

# NEWSLETTER - 2013

## EAST CORNWALL MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

[www.eastcornwallmininghistoryassociation.org](http://www.eastcornwallmininghistoryassociation.org)  
CHARITY NUMBER 1082887

### Brian Spencer 1943-2012



The sudden death of Brian has been keenly felt by ECMHA. He was a founder member, as well as being our Chairman since 1999. At his funeral, it became apparent that his local interests were broad, encompassing the Calstock Parish Local History Group, of which he was a founder member in 1999, serving as its programme secretary since that time; the Friends of Morwellham, which has now become the Friends of the Tamar Valley, serving on the committee of both organisations; as well as

being the leading light behind The Gunnislake Festival.

Caroline Vulliamy wrote an appreciation, which, among others, was included in the funeral Order of Service. Below is one paragraph which epitomises Brian's contribution to ECMHA:-

Brian spent hours on grant applications, archaeological recording and measuring, interspersed by cutting back annual vegetation – a task which he took on almost single-handedly sometimes! – as well as meeting archaeologists and specialists, craftsmen and volunteers working on the site. Brian's own cheerful and enthusiastic presence and his appetite for learning has underlain the fun in all of these, though how he kept it up when practically single-handedly digging out trenches for the lightning conductor on East Kit Hill mine stack, I'm not quite sure!

The opening minutes of the AGM were spent in silence as a tribute to Brian. Brian's brothers have offered to provide a permanent memorial to Brian, and it was agreed that a bench in the cottages' garden would be enjoyed by all.

### Random Notes from the AGM held on Saturday 20 July 2013

#### Committee matters

The new Committee now comprises:-

Caroline Vulliamy	Chairman
Kim Tasker	Treasurer
Penny Rowe	Committee Meetings Secretary
Terry Faull	Committee member - with brief to help with grant applications

More Committee members are needed and would be welcome, so please make contact if you are interested.

Susan Pittman will continue as Membership Secretary and Editor of the Newsletter.

The new Committee is to meet quarterly and will organise monthly work parties.

#### Points of action

- Works under the Awards for All Grant are in progress, but the survey of the interior of the cottages needs to be completed, perhaps with more help from

Robert Waterhouse. The restoration of the windows has been delayed due to a shoulder injury sustained by Ken Smith.

- The earth closet is in need of stabilisation and restoration.
- The warning/safety signs need refreshing to comply with Health and Safety regulations for insurance purposes.
- A volunteer gardener is required to create a vegetable patch in the cottages' garden.
- Some of the woodland vegetation needs management to maintain the open area created for primary school and Forest School activities.
- The website has had 4000 hits, but is in urgent need of updating.

### **General points of interest**

- Lucket Mine has been scheduled, but its future is uncertain because the Duchy of Cornwall is likely to put it up for auction.
- The Tamar Valley AONB team is planning a mapping project and is also helping local parishes to produce community plans, for both of which it will be important to record as many archaeological and historical features as possible.
- A volunteer is required to replace Brian Spencer as ECMHA representative on the Tamar Valley AONB Advisory Board. To find out more contact Caroline Vulliamy.

#### **'THE PRICE OF POISON'**

An original drama with music based on arsenic mining in Lucket in the 1870s, by Kathryn Clark, with music by David Secombe, performed by SCATS (Stoke Climsland Amateur Theatrical Society) at Stoke Climsland Parish Hall. The drama was largely inspired following a visit to the miners' cottages and Lucket mine.

**Thursday 31 October, Friday 1 November, Saturday 2 November, 2013.**  
**Tickets £7** (available from 30 September) from Stoke Climsland Post Office, or for non-locals from Kathryn Clark, The Old Barn, Venterdon, Stoke Climsland PL17 8PD (01579 370844) [ktycl@aol.com](mailto:ktycl@aol.com)

### **Notes from the Treasurer**

#### **Income - Total £53.75**

- **Membership** - This has remained static at about 40, but as most are life members only £25 was raised from subscriptions.
- **Countryside Stewardship Scheme** - This has now expired and renewal so far has not been achieved. This has caused a large hole in our income.

#### **Expenditure - Total £1, 169.48**

- **Insurance** - NFU Mutual costs about £729.35 a year. Alternative insurers are being considered for the future.
- **Maintenance** - Ongoing vegetation clearance, fencing, signage materials, etc. vary from year to year. This year it came to about £200.
- **Administration** - This is related to Companies House accounts' requirement and postage of ECMHA letters/newsletter to members.

**BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD FROM LAST YEAR : £2,295.84**

**BALANCE AT 19 JULY 2013 : £1,180.11**

The Committee will urgently address the problem of diminishing resources.

**VISIT TO KIT HILL, 20 July 2013**



9 members met at the base of **Kit Hill mine stack** (left), dating from 1856. Caroline Vulliamy (below) outlined the route and sites of interest, especially South Kit Hill mine and the Tin and Wolfram works on the east side of the hill

**South Kit Hill mine is the best preserved mining complex on Kit Hill, but no good tin was ever found**  
1856 Opened  
1874 Closed  
1879 Reopened as Cornwall Great Consols  
1882 Final closure



South Kit Hill stack from first phase of the mine.(r) Stack & engine house, 1974.  
(below) Simon Streatfield studying one of the six circular buddles constructed by 1881 to allow heavy tin particles from stamps to settle from the waste.



From South Kit Mine we walked along the trail to **The Tin and Wolfram Works**. These were opened by the Duchy on the east slopes of Kit Hill in January 1916 as part of the First World War effort. Wolfram was the major goal as it was important for hardening steel. By 1918 there were 100 underground and 70 surface workers. The mine operated until 1921, and there are substantial remains on the ground to be explored.



The costean trench (left), a linear prospecting trench dug at right angles to the line of lode. No. 1 lode was exploited because substantial values of tin and wolfram were found on level one. (lower l) View from bridge along lode looking W > E towards Dartmoor. (lower r) Close-up of bridge across lode.



Ore from the mine was run in trucks down a steep inclined plane and then along a track, which led ultimately to a cableway. The cableway was 2½-3 miles long running from Kit Hill over Hingston Down to Gunnislake Clitters processing mill. This was a single cable and could cope with 15-20 tons per hour, carried in suspended buckets. The cableway was operated by 4 men and 4 boys. It would proceed from one end with additional guide wheels supported on pylons, one of which was located on land at East Kit Hill mine.



Looking NE from the southern finger dump to the inclined plane leading to track and then overhead cableway. This ran over East Kit Hill mine, the stack of which is visible.