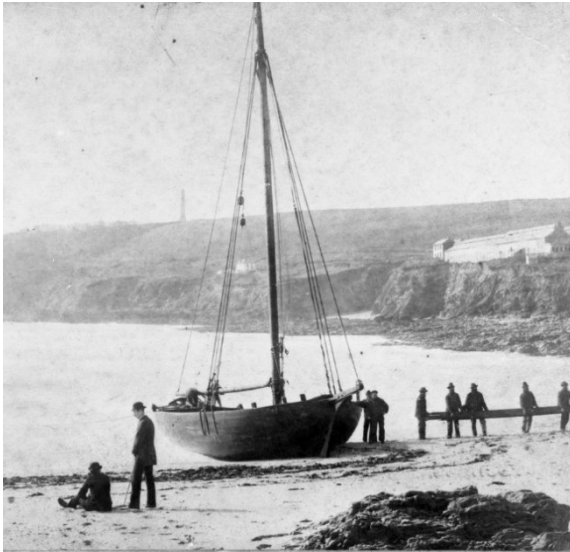


11. FHA. THE ARSENIC WORKS. PHOTO OF SAILING BARGE PHOTO OF STACK.10 APR 2024

Facebook: 75 Likes 9 Shares

Instagram: 36 Likes



The Arsenic Works ... the story continues!

This photograph, taken around 1890, shows a sailing barge on Swanpool Beach, with the arsenic works on the right and a chimney stack visible on the skyline.

Ore from Swanpool Mine was originally exported by ship, but later a smelter was built to process the ore so it could be sold at a higher price.

As well as lead and some silver, ore from Swanpool Mine also contained valuable -though toxic- arsenic, in high demand at that time for use as a pesticide and in paint manufacturing.

After the mine closed, an arsenic works with a calciner was built in place of the redundant smelter as part of a process to recover the profitable arsenic.

In the calciner, ore was roasted at a very high temperature and the resulting vapour (containing the arsenic) travelled along a series of tunnels and out through a chimney stack at Pennance Point (this area is still known locally as Stack or Stack Point). As the vapour travelled, the arsenic condensed on the inside of the tunnels, where it could be collected by hand.

It was dangerous work. Men working in the tunnels were sometimes overcome by the poisonous fumes, and if a worker went into the tunnels and didn't come out again after 8 minutes, a rescue party would be sent in.

The arsenic works continued to operate for several years, until it was forced to close due to increasing transport costs ...

...which also signals the end of this fascinating but little-known part of Falmouth's history - the existence of a lead/silver mine and an arsenic works at Swanpool over 150 years ago!

[Photograph of Sailing Barge: 991a, Brian Osborne's Images of the Past Collection](#)

[Photograph of Chimney stack \(thought to be 'Anna Maria'\), Pennance Point: 991b, Brian Osborne's Images of the Past Collection](#)