



Friends of King Edward Mine Newsletter

Issue 9 – February 2010

Chairman's remarks:-

This being the first Newsletter of 2010, I'd like to take the opportunity of wishing all Friends a belated Happy New Year and hope that you had an enjoyable Christmas. The award of a major grant to King Edward is clearly very good news and the reports below again indicate the width of interests and work continuing at KEM. However this good news must be tempered by the extremely sad news of the recent death of Vernon Baldry who was very instrumental in setting up the Friends, people like Vernon are vital if mining history, especially Cornish hard rock mining history in any form is to continue. He will be sorely missed.
Steve Polglase, Chairman

1. Winder and Compressor House:-

Grant

The fact that KEM had been awarded a grant for the restoration of the winder and compressor houses must be the worst kept secret at KEM for many months.

Now, although the official words are still not released, we can 'let the cat out of the bag' because the builders are already hard at work.

Members may recall that in Issue 7, we suggested the idea of 'adopt a plank' as a means of raising funds. Whilst the response was most encouraging, it must be

admitted that it would have taken a long, long time to raise the necessary money.

The grant that KEM received is part of a far larger sum put together by the Cornish Mining World Heritage Office for the mining attractions 'within the world Heritage Area.'

The funding source is the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and our thanks must go to Jeremy Williams, funding officer of the WHS team at County Hall who was extremely helpful in this matter.



Plans for restored Winder /Compressor House

Architect Martin Richards was appointed to prepare the necessary drawings and obtain the all-important consents. It was a close run thing, but deadlines were met and eventually everything was agreed and a start date of 4th January 2010 established.



History

The original compressor house at KEM was built in 1898 with the winder house added alongside in 1907. In 1942 the winder was removed and sent to Castle-an-Dinas wolfram mine, just north of Goss Moor. By then the compressor had already been scrapped.



Courtney Smale's 1950's photo of the original house burning down

In 1957 the original winder and compressor houses burnt down, and we have photos of this as taken by Courtney Smale, then a student at CSM. There were plans to replace the buildings so that they could be used for additional teaching space, but this never came to anything – presumably due to lack of cash.

In 1957 Castle-an-Dinas closed. The winder survived and its next move was to Poldark Mine (formerly Wendron Forge) where it sat as a stationary exhibit.

In 2003 the winder was bought by the Trevithick Society, and re-erected on its original mountings back at KEM.

This work was completed in 2007 – in time for the winder's centenary. The reader may note that at KEM, it isn't that we just preserve history – we actually make it!

Whilst the Holman winder was back on its original foundations, no Holman compressor exists of the type installed at KEM in 1899.

Compressor

We are aiming to erect the 1870's Harvey compressor, which has been stored at KEM since the early 1980's. In the last Newsletter I reported that work had started on renovating this compressor.

Work has continued steadily on the compressor, the base plate and flywheel..



Cleaned and painted flywheel on hydraulic lift, Frank Kneebone, Huw Rowe and David Blight

In the workshop the cleaning, repair and renovation of the other parts is well in hand. The air side piston is finished and the steam side has been stripped down.



The steam side compressor piston before renovation



Frank Kneebone and Huw Rowe with the air side compressor piston after renovation

The £500 donation from the Friends (see Newsletter 7) will go towards the cost of this work.



David Blight and Frank Kneebone at work on the compressor loadings



Compressor loadings almost complete December 2009

Building

With the approaching deadline of builders actually starting work, it concentrated minds on the need to provide new footings and to have the heavier parts in situ before building work started.

Taking full advantage of the recent short spell of fine, but cold, weather, a new set of loadings on top of the original 1898 ones has been constructed by David Blight and Frank Kneebone.



With the help of MacSalvors, the compressor base plate and flywheel were manoeuvred into position.



MacSalvors crane moving the compressor base and flywheel December 2009

They have not yet been firmly bolted down.



David Blight checking freedom of movement after the flywheel had been positioned.

By the beginning of the New Year, when Gloweth Ltd., the contractors, were due to start, the important bits and pieces from the immediate area had been removed and the site was ready for hand over.

To date, the accumulated rubbish has been cleared from the 'basement' areas, allowing a clear view of the original walls and supporting structures, clearly showing the different materials and methods of construction of the foundations of the two original buildings.

New block work has been erected to partially level up the original walls, shuttering put in place and concrete poured for foundations for the new building.



New foundation blockwork and shuttering February 2010

Here, with the building contractor on site access is severely restricted, however work continues elsewhere at KEM.



2. Spalling Floor:-

This item has not been mentioned in the Newsletters before. For several years now whilst the ‘chaps’ have happily been getting grubby and greasy playing with engines and things, Pauline and Maureen, the two regular Sunday volunteers have worked away steadily uncovering the spalling floor. This is just in front of the carpenters’ shops, behind the Survey office.



The Spalling Floor



Early in the New Year Pauline uncovered what looks to be an edge; it might be a delimiting feature, or it might be a part of a drainage feature, but whatever it is, we can now have a clear look at the largest floor of it’s kind still in situ, in the County. There will be more news of this in the future newsletters.

3. Bank Clearance:-

Nothing to do with the world’s current financial problems, but a report on work started just before Christmas to clear the undergrowth from the old tramway embankment.

This was built sometime after 1880 (although it does not appear on the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey map) to link Marshall’s shaft (across the Camborne to Troon road) to the stamps and dressing floors just west of KEM.

This long level run was used by generations of the School of Mines students as a ‘check base’ for their mine surface survey. Recently the whole area had become completely overgrown and was no longer recognisable. The area around the explosives magazine has been cleared and work progresses, hacking sawing, chopping and bullying on the remainder to open up the entire embankment.



4. Boiler House Flue:-

In Newsletter number 8 we mentioned the 'yellow brick road' and the new access gate behind the original beam winder house and chimney.

The clean up operation revealed the original cleaning pit at the base of the chimney. Kingsley Rickard and Frank Kneebone worked on clearing this, removing several barrows of soot and debris before finally revealing the opening to the old flue.



Frank – being smaller than Kingsley – volunteered, (that's what Kingsley said!!) to investigate inside. Like a Dickensian chimney sweep, Frank went in right to the end and back again. Once he had been hauled out by his feet Frank reported that the flues are intact underneath the existing house and that, on the whole, it is relatively clean and soot free.

We believe that the original 1860's boiler, which was in a lean-to house now demolished, was installed in the 'normal' position – with the firing end away from the chimney. When the new (existing) boiler house was built, the new boiler was installed the other way around. We are not yet certain to which of the two boiler installations the flues now 'uncovered' relate. The current view is that they relate to the boiler installation of the 1860s. More work needs to be done here, though it seems likely that Frank is the first person to see these flues for over 80 years.

5. Classifier:-

The woodwork of the new classifier is now complete and it has been fully tanalised. The relevant pipe work has been attached and all the joints sealed and the interior coated with bitumen. The next job is to check it all for water-tightness

Removal of the old classifier will be a tricky job matched by the problem of installing the new one. Another deadline, which has to be met by Open Day on the 25th April this year.





6. Death of Vernon Baldry:-

Vernon Baldry has finally succumbed to the illness which he has been fighting against for the last two years.

Newsletter co-ordinator – John Beale

In the early days of Friends Vernon gave us great help, his advice and helpful criticisms enabled us to get going quickly and efficiently. When asked to chair the inaugural meeting at KEM Vernon readily agreed, then as soon as a management committee has been formed, he stepped down.

From the very first day Vernon continued his support of Friends, his advice and help was always readily given, he will be sorely missed by anyone who is involved with KEM. Our sympathies are with Diane, Karen, Rose and Justin.

7. Visitors to KEM:-

Anyone who cares to drop in on Sunday mornings is always made welcome. Since closing last September amongst our visitors have been a student, and an Australian, here to look up distant relations.

In mid January the Cornwall RIGS group (Regionally Important Geological Sites) held a meeting 'Hidden Treasures' an introduction to mineralogy, particularly Cornish minerals. Of the 30 or so who attended this, most admitted to never having visited us before so we gave them a quick taster around the museum and mill. We hope to see more of them later in the year.