzance Exchange and was a glider pilot, using his electrical engineering prowess to test and maintain the instruments of the Glider Club. He was also a considerable steam enthusiast and a skilled model engineer, building a variety of steam engines and boilers.

Dennis was a member of the St Buryan Male Voice Choir, a school mate of Jim Hodge, and a great friend of Jack Trounson. Jack would frequently make extended phone calls and Richard fondly remembered answering the phone on several occasions to hear Jack immediately launch into a deep conversation about Cornish mining not realising that he was talking to Richard instead of the intended recipient, his father Dennis.

**CNF.**



## SOCIETY MEETINGS

### Society Programme

The West Cornwall Branch meets at King Edward Mine (KEM) at 7.30pm on the 2nd Friday of the month.

The East Cornwall Branch (ECB) meets at the Public Rooms at Liskeard and start at 7.30pm, unless stated otherwise.

#### Tuesday 11th November (ECB)

*Pensilva - A history.* A chance to learn about the development of this mining community on the edge of Bodmin Moor. A talk by Angus Holland of the Pensilva History group.

#### Friday 14th November (KEM)

A film evening with David Jewell.

#### Tuesday 16th December (ECB)

*Christmas quiz.*

Come along for an evening of pre-Christmas fun with a Cornish history slant. Composed and hosted by Richard Humphrey.

### 2015

#### Friday 9th January (KEM)

A film evening with David Jewell.

#### Friday 13th February (KEM)

To be confirmed. Hopefully this will be a meeting on mining social history.

#### Tuesday 17th February (ECB)

*The Road to Messines - Underground Warfare on the Western Front 1915-1917.*

A talk by the author Rick Stewart on World War 1 tunnels and trenches.

#### Tuesday 17th March (ECB)

*Arsenic - its production and use.*

A talk by Kingsley Rickard on this fascinating mineral.

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<http://teammanley-ts.blogspot.com>

**Non members are welcome to all talks.**

## MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Trevithick Society members are entitled to free entry (on production of the membership card) to the following attractions:

- King Edward Mine
- Cornish Engines at Pool (East Pool Mine and Michell's Whim)
- Levant
- Geevor Museum

Also

Members are invited to visit Poldark Mine free of charge on production of a valid membership card.

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The Trevithick Society, a registered charity, is a recognised body of the study of industrial archaeology in Cornwall. Membership is open to all who are interested in the region's great industrial past, whether or not they live in Cornwall. The Society takes its name from one of Britain's foremost inventors and pioneers of the Industrial Revolution, Richard Trevithick, a Cornishman whose name is inseparable from the development of steam power. This newsletter is published quarterly and, together with the annual journal, is distributed free to members. Letters and contributions are always welcome and should be sent direct to the editor.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Trevithick Society.

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