



TREVITHICK • 2001

THE HORSES STOOD STILL THE WHEELS WENT AROUND



THE TREVITHICK WEEKEND



What was to prove one of the most eventful, and drama-laden, weekends in the Society's history began at about 7 am on Saturday 28 April. In the car park of the Trevithick Surgery, Camborne, Kingsley Rickard and a small team erected the bright yellow Society stall, laid out a sparkling array of books, and hoisted the flag. Soon, most of those present departed for the CompAir UK Holman factory to get the replica ready for its first public run at 11 am, leaving Vernon Baldry, George Wilson, Eric King and Paul Smith behind.

At Holmans the engine was manhandled out of the workshop and prepared for firing. Long strips of cloth soaked in paraffin were laid along the length of the grate and lit. A covering of freshly chopped 18"-long pieces of wood was added followed by a dressing of anthracite

chunks. Very soon a fierce fire filled the firebox.

David Bray and Arthur Young went around oiling and greasing all the relevant points and made adjustments to various bolts; tightening down here, loosening there, to improve the smooth running and minimise the escape of water vapour. John Sawle provided some very special engine oil. When South Crofty stopped the Robinson's Beam Engine in 1955 several barrels of oil were left over. This oil was kindly given to the West of England Steam Engine Society for their Traction Engine owning members. In a remarkable link with the past John used remnants of his dwindling stock of this precious, viscous, dull green oil on the engine.

As preparations continued groups of CompAir employees kept appearing to monitor progress, as well as an influx of radio interviewers and television crews. The atmosphere was very jovial and there was a quiet confidence in the air, in the knowledge that hundreds of highly skilled engineers and craftsmen from across Cornwall and beyond had contributed many thousands of hours to this project, and that the engine had been made to the highest standards.

The fire was very good but the boiler was pressurising much slower than on previous trials. Perhaps the boiler had more water in it than before, perhaps the flues should have been brushed out, or perhaps it was the unusually cold wind that was blowing that morning. Whatever the reason it was soon

apparent that something needed to be done to meet the 11 o'clock deadline. Several Holman employees came to the rescue and procured a compressor (not difficult to find) and an air line was introduced to improve the draught. This draught was later supplemented when there was sufficient pressure available (c. 15 psi) to run the replica as a stationary engine. The resultant blast of exhaust steam up the chimney further improved the





combustion and the heat provided by the fire.

Despite all this, the desired 60 psi could not be attained in time. Nevertheless, a few minutes before the allotted hour, the crew all changed into their specially made period costumes, and decided to give her a try. One of the two driving pins was fitted to engage the gears to the wheel and the flywheel was cranked forward to ensure she would start on the right stroke. The crew clambered on board, brakes released, chocks away and gingerly and smoothly the engine came to life despite only having 25 psi steam pressure.

It was a wonderful moment as the engine moved off along the concrete road, then through the burrows and into the long straight stretch where the first glimpse was made of the massed crowd outside Holmans. Despite the low pressure she went "like a bird" past the cheering and camera-clicking crowd, who then followed, en masse, down Foundry Road and into Centenary Street.

The long straight street ahead was clear so she was allowed to accelerate to a

jogging pace and the crew savoured the majesty of this historic moment. To let the crowd catch up there was a brief pause before proceeding towards the statue where another great crowd waited patiently. With a reverential salute to Cap'n Dick the engine was sedately turned into Basset Street where some of the Traction Engines on show that day were parked. They



immediately greeted the replica with a crescendo of shrill whistles which, like an infectious ripple, spread unseen into other streets where Traction Engines were parked, and the whole town knew that the "Puffing Devil" had arrived.

Getting into the Trevithick Surgery car park, where the engine went on show, was made unnecessarily difficult by the position of several stalls, which were immediately opposite the entrance, in the street. At least that enabled a demonstration of just how controllable Trevithick's design was. In the restricted space available the engine was gently manoeuvred around, until in line with the car park entrance. She was then reversed in, to a thunderous cheer from the massive crowd.

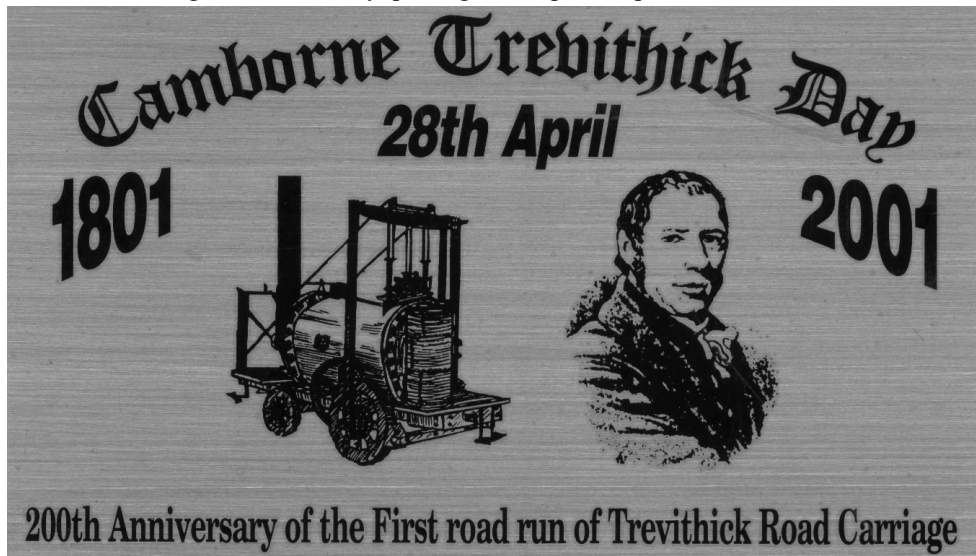
Once enclosed by sheep fencing a seemingly endless stream of people flowed into the car park to inspect her, not even daunted by the one shower that doused the town. The interest was intense and all those involved in the project were quizzed at length about the intricacies of the its design. However, many people just stood and marvelled, in quiet contemplation, at the workings of the engine, especially when the driving pin was removed and she was set running as a stationary puffing



engine again.

Frank Trevithick Okuno, a direct descendent of the Cornish inventor, had made a long railway journey in poor health from London. He was ecstatic that the project had come to a successful conclusion.

At 2 pm the engine was due to leave the car park to proceed to the statue where she



would line up in front of the afternoon parade. With the help of Barry Tiddy of the Trevithick Day committee and strict instructions to all to stand well clear, the sheep hurdles were realigned to stop anyone stepping in front of the locomotive, and she was driven forward. Once out in Basset Road, the 38 gallon



water tank on the engine was filled by a tractor-towed water bowser that had just arrived. Next a few realignments were made to enable the engine to complete a right angle turn in Basset Road and then with consummate ease she swung around in front of the stalls and headed up the street at a nice steady walking pace. At the entrance to Basset Street the procession slowed right down and then paused for a minute to let the crowd by the monument see that the replica would soon be coming towards them.

Whenever the engine is about to be started, the position of the piston is ascertained to ensure it is not top-dead-centre and that it is on the right stroke. Thus ensuring that when she starts she goes in the right direction. If the piston is in the wrong position it is moved around using a specially made bar which rotates the flywheel and so repositions the piston.

Adjustments made, she headed off at a walking pace along Basset Street with the engine ringed by Trevithick Society marshals and several up front to ensure a clear passage. A sizeable crowd followed in the sunshine and in a happy carnival atmosphere, the cavalcade strolled past the several stationary Traction Engines parked in the street and circled around Trevithick's 1803 London Road Carriage, which was to follow in the procession. From there everyone progressed into the

street in front of the statue, where a large un-marshalled crowd had gathered.

The sequence of events that followed was as bizarre as it was bewildering and brought discredit to the town. Trevor Dalley, the Chairman of the Trevithick Day committee and principal organiser of the event, was standing in Basset Street when the engine was being driven to the start of the afternoon parade. He watched the oncoming spectacle and decided the Camborne Road Locomotive should not lead the parade, under the pretext that it was not, in his opinion, safe. Unfortunately, instead of going to see the crew and expressing his concerns about crowd safety and coming to some amicable arrangement about how the replica should proceed, he went straight to the Special Policeman, who was in charge of the Police presence on the day, and complained that that the engine was being driven in an "erratic" fashion. That unfortunate policeman, who later admitted that he had no knowledge of steam engines, was put in the extremely awkward position where he had now to make a decision. Faced with the expressed opinion of the Chairman of the Trevithick Day committee, it is understandable that he should choose to err on the side of caution. In consequence, the crew were then instructed to move aside from the starting point of the parade.

Interestingly, the notion that the engine was travelling erratically was later changed to “travelling too fast” when it was pointed out that Traction Engines do not travel in a straight line due to the nature of their steering mechanism.

Disconsolate as the crew was, there was still an important ceremony to perform. Earlier in the day a ladder had been padlocked to the railings by

the statue, and this was erected in front of the statue. Arthur Young’s wife, Pam, then came forward, dressed in black and gold finery, carrying a bright red cushion on which was a medal, specially struck by Jan Luke. This was presented to Arthur who then ascended the ladder and placed it



around the neck of Cap’n Dick himself, followed by a most dignified hat. The crowd roared their appreciation.

Following that joyous moment the engine and crew were ushered aside to a new location in front of the former fire station. Again, in completing that manoeuvre, all

onlookers were able to see just how safe the engine was as it crawled along the street to the new and ignominious parking place. The London Road Carriage then followed and parked immediately behind.

After a considerable break in the proceedings the afternoon parade finally departed for its grand parade through the streets minus the whole reason for the day.

From having spoken to many people after the event, the tremendous disappointment experienced by the crew was deeply felt by one and all. As one man put it, “I have come 8000 miles just to see this engine moving, and I have not seen it!”.



Not surprisingly rumours were rife and many were quickly led to believe that the engine had broken down and that something had fallen off. Few would have believed the truth for that would have seemed too far fetched!

Remarkably, a sizeable crowd remained with the engine during the whole run of the parade and although the shock of what had just happened was numbing, the Society can be proud of the dignified manner in which all and sundry took such a terrible and unwarranted blow.

Eventually, the parade completed its tour of the town and on the return passed the two Trevithick replicas. At least the Traction Engine owners were thus given an opportunity to view the engine as they passed, and in a mark of respect to the genius of Trevithick, they sounded their whistles.

Once the parade had completed its circuit, the engine was then escorted back to the CompAir UK Holman factory, led by a Police car, lights flashing. At the completely safe and well controlled rate at which she returned to the factory, not surprisingly, the car in front had to slow right down and stop several times to let the



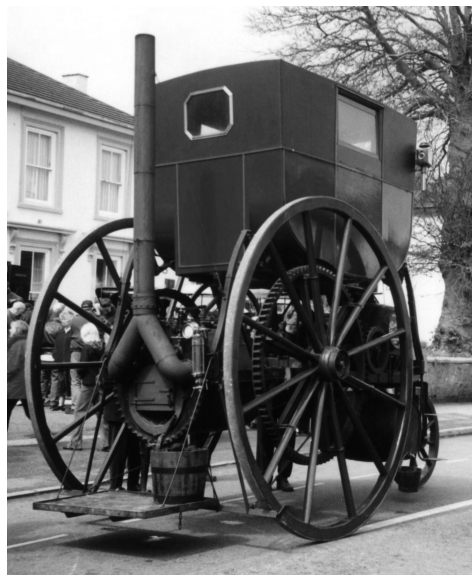
Camborne Road Locomotive catch up.

Back at Holmans the engine was put to bed. The fire was raked out, the water tank refilled, and the engine operated in stationary mode so that the water was pumped into the boiler. This speeded up the de-pressurisation process. She was then driven into the works around the incomplete compressors and rock drills into the workshop space where she was built. There the final stages of shutting down the engine were completed.

On Sunday the Camborne Road Locomotive was due to lead the parade of vehicles and re-enact the Camborne Hill Run made by Trevithick in 1801. It was obvious to the crew that the replica would not be allowed to take part in such a run after being unceremoniously pulled out of the Saturday parade. Furthermore, it would be very foolish to spend three hours preparing the engine and then to arrive at the bottom of Tehidy Road to be told that the engine could not take part. So, all concerned left for their respective homes secure in the knowledge that they would not be needed the next day.

Nothing had been heard from the





Trevithick Day Committee so John Sawle set out to find its chairman. Together with the police officer of the day they sat on the granite walls of Commercial Square and he discovered that there was very little common ground. The ultimatum was that the engine would be permitted to climb Camborne Hill if it were preceded by a police car at 3 mph. This was quite unacceptable to John who pointed out that the engine would have to travel at a faster rate at the bottom of the hill to make the ascent. At 3 mph it would inevitably lose all momentum and stall. John left the impasse knowing that the terms offered made the following day's climb impossible.

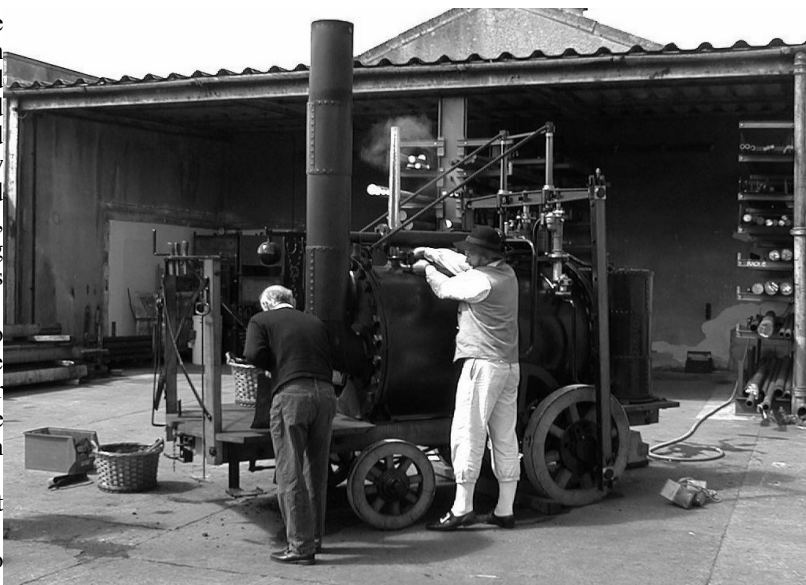
At six o'clock that evening a Radio Cornwall broadcast, purporting to come from the Trevithick Day committee, said that the Sunday Camborne Hill Run was going ahead as planned and that the Camborne Road Locomotive would be leading the procession. By chance one of the team heard the broadcast which placed the Trevithick Society in a very difficult position, given the previous ultimatum. Furthermore, the initial reaction by members of the dejected crew to taking part was not very favourable.

As the evening progressed the phones of Phil Hosken and Kingsley Rickard, in particular, never stopped ringing as a deluge of people wanted to know what had happened and whether the replica would be taking part in the climax of the weekend on the Sunday. Gradually, the notion dawned that she should take part and try to redeem something positive out of the fiasco.

To his eternal credit, Phil Hosken saved the day. He contacted the Press Office of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, and, in the intense discussions that followed, was able to point out the bad image of the Police that had been generated by the events earlier in the day, even though it was not of their making. In turn he was contacted by the duty Inspector, who, as he had not been involved with Trevithick Day, was able to have an entirely independent perspective. There followed detailed negotiations during which the parameters for the appearance of the engine the following morning were carefully worked out, and finally it was agreed that the Camborne Road Locomotive could appear.

It was fast approaching midnight when Phil started to try and reconvene the engine crew. At that late hour it proved impossible

to make contact with everyone and those that had been contacted had a very short and uneasy sleep, not knowing whether it was logistically possible to gather the team together and to prepare the engine in time. Certainly, it was impossible to have



everything ready by 10 am, the time that its appearance was originally planned.

At seven o'clock in the morning, Radio Cornwall announced that the Camborne Hill Run was going to take place but did not know whether the replica would be present. At that point, frantic efforts were going on behind the scenes to gather everyone together, including getting Radio Cornwall to broadcast that the engine was going to take part and that the team was being mustered. One of those that heard this later broadcast was Paul Smith, Membership Secretary, and he quickly appeared at Holmans eager to muck in. Soon after nine o'clock most of the crew had assembled at Holmans and preparations began to get the engine ready.

Sadly, Jon Eastman could not be contacted in time. During the evening he had made arrangements to spend the Sunday on one of the Traction Engines and he had already departed from home. David Bray also had other arrangements and so two valuable members of the team had been lost.

Thankfully, Ray Tilling and his son Antony, two CompAir UK employees who had helped build the engine, were able to step in at very short notice. Hence, in all

the photographs of the engine attempting the Camborne Hill Run, one of the crew can be seen, very aptly, wearing a CompAir UK boilersuit.

Arthur Young, who had steered the engine on Saturday felt battered and bruised from the exertions of the previous day and so Cllr. John Woodward deputised. Finally, the crew was reformed and ready.

The engine was manhandled out of the factory and into the sunshine. Extra time was needed to get her ready as the incline of Camborne Hill would necessitate 100 psi steam pressure and not the 25 psi she started out with the previous day. Also, to ensure the largest heating surface and maximum efficiency of the engine all the flues and the firebox would have to be thoroughly cleaned. All the components of the firebox were removed and cleaned and then the internal surfaces were carefully scraped and brushed. This included John Sawle crawling into the firebox to brush out the lobster-back bend at the rear.

Once clean, everything was reassembled, some water drained out of the boiler and the fire set like the day before.

Next, two policemen arrived, a Sergeant and the Special policeman who was in



charge the previous day. There ensued further negotiations, for the Special in charge made it clear that it was up to him whether or not we would make our appearance. To his credit, he took instruction on the workings of the engine, all the safety features built in, and its general operation. He then agreed to let us take part in the Camborne Hill Run, effectively overturning his decision of the previous day.

Due to the road closure order finishing at 2 pm, the Camborne Hill Run had to be completed by then. Consequently, the engine needed to be ready and at the bottom of Tehidy Road by about 1 pm. Although confusion still reigns regarding the location of Camborne Hill the available evidence does indicate it was the slope up from Rosewarne towards the commercial centre of the town, along the line of Tehidy Road and Fore Street.

In the town crowds began gathering early in the morning sunshine. From 10 o'clock, for half an hour, the Grenville Steam carriage ran trips up and down Camborne Hill carrying passengers. Then began the parade proper. A multitude of steam and vintage cars and traction engines, of all



shapes and sizes, entertained everyone present. These magnificent vehicles drove up the hill to the continuous applause of the crowd. It was a marvellous spectacle. The Steam Car Club of GB later said that no community had ever given them such a welcome.

During the morning the radio coverage of the proceedings was truly remarkable. Radio Cornwall did their utmost to keep Cornwall informed about how the preparations of the engine were progressing and at regular intervals broadcast live interviews with Phil Hosken on his mobile phone. He would describe the work being done, the atmosphere of anticipation that was building, the all important steam pressure, and latest estimates about departure time. In turn these broadcasts were relayed to the people patiently waiting in the crowded streets. All this added to the excitement and intense emotion of the day which inexorably grew and grew until the Camborne Hill Run itself.

That morning Clive Carter, Society Chairman, was distraught that he did not have transport to get from Penzance to Camborne and left a very doleful and apologetic message on the answer phone of one the crew that he would not be present. Radio Cornwall heard of his plight and

broadcast a plea for transport and soon Clive was inundated with offers of lifts.

The parade of vehicles ended about midday and then a vehicle drove up through the crowd to let everyone know that the replica was expected at about 1 o'clock. Very quickly the streets emptied of people.

At about 20 minutes before the hour, they filled again, with many more people than before.

Meanwhile, preparations were almost complete and the necessary 100 psi had been attained. All aboard! This time with seven crew and followed by a tractor, the engine was driven out of the CompAir UK Holman complex.

As she headed for the base of Camborne Hill small groups of bystanders cheered and applauded the progress. At Trevithick's statue, where a large crowd had mustered, it was decided that the engine should be towed the remainder of the way and the tractor was hitched up. From this point onwards a long line of people could be seen heading for Camborne Hill.

On arrival at the bottom of Tehidy road the water tank needed filling and the immediate householders provided replenishment. All sorts of water-filled containers were quickly procured including one kind lady who came forward with a full kettle.

The engine was then carefully turned around, for she would make the run with the chimney at the rear (front wheel drive and rear wheel steering).

Finally both driving pins were fitted. To do this the flywheel was cranked around until the holes were aligned, the pin was



inserted and then bolted in place. Aligning the pin holes on the other wheel was more difficult as the engine was now in gear. This was achieved by manually reversing the engine on an arc.

Finally Trevithick Society marshals walked up the street to ensure the crowds kept well back and the way ahead was clear. All was now ready.

Brakes off, chocks away, all aboard and away she went with a police car in front and tractor behind (in case we didn't make it and need towing the remainder of the incline). Plenty of momentum was needed and she went off at a cracking pace reaching a speed of 12 miles an hour (it is now known what the World Land Speed Record would have been in 1801).

There was a huge cheer as she set off and on approaching the commemorative plaque, set in Rosewarne's wall, celebrating the 1801 run, Kingsley had the presence of mind to doff his hat. That instant was captured by a press photographer, Phil Monckton, who took a truly amazing dramatic photograph, which encapsulated the day, showing the engine, animated crew and the plaque (and of course Kingsley posing!).

During the course of the run a great cloud of steam issued from the general area of the cylinder block and John Sawle slowed



the engine down several times to let it dissipate. This could have meant the end of the run for considerable momentum was lost, especially as the hill progressively steepens to the top. Trevithick triumphed, for the 8 HP engine had sufficient power in reserve to accelerate away again.

As the climb continued the engine gradually slowed down to a walking pace and several of the crew jumped off in case she stopped and chocks were needed. If anything, the slowing of the engine caused greater excitement in the crowd as everyone was shouting, urging it on. This reached a crescendo within yards of the summit, which is the steepest point, where the engine had slowed down to almost a crawl and was straining to make those last few feet. Several of the crew were behind pushing at this point desperate that she should get to the top. The atmosphere was electric and the emotions felt by all present were very intense as she finally reached her destination. The cheering, applause and spontaneous singing of "Going up Camborne Hill" rang out around the town and everyone present felt immensely proud. One of the greatest achievements of



mankind had been recreated and re-enacted in honour of the great man himself, Richard Trevithick.

At the top of Camborne Hill there was a pause for a few minutes to take breath before heading off down the main street, Trelowarren Street. This would have been part of the Saturday parade and now the top of the street was as full of people as the previous day. This provided an excellent opportunity to prove that the little engine could travel down the street in a carefully controlled and sedate manner and demonstrate once and for all that the engine was completely safe, and that it could take part in future parades without fear or prejudice.

About three-quarters along the length of Trelowarren Street, the replica ran out of steam. The water tank was dry and the boiler pressure was too low to continue, so the tractor was hooked up to the engine and it was towed the remaining distance to the CompAir UK Holman factory. Unfortunately, due to the road closure order finishing at 2.00 pm there was insufficient time (and steam pressure) to travel to Trevithick's Statue, where it was

later learnt a very disappointed crowd had gathered. Given the difficulties faced over the weekend it is hoped that an apology is accepted and that amends can be made in the future.

At Holmans the engine was parked in the entrance and the tractor uncoupled. There followed a series of photo-shoots, television interviews and a chance to talk to some of the crowd that had gathered. It was as if no one wanted this day to end for as long as the engine remained so the crowd stayed. One fellow came across and thanked the crew for "one of the best days he had experienced in many years".

In the end the Camborne Hill Run was a triumph and the events of that day could not have been choreographed better. The way the anticipation

and excitement grew and grew until reaching its climax in the re-enactment of the Camborne Hill Run was splendid. It became a very special day for Cornwall and for everyone in Camborne.

When Trevithick drove his "Puffing Devil" for the first time through the streets of Camborne no one in the world had ever seen anything like it before. Some thought the world had come to an end and there was a fear of the unknown. On the Trevithick Day Saturday people had not seen anything like it for two hundred years and it seems that fear of the unknown had been resurrected. Thankfully, the Camborne Hill Run demonstrated that fear of the unknown to be unjustified!

The eventual successful conclusion to the Trevithick weekend more than made up for the bitter disappointment of the previous day. It also provided all concerned with some valuable lessons about the management of events such as this, as well as provided ideas as to where improvements could be made to the engine



itself. Trevithick's Camborne Road Locomotive behaved impeccably and absolutely nothing mechanical went wrong with it. The tiller steering was remarkably light and the arrangement of pegs used to assist the steersman maintain a steady course worked extremely well. There was far too much egress of steam from the primitive valve gear which undoubtedly affected the efficiency of the engine, but as the replica was faithful to Trevithick's design, the "white stockings she wore" were expected. The heat exchanger and water pump worked a treat with the cold water from the water tank being appreciably heated by the exhaust steam before being pumped into the boiler.

The many thousands of hours of work by hundreds of people and dozens of companies who contributed, since the start of this Project in 1996, had finally come to a successful fruition.

Colin French.



LEADING UP TO THE TREVITHICK WEEKEND

In the weeks leading up to the Trevithick Weekend the preparations, by all those involved in the Trevithick 2001 Project, increasingly became frenetic.

Work continued on the engine to add the finishing touches. The water pump was cast in gunmetal and arrived just in time to be machined ready for fitting. The pipe work also had to be cut and twisted into shape by Arthur Young to connect the pump with the water tank and the boiler.

A commemorative booklet about the building of the replica was written and published (both as a book and CD-ROM).

The period costumes worn by the crew were specially made by Karen Brown of St. Agnes and there were several fittings to be squeezed in and it became a mad rush to get them finished in time.

A corporate image for the Society was sought and it was decided that the participants should have distinctive boilersuits with Trevithick Society embroidered on the back. A maroon colour was chosen to contrast with the blue of CompAir UK.

The Society also had a presence at other venues in the town. The model of the Camborne Road Locomotive was on show in the Post Office and there was a sizeable display in Wesley Chapel. This was prepared by Kingsley Rickard and consisted of photographs and posters showing many aspects of the work of the Society.

There was even a well-attended lecture to be fitted in about the project on the night before Trevithick Day itself.

Finally the poster on the right hand side of this page was printed on suitably coloured paper and distributed throughout the town by Phil Hosken.

NOTICE

CAPT'N DICK TREVITHICK'S 'PUFFING DEVIL'

WILL SALLY FORTH FROM MR. HOLMAN'S FOUNDRY AT 11 O'CLOCK IN THE FORENOON ON SATURDAY NEXT ON ITS FIRST FORAY THROUGH ITS NATIVE TOWN FOR 200 YEARS.

ITS HANDLERS WILL LEAD IT THROUGH FOUNDRY ROAD, WESLEY STREET AND CENTENARY STREET TO BASSET STREET WHERE IT WILL SOJOURN WITHIN THE SURGERY YARD.

PERSONS WISHING TO FOLLOW THE 'DEVIL' SHOULD FOREGATHER AT THE FOUNDRY GATES AT FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE THE HOUR.

**PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF
CLIVE CARTER, ESQUIRE
CHAIRMAN**

**THE TREVITHICK SOCIETY
DATED THIS 21ST DAY OF APRIL 2001**

THE TREVITHICK WEEKEND TEAM

Crew

David Bray
Jon Eastman
Colin French
Phil Hosken
Kingsley Rickard
John Sawle
Paul Smith
Antony Tilling
Ray Tilling
John Woodward
Arthur Young

Stall

Vernon Baldry
Clive Carter
Eric King
George Wilson

EVENTS WHERE THE REPLICA MAY BE SEEN IN 2001
THIS LIST HAS BEEN REVISED DUE TO THE CANCELLATIONS
CAUSED BY FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

With the 2001 Camborne Steam Carriage, in steam.

2001

18 July	Culdrose Air Day, RNAS Culdrose
20, 21, 22 July	Liskeard Show, Boconnoc
4 August	Hayle Gala Week Rotary Car Show
25,26,27 August	Morval Vintage Rally 25th Rally
2 September	Helston Charter Celebrations
24 December	Bicentennial Camborne Hill Run

2002

3-6 May	Dehwelans 2002 The Grand Cornish Homecoming
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Lectures about the 2001 Project

2001

13 June	Annual Trelawny Lecture London
17 July	Probus Club Ponsmere Hotel, Perranporth

2002

10 January	West Cornwall Ladies Luncheon Club Royal Duchy, Falmouth
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