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A GLIMPSE AT EAST TREVELL MINE IN CORNWALL

R. von Arx

SYNOPSIS

This small mine escaped the attention of J.H. Collins (1912) as well as of the Geological Survey Office (Henry Dewey, 1921). H.G. Dines (1956) gives only a very sketchy description under the name Tolpetherwin and is unable to name the minerals for which it was opened, but the reprint of 1988 mentions under Addenda the information unearthed by A.K. Hamilton Jenkin (1969) who is the only researcher to shed some light on this mid-19th century silver-lead/copper venture.

The mine is situated about 300 yards N. by E. from Two Bridges and 5 miles from Launceston, in Southpetherwin Parish (2 miles N. of the granite hills of Killmar and Ox Tor, 5 miles E. from Great Wheal Roughtor and 2/3 of a mile from the works of The Trevell Silver Lead Mines Company which was then in full operation). Mining at East Trevell started in 1845 under “that most celebrated” Captain Henry Brenton, while the capital was supplied by the Tavistock bankers Gill & Rundle. The enterprise was called The Tolpetherwin Mining Company and lasted until around 1846/7. They opened a 9 feet deep pit on a lead lode and raised a ton of lead containing 52 ounces of silver, the lead fetching £14 per ton. Although the mine looked promising, it was decided to abandon the lease in view of the high dues of 1/10 claimed by the landowner Squire Archer. The sett was thereupon granted to another group of investors operating under the same name and who drove an adit of about 50 fathoms on a large E./W. silver-lead lode. Ore samples personally broken from it, dressed and assayed later on by the mining agent Captain H. Luke were found to produce thirteen in twenty of lead and 72 ounces per ton of silver. A 20 fathom cross-cut was also driven and “a most splendid” 4 feet wide S./E. copper lode cut. With the idea to intersect the lode at a depth of 40 fathoms an engine shaft was commenced and when it reached a depth of 8 fathoms another 4 feet copper lode was met with, running parallel to the other one. At 20 fathoms a cross-cut was driven towards the lode but after 6 fathoms such a large stream of water was encountered as to make proceeding further impossible with the existing horse-whim. This water was so rich in copper that kibbles and tools left in it just overnight were “corroded with beautiful copper greens”. The adventurers were unable to incur the expense of the necessary machinery to cope with the influx of water and forfeited the sett in 1848 after having spent some £1500.

At this point, about 1848/9, a new venture was being floated under the name of *East Trevell Copper and Silver Lead Mining Company* to be conducted on the cost-book principle. Abraham Shepherd, Henry Payne and Samuel Bray of Launceston together with William Pearce and Richard Peters of South pet her win formed the Management Committee, Superintendent at the mines was John Bennett of South pet her win, Mine Purser was John Parsons Harris of Launceston and Secretary and London Agent J.H. Haynes, with offices at No.12 Old Jewry Chambers. The undertaking was divided into 2048 shares of £1.5. – each. Out of the proceeds £1500 was to be carried to the credit of the Company as working capital and the remainder held by the previous parties – presumably all or part of the Management Committee – in consideration of the work already done, the purchase of the lease etc. The dues were 1/15th. The sett covered nearly one square mile.

To buttress the statement of the promoters “that the ultimate success of the mine is beyond doubt”, four experienced mining agents were called in for their opinion: Captain Joseph Pike, Captain Davey, Captain H. Luke and Captain James Gripe (of St. Ann’s, Cornwall). All were pretty positive calling the mine “a very fine speculation”, although Pike cautioned that “those things must be proved before it can be brought to light”. Davey surveyed the area for water power as well as for the leat required and calculated the cost of a 30 feet water-wheel including leat, rods, bobs, pumps and other necessary materials at £500 maximum. He pronounced it “a very kindly mine”. Gripe in turn spoke of “a very strong, masterly” copper vein.

We have no way of knowing if the East Trevell Company was actually formed and started operations. Circumstances would indicate that the company never got off the ground because it was impossible to work the mine without the erection of a water-wheel, a job that was taken in hand only in early 1853 by Inny Consols who had by then been granted the sett. The activity of this small Company is described in detail by Hamilton Jenkin. Mineral statistics do not list any of the three ventures.

SOURCES

Prospectus, undated; A. K. Hamilton Jenkin: *Miners and Mines of Cornwall* Vol. XV, p.57/8.

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