

NEWSLETTER - 2014

EAST CORNWALL MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

www.eastcornwallmininghistoryassociation.org

CHARITY NUMBER 1082887

Installation of Brian's seat



Brian Spencer 1943-2012

This is expected to take place in the Spring of 2015. Brian Spencer's brothers have generously donated £1000 to the Association, part of which has been used to commission a special oak bench in his memory. The simple design is in keeping with the cottage garden. There is a panel on the back on which a suitable inscription will be carved. Brian's brothers will be consulted on the wording, **but members are also invited to make suggestions.**

Notes from the AGM, held at the Tamar Trails Centre, 6 September 2014

Committee matters

The Committee remains as follows:-

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 would be welcome, so please make contact if you are interested.

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

Points of action

- **Tamar Valley AONB's 'Helping Hands for Heritage'** managed by Sam Barnes is to run a joint project in conjunction with ECMHA. A programme of work parties include vegetation clearance at the cottages and East Kit Hill mine; recording and dismantling the remnants of the wooden floor at the cottages; replacing warning signs on the site behind the cottages; preparing a wildlife trail in the woodland behind the cottages; planning work for primary school classes; and collating written records.

These working parties will continue into the New Year, if you would like to help or know of others who would, please contact the Tamar Valley AONB Centre (www.tamarvalley.org.uk / 01822 835030)



Miners' cottages, Lockett,
4 September 2014

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- The last of the funded works under the **Awards for All Grant** is due to take place this autumn and winter, namely the completion of the survey of the interior of the cottages, and the restoration of the door and last two windows by Ken Smith.
- **Heritage Lottery Fund 'Sharing Heritage'** application for up to £10,000 is almost ready for submission. This is a bid for funding for two replacement wooden floors, and interior work to the mortar walls and ceilings.
- Susan Pittman's offer of up to £1000 to restore the earth closet was accepted, and hopefully the restoration will be completed within the year.
- Engineer Paul Carpenter's report on East Kit Hill mine suggests that a missing timber in the engine house be replaced, and some 'sensitive, sporadic repointing, with voids filled' be done on the stack.

Donations towards these repairs would be gratefully received, and would mean that timely repairs now would save greater expenditure in the future.



East Kit Hill Mine engine house & stack,
6 September 2014

- As mentioned last year the website is in urgent need of updating. It is felt that with a more dynamic site more interest and even increased membership might follow.
Has anyone any ideas for content, please?

Notes from the Treasurer

Income - Total £1,035

- **Membership** - This has remained static at about 40, but as most are life members only £35 was raised from subscriptions.
- **Donation in memory of Brian Spencer** - £1000.

Expenditure - Total £1,145.09

- **Insurance** - NFU Mutual costs £63.61 a month, but in June was raised to over £69. As this is the main outgoing alternative insurers are being sought.
- **Administration** - This is related to Companies House accounts' requirement and insurance of directors and officers, and this year cost £225.

BALANCE AT 20 JULY 2013: £1,180.11

BALANCE AT 5 SEPTEMBER 2014: £1,070.02

As can be seen the above is unsustainable, and the Association is surviving on the generous donation by Brian Spencer's brothers.

The Committee will urgently address the problem of diminishing resources. At the AGM several suggestions were made e.g. a membership drive, requesting more donations from members, arranging & charging for guided walks and other events. The Committee has received other suggestions since. **PLEASE ADD YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR FUND**

VISIT TO DEVON GREAT CONSOLS MINE, 6 September 2014

Leader: Rick Stewart, author of 'Devon Great Consols - A mine of mines' published by the Trevithick Society, 2013.

Eight members met our guide, Rick Stewart, by the tall stack at the core of the mining area.



This stack is on the site of earlier ones, but was rebuilt in the 1920s to provide draught for arsenic processing

Rick Stewart with his back to the car outlining key information about Devon Great Consols



Devon Great Consols was the world’s largest producer of copper in the 1850s to 1860s, when the price of copper slumped. It then turned to arsenic production, becoming the world’s largest producer of arsenic in the 1860s into the 1890s. In the 1890s, disease, leading to death among Australian sheep, drastically reduced the demand for arsenic to treat the fleeces, causing financial difficulties for Devon Great Consols, which went into liquidation shortly after. However, despite overall decline, there were various revivals on parts of the vast site right into the 1970s.

The main copper lode was discovered by chance in 1844, and was so long and rich that it was accessed in five places – Wheals Maria, Fanny, Anna Maria, Josiah and Emma. The south lode was discovered in 1848, and a third lode, mainly arsenic bearing, was found in 1864.



Looking into the adit, exploratory Blackwell shaft

Early in the mine’s history a decision was taken to use water power rather than steam where possible, and an incredible amount of water management and engineering took place to achieve this. At one time, according to Frank Booker, the mine had thirty-three water-wheels. Rick explained how the water management system worked, and showed us one of the former reservoirs on site.

Very little of Victorian mining and processing activities remain because of the later re-workings and the removal of machinery for scrap from 1902 to 1905. However, Bob Waterhouse and Rick have identified the base of an 1850s engine house and the remains of a C19th crusher roll among the 1920s arsenic calciner complex.



Looking down at the remains of the C19th crusher from the base of the 1850s engine house



The 1920s arsenic condensing chambers provide the iconic image of the Devon Great Consols site

Rick explained the processes involved in refining arsenic bearing rock into 99% pure arsenic.

The Brunton calciner was common in the S.W. It was a rotary furnace, which not only drew off arsenic fumes, but rendered the cassiterite more suitable for processing.

In the 1970s when there was an upturn in ore prices attempts were made to recover tin from the waste dumps.



The ruins of the Brunton calciner



Part of the waste dumps - the black lump is called 'winkle' and came from the arsenic calciner, while the red finer material came from the ore itself.

Rick showed us the few bits of 1970s industrial archaeology remaining in situ. These are relatively well preserved and Rick would like them to have more recognition and protection as part of the history of the site.



Ballmill crusher from the 1970s – this was filled with ball bearings to crush the waste more finely to recover the mineral. Some of the ball bearings were lying on the ground



The water tank for the jigger from the 1970s and the wooden scaffold to support the jigger behind. The jigger acted as a gravity separation sieve, separating material of the same size

Stop Press - The Duchy is to sell 4 local mines by auction in November - Gunnislake Clitters, Prince of Wales (Harrowbarrow), lower part of Drakewells and New Consols, Luccett