Dear Friends,

Despite the horrendous weather KEM seems to have had another successful year with the completion of some projects and yet more underway. It was sad to hear of the death of Richard Williams, although a busy man on the international mining heritage front he was a good friend to KEM and the Friends.

Good news has come in the form of two substantial grants which will assure the future of KEM. We hope these will be the forerunner of many. Future grants are by no means guaranteed however, and it is here that I would like to thank you for your continued support in the year ahead. Wishing you a happy and prosperous new year and hoping to see you at the Open day and the AGM.

Stephen Polglase

It seems and, in fact is, a long time since the last Newsletter, celebrating the 34th International Mining Games was produced. The first drafting of this newsletter dates back to mid-October last year, the end of King Edward’s ‘open season’, but as usual other items somehow intervened and days, weeks and even months were lost before this Newsletter was finally created.

Friends AGM 2012:

The AGM was held at KEM on Monday 30th April, most of those Friends who live locally attended and the meeting was quorate, with hindsight it was lucky that we made the quorate figure relatively low in the constitution. It was, as you would expect an amicable meeting, minutes of the last AGM were approved, the current Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee were all re-elected, primarily because there were no alternative nominations. As these posts are all for two years, there will be no need for further elections at the 2013 AGM, however I must stress that the workload is not onerous and if there are any Friends out there who would like to volunteer, please do not hesitate to let the Secretary know.

Richard Williams: -1946 – 2012

It is my sad duty to report the death, towards the end of last year of Richard Williams. In Newsletter 13 we offered our congratulations to Richard on the award of his MBE in the 2012 New Year’s honours list for ‘services to UK/Mexico relations’. Richard was best known for Poldark Mine and the links between Cornwall and Mexico, what is probably not as well known is that Richard was incredibly supportive of both KEM and the Friends. He was one of the founders being at the first meeting which created the Friends and was an original committee member. He had been battling cancer for some time, and eventually he could fight no longer. There was an extremely well attended service of thanksgiving held at Wendron Parish Church on the 27th October and Richard was laid to rest on a beautiful, sunny afternoon in the churchyard there. The last act of this sad, but also celebratory day, was a firework display at Poldark Mine, which Richard would have enjoyed immensely.

Changes at KEM:

King Edward Mine Limited, the company formed to run KEM, has now become a Registered Charity. It is not anticipated that there will be any major
changes in the way things are done, there should be financial advantages which are being explored. The Charity has signed a 30 year lease with Cornwall Council. This is for the buildings and land formerly leased by CSM from the Pendareves Estate and now owned by Cornwall Council. This lease has been extended to include some land around Fortescue Shaft of the old Wheal Grenville sett, that lies just across the lane to the south of KEM. This piece of land contains both a pumping engine house and a winding engine house along with some interesting archaeology.

There are plans to develop a nature/archaeological trail at KEM, and the Fortescue Shaft area will enhance that. A plan of the area now leased is appended to this Newsletter, as is a plan identifying the original uses of the core buildings at KEM.

**KEM Open Day:**

Memory plays funny tricks on us, consensus seems to be that we had a fine spring and it was only as summer started that it became wet. I must say that I can recall some sunny days in March and maybe early April but by the time Open Day arrived we were becoming used to rain and yet more rain. The forecast for Open Day was not encouraging, implying severely unpleasant wet and windy weather, and the forecast wasn’t wrong. With the benefit of last year’s Open Day, we had a plan to ensure that as much as possible could be accommodated undercover, in the Mill, the museum, the winder house and in the Survey Office. The usual signs were erected, a risk was taken on ground conditions and we opened the car park, not for long however, the ground cut up very badly, very quickly and we were forced to rely on any available hard surface parking either on site or in roads close by. The Chairman of the Porthleven Band phoned to ask if we were going to call the day off and was surprised when we said no, it will go ahead. The band arrived and performed in the Mill, as did the Hevva Cornish Music and Dance Group, Troon School Choir and the Ingleheart Singers. The Sulzer engine was reluctant to start, but start it did, the Californian Stamps ran, the equipment in the Mill ran, water dripping from the launders adding the water bought in on visitor’s footwear and through the odd hole in the roof. At the end of the day we had over 500 intrepid, and damp visitors, a surprisingly high number given the weather conditions and the recent mini Open Days during the Mining Games a few weeks before. I feel certain that almost every one of these visitors went away having had another most enjoyable visit to KEM, our thanks must go to the volunteers who braved the most unpleasant conditions to make this yet another successful KEM Open Day.

**KEM, the `season`:**

With the Mining games taking place at the end of March we decided to keep KEM open during April. As alluded to when reporting on Open Day, the weather this summer has not been the greatest, and the economy still seems stagnant with not a lot of ‘spare cash’ around, which has impacted on KEM in two ways. Firstly with bad weather people aren’t inclined to go out, conversely with bad weather you will look for an attraction that is undercover and with plenty to see and do, and this is where KEM scores. Overall it was not a bad summer, numbers were much the same as last year, and again like feedback from Open Day, the comments we receive from visitors are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of what we are trying to achieve. Hopefully next year will be better, both weather and economy wise and we will attract more visitors, after all it is numbers through the door which seems most important, so please visit, tell your friends and family either to return and see what is new, or if they’ve not yet visited that it is the must visit in Cornwall.

**Visits to KEM:**

There is a steady programme of visits by local Cornish schools and in September we entertained Troon School. The party consisted of 3 members of staff and over 30 pupils ranging in age from 9-11, being local they were able to walk to KEM along the Great Flat Lode. There is a lovely report, downloadable as a PDF file, of this visit on the website. I think I can quote from one of the children’s letters concerning the old South Crofty Cooks Kitchen cage now mounted in Engine Shaft...
'Dear Frank and Lesley, It was fun finding out about the miner’s job when the driver isn’t allowed to be distracted because if he did it would make the cage go down too fast and smack the bottom. .... The cage couldn’t fit 8 of us in at once so it got a bit squisy in there’

I must say I don’t think they can have been trying too hard, we’ve certainly had more than 8 children in this cage at one time.

**Cornwall Mexico Cultural Society:**

Shortly after this a Mexican delegation from Cornish Mexican Cultural Society (CMCS) visited as part of the Cornish Pasty Festival in Redruth, this was the first such Festival in Cornwall. The delegation came from Real del Monte, which has strong Cornish connections. This area of Mexico prides itself on its numerous pasty (pastes) shops and is host to the international Pasty Festival. They seemed to have enjoyed their visit. They were guided around KEM by Nigel MacDonald, our resident fluent Spanish speaker.

**European Tourist Organisation:**

Almost a week later delegates from the European Tourist Organisation (EUTO) visited KEM and were given the usual tour, including running the Mill. The EURO party were on their annual study visit which in 2012 was held in Cornwall. The tour comprised two days of talks/lectures with one day visiting sites, there were delegates from at least nine European countries.

**Italian visit:**

Later in November we entertained a visit by a group of young Italian students, this time we couldn’t supply a fluent interpreter, but observing them, we certainly gained the impression they enjoyed themselves.

**Funding:**

Good news, there have been two significant awards of funding, the result of much backroom work undertaken by KEM and experts at Cornwall Council who seem to know their way around often very complex and confusing application forms and attendant criteria.

The first award was made in October and was £37,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund, known as ‘Your Heritage’, which has been matched by £10,000 from Cornwall Council with a further £2,477 from Rural Development Programme for England. The basis of this submission was:

‘This project aims to encourage more people and a wider range of people to visit, learn about and enjoy King Edward Mine Museum, its natural setting and the wider Great Flat Lode.’
This money is to ‘improve the business’ so it is not for bricks and mortar, it will be used to encourage more people to visit, to support the development of a programme of events, building on the success of the recent Mining games, it will also support investigation of the flora and fauna of the site, (there is much more to KEM than just mining remains, buildings and machinery), and archaeological remains on site, particularly what remains of the 19th century South Condurrow Cornish Stamps complex. With so many independent schemes financed by this money it is proving a ‘nightmare’ to progress, some projects are on time, others slipping a tad, but in the usual KEM way I’m certain that by December this year, when the money has to be spent, it will all be fine and dandy.

As this Newsletter was being drafted we also learnt that Architectural Heritage Funding has awarded a grant of £200,000. This is aimed at industrial buildings that are ‘At Risk’ and also which are being managed by a charitable organisation. This is, hopefully the first part of a larger funding application which will be used, amongst other projects to convert the assay Office into a café and the Boiler House into an extension of the museum.

Heritage at Risk: -

It seems funny to follow the good news of grant awards with the, what might appear at first to be, bad news. Three of the buildings at KEM have been included on the latest Buildings at Risk listing published by English Heritage (October 2012). Details of the listing can be found on the English Heritage website, where they consider that listed industrial buildings are more at risk than almost any other kind of heritage, and I suppose because of their nature and the often lack of care after the industrial uses cease this is not surprising. After all the majority of the buildings at KEM were erected as temporary structures, wooden frames with tin sheeting and it is remarkable that these have survived for over 100 years. The buildings at KEM that English Heritage have identified are, the boiler house, where a new roof is seen as an immediate need, the Counthouse and the weighbridge stores, assay office and brass machining shop complex. One of the advantages of being so ‘listed’ is that it has given us access to grants that would not normally be available to us.

In connection with the future development and protection of KEM as a whole, a local architectural firm (St. Ives) has been employed to survey and ascertain what is physically required to bring all of the buildings up to current day standards and to advise on what future uses may be appropriate. More detail on this ongoing project will be given in future Newsletters.

BBC Spotlight Filming Oct 2012

Lastly when the Heritage at Risk list was published BBC Spotlight, the local news programme used KEM as a backdrop when discussing this. As the old saying goes, there is no such thing as bad publicity, I’m sure that rather than listening to the opinions expressed by the ‘experts’ the audience was far more interested in the views of KEM.

World Heritage Filming: -

KEM has recently been filmed as part of a new World Heritage publicity campaign, where the aim is to produce a two to three minute ‘Sizzle’ video advertising the many various World Heritage Site attractions.

Volunteer Recognition: -

Frank Kneebone, who has been active at KEM from the beginning, too many years to count, was recently recognised with a highly commended award in the ‘Cultural Volunteer’ category of
Cornwall Celebrates Volunteering awards. He was given this by the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall Col. Edward Bolitho OBE at a ceremony in Newquay, handy, as it is Frank’s hometown in October. Our congratulations are offered to Frank on this award.

Whilst not strictly KEM, Friends will recall that in Newsletter 12 there were a couple of pictures of Bob le Marchant whilst he was renovating the head frame at Great Condurrow. Recently Bob featured in a BBC television programme ‘the Golden Age of Steam Railways’ this was a short series of two programmes looking at historic railways and the heritage groups that ensured their survival today. The first concentrated on narrow gauge line in North Wales, including the Ffestiniog Railway. In earlier years Bob and a other volunteers were responsible for blasting through the rock to create the tunnel above the new reservoir which enable the railway to once again gain access to Blaenau Ffestiniog. These are two programmes I can heartily recommend if you get the chance to see them, if only for the comparison between the Bob we know today and his more hirsute earlier persona.

Institute of Mechanical Engineers Award: -

The Institute established their Engineering Heritage Hallmark Scheme (EHHS) 1984 to celebrate excellence in mechanical engineering, their current scheme is the Engineering Heritage Award (EHA), which recognises artefacts collections and locations of significant mechanical engineering importance. These awards are not lightly given, and earlier this summer the Mill at King Edward Mine was added to this list. To show the level of our award I can only give but a few examples i.e. Tower Bridge, Channel Tunnel and Eurostar, and the one closest to KEM the SS Great Britain in Bristol. This award came after a visitor was shown around the Mill this summer as part of his holiday and was so impressed the rest, as they say, is now history.

Training: -

Part of the Heritage Lottery Funding above has been spent on training for the regular volunteers at KEM, courses have been held in emergency first aid, chainsaw maintenance/small tree felling and pesticides. Thus ensuring that if we cut or poison ourselves, we should know what to do – call an ambulance.

Maintenance at KEM: -

Work never seems to stop at KEM, in one of the few periods of decent weather earlier in the year scaffolding was erected at the far end of the Mill, and taking advantage of a most generous donation from the local Jewson outlet of paint ad materials and from a Friend, this elevation was checked over, maintenance to gutters etc. carried out and then painted.

Unfortunately after this the weather hasn’t been suitable for too much external work, although essential works around the ‘estate’ have continued. The strong winds or even gales in October had an adverse impact on the tress along the approach drive, one was toppled completely and large branches stripped from another. Taking advantage of their new chain sawing expertise the outside gang soon made short work of tidying this up.
The same winds also dislodged a piece of the translucent sheeting in the Mill roof, above the Frue Vanner and this was quickly repaired and a new piece installed.

Internally work has concentrated on two areas, in the winder house the 1870’s Harvey compressor is being reassembled, Friends may recall that work in this has been reported in Newsletters 8 and 9 and the snow encrusted flywheel was the Friends Christmas card for 2010. Frank and his various helpers have slowly reassembled this machine. This is not as easy as it sounds, I understand that each nut and bolt are different and it takes time matching one with the other, then with the hole or part they are associated with. Friends have contributed to the costs of this work.

Within the Mill, work has continued with fine tuning the tracking of the Frue vanner belt, truly a case of trial and error. The major project in the Mill is the rebuilding of the large dipper wheel. This is an essential part of the working Mill, so work on this couldn’t commence before the end of the ‘season’ and a few, slightly later, school visits. The dipper was last refelted about 10 years ago when some of the spokes and other pieces were replaced. Due to the method of construction the wheel is capable of flexing, so putting wear and tear on the bolts and more importantly bolt holes holding it all together. This, with the added problem of the wheel becoming wet, then dry, then wet, then dry etc. meant that the wood was seriously rotting in some parts and the fixings becoming seriously unfixed. Advice was taken, given the alternate wetting and drying problem, as to the most suitable wood to use. Normal dipper wheels would be expected to run continuously and stay continuously wet, there are woods that are suitable for this, alternate wet and dry is a much greater problem. In the end it was determined that although substantially heavier than the wood it was replacing, we would buy greenheart wood. There is a local source of this at Gweek where salvaged wood from the Falmouth dockyards can be purchased. It is the wood we used to replace the upper runners in the Condurrow headframe. A suitable amount cut to size was ordered, new bolts, nuts and sundry other pieces bought and work has started on the complete rebuild of the dipper and the launders above it. So far, the new launders have been made and roughly put in place, one side of the dipper has been rebuilt, we are now in the learning curve of making sure that this side runs true. Like the compressor above, every casting on the wheel is a separate one, and every hole and fixing varies enough to make it an interesting project. The costs of this major rebuilding have been shared between the Friends and from an extremely generous donation from a Friend.

New pictures in the museum:

At a recent auction a box of old glass lantern slides was bought, three of these were pictures of KEM that, as far as I understand, hadn’t been seen before. Tony Brooks was contacted and identified both the people shown and the locations. What was particularly interesting is that they were images of women going underground at KEM in 1904. Very few women went underground and even fewer were recorded in photographs. Enlarged copies of these are now on display in the museum.
Live Archaeology: -

Its not all work and no play at KEM, Friends will recall that in Newsletter 9 there was a report of Frank’s exploration of the original boiler flue, which runs from the chimney back under the boiler house towards its rear. This summer Frank excavated from the outside, digging down at the rear of the boiler house to discover the original access and cleaning doorway, now bricked up.

On a final note, AGM time is also Friends subscription renewal time and I look forward to receiving subscriptions for next year and again can really recommend the ease and convenience of completing a bankers Order if you haven’t already done so.

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