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**A GLIMPSE AT CAPE CORNWALL MINE**

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**SYNOPSIS**

*Opinions as to when mining on Cape Cornwall near St. Just in Penwith began differ. The first work under the name of Cape Cornwall Mine took place from 1836 to 1846. The mine was then idle until the early 1860s. This short account outlines this latter operation.*

Under the energetic direction of London promoter and Managing Director Henry L. Phillips preliminary work started again in 1863, soon to be overshadowed by a dispute with St. Just United Limited about undersea mining rights, which called Warrington Smyth, the Crown representative, on the plan. This controversy, although apparently lasting several years, did not prevent the interested party from forming a new company called *The Cape Cornwall, St. Just Consolidated Tin and Copper Mining Company Limited* in March 1864. The subscription for the capital of the company was so successful that several hundred shares were applied for in excess of the number to be allotted. Curiously enough, the question of the undersea mining rights was never mentioned at the meetings. At the 1st General Meeting of the shareholders at the London Offices in 32 New Broad Street on 8th June 1865 the Report of the local managers John Carthew and Ralph P. Goldsworthy on the state of the mine was read and their information corroborated by outside consultant Peter Casley. A house for a 26 inch cylinder engine, serving the purposes of pumping and drawing, had been erected in addition to the houses for the two new 7 ton boilers. Flat rods had been attached to the bob at the engine shaft at a distance of 50 fathoms. The spot for the engine was chosen with a view to the best place for laying out the planned stamps which were to be driven by the engine. Among further buildings was a counting house, material house, carpenter's shop as well as sawing and powder houses. A capstan and shaft tackle 60 feet high had been put up, which would also serve as a shears. When erecting the stamps, a spalling brace would be formed on the shaft tackle, by fixing the beams to the legs, and convey the tin-stuff broken to a proper size from there to the stamps over a tram road. The mine had been forked to the bottom, a depth of 100 fathoms from surface, and pit-work fitted for permanent working while the skip road was completed down to the 90 fathom level. Several levels were now cleared and the 3½ inch wire rope for drawing worked well.

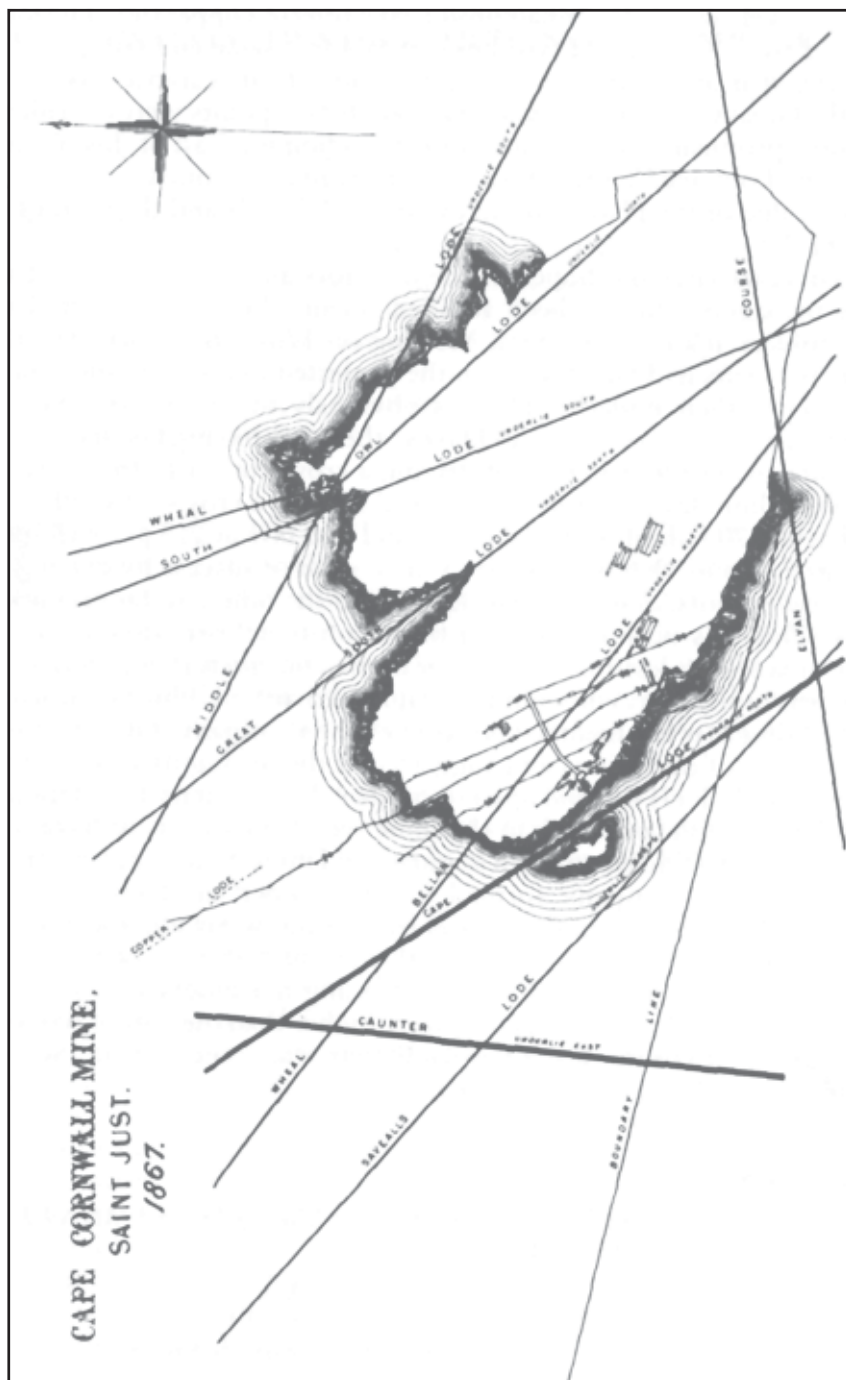
## A GLIMPSE AT CAPE CORNWALL MINE

Work was at present in progress on the Cape Lode. The 40 fathom level, driven east by two men at £2.15s per fathom, was 25 fathoms from shaft, the 55 east 50 fathoms and west 39 fathoms, and the 70 east 70 fathoms. The lode in the latter, fully 4 feet wide, had been unaccountably left by the “late” workers. The tin-stuff produced was judged to average 2 to 3 cwt. of tin to 100 sacks. Two men were on tribute at 13s 4d in the pound. Four men were sinking a winze below the 70 fathom level 11 fathoms east from shaft at £3.3s per fathom, the 80 to be holed soon. With improved ventilation, work in the 80 could then be resumed. The 70, now 70 fathoms west from shaft, was being driven by two men at £2.15s. The lode was composed of spar, mundic and jasper with spots of copper ore – “very promising”. A further level in the 70 was driven east by four men at £4. The 80 was 35 fathoms east and west from shaft. Other short levels were in progress and there is frequent mention of splendid stones of tin. It was reckoned that in due time sufficient tin-stuff for 32 heads of stamps would be raised, which, when worked at 14 hours a day, would return 5000 sacks per month at 2 cwt. per 100 sacks making a total of 5 tons of tin monthly.

Points of interest for the immediate future were the extension of the 70 fathom level west by 38 fathoms to reach the Great Caunter which would have a “powerful” influence on the Cape Lode, and the driving of a cross-cut at the 100 fathom level to reach the Great South Lode, with the Wheal Owl Lode and Middle and South Lodes to be worked separately because of the distance.

The capital of the Company was in 8000 shares at £2.10s of which 2500 had been allotted to vendors. On the remaining 5000 shares three calls totalling £1.10s had already been made, the arrears amounting to £672.1s. The value of the mine lease was put at £8750 and the cost of the plant at £1690.1.7. The outlay at the mine was £3481.16.3 so far; the cost of law fees, Crown and Duchy grants £223.19.6. Income from sales of tin was only just £230.18.8

We have no information for 1866 but at the 3rd General Meeting on 10th October 1867 it was decided to increase the capital by issuing 3000 new shares (as the mine was worlds from paying for itself). All were applied for, a number from persons resident in the immediate vicinity of the property and consequently well acquainted with its merits and prospects. In the meantime, the two local managers had been replaced by Richard Pryor and William White who reported on the progress on the Cape Lode. The 100 fathom level east from shaft was producing good stones of tin from a 3 foot lode. The 90 had been extended by 70 fathoms east from shaft and yielded from £10 to £15 per fathom. Six men were engaged in putting up a rise and stoping the back of the level. At 130 fathoms west from shaft a caunter lode was intersected in the 70



CAPE CORNWALL MINE,  
SAINT JUST.  
1867.

## A GLIMPSE AT CAPE CORNWALL MINE

fathom level, which so far had produced 3 tons of copper ore. The lode, worked by two men and two boys, was 4 feet wide and composed of mundic, spar and rich stones of copper ore. Its appearance gave hope that the Great Caunter Lode was near. These two points were considered the most promising, all the more so as the adjoining East St. Just United Mines had obtained large returns in very similar circumstances.

The value of the plant had increased to £2979.13s and the sales of tin to £781.3.5

Two years later the hopes of the directors and the promises of the mine managers had not been fulfilled. Henry Phillips sadly told the shareholders at the 5th General Meeting on 17th November 1869 that both cross-cuts had failed to reach the projected lodes, probably due to variation in their underlie. He was obviously more realistic than the local managers, Pryor and John Davey, the latter having taken the place of White. After reporting about driving a cross-cut north from shaft at the 100 fathom level with six men at £17.10s and a cross-cut south from shaft at the 70 fathom with four men and one boy at £13 per fathom in hard greenstone, they still clung to the notion of success by driving on at the two points, and also bearing in mind the other, so far unworked lodes. This was pushing things a bit far on their part; after all, in six years of working less than 20 tons of tin had been returned, no rich ore body was in sight anywhere and the capital exhausted. Phillips informed the Meeting that the financial position of the Company did not allow a continuance of operations and suggested at the urging of several of the largest shareholders to wind up the Company by voluntary liquidation.

Phillips' and Pryor's faith in the mine seems, however, to have been unbroken as we find them again as purser and mine manager respectively in a cost-book company formed in 1870 under the name of Cape Cornwall Mine. According to a letter by Warrington Smyth, the working of the mine was much as before with the ore bodies "just round the corner", no ore being raised and the dressing machinery decaying. He was sure that the London expenses were higher than the cost of working the mine. In 1879 the Cape Cornwall sett was joined to the St Just United when that mine was reorganised.

### SOURCES

Company papers; Cyril Noall: *The St. Just Mining District; MINERAL STATISTICS – Cornish Mines.*

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