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HISTORICAL NOTES ON WHEAL JANE

J. Brooke

There have been mines worked in the area around the modern 'Wheal Jane' for upwards of two hundred years. Baldhu, the village in which it stands, was the former name of 'West Wheal Jane', and means "black mine" in Cornish.

The mine now worked as 'Wheal Jane' was formerly known as 'West Wheal Jane' and was reopened by a local cost-book company in 1853. Frank Clemow, a Cornishman who settled in London, was a member of the committee of management of this concern, and gave his name to Clemow's shaft. Other mines working at about this time were 'Wheal Jane' (1850-1885, for part of the time under the same management as West Wheal Jane), 'North Wheal Jane' (1860-77), 'Nangiles' (1859-82) and 'Falmouth and Sperries', as well as others bearing the name of Falmouth in honour of Viscount Falmouth, the mineral lord. Apart from 'Falmouth and Sperries', which paid a single dividend, and 'Wheal Jane', which paid dividends intermittently for several years, these mines all worked at a loss. A feature of their operations was the large number of minerals sold from them, which included black-tin, copper, blende, silver, silver-lead, gossan and mispickel. It was also said that gold was found. The old 'Wheal Jane', north of the main road from Chacewater to Kea church, was worked above and by tributaries until 1895.

During the so-called electric pump boom of the first decade of the twentieth century, the leases of the old 'Wheal Jane', 'West Wheal Jane' and a number of other neighbouring mines (as well as two mines in East Cornwall) were acquired by the 'S.G. Minerals syndicate' for £1000 in cash and £7500 in shares credited as fully paid and £5000 in cash.

'Falmouth Consolidated' which took over the mines in 1907 erected its own power station on the old 'Wheal Jane', the walls of which are still (1973) standing. However, the company was dogged by bad luck, and, one suspects, bad management. During the first year of its life its crushing plant failed and the company was compelled to make an arrangement with its creditors. It was under-capitalized and always chronically short of cash, and at the time of the appointment of a Receiver in 1913 it had £78,300 of 610 prior charges ahead of its ordinary capital of £119,600, while a further £26,700 of 7% loan was created during the receivership. The company was finally wound-up in 1916, when the sale of its assets produced insufficient funds to enable the Receiver to make any return to the debenture holders.

The company is still popularly thought to have gone into liquidation during the first World War owing to the fact that it was run by Germans. This was not the case, though the ignorant may be forgiven for thinking that Messrs. Dietzsch, Eisenberg, Golberg, Goldman, and Seimert, who were connected with the company, were not Englishmen.

The modern 'Wheal Jane' was acquired by Consolidated Goldfields Ltd in 1969. It was formally opened by the Chairman of that company on 1st October 1971, the first tin mine to be opened in Cornwall for thirty-four years. In February 1973 the mine operated at a profit for the first time, despite unresolved problems arising from the dressing of the mine's unusually complex ore, from which the recovery is about 1.25% black-tin, or about 281bs. to the ton, plus a copper-zinc concentrate.

Sources used in compiling this article: Mining Journal, Mining Magazine, Stock Exchange Official Year Books, London & West Country chamber of mines Year Books, Mining Year book, A.K. Hamilton-Jenkins Cornish Mines and Miners, H.G. Dines Metalliferous mining region of S.W. England, company's printed publications.

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