

PEREGRINATION IN CORNWALL 1983

21ST May 83. With John Gaskins, Tom Charman and John Willock we left Leamington at 08.00 heading for Cornwall, but soon ran into rain. We travelled via Evesham, Ashchurch and the M5, making a stop at the Michael Wood service station. Here John G. soon found a subject for his camera, this being a Birmingham Corporation double decker. We then motored through heavy showers without a stop to Sticklepath arriving about 12.00. It was thought time to take lunch but after much searching, one member failed to find his, so a little sharing took place. We then visited Finches Foundry, originally maker of agricultural hand tools. Three waterwheels powered these workshops; one drove a grindstone, one a tilt hammer and one a blower for the hearths. To the rear of this foundry is a Quaker burial ground. All Uncle Tom Cobley's six friends named in Widecombe Fair hailed from Sticklepath.

Our next stop was at Meldon Reservoir where the water was flowing over the dam sill and cascading down the spillway. In the distance was a disused railway viaduct that crossed the River Okement.

We then spent sometime in searching for accommodation, finally settling in at Mrs. Chivers, 3 Clinton Road, Redruth. In the evening we called at the railway station and photographed an 'up' train as it crossed a high viaduct just outside the station. Just to the rear of station is an unused ivy mantled chimney which tapers in stepped rings. It looked a little like an upturned

telescope, it is said that originally it was 140' high. We then briefly visited Carnkee that is just south of Redruth, here is a profusion of mine engine-house ruins, chimneys and dressing floors. By this time the light was fading and all feeling a little empty returned to a fish and chip saloon. On arrival at Clinton Road we were offered tea and biscuits.

22nd May 83. Usual walk with JG. We decided that Redruth was not dominated by churches but by many chapels, some of which were immense. One could well imagine the volume of sound that would emanate from these establishments when all these Cornish voices were in full song. After an excellent breakfast we set out for Penzance, making our first stop at St. Erth railway station where we saw an 'up' HST and also a DMU from St. Ives enter the dead end bay. The station was very well cared for. A discussion why the 'up' main line platform was 2 or 3ft higher than the St. Ives branch platform, (though it was an island platform) but no one could give a satisfactory explanation.

Pictures taken of one of the rather fine granite mileposts with St. Michael's Mount behind. Over the highway an RAC sign depicted a telephone one mile distant. To Penzance Heliport where there was one large helicopter on the tarmac. At Penzance Harbour a Trinity House Light ship attracted our attention. We then walked into the town photographing many interesting objects and buildings, a door and door case in Chapel Street, a two

ton anchor from the sunken flagship (1707) of St. Cloudsley Shovell and the Egyptian House (NT). Sir Humphrey Davy with the giant Ionic portico of the Market Hall to the rear. A look at the 1879 Railway station and a picture of a 20 seater Bedford bus on the forecourt.

Then next to Lands End where there is now a charge of £1.50 per person for the privilege of reaching the final tip. This we were not prepared to pay, so as a recompense we went to Sennen Cove which is almost as far west. Here we looked at a very large manually operated capstan that was housed in a circular building of two floors, it was capable of hauling boats of up to 10 tons from the sea. We then visited the very heavily mined sites around Cape Cornwall, Batallock and Levant. We were all captivated by the two engine houses open to the heavens that were situated almost at sea level with the cliffs towering above. Near this spot we saw a sleeping adder. Tea taken at Geevor Mine Museum car park.

Next stop was at Pendeen light-house situated on a headland. Finally we arrived at St. Ives when it became prematurely dark with drizzle falling, so with a brief look round the harbour the lights from an artist studio beckoned us in. Here there were several artists working at their canvases, the one that held our attention most was that of a young woman sitting motionless and the painter portraying her likeness. We were reluctant to leave before its completion but remained long enough to see

the likeness appearing. I am sure this young lady will be most pleased with it.

It was now turned nine o'clock so turning towards Redruth... on arrival we heard the call- 'would you like a cup of tea'.

23rd May 83. Usual walk followed by an excellent breakfast. We started off by going to Pool to see the two preserved (Nat Trust) engine houses, one for pumping and one for winding. Neither opened until 11.00 so we settled for an outside view only. On to Cambourne, hoping to visit the Holman Museum but this we learned had been closed and the exhibits shared between Paldark Mining and Tolgus Tin sites. Outside of the Public Library standing on a granite plinth was the bronze figure of Trivithick holding his road locomotive of 1801. This bronze figure had been sculpted by L.S. Merrifield. 1928. We then took a bye road to Copper House (Hayle) where we stopped to take pictures of the main line viaduct at Angarack. On reaching Copper House we looked at the short canal and a wharf with its walls built with blocks of copper slag. Blackroad causeway runs through Copperhouse Pool, this too is constructed of the same material. Pictures taken with Phillack church in the background. We then motored to Hayle wharves and the docks, which are very run down. We were told that the whole site was going to be developed. In Hayle we called and looked inside of the empty, gaunt decaying workshops of Harveys' which have long since been abandoned. With thump of a steam hammer coursing

through John Willock's head, a nostalgic tear forming in his eyes and the name of Harveys ringing in our ears we left Hayle to seek a jewel set in a silver sea.

Approaching Marazion we had glimpses of St. Michaels Mount and found quite a good position for a photograph. Goldsithney, here was a large empty engine house with its attendant chimney, a little way off was a similar lone chimney, pictures taken with black clouds for a backcloth. A fleeting visit to Portleven where the seas were turbulent. We took our picnic tea in the viewing area of Culdrose airfield, Tom had an interrupted meal and got his field glasses mixed up with his cup of tea. Gweek Creek, a watermill converted into a private house, no expense spared. A two masted wooden vessel in the creek (Oddesee). We called at the closed Poldark Mining Museum and saw some of the exhibits from the outside. In failing light we looked at a pair of engine houses near Church Coombe. Returning to our digs we were welcomed with a nice pot of tea and biscuits

24th May 83. A short walk and found Richard Murdock's house in Cross Street, Redruth, it is very badly sited for a picture. A plaque depicting some of the great mans achievements has been erected on the wall by Tangye of Birmingham. Another excellent breakfast was to follow.

Beneath Carn Brea is the pleasing church of Church Town. On the summit of this barren hill of Carn Brea stands a granite monument in solitary grandeur, of cyclopean proportions and rising perhaps 70 feet. It

overlooks a gaunt landscape of roofless engine houses, falling chimneystacks and mean dwellings. This monument to Lord de Dunsterville was erected in 1836 when the hills and valleys were alive with the sounds of activity, the rhythmic stroke of the pumping engine, the crunching rattle of the stamps breaking the tin bearing ore and the warm Cornish voices echoing through the hills. Now only the jackdaws enter this lonely monument and the occasional holiday idler come to gaze. After some searching we found Gwennap Amphitheatre, this depression was caused it is thought by mining subsidence. In 1805/6 it was reconstructed making circular terraces. It is said that John Wesley preached here many times.

Ponsanooth – pictures taken of a viaduct on the Falmouth branch line with the old stone piers still in situ that supported the original trestle bridge. Then we drove on to Falmouth and stopped overlooking the ship repair yards, Tom had a field day.

Next stop, Perran Foundry, this firm ceased trading in 1879. Some of the buildings are used by Bibbys', but others were derelict. The whole site was run down and most untidy. Just north of Perranwell another railway crosses the valley of the River Carnop, this also has old piers alongside. We went into Truro and parked near the cattle market now being demolished. Everyone was ready for a meal, after which we strolled around the city taking pictures of the cathedral and the renovated Georgian Walsingham Street. This was followed by a quick look at the BR station. An express run to St.

Agnes and a hasty look at Trevellas. We made one more call in the failing light at a farm museum about two miles from Redruth. It was open but completely deserted, we all thought it was the best collections we had ever seen. Back to the digs to three pots of tea and television.

25th May 83. A walk then back to an excellent breakfast. Our first visit today was to the Tolgus Tin Streaming and Works Exhibition. Although we were there before official opening time we were invited in and shown all the processes of tin streaming. All the plant being used was of the last century; it was an excellent and informed visit.

Revisited the Farm Museum as we did not do justice to it last night. Mr. R. E. Morse, the owner escorted us around, he is quite a character. Pictures taken of another railway viaduct just south of Blackwater before purchasing provisions in Chacewater.

We then made a short journey to Great Wheal Busy Mines. This engine house, although empty and roofless had its boiler house alongside. Nearby was a large stone built workshop with cast beams over the door openings; these bore the words – Great Wheal 1872 Mines. On a small plate above; William Perrin Foundry Co.

A short stop was made at Probus where we took pictures of the very fine granite church tower and a globe type street lamp to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Accommodation sought and found at St. Austell, Mrs. McCheyne. As the weather was so pleasant we made haste to Fowey where we parked the car near the jetty for

the Brodinnick Ferry and then meandered through the town, keeping a watch for shipping in the estuary. We called at Golant where the sun shone casting long shadows. Although it was after 9.00pm when we arrived at Par Harbour we were allowed in. There were about eight ships moored awaiting cargoes of china clay. Pictures taken, this time with the moon overhead. Then back to our digs.

26th May 83. An early morning walk in brilliant sunshine proved expensive in film. Then back to a good breakfast. Shopping, then a call at BR station which is very well cared for with many palm trees along the platforms.

Our first major stop was at the Wheal Martyn China Clay Museum that showed the processes of producing the clay for use. There were two large waterwheels, bell cranks, pumps and settling tanks also Par Harbour locomotive 'Judy' and many other items of great interest. I thought how well it was all presented.

Pictures taken of deep pits and high waste tips around Stenalees.

At Luxulyan a train loaded with china clay passed through the station. We then went in search of Treffry Viaduct/Aqueduct that crosses a small stream and railway. This is a very fine granite structure with six or seven piers about 100 feet high and 650 feet long. It conveys water across the valley and also connects with a quarry. It was built in 1839 at a cost of £7,000. The railway that ran along the top above the water has long

since gone. At this moment I have little other information about it.

Roche Rocks. These rocks rise about a 100 feet, on top is a little chapel in ruins and dedicated to St. Michael, built in 1409. Said to be approached by a rope ladder. Parkandillick; here is a complete engine house with boiler, the engine has a 50 inch diameter cylinder built by Sands Vivian & Co. Copperhouse. We were not able to enter the engine house, externally it is very well restored and we think the engine to be complete. Onto St. Mawgan RAF for a picnic tea, the only activity here was a fellow driving a tractor spraying crops on the airfield. We returned to St. Austell via Newquay. Finally we looked around the old port of Charlestown, this appears to have remained untouched for the past fifty years.

27th May 83. Walk, breakfast, the last day. Turning our backs on St. Austell we headed for home, but before long found ourselves trudging around Lostwithiel discovering its charms. A shrill note from a locomotive horn was heard in the distance and this triggered off a lodestone hidden beneath the station platform, its magnetic pull reacted on JG's legs. From a steady pace the strides became quicker and longer until his feet hardly touching the ground. His reward was by seeing a train of upwards of 50 H.G. sheeted wagons used for conveying china clay.

Moorswater viaduct photographed from both sides and above.

At Liskeard railway station we were on the platform looking at the branch line to Looe when someone at the station told JG that there was a Royal Train due to pass. I didn't take much notice as I thought he must have said an 'oil train'. In a few minutes time a train of about ten dark brown coaches passed through at speed. After this we went to Coombe Halt on the Looe Branch. At Saltash we didn't do anything right. Then onto Buckfastleigh and the Dart Valley Railway, it was rather quiet there and not a very good reception. There was one 14xx class and one 16xx class in steam. Picnic taken at Whiteball on the Wellington bank. Final stop, Clifton Suspension bridge. Tom took his last picture six times. It has been a very enjoyable week and a pleasure having John Willock with us for the first time. For Tom arranging the itinerary and John G. for doing the driving.

4 nights. Mrs Joan Chivers, 3 Clinton Rd. Redruth.
£6.50 per night. Excellent.
2 nights. Mrs McCheyne, St. Austell.
£6.00 do Fair

Peter Chater June 1983.