



EAST CORNWALL MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER - 2024

CHARITY NUMBER 1082887

Last year I was unable to travel to Cornwall for my holiday and to attend the AGM because unfortunately I caught a chest infection, which was not serious, but I did not want to risk passing it on. This year my commitments and Caroline's clashed, and it proved impossible to find a date for the AGM which was convenient to us both. I therefore have just returned from my holiday in Cornwall, but will travel again for the AGM if I am free to do so.

After all this I have decided to resign as Membership Secretary, and have passed the list over to Caroline. Also, this Newsletter is likely to be my last because I find that I am too far away to let keep up to date with any developments or events. I have very much enjoyed keeping in touch with you all for the last 20 years or so, and loved hearing from you from time to time.

This newsletter will contain bits and bobs collected on my recent trip to Cornwall.

After a not-without-hitch journey to Cornwall on 18 July, I managed to get to the Old School, Stoke Climsland, for **New Zealander Karl Mutch's talk about his 3xgrandfather, Henry Harper, who emigrated to New Zealand in 1840.** Henry was baptised in Calstock in 1812. The Harper family illustrates the itinerant nature of miners' lives, because Henry's siblings were baptised in St. Agnes, St. Austell, and Redruth, as well as in Calstock.



St. Andrew's, Calstock,

Henry Harper, his wife and children faced many hardships in New Zealand. His first wife died in 1845, and after his remarriage, several of his children died during the struggle to establish himself. Eventually, he joined in the gold rush of the early 1860s in New Zealand and managed to discover enough gold to set his family on a more secure basis.



Thousands of diggers rushed to 'Gabriel's Gully' hoping to strike it rich. The discovery was a major economic boost to both Otago province and the wider New Zealand economy. But there were fears that criminal elements seeking potentially rich pickings would also flock to the goldfields. The Otago gold rush peaked in the mid-1860s, after which miners left in large numbers for the new West Coast goldfields.

Gabriel's Gully 1862. Reference number: 1/2-096648-F 1 Photograph taken by Harry G Gore

Karl is testament to the eventual success of the family, but I could not help thinking that I would have been one of those who stayed at home!

I visited **Calstock Parish Archive** to see if I could find any more about the Harper family, but then learnt that a researcher at the Archive was already on the case. I always visit the archive based in the cemetery chapel at Albaston, and recommend it to others. If, like Karl, you do not live locally, the volunteer team will always try to answer queries.



Address:

Calstock Parish
Archive
Albaston Cemetery
Chapel
Cemetery Road
GUNNISLAKE
Cornwall
PL18 9AF

Phone: 01579351413

Email: enquiries@calstockhistory.org.uk

Website: calstockhistory.org.uk

Visit to East Kit Hill site and to Kit Hill

ECMHA was recently awarded a grant to re-fence the site, so I went along to see what had been done. I could see the fence from a distance, but brambles and vegetation near the entrance gate meant that I did not venture across the whole site.



East Kit Hill mine with engine house to the right from the road, 21 July 2024.





Long distance view of the Tamar from East Kit Hill mine area, looking towards pylons near Cargreen on the Cornish side and Weir Quay on the far Devon side, 21 July 2024.



Kit Hill stack on the summit of Kit Hill, 27 July 2024



Zoom photos f

(top) Looking s
area.

(lower) Looking

Mineworkers' Smallholdings within the Tamara Landscape Partnership Area

This was a lottery funded project carried out in 2023. Calstock, Stoke Climsland and Bere Ferrers parishes were selected for closer examination. The link to the full report is:

<https://www.cornishmining.org.uk/about/education/research-mineworkers-smallholdings-within-the-tamara-landscape-area>

Among the smallholdings identified in Luccett was Duchy House, Stoke Climsland, the residence of our treasurer, Kim Tasker, and her partner. The plot measured 38 perches and carried a tithe charge of 2d. In 1841 it was occupied by Samuel Stephens, a copper miner aged 48, with wife and four children (of a total of at least nine). In the 1820s Samuel was the miller at Treovis Mill, and reverted to being a miller, living at Latchley, in the 1860s. His wife, Grace, died 'after a short, but very severe illness' in 1858, aged 58. Samuel outlived her for many years, dying at Latchley in 1876 aged 83.

Another smallholding in Luccett was opposite Duchy House. It comprised a narrow strip of land alongside the road from the track to Greenscombe Wood, and uphill beyond Duchy House. This measured 16 perches and carried a tithe charge of 2d. In 1841 it was occupied by Thomas Martin Penaluna, aged 25, with wife and three children. Thomas was a well-known mine agent and captain in the district. In 1846 he reported that at Wheal Benny in Greenscombe Wood the engine shaft had been completed and the dressing-floors nearly completed. A lode 2½ feet wide had been found bearing gossan, copper, mundic and spar. In 1851 he reported on Wheal Providence at South Sydenham. However, by 1856, he was arrested for insolvency and sent to trial in Exeter. He was accused of appropriating partnership property and imprisoned for three months. He seems to have emerged from prison to resume employment as a mine agent and reported on Great Wheal Martha in 1858. In 1861 he was lodging in Callington, while the rest of his family was living at Saltash. He died in Plymouth in 1866 aged 53.

The other biographies compiled from the records also make fascinating reading.



Halton Quay

I will finish with views of the Tamar from perhaps my favourite place anywhere. This year I stayed in a B & B at Higher Chapel Farm, Halton Quay, and I strongly recommend it. It was ideal for my wild swimming as the river was so close. I was able to drive down when I thought the tide was perfect - high tide and minimal current - and judge the ideal time to enter the water. Spring tides prevailed so I was able to walk in from the shingle foreshore, avoiding the mud, and not having to clamber up the quay wall as is necessary at lower tides.



Canoeists and paddle-boarders at slack high tide travelling downstream from Halton Quay towards Pentillie Castle, 28 July 2024.

Captions for p.8.

upper: The quays either side of the foreshore at Halton Quay, from the steps up to the upper floor of the 'chapel'. The iron funnel on the beach is the flue from the lime kilns nearby. The line of stones along the foreshore marks the top of the mud bank. When the large stones are submerged the river can be entered without getting muddy! 28 July 2024.

lower: View from field above Higher Chapel Farm looking across the Tamar to the Bere peninsula, Devon, with Lockridge Farm facing the river, and rooftop of Whitsam, 26 July 2024.

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