



# THE TREVITHICK SOCIETY

**KOWETHAS TREVITHICK**  
NEWSLETTER 181 AUTUMN 2018



HRH The Duke of Kent views the Puffing Devil as it passes in front of the Trevithick statue.

Reg. Charity

No. 1,159,639



Congratulations to Dr Damian Nance on being made a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedd. The photograph shows him receiving that honour from the Grand Bard at the ceremony which was held at the Barrow Fields, Newquay. Over the years Damian has contributed excellent articles for this newsletter including the *Beam Engines in North America* series. Together with Ken Brown he also wrote the *Complete Guide to the Engine Houses of West Cornwall*, which was published in 2014.

Damian, a Cornishman, has a PhD from the University of Cambridge, where he studied the application of plate tectonic theory to the development of ancient mountain belts. He is Distinguished Professor of Geological Sciences at Ohio University.

Nance, R.D. and Brown, K., 2014. *Complete Guide to the Engine Houses of West Cornwall*. Lydney, Gloucestershire, U.K.: Lightmoor Press, 184 p.

CNF

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**Copy date for next newsletter:  
December 15th 2018**



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I was recently on Cape Breton Island and visited the Alexander Graham Bell museum at Baddeck. There was a display cabinet of medals presented to Bell by various organisations and the very first one he received was a silver James Watt medal (1877) from the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society!

I realise that the Fox family and many of the members had interests in mining and many of the medals were awarded to people who had made inventions that added to mine safety. Bell's father in law was Gardiner Green Hubbard, who had extensive mining interests on Cape Breton Island and as far as I know the coal mines there were among, if not the first, mines to use the telephone underground. This would almost certainly have been due to Hubbard's link with Bell. I am interested to know when the first telephone was used in a Cornish mine, or any British mine, come to that. Also I'm wondering if there was any conceivable link between Hubbard, the Cape Breton mines and Cornwall.

If you could help me in any way, by pointing me at any literature, or passing my details on to someone who you think might help I would be very grateful indeed. It's 'micro history', but interesting nonetheless.

**Keith Matthew,**  
01326 574441.

Dear Editor,

I write to express my gratitude to the Society for making me (among others) an honorary member (Newsletter 180, page 15).

Is it really fifty years since I joined the then Cornish Engines Preservation Society? I suppose it must be. We have seen extraordinary changes in the larger world of industrial history and industrial

archaeology: the Society has manifestly kept pace with those changes. At the same time the Society has maintained the sturdy Cornish exceptionalness that foreigners (including me) find so admirable. Long may it continue this difficult balancing act!

I have very much enjoyed my membership of the Society, even though the circumstances that kept me in London have made it impossible for me to contribute to the Society's work in any practical way. I hope to continue the enjoyment for a few more years yet.

**Robin Adams**

## FROM THE PAST

Two pictures of the Beach Tin Operating Co. (Gwithian) Ltd. – July 1937

**KJTR**



## BIRTHDAY BASH FOR KINGSLEY

The company assembled at the Engine Inn, Cripplesease, for 6.30 pm, Mr Badger and Mr Mole arriving early to set up Mr Badger's beautiful hand-crafted model of a Trevithick steam engine in the back courtyard of the pub (by arrangement); Mrs Badger and Mrs Mole to drink tea and watch the proceedings. The engine was stoked and brought to steam at about 6 o'clock, Mr Mole assisting, and Mr Rickard, Mr and Mrs Saunders and Mr Flaxman arrived to view this (along with some of the Inn staff, a few other interested spectators and a small grey bulldog). At 6.20 pm the fire was drawn and the engine left to run down the steam pressure for 10 minutes before a blow down preparatory to returning the engine to its place in Mr Badaer's Volvo.



A couple of old engines!

Badger and Mole prepare the engine.



Dinner was served at 7 pm and enjoyed by all; Mrs Badger had provided a saffron birthday cake and Mr Rickard blew out all the candles at one go in the approved fashion. Unfortunately, owing to the requirement for sobriety on the part of the drivers, the 'skinful' urged by Mr Thorne was not indulged in but a fine time was nevertheless enjoyed by all, including Mrs Badger who, overcome by a surfeit of tea, left her bag behind in the Engine Inn.

Several messages were read out from those who were unable to attend:

From Mr Joseph:

"Just remember, when you're over the hill, you begin to pick up speed."

From Mr Rogers:

"To believe Kingsley Rickard  
Is eighty is very hard  
It is easier to contemplate  
He is really only thirty eight  
Of mines so much education  
Of machines so much erudition  
We feel the need to kowtow  
To this fine son of Kernow.

Pennbloedh Lowen da Kingsley  
Olla an Gwella – All the Best

Jerry Rogers."

From Mr Thorne:

Dear Kingsley,  
Believe me, I'm some disappointed I can't be with you this evening; I'd dearly like to have been there to celebrate your birthday. This verse was written for the birthday of Charles Causley, another great Cornishman and, with a little tweaking, seems to me totally appropriate for you. So have a great evening, pard, and drink plenty, because, as you and I do know: "Cake wain't fill tha".  
Yours, with all good wishes and huge affection,

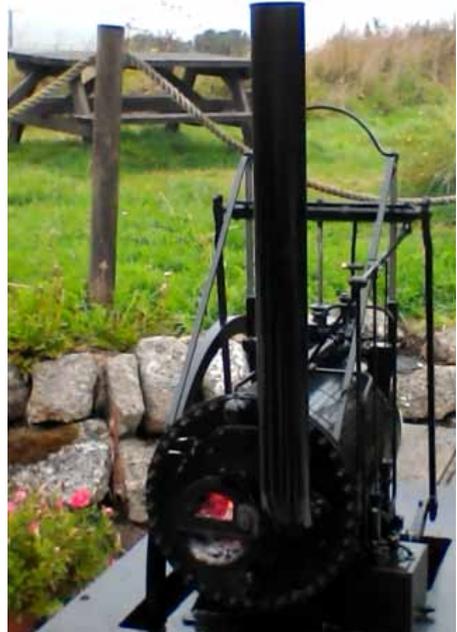
Graham

**Ted Mole**

One of the sadder things, I think,  
Is how our birthdays slowly sink:  
Presents and parties disappear,  
The cards grow fewer year by year,  
Till, when one passes sixty-five,  
How many care we're still alive?  
Ah, KINGS, be reassured! For you  
Make lasting friends with all you do,  
And all you write; your truth and sense  
We count on as a sure defence  
Against the trendy and the mad,  
The feeble and the downright bad.  
I hope you have a splendid day,  
Acclaimed by wheeling gulls at play  
And barking seals, sea-lithe and lazy  
(My view of Cornwall's rather hazy),  
And humans who don't think it sinful  
To mark your birthday with a skinful."

Mr Rickard expressed thanks.

After dinner the company took part in the pub quiz, raising money for the West Penwith Scouts, and Kingsley's Team came fourth in the competition, scoring 30 points out of a possible 52. The party dispersed at closing time, dispersing into the Penwith mist.



## W.E.S.E.S. RALLY

We had a very successful three days at the West of England Steam & Country Fair, enrolling new members, chatting with members visiting the tent, answering general queries from the public and enhancing the Society coffers with welcome sales. The fair has a somewhat variable weather history, and this year, although we have had a remarkable summer the hot spell collapsed prior to the show. Having said that we had two dry days with a strong breeze and the third day was misty and damp to begin with but the sun broke through during the afternoon and we were able to pack up dry kit for winter storage as this was the last outing for 2018.

Thanks to Phil Porter and Barbara Tripp for staffing the tent. This year we did not have the services of our stalwart member Dave Mann who was indisposed. Get well soon Dave and see you for the 2019 season.

**KJTR**

## FLYING VISIT

On October 6th the Flying Scotsman made its first ever visit to Cornwall and, despite the cold wind and rain, thousands of people lined the main line to catch a glimpse of the iconic engine as it shot past. The photograph diagonally opposite caught it speeding past the old Carn Brea station with Carn Brea forming a suitable backdrop.

In the publicity on television and in the newspapers the Flying Scotsman was heralded as the first train to travel at 100 mph. Strange, I thought that accolade went to the City of Truro locomotive in 1904 when it became the first vehicle to reach that speed. It seems that facts should not stand in the way of an eye-catching headline!

**CNF**



## GURNEY VENTILATOR

Whilst visiting Peterborough Cathedral to see the landing pod used by Tim Peake after his time spent on the orbiting space station, I came across something far more interesting - several Goldsworthy Gurney ventilators made by the The London Warming and Heating Company. Patented in 1856 this stove was used in many old Cathedrals and Abbeys for heating. Originally fired by anthracite some were later converted to gas firing.

To judge by the flues connected to the stoves in Peterborough Cathedral they are still in use today, as apparently are the ones at Chester and Hereford Cathedrals.

CNF



## ST JUST MINERS' CHAPEL APPEAL



Society members Ted Mole and Len Phillips have spent the summer leading guided walks around Botallack. Thanks to publicity by our Membership Secretary a number of Society members joined us along with a walking group from Carrick U3A, casual visitors to Botallack and on the last day a group of enthusiasts from Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum and Sherborne Steam and Waterwheel Centre. The walks also took in Ding Dong and the neighbouring prehistoric monuments and Godolphin and Tregonning Hills. The tours were a money raising venture to help secure the future of the St Just Wesleyan Chapel, often referred to as the Miners' Cathedral, and now known as St Just Miners' Chapel. Built in 1833 as the third Wesleyan chapel in St Just, the chapel is one of the most prominent buildings in St Just and at the opening in 1833 it was claimed that it could accommodate 1800 worshippers. The original Wesleyan Meeting House in North Row (c. 1745) and the chapel built in Cape Cornwall Street (1755) both still stand today but it is the 1833 chapel which can justifiably be termed iconic. Visible from the sea and from the road to Penzance as it passes Balleswidden, miners leaving for work overseas would cite the chapel as part of their parting view of St Just.

The chapel houses a memorial to the victims of the Wheal Owles disaster of January 1893 and the graveyard contains the graves of 15 of the men killed at Levant



on 20th October 1919.

The aim of the St Just Miners' Chapel Appeal is to secure the building for the community for the future and the guided walks raised £305 towards the target, enough for the Trevithick Society to be recognised as a Pard for the next year.

Receiving the money on behalf of the chapel David James said, "The forging of links between the Trevithick



Society and St Just Miners' Chapel means a great deal to us, not only because the hard work of Ted Mole and Len Phillips has raised a most generous and much needed donation of £305, but also because we welcome the Society as one of our Cornish Pards. Just as miners used to call each other Pard, and relied on their Pard to look out for them when underground, so our Cornish Pards look out for the Chapel - with donations, time and advice. Pards are vital to its future - for the sustainability of this noble building and all it stands for depends on the community and those who love this area providing continuous financial and practical support. Welcome Pards, and thank you."

The first big project, a new heating system, is being installed now, in time to warm the audience for the performance of Ed Rowe's *Hireth* in November. (It's a chapel, have some faith!)

Thanks to everyone who turned up for the walks, we both enjoyed ourselves and enjoyed sharing our passion for Cornish industrial history with you all and doing a little bit for a worthwhile cause.

**Ted Mole**



## PUFFING DEVIL

It came as a complete surprise for the Puffing Devil and crew to receive an invite to take part in the re-opening of Camborne Library and the opening of the new Camborne Town Council offices - both in the same renovated Passmore Edwards building.

On the day HRH The Duke of Kent visited the library where he was introduced to representatives of various local groups including the John Harris Society (the Miners' Poet) as well as three of the crew Sean Oliver, John Woodward and myself. John Sawle very kindly kept the engine in steam whilst the rest of the crew were so detained. The Duke of Kent was given a tour of the building and unveiled a plaque commemorating the event before ending his visit outside by the Trevithick Statue.

This was a very fitting end as it was his father who unveiled the Trevithick Statue in 1932.

The dramatic finale to his visit was a drive past by the Puffing Devil.

The engine was also in steam at the W.E.S.E.S. rally in August. John Sawle steamed it on the Saturday and Sunday and I operated the engine on the Friday. The weather was very kind this year and the crowds were large with much interest shown in the Puffing Devil by all ages.

On one of the hottest days of the summer, the engine was also commissioned to take part in a four part documentary to be screened in America. Whilst steaming, several horses gingerly passed us immediately showing their disdain for technology by leaving the longest line of dung imaginable. When we were ready to drive the engine for the first time, John Woodward thought we were driving off forwards whilst I thought we were to go off in the other direction. Consequently when we moved John was unprepared for the trajectory and we headed off across the road where, in the confusion, an emergency stop was needed. Unfortunately the driving wheels stopped on the fresh greasy dung which caused wheel spin when we tried to move off again. The horses had the last laugh.

CNF





## LEVANT REPORT



Three new engine drivers have been trained and passed as competent and they are enjoying driving the Whim. The majority of driver refresher courses have been completed, and this will be a regular yearly requirement, as procedures tend to change each year. We also welcomed several new guides to the site.

Visitor numbers are down from last year, and this is the trend throughout National Trust sites in Cornwall. We also have restricted car parking facilities now, which results in visitors being asked to park either at Botallack or Geevor Mines and walk across. This has impacted on visitor numbers also.

The newly plumbed-in pipework to increase the efficiency of the boiler by using steam injection into the boiler make-up tank is working very well, and this helps to substantially reduce fuel oil consumption.

During the winter shutdown period, work has started on curing the water leaks within the wooden Hot-well cistern and also its cast-iron external discharge pipework into the cooling pond. Substantial amounts of water has been lost this summer which has resulted in having to top-up the pond with mains water. This has not been helped by the long hot summer that dried up the leat feeding the pond. There is also concern for the stability of the cooling pond as there is erosion around the base in the Zawn. Expert advice is being sought from marine and structural engineers.

The usual painting of exterior winding drums and bearing cover is

ongoing, and also the engine and guards will need some paint during the shut-down period.

After a year of being out of service due to the National Trust disconnecting the power supply to the Electric Winder, it is now running again. The winder rope was exposed to the salt atmosphere and by not passing over the head frame diverter wheel, that section of the rope had rusted solid. This was due to the fact that the grease impregnated core had not been flexing which keeps the rope from being properly lubricated. Consequently about 25 fathoms (150 feet) of rope had to be wound up the shaft and discarded. Luckily there is plenty of rope on the winding drum because we now only wind down to just above adit (24 fathoms). The winder originally wound the cage to 190 fathoms. Many thanks to the volunteers that assisted me in this process, and also the resetting of the level indicator and all four safety limit switches.

Over the past year there has been a large turnover of National Trust staff at Levant and Botallack. Unfortunately this has led to some volunteers being unhappy with the situation, and it is hoped that the new managers will settle in quickly.

**Ron Flaxman**

## ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

“Thank you for calling Tech Support. If your computer becomes obsolete while you are waiting, press “1” to reach our sales department”

**KJTR**

## BOOK REVIEW

Members who attended the 2016 AGM, based in mid Cornwall, will recall a fascinating morning spent exploring the china clay port of Pentewan with local historian, Robert Evans. The story of the port is intimately linked with the narrow gauge railway from St Austell which served it.

In the 1960s the publishing house, Bradford Barton, based at the Truro Bookshop, produced a remarkable series of volumes on Cornwall's mining, transport and industrial history. One of these was a slim pale blue paperback, *The Pentewan Railway 1829-1918* by M J T Lewis. It ran to 58 pages and cost 8s 6d. and many must have thought that justice had been done to record the story of that relatively unknown line. Twenty-one years later the fledgling publishing house Twelveheads Press issued a much revised and extended version of the book, now with 90 far larger pages and more illustrations. This was most welcome and surely, we thought, told the definitive story of the Pentewan line.

Now after thirty-seven years *The Pentewan Railway* appears again from Twelveheads; it has 128 A4 pages and a further raft of new material, notably from the papers of the Johnstone family, whose Hawkins ancestors built and owned the line. This third edition benefits from a larger page size and also contains a number of hitherto unseen photographs. *The Pentewan Railway* cannot be regarded as a success, even though the china clay industry, its *raison d'être*, prospered mightily over the line's active life. It suffered from two crippling disabilities, one being that its upper terminus in St Austell was far distant from any clay pits and secondly that the port of Pentewan suffered constant choking from the waste products of the clay industry.

The many, fruitless, efforts to keep Pentewan open are covered in the book; so too are the several efforts to extend the line further into 'the clay'. The reader will also find details of the line's operation, first as a horse drawn tramway and later as

a steam railway to the unusual gauge of 2' 8". There is detailed information about the locomotives – a curious collection influenced by the inventor J B Fell. This truly is the definitive work on *The Pentewan Railway*; its content and production are to Twelveheads' high standards. The author Dr Michael Lewis, did his original research as a schoolboy; in this new edition he has been assisted by Michael Messenger a director of the publishers and an honorary life member of the Society. The book is a model of its kind and will not disappoint. Even if you own the previous edition(s), this one is well worth your attention.

*The Pentewan Railway*, M.J.T. Lewis, Twelveheads Press, 2018, £25, ISBN 9780906294949

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## 2019 AGM

### PLEASE NOTE

The 2019 Annual General Meeting will be from the 11th to 13th May and located in the Falmouth area.

A detailed itinerary will be provided with the spring newsletter.

## PUBLICATIONS

We are now putting the finishing touches to our autumn publication. *The Notebook of a Devon Great Consols Mine Captain: 1886–1900* by William Woolcock. William Woolcock worked at Devon Great Consols during its final period of operation. By then the great days of copper mining at Blanchdown were long gone. The mine was reliant on sales of arsenic but at the same time the ultimately fruitless search for tin at depth was continuing. Diaries such as this are rare. Rick Stewart and Robert Waterhouse have transcribed and annotated the notebook for publication with explanatory notes about the mine during this period. A short biography of Woolcock is also included. He comes across in his notes as very much a man of his time, professional and loyal, genial but of firm integrity, a classic Victorian. It is a pleasure to bring him and his notebook to a wider audience.

*The Notebook of a Devon Great Consols Mine Captain: 1886-1900* by William Woolcock, compiled by R J Stewart and R Waterhouse, 2018, 68 pages, paperback, £11.00, ISBN 978-0-9935021-6-3 will be available in early autumn.

Congratulations to two of our authors – to Robert Waterhouse for winning the AIA Award for the best publication from a voluntary body with *The Tavistock Canal*; I was fortunate to attend the AIA conference in Nottingham to receive Robert's well merited award on his behalf. And to Rick Stewart who was only edged out at the Holyer an Gof Awards; his *Mine Pumping Engines in Eighteenth Century Cornwall* beaten only by a volume on the Penlee Lifeboat Disaster.

A reminder too to all members, that we are still seeking content for our proposed Levant anthology to be published next autumn. If you have anything you think might be at all relevant, written or pictorial, do please get in touch with Pete Joseph or myself. There may be a year to go but the sooner the better.

Finally, as autumn looms and Christmas approaches, here is a list of our

current books in print for that thoughtful gift.

*William Woolcock Diary of a DGC Mine Captain* £11.00

*Wheal Trewavas* £10.00

*Tavistock Canal* (Paperback only) £30.00

*Mine Pumping Engines in C18 Cornwall* £17.50

*Great County Adit* £15.99 Stocks now low.  
*Cornwall's Fuse Works* £28.00 Hardback, £20.00 Paperback

*Great Wheal Vor* £40.00 Hardback, £20.00 Paperback – New bargain prices

*Wheal Basset* £14.99

*Life of William West* £14.99

*Ding Dong Mine* £15.99

*CSM History* £14.99 – Half published price  
*Holman to Compair* £18.50 – Very low stocks

*Levant: A Champion Cornish Mine (Revised)* £10.99

*Wherry Mine*, £4.99 – Last few copies

*Webb & Geach Mines of Liskeard* £5.00 – Reduced price

*Moissenet Tin Dressing* £10.00 – Price further reduced

*Hard Graft (Botallack in C20)* £16.99 – Stocks running low

*Marconi at Lizard* £9.99

*Tin & Diamonds (Life of Francis Oats)* £4.99 – Low stock

*Cornish Explosives* £15.00 – Bargain Price for this classic

*Levant Whim Drawings* £6.99 – Stock running low

It is most unlikely that any of these low stock items will be reprinted in the foreseeable future.

**Graham Thorne**



## SOCIETY MEETINGS PROGRAMME

**KEM:** 7.00 pm start at King Edward Mine, Tron, Camborne TR14 9DP.

**Liskeard:** 7.30 pm start at The Long Room, Liskeard Public Hall PL14 6BW.

### Friday 9th November (KEM)

*Cornish Lithium.*

by Jeremy Wrathall

### Monday 12 November (Liskeard)

*Royal Albert Bridge – Accessing The Unreachable.*

Kimble West and Mark Musgrave from XEAD will explore the specialist engineering techniques that are used to maintain the bridge.

### Monday 10th December (Liskeard)

*Plymouth Breakwater Tour.*

£10.00 per person. Contact Tracy to book.

### Monday 10th December (Liskeard)

*Film – Building Bell Rock Lighthouse*

### Friday 14th December (KEM)

*Film – Building Bell Rock Lighthouse*

### Friday 11th January (KEM)

*Secrets of the Portreath Branch Line*

by Peter Wycliffe-Jones

### Monday 14th January (Liskeard)

*Wave impact on lighthouses*

by Alison Raby

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For up-to-date news check:

<http://www.trevithick-society.org.uk>

<https://www.facebook.com/trevithick.society/>

**Non-members are welcome to attend.  
Non-members £2.00 please.**

### 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
- Poldark – free entry to site and reduced fee for underground mine tour

Also:

- 10% off book purchases at Tormark.
- 20% off purchases at KEM shop.

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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.

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Individual members .....	£28.00
Family/joint members .....	£33.00
Overseas members .....	£35.00
Corporate members .....	£35.00

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