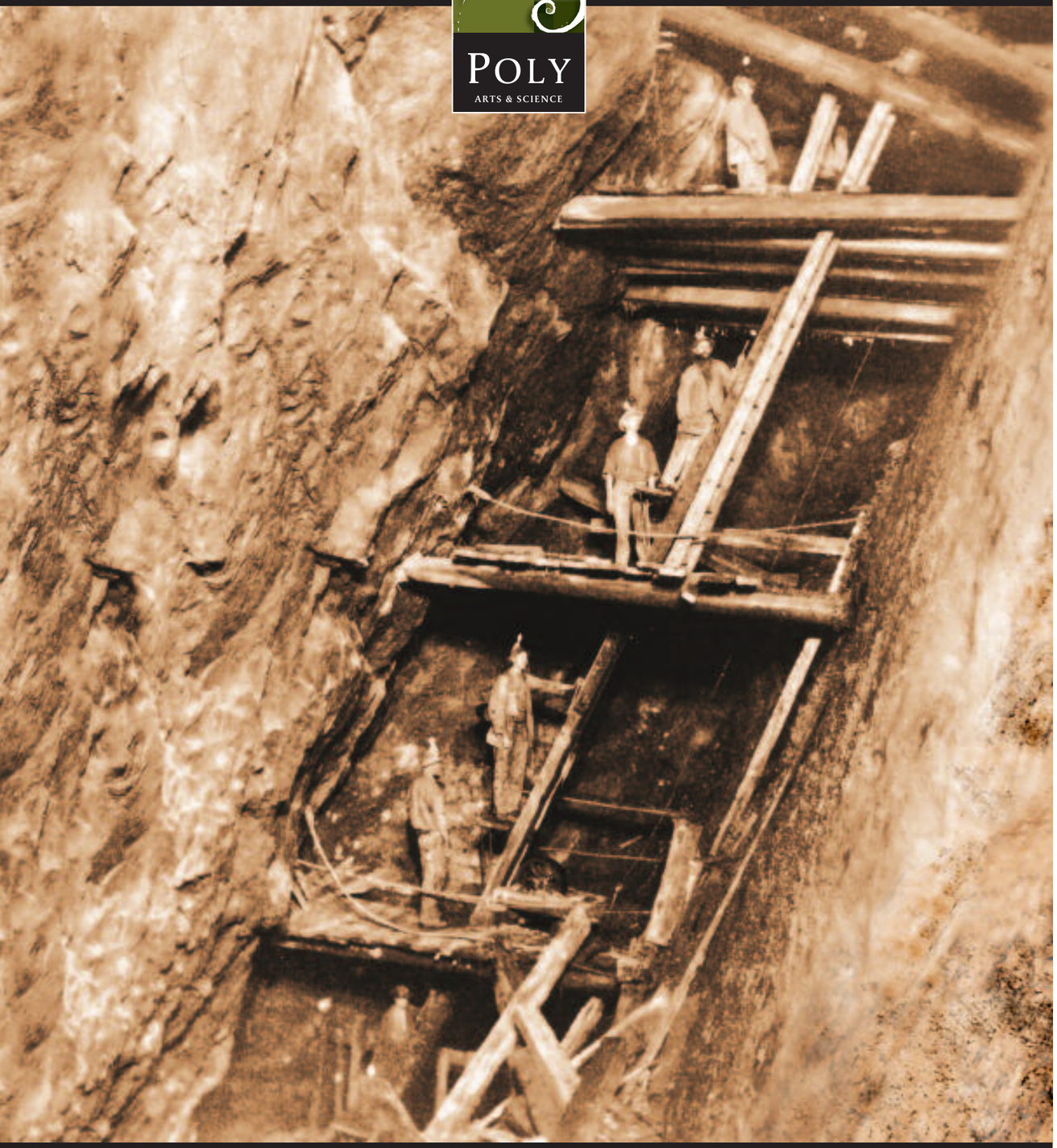
POLY
ARTS & SCIENCE



THE MAGAZINE OF
THE ROYAL CORNWALL
POLYTECHNIC SOCIETY

2006 / 2007

thepoly

£3.00

FEATURING THE ARTS & OUR HERITAGE

POLY
ARTS & SCIENCE

TO ENCOURAGE EDUCATION, AND STIMULATE INTEREST IN SCIENCE, THE ARTS, AND THE HERITAGE OF CORNWALL

Contents

Editor Michael Carver
Graphic Design Steve Collinson
Printed by Rowe the Printers, Hayle

Very many thanks to all who have contributed to The Poly 2006/7

The **Poly Magazine**
is the annual magazine of the
Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society,
24 Church Street, Falmouth,
Cornwall TR11 3EG

Tel: Office: 01326 314566
Box Office: 01326 212300
email: office@falmoutharts.org
website: www.falmoutharts.org

Cover photograph:
The Man Engine - Dolcoath.
RIC Archives.

Letter from the Chairman

Anthony Phillips

There can rarely have been a time in the history of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society when more change was in the air. It has long been apparent that if the Society was to fulfill its founders' purpose of supporting the arts and sciences in Cornwall, then it must find ways in which revenue could be increased. In the last two years, the Society has recorded a small revenue surplus – no mean achievement for what is at present mainly an arts society with almost no public funding.

But the Society has virtually no capital reserves to enable it to modernize its Grade II* listed building or to expand its trading operations, both necessary if the Society is to remain an effective institution within the county. I therefore asked our President, Sir Michael Lickiss, to chair a small sub-Committee to consider the best way forward. Their recommendations have been accepted by the Board and are being put into effect.

Central to these is the splitting of the charitable and commercial activities of the Society. The former will remain the responsibility of the Board of the Society, but to manage the latter The Poly Trading Company has been formed with five directors under my Chairmanship.

Some may question this new emphasis on the commercial aspects of our activities; but without the generation of substantially increased revenue, the Society cannot maintain, let alone improve, its property nor set about what is its core activity of supporting the arts and sciences in Cornwall, particularly in the field of education.

A start to our regeneration programme has already been made with the alteration of the ground floor area fronting Church Street. The intention is to make the entrance very much more welcoming as well as to create within the two galleries a café/bar, retail area and computerized booking office. Further, the installation of a new boiler with improvements to the heating system is under way, which may allow us to improve the ventilation in the theatre.

To provide the initial finance for these undertakings, the Society has had to enter into a loan arrangement with its bankers who have shown themselves very supportive of our plans; and to manage what will now be a very much expanded business, Richard Glover has been appointed Chief Executive. Clearly one of his tasks will be to secure greater outside funding for the Society. With his experience both in Cornwall Arts Marketing and as Chief Executive of Truro Cathedral, we consider ourselves fortunate indeed to have secured his services.

From now on the Society is dropping its trading name of Falmouth Arts Centre which has caused confusion both with Falmouth Art Gallery and the former Art College, now University College Falmouth, with both of whom we have the closest, and indeed expanding, relations. In future we shall be branded as The Poly, which, of course, is traditionally what the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society has long been called by older residents of Falmouth. In adopting this branding we are again stressing that it is not just the arts, but the sciences too, which will be our concern.

Two major developments have occurred since the last issue of The Poly Magazine was published. First, we have completed the conservation of the entire Tuke collection of both oils and works on paper. This has been a huge undertaking, which would never have been realized without the enthusiasm of the Tuke Committee and the project manager, Cath Wallace. All the funding came from donations from four major Trusts, together with private donations. Now a further £25,000 is required to complete the Catalogue of this largest collection of Tuke paintings in public hands, and for which all the paintings have already been photographed. This important work will be of immense value to galleries, academic institutions, students, collectors and all who love Tuke's paintings.

We are very grateful to the original donor of the bulk of the collection, Brian Price, for a further gift of one oil painting by Henry Scott Tuke and two by his sister Maria. In carrying out the conservation work, further paintings were discovered on the reverse of some canvasses, which have now been framed to show both sides. The collection now numbers 277 works, but we hope that further donations will be made.

The second development is the gift by Peter Gilson, who has long looked after the photographic and other historical records of the Society, of his own private collection. We are very greatly in his debt not only for this gift, but for all the work he and his team have undertaken on the Society's behalf. Once more an excellent Calendar has been produced for 2007 and is now on sale. We also rejoice in Peter's recovery from serious illness.

During the 19th century, the Society awarded both silver and bronze medals at the Annual Exhibition for works and inventions deserving recognition. Very rarely indeed the Committee also issued gold medals for outstanding contributions – but we have never seen one! If any reader knows of the existence of an RCPS Gold Medal, we would be very glad to hear about it. This year the Society has received, as gifts, two of its silver medals. One was presented by Miss Nancy Downing shortly before her death and was awarded to the Falmouth artist J.R.Wilmer in 1900. The other came from my sister, Mrs. Angela Thorne, and was struck in 1868 for Miss H.I. Sterling for amateur drawing.

The Wilmer and Downing families were close friends: how the Sterling medal was acquired by my family is a mystery. My sister, who lives in Australia, felt it should come home to Falmouth.

If readers of this exciting new edition of The Poly Magazine, which embraces our past, present and future, feel that they can in any way help us, then either Richard Glover or I would be pleased to hear from you. Many of you will already be members, but we need many more. Volunteers are essential, and financial support ever a necessity. We look forward to a challenging future as a rejuvenated Poly takes its rightful place in the artistic and scientific life of Cornwall; but its wellbeing in the end rests with the community in which it is set and the recognition of its importance, not just within the county, but for all who care for the heritage of the past and the exciting possibilities for the future.

Anthony was born in Falmouth, qualified and practised as a solicitor before reading theology at King's College London and completing a doctorate at Cambridge. After ordination, he was Dean of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Chaplain of St. John's College, Oxford and Head Master of the King's School, Canterbury. He is a writer and has also worked in radio and television.

Lou Jones

Having worked in industry as a Creative Director and Account Manager, Lou set up his own design practice, Lou Jones Design, in 1990. This practice offers a multi-disciplined approach to project work, and covers most aspects and applications of modern communications graphics.

Keith Hambly-Staite

After working in education, librarianship and marketing for most of his career, Keith directed *In Pursuit of Excellence*, an initiative to stimulate investment into Cornwall. He is a trustee and director of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society and a trustee of the Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Tim Guy

For over three decades Tim Guy has run his communications consultancy, providing creative resolves for a wide variety of clients, from the world's largest company, GE (USA), to our own Mermaid Trust at Treliske Hospital.

Introduction

Keith Hambly-Staite

Lord Byron said of Falmouth 'the claret is good and Quakers plentiful'. Indeed it was two young Quaker girls, Anna Maria (13) and Caroline (17) Fox who gave England the Polytechnic idea, and Falmouth a place in history. The Fox family were closely involved in mining, and owned the Perran Foundry at Perran-ar-worthal. The sisters persuaded their father that an organisation (subsequently to be called the Cornwall Polytechnic Society) would help the miners and artisans who worked in the industry, as well as the employers who could benefit from the many ideas suggested by these workers.

The idea found favour, Robert Were Fox gathered his friends together to put the idea into effect, and in 1833 the Society was founded. The objectives, written in beautiful copperplate in the first minute book, include *'to stimulate the ingenuity of the young, … and to elicit the inventive powers of the community at large.'* These objectives may appear quaint today, but in fact they were first and foremost about what today we call 'economic regeneration'.

The early movers' motivation undoubtedly involved vested social and economic interest, but also had the philanthropic effect of developing capacities and talents otherwise dormant, and bringing into notice many useful improvements that would otherwise remain unknown. It was an early example of support and encouragement being given for the natural aptitudes and talents of working men and women, which later led to public recognition and esteem.

From the beginning, the Society promoted its objectives through an annual exhibition with prizes and medals awarded for '*scientific and mechanical inventions and improvements, and productions in the fine and useful arts'*. The very first exhibition attracted a wide range of exhibits including oil paintings, watercolours, engravings, maps and charts, models of such things as a new water gauge for steam boilers, an apparatus for making tea, and a new design for a greenhouse, all of which drew large crowds of people.

So successful were the early exhibitions that leading businessmen of the day were encouraged to offer what were called Premiums, financial rewards for innovation and good ideas. The most important was probably that of Charles Fox, which led to the first 'man-engine', a life-saving and cost

effective way of taking men down and up the many mine shafts in Cornwall.

What comes across from reading the original minute books and reports is how, by promoting and encouraging the miners and businessmen of the mid 19th century, the immense vigour, enthusiasm and daring of these early pioneers helped to make Cornwall a place of innovation and achievement throughout the world. An important 'brand' was emerging, chiefly by the most effective form of marketing – word of mouth. The Society identified the needs of the public, satisfied those needs, and delivered a quality product.

An early report to members of the Society contains a paragraph which deserves quotation, and shows how in 1835 a Cornish institution understood what was important to be successful:

'… and from the liberal support which it generally received the committee confidently look forward to the day when it will take a high rank among the useful institutions of the country. The broad and unobjectionable principles on which it is founded, the wide range of its objects, adapted to the tastes, and bearing on the interests of all classes generally and those of the county particularly, cannot fail of recommending it to the consideration of everyone, who bears the welfare of his fellow creatures at heart.'

The Society continued to receive support for much of the rest of the century, and its contributions to the arts and sciences were diverse and important. 1838 saw the first application in the world of photography for scientific purposes, recording meteorological and magnetic observations with H Fox Talbot; 1842, the first man-engine at Tresavean; 1854, J Allen and the Society offered a Premium for the best statistical report on the state of education in Cornwall; 1864, the Rev. W J Coope *et al* offered a Premium for the best essay for improving the Cornish river fisheries; 1868, records began at the new Meteorological Observatory. Throughout the century the Society received Royal patronage at an unprecedented level, with Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and the Prince of Wales becoming Patrons or members of the Society.

After the initial impetus is over and the original objectives are achieved, all organizations have a tendency to decline or fall. The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society was no exception. World Wars took much of the energy out of the Society, and to survive, it became more of an arts centre, specializing in exhibitions to encourage new and old artists, and a cinema to provide access to a wider range of films than any other centre in the South West. Theatre and music have complemented this provision, turning this change in fortunes to general advantage.

As everyone turned their attention to celebrating the new millennium, the Board of the Society began to discuss its role in the 21st century. The growing achievement and confidence in the county was showing itself at Eden, St Ives, Falmouth and Padstow. The Combined Universities for Cornwall, receiving unprecedented demand for places in 2006, was rising from the earth at Tremough near Penryn. Cornwall was asserting itself as a place to live and work, where the distinctiveness of its landscape and its cultural heritage offered rich rewards to people who wished to invest time and energy in the county.

Time brings change, and the Board recognized that the response of the Society to the needs of Cornwall in the 19th century could be a guide to its renaissance in the future. By re-evaluating the services that it offered, it could honour its founders, better respond to the needs of today, and once again play a part in the improving fortunes of the county's artistic, cultural, educational and economic life.

Change also brings new challenges, new partnerships, and fresh opportunities, two of which can be mentioned.

In the past few years the Society has acquired the largest collection in public hands of the works of the Newlyn and Falmouth artist Henry S Tuke. This collection has been restored and conserved, and will soon be made available through exhibitions in partnership with the Falmouth Art Gallery and the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro.

Estate agents swear by 'location'. From its founders the Society has inherited real estate in the very centre of Falmouth. The Society already works with University College Falmouth. The Board are actively seeking further appropriate partnerships which make the most of our location and will promote the constituent strengths of the CUC through the College and the University of Exeter, providing ready public access to their work in the arts and environmental sciences.

There is an opportunity to develop new and exciting partnerships with other bodies, which will complement what we are able to offer – the Combined Universities of Cornwall, the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, the Royal Institution and the Falmouth Art Gallery spring to mind. Cornwall's first Café Scientifique, the regular public forum for debating key scientific issues with renowned speakers leading the way, opens this winter at the Poly with the support of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

We live in a world of competing demands where success is determined by profile, adaptability, and quality services that meet the needs of customers. We recognise the need to develop creative marketing techniques, backed up by a database of our customers, past, present, and future. We will certainly need to emphasise the quality of everything we do, and communicate our values to both old and new audiences.

We therefore invited two of the county's leading designers, Tim Guy of *ABG* of Falmouth and London, and Lou Jones of *Lou Jones Design* of Truro, to join us in assessing our future role, and to provide us with the brand image that reflects who we are, and what our customers can expect from us.

The following paragraphs, written by these two designers, chart our progress to the point we have reached today - an organization that is refreshing itself, drawing on its roots, has confidence in the future, and wishes to fully contribute once again to the social and economic life of the county.

Refreshing the Brand

"The Brand: A product or service in a class of products or services, including its trademark, its brand name, its reputation, and the atmosphere it builds up around it."

Timothy Guy
Strategic Marketing Director,
Aukett Brockliss Guy

My father was a bank manager and as such had to judge his potential customers particularly well. Could he trust them, could he do business with them, and was their company going to succeed and ultimately grow profits for the bank? 'Always look at their shoes first! You can tell a man by his shoes.' But we all know that you can equally not judge someone at first sight – only when you get to know the person can you make that decision.

The Poly has a personality just like each of us – the characteristics of this great institution are what we call its brand – not just the shiny shoes but its beliefs and values, its ambitions and its achievements – who it associates with and the influences under which it is shaped and governed. Above all, is it popular and do we think by being its 'friend' that we will equally benefit?

On the 24th August 2005 a group consisting of trustees and supporters of the Poly came to my studio at Events Square to decide whether our friend was showing its best face, and I ran a workshop that looked at all aspects of its brand. I call it 'Message Mapping'. We have undertaken this for companies large and small such as Cornwall Care, the Open University, National Express and the Devon & Cornwall Safer Communities Trust. It ensures that everyone involved in managing the Poly focuses their efforts on maximising all the opportunities that the institution has available, in order to succeed in today's fast moving society.

All businesses need to refresh their brand at frequent intervals. Technology and the internet ensure that. Today an idea placed on the worldwide web can be copied within moments and the converse is that, if we have a product or a service to sell, we have at our fingertips a global customer base.

So we spent a morning together, sometimes in fierce debate, sometimes with humour, teasing out from everyone what the real Poly is all about – today.

We looked at its audiences, who they are, who they might be, and why they are important to us. We wanted to understand what they are like, what media they best respond to, and how they make their decisions. Most importantly, what actions do we want them to take? We looked at the competition and the current perception about the Poly. And finally we looked at how we could match the right messages with the appropriate audiences.

The results you can start to see today; you have a new, contemporary signature mark – a renaissance that visually expresses the team's belief about keeping the best of the old, and says to Falmouth and the wider world, 'Look at me – I have much to attract today's audiences, and a host of offers to teach and entertain, to enjoy and support – and oh by the way, do you like my new pair of shoes?'

"You can always tell someone by their shoes"

Making the marque

Lou Jones

My Father wasn't a bank manager - but he was a good customer of his bank! And it is from a customer's perspective that we began to develop our ideas for a new corporate marque, or logo, that would both support and become the vehicle for implementing the brand message.

As with any organisation, in any marketplace, its corporate branding has to be both relevant and appealing to its customers and audiences. All aspects of its shape, size, colour and typography are carefully designed to say, "This is who we are!" The style of the design intones the spirit of the organisation, which in turn creates the framework for developing the overall brand.

So how did we arrive at the new corporate marque? Well, in the parlance of one well-known bank - 'We listened!' We initially used research and feedback from Timothy Guy's message mapping and focus sessions to develop a better understanding of the organisation and the feelings that its customers and staff had towards it. This, together with meetings held at Board level regarding the exciting plans for the 'renaissance' of the Society and its building in Church Street, meant the development of a corporate marque that would reflect the future as well as the past. Ultimately the new branding must work at all levels of the Society's day-to-day 'arts based' operations, from cinema, live theatre and exhibitions, to representing the work carried out by the Local History Group and the Tuke Collection, while also appealing to the diverse age ranges of its customers. With future plans to also reinstate and deliver the original scientific aims of the Society, the job of the new corporate marque was defined.

The designers' brief was simple (!)...create a corporate marque that reflected the provision of the Arts and Sciences; that was professional, yet retained some of the 'quirkiness' of the old organisation; that was not too old fashioned, nor brutally modern; that would work well when used on a theatre ticket or on the side of a building; that was colourful and inviting, yet strong enough to work in black & white; and most important of all, a marque that would, in time, come to represent all that is best in the new organisation, its future aspirations and core values, including a name change to the 'POLY'.

The word 'Polytechnic' is as old as the Society itself. In fact the name was first coined in 1833 to describe the activities of the new institution - this being the first time it came into the English language! Over the intervening years the 'working title' by which the Society was known has undergone many subtle changes, ending in modern times as the 'Falmouth Arts Centre', although throughout its history the building has always been affectionately known as the 'POLY'. Through research and discussion we felt that 'POLY' was short, snappy and memorable. Its classic Greek origins and meaning retain the *gravitas* required to encompass both the 'arts' and 'science' dimensions of the revitalized organisation. It also picked up on the 'quirkiness' that we felt to be an integral part of the new brand.

Finding a graphic device that would complement both the 'arts' and 'sciences' aspects of the organisation as well as the name 'POLY' did prove slightly more demanding. Our brief was to find a visual link between the arts and sciences in a way that demonstrated the academic nature of the original Society, fulfilled all the other criteria required to make the marque work at all levels, and met all the requirements needed in today's competitive marketplace.

Having re-discovered the 'Golden Curve' (see panel) and got to grips with its sequence of construction, we prepared a series of initial marque concept designs, amalgamating the agreed 'POLY' name style, 'arts & science' sub-title, and the curve itself. We felt that to truly achieve a balance between the arts and sciences, the curve would be drawn in a free brush stroke, rather than a hard mechanical line. And, by using tints and tones of colour to denote the 'building block' sequence of the construction rectangles, we felt that a strong, dynamic marque had been achieved.

Choice of colour palette for the new marque was important. The impact of various colours and their effect and meaning to the 'tone of voice' that the marque gives to the core brand message would be the final process in making the marque come alive! We felt that warm, vibrant colours such as reds, oranges or yellows might be used to express the arts, while cool, clinical colours such as blues, greys and some light greens might be used to represent the sciences. Ultimately we chose colours from the darker green palette to enhance and support the visual crossover between arts and science, and reflect the softer side of science in nature, much as the 'Golden Curve' does in the concept of the design. The use of the dark green palette suggests calm, order, understanding and longevity.

The marque uses a traditional 'serif' typographic font to reflect the name and subtitle. The serif face, called 'Appoline', reflects the scholarly and academic nature of the original Society, while visually softening the marque and making it more personal to the viewer. The 'roundness' of the serif is picked up in the 'Golden Curve', which in its 'brush stroke' execution is now more suggestive of a freehand or painted 'waveform' - somehow apt for its location, almost touching the sea in Falmouth!

The new corporate marque, having been formally adopted in July 2006, will now go on to be used in (and on) all literature, signage and business applications. The make-up of the marque, typography, colour, style and tone of voice, will be rolled-out across every aspect relating to corporate communications with the rest of the world. It is this, along with the support of its officers, staff and members, that will begin to build the 'POLY' brand, maintaining the high calibre of the services it offers well into the future.

If the 'POLY' were a bank, then I hope that with this new corporate marque, its account would be well in credit!

The Golden Curve

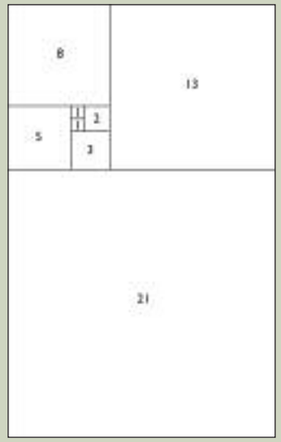


fig x

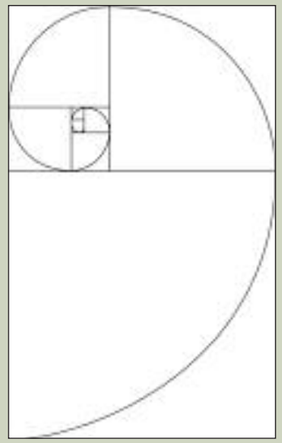
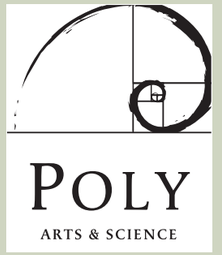
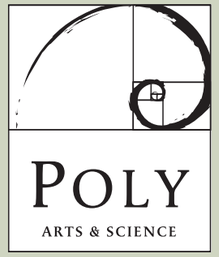
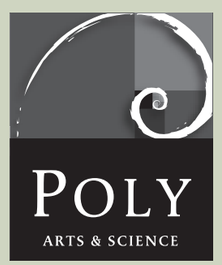


fig y







A little reading and research by the design team brought about the discovery of a printed work *'Liber Abaci'* (The Book of Calculations) published in the 13th century by Leonardo da Pisa - better known to history as Fibonacci (he wasn't a bank manager!). Fibonacci is perhaps best known for presenting a simple series of numbers, later named the Fibonacci Sequence. The series' structure begins with the numbers 0 and 1, after which the last two numbers in the sequence are added together to make the next in the sequence. ie; 0 + 1 =1, 1 + 1 = 2, 1 + 2 = 3, 2 + 3 = 5, 3 + 5 = 8, 5 + 8 = 13. This calculation is expressed in the Fibonacci Sequence as 0, 1,1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc.

Fibonacci then calculated a special value, which became known as the 'Golden Section' or 'Golden Ratio'. Using the resultant multiples, the sequence can be presented visually as an ever-expanding rectangle, constructed by repeatedly conjoining squares whose sides are of an equivalent dimension to the sum of the two proceeding squares' sides. (see fig x). As this equation is multiplied, a 'spiral' can be drawn by touching the corners of the previous rectangles (see fig y).

The resulting spiral echoes that which often occurs in nature. These spirals can be seen in sea shells, seed arrangements and flowering plants. The 'Golden Curve' was felt to provide a mathematical explanation of the make-up of the natural world. As a crossover between science and nature, this mathematical equation has been used widely in art, architecture and music throughout history, notably during the Renaissance and the neo-classical revivals of the 17th and 18th centuries. The 'Golden Section' is normally denoted by the Greek letter *Phi*. Greek mathematicians of Plato's time (400BC) recognised it as a significant value, with Greek architects using *Phi* as an integral part of their designs - most famous of which is the Parthenon in Athens.

1933, Study for a Head by Ben Nicholson (1894-1982), signed and dated on reverse, oil on canvas, 59.7 x 34.3 cm. Falmouth Art Gallery collection. Accepted by HM Government in Lieu of Tax and allocated to Falmouth Art Gallery. FAMAG:2005.14 © Angela Verren Taunt. All rights reserved DACS.

Nicholson's masterpiece housed in Cornwall

Brian Stewart

The government scheme to accept works of art that are of national importance in lieu of inheritance tax has benefited Cornwall with the major acquisition for Falmouth Art Gallery of Ben Nicholson's masterpiece *1933, Head.*

The picture is a tender love portrait of Barbara Hepworth and Nicholson at the beginning of their relationship. The painting shows a portrait of Hepworth in profile. Overlapping is drawn a profile self portrait of Nicholson as if entwined in a kiss. The two profiles cleverly join to make a portrait of Hepworth face-on. The picture is in essence a drawing incised in dark paint, which allowed the gesso ground to appear through. The scraping thin of parts of the paint was a favourite device for achieving a texture suggesting a time-worn object.

It was painted in 1933 at the beginning of their relationship, and after the couple's visit to France. A linocut by Nicholson from 1933 also has the same motif of overlapping profiles.

The style was influenced by Picasso, Braque and Arp, whom they visited that year, and also by the Roman reliefs viewed during their trip to the ruins at Glanum in Provence on the outskirts of St Remy. Glanum had been excavated in 1921 and is one of the most impressive archaeological sites in France. Glanum, with its Roman arches and reliefs, was the subject of a delightful sketch by Nicholson and he also took a photograph of Barbara Hepworth in front of the ruins (Tate Archives).

Ben Nicholson was from an artistic family. His father William was a distinguished painter of portraits and still-lifes as well as a designer of relief prints. His mother Mabel Pryde was also a talented artist who chose to forsake her career to bring up the family.

Although Ben Nicholson is firmly associated with St Ives, it was at Feock on the river that he stayed on his visit to Cornwall in August 1928. His painting *1928, Pill Creek, Cornwall* (Private collection) is an atmospheric and poetic rendition of the landscape of the sheltered creeks to be found off the River Fal.

Nicholson was joined at Feock by the artist Christopher Wood. Later that August the artists travelled over to St Ives for the day. As Nicholson recalled in a letter to Andras Kalman:

"That day's visit from Pill Creek (Truro) in a hired open Ford — we left this in St Ives with its driver at once and went all over & around St Ives drawing & agreed to meet some hours later. The place in those days was comparatively unspoilt & v. dramatic (especially coming from the sleepy Falmouth creek). Really I suppose my desire was to record as many impressions as rapidly as possible in that time & prob. on odd sheets of paper or v.small sketch book. I remember trying to draw a large ship in full sail with the aid of a telescope … Most difficult bec. one had to find the ship between each pencil stroke…This was an exciting day, for not only was it the first time I saw St Ives, but on the way back from Porthmeor Beach we passed an open door in Back road west and through it saw some paintings of ships and houses on odd pieces of paper and cardboard nailed up all over the wall, with particularly large nails through the smallest ones. We knocked on the door and inside found Wallis."

In 1931 Nicholson exhibited with John Skeaping who was married to Barbara Hepworth. The Nicholsons and the Skeapings quickly became close friends. By October that year Nicholson and Hepworth were seeing each other regularly.

He spent Christmas of 1932 with his wife Winifred, who had moved to Paris with the children. In early 1933, Skeaping obtained his divorce from Barbara, Nicholson being cited as co-respondent. At Easter 1933, Nicholson and Hepworth spent a short holiday in southern France staying in Avignon and St Remy. This painting is a direct result of that visit.

The expert advisors to the Secretary of State considered the painting to be of especial importance, noting that this was one of a small body of works which dated to the beginning of Nicholson's relationship with Hepworth. It was regarded as a rare and important work from the most significant moment of the artist's long career.

Brian Stewart is author of a number of books on British art including The Dictionary of Portrait Painters in Britain up to 1920. *He is curator of Falmouth Art Gallery.*

The Robartes Memorial

Truro Cathedral

John and Phillipa Robartes
are lying stretched out
in their finery and ruffs
one above the other
as if in a compartment on the Orient Express.

For nearly four hundred years
John's been on top
reading a book
and ignoring his wife.

She's on her side
propped on one elbow,
her head in her hand,
bored and resigned,
but wearing the faintly wistful
far-away look
of an old married woman
with a naughty secret
she'll take to her grave.

Bob Rogers

Seasick

(In a Cornish Art Gallery)

The sea is vast, immense,
and covers two thirds
of the globe, as we know

but it's a mere drop in the ocean
compared with the seas
that cover these walls.

Bob Rogers

Ladderway at Dolcoath
Climbing a flat ladderway is more tiring than climbing a vertical ladder.
RIC Archives

The Man Engine
The 'Darling Object'

Michael Carver

Early days

Ever since men started venturing underground, it's safe to assume they've wondered about getting back up again. In the pre-historic flint mines they seem to have clambered up and down notched tree trunks – but even then they may have dreamed that a safer and faster method might one day be invented.

Over 3000 years ago, during the Bronze Age, the discovery that in Cornwall there were large deposits of the vital tin, easily reached by surface mining, created a flourishing trade with the Mediterranean, which lasted well into the industrial heyday of the 19th century. However, as the alluvial deposits were worked out and the precious ore had to be sought deeper and deeper, the old problem re-surfaced: how to get the miners up 'to grass' again? In the Harz Mountains in Germany, to judge by the 16th century print, the system looks slow, laborious, and dangerous.

By the early 19th century, the mining industry was of enormous importance to Cornwall. It employed thousands of men, and brought great profits to the mine owners and adventurers. However, the dreadful working conditions of the miners themselves had become clearly recognised, and it was vital that improvements be made.

The Society is formed

The Cornwall Polytechnic Society was formed in 1833 ***for the encouragement of Arts and Industry***, and one of its first aims was to encourage the inventive powers of the community at large. The Annual Report of 1834 suggests:

De re metallica
Georgius Agricola, 16th century

The genius of a Watt has, perhaps, often slumbered within the breast of many a rude and uneducated mechanic, whom poverty and neglect have led to mistrust his own powers; the germ of thought has either been repressed in the bud; or may have expended itself in crude and hopeless attempts … for want of some fostering hand to prompt his endeavours, and direct his energies into the right channel. *(CPS 1834)*

Clearly, for an organisation with philanthropic aims, conditions in the mines were a matter of concern, and one year after the Society's formation, the Committee decided to offer a number of prizes ***for scientific and mechanical inventions and improvements,*** particularly those that would improve the lot of the invaluable miner.

Prizes were offered, among other subjects, for ***a safer method of blasting rock,*** a hideously dangerous process; for ***better circulation of air,*** which in the hot deeper levels could dim the candles and affect the miners' breathing; for ***some method of improving the lighting***, which consisted of tallow candles; and for ***an improved and safer form of wire rope.***

However, the first and most important aim was to devise ***some mechanical means of lowering and raising the working miners into and out of the shafts.***

In the Society's Annual Report for 1834 Dr C.C. Carlyon writes:

Men who work at great depths under ground, exposed to impurities of air, and irregularity of temperature, must have their heart and lungs tried severely. In order to judge of the extent of the heart's distress, when the miner has ascended by ladders, from a depth, sometimes of more than 200 fathoms, he should be seen emerging from the shaft, on his getting, as it is technically known, to grass, his heart beating as if ready to burst, his whole frame bedewed with sweat, and his strength ready to pass from the extreme of feverish excitement, into the opposite state of perilous exhaustion. The descent is easy. *(CPS 1834)*

(Only by comparison, one feels.)

Some of the conditions in the mines were clearly beyond the present scope of the Cornwall Polytechnic Society, although the Annual Reports continued to show the concerns felt by its members. However, the invention of a mechanism to bring the men up *to grass* was something the Committee could very well encourage:

A main ladderway at East Poole
RIC Archives

It is well known that the only mode of access to the Cornish mines is by a suite of perpendicular, or slightly inclined ladders, sometimes uninterrupted, but more generally broken, at regular intervals, by resting places technically called 'sollers'. The exertion of descending and ascending these ladders, which in the deep mines, necessarily extend to the depth of 1200 to 1500 feet, is laborious and painful in the extreme. *(CPS 1834)*

This ascent to light and fresh air could often take up to two hours of steady climbing in the dark.

The daily recurrence of this fatiguing exercise is attended with the most pernicious consequences to the miner, tending materially to impair his physical energy, to injure his health, and considerably to shorten the duration of his life; these ladders being unprotected, and naturally liable to decay, miners are continually exposed to serious and fatal accidents, melancholy examples of which are constantly occurring; and if to avoid the fatigue of the ladders, they are induced to ascend in the buckets, the danger becomes still more imminent, on account of the obliquity of the shaft. *(CPS 1834)*

As the next sentence shows, it was not only the miners who suffered!

It should also be observed that the practice, above referred to, must necessarily be attended with considerable loss to the adventurers. *(CPS 1834)*

The adventurers (mine owners and investors) were primarily interested in the amount of work completed by their workers, and the author of this paper attests that one fifth of a man's labour was spent climbing ladders. Since the miner was paid only for the work produced, this was hugely unprofitable for him as well as for the adventurer. So for self-interested reasons, as well as genuinely altruistic ones, the situation had to be improved.

The invention of the Man Engine

By 1833, the first year of the Society's existence, Mr Charles Fox of Perran had heard that a device in use in the Harz mountains for lowering and raising miners, powered by water wheels, was already working safely; it should certainly be possible to discover a method for use in Cornwall. He therefore offered, through the Society, three prizes of 10, 5 and 3 guineas for ***the best improvement on the present method of ascending and descending in mines.***

This offer was the genesis of what eventually produced Man Engines in mines throughout Cornwall, and improved the lives of uncounted men and women.

In the following year the judges reported:

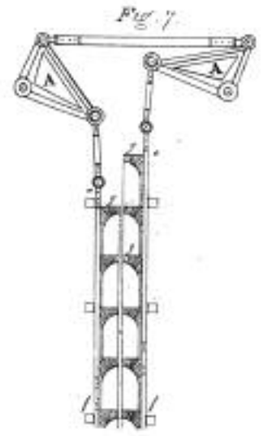
On an investigation of their respective merits, (we) are unanimously of the opinion, that the principle of balanced rods, working in a reciprocating motion in a shaft, with platforms attached to them at regular intervals, is preferable to that of a car, attached by a rope or chain to the moving power, and guided by racks or rods. *(CPS 1834)*

Charles Fox
RCPS Archives

The first Prize (or Premium) of 1834 was awarded to Mr Michael Loam, Consols, who had actually invented it before Charles Fox offered the original prizes; he had already offered it for sale (not to the Society), but it had been rejected without trial. In the next few years he presented papers to the Society on *Loam's Counter*, *Loam's Improved Miners' Surveying Instrument, Loam's Engine*, and *Loam's Wheel Wrench*.

In principle *Loam's Machinery for Raising Miners* was quite simple:

A vertical section of the shaft, with a rod attached to a beam connected with the moving power, having an alternating action in the shaft; platforms attached to the rod at regular intervals, equal to the distance of the stroke; corresponding platforms in the shaft coinciding with those attached to the shaft. It is proposed that the men shall pass successively from the platforms on the rod to those in the shaft, and back; till they are raised to the surface, or lowered to the bottom. *(CPS 1834)*



Michael Loam's winning design
RCPS Archives

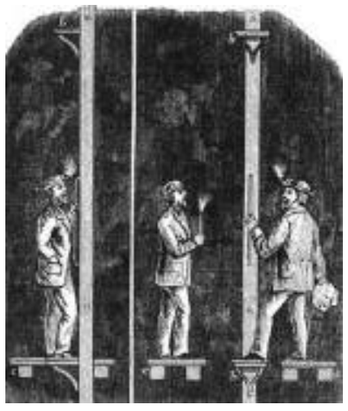
The diagram *(Figure 7)* illustrates the concept. Starting at the top, the miner would step onto a small platform 15" square, fixed to one of two long vertical rods that rose and fell at regular intervals, pausing between each stroke. The man would descend until his platform was level with a fixed platform (*soller*) built onto the side of the shaft. There it would pause, allowing the miner to step across, and wait until the rod rose again; when it returned on the next downstroke he would step back onto the rod and descend a level to the next fixed platform; and so on, at 12 feet each step, and the same in reverse at the end of his shift, until he reached the surface. It sounds easy enough.

However, consider the conditions. This rod, or a series of joined rods, is designed to drop to the bottom of the mine - perhaps 1500 feet. The miner has worked a full 8 hour shift, on piece rate (*tutwork*), and thus is paid only from the moment he actually produces. No slacking, therefore - although the pride that all miners took in their trade would have prevented this in any case. He has eaten poorly, he is now exhausted, and even if he has a candle left from his day's work (which he is probably saving for use at home, since he has had to

pay for it himself), the draft in the shaft will probably blow it out. In that case he will be carrying out this dangerous step across from platform to platform, reaching for the handle to guide him onto each step, all the way to the top, in pitch darkness.

Nonetheless, the idea seemed workable on paper, and Mr Loam, was awarded the ten guinea prize. Second prize was awarded to Captain (ie mine manager) W. Nicholas, Wheal Trannack, whose idea worked on the same principle except that the platforms were built onto two rods which worked opposite each other but, amazingly, did not allow a pause for the miners to cross from platform to platform; and the third prize went to Captain Richards, Wheal Vor, which represented a car containing a number of men (Figure 8) which, if the cable broke (and cables did!), would remain in place due to the cogged wheels on either side. The judges found this an ingenious invention, but it ***did not operate on the principle of which they approved.***

There were various other models and drawings in the 1834 Report, most working on the same principle of men moving from one platform to another; and one which proposed two ladders rising and falling opposite each other, the ladders slightly inclined towards each other to make the move easier, so that the men could step from one to the other and thus rise or descend. However none of these, while commended by the judges, received any Premiums. The Report was signed by seven obvious Cornishmen - Messrs Enys, Boase, Williams, Grose, Vivian, Richards, and Tregaskis.

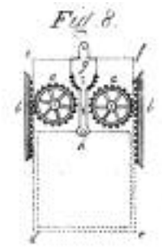


Quite simple in principle
Principles of Metal Mining - J.H. Collins 1875

Who will make the first move?

So in the first two years of its existence, as well as achieving Royal Patronage from William IV, the now Royal Society certainly produced its fill of good intentions and ideas; and in the second year, it looked as if there would soon be concrete results:

The plans submitted by Mr Loam have been adopted, and will shortly be in full operation, in the Consolidated Mines. The conductors of these mines have it in consideration to apply to a shaft 170 fathoms deep, the method of raising miners which obtained the first premium … and they hope, in their next report, to have the satisfaction of announcing, that measures have been actually taken for carrying this object into effect.
(RCPS 1835)



Ingenious, but not approved
RCPS Archives

Unfortunately, Consolidated Mines must have had second thoughts, words being easier and less expensive to produce than actions, and for the next eight years, hopes were all that the Society could report. In late 1835 the Report laments:

No plan has, as yet, been generally adopted, for superseding the immense ungainful expenditure of vital and muscular energy, necessary to convey the miner to the surface from the scene of his underground labours.
(RCPS 1835)

And next year:

Notwithstanding the interest expressed upon the subject by influential and practical men, no attempt has yet been made in this country to apply any of the methods suggested for facilitating the ascent and descent of our miners. *(RCPS 1836)*

In an attempt to get things moving, Charles Fox offered the sum of £100 to the first mine to install an operational Man Engine, but the disappointment of the Society is re-echoed in 1837:

But hitherto, although many ingenious models have, from time to time, been submitted to the Society, none of them have been adopted in any of the Cornish mines.
(RCPS 1837)

A sense of frustration and urgency became more apparent every year, and in 1838 Charles Fox's offer of £100 was increased to a total of £530 by G.C. Fox, Robert Were Fox, and five others, followed in 1840 by an additional premium of £50 from the Rev Canon Rogers, but still to no avail.

This is not really surprising. Since no such machine already existed in Cornwall, the adventurers were not eager to invest their capital in an invention that might not work, and would certainly be expensive to install. In the 1838 Report, Mr E.O. Tregelles estimated the cost of installing a man engine at £2,365, with the proviso that

… it appears, by an essay on this subject laid before the Polytechnic Society at its last annual meeting, "that the occupation of the miner shortens his life by at least twenty years"; not that the whole of the injury sustained is chargeable to the descent and ascent by ladders, but it must be admitted that a large part is attributable to excessive fatigue, in climbing from a great depth, at the end of a laborious day's work.
(RCPS 1838)

The Miner's Life

We should understand some of the conditions of work underground at the time of the Man Engine's invention. The Annual Reports of the Society for 1834, '35, '36 and '37 all contained lengthy papers on this topic, starting with Dr C.C. Carlyon in 1835.

He is tired enough, when the labours of his stem are over, to throw himself down and sleep. But this is not all; his cottage is often several miles off; and impatient to return thither – for home is home, however homely – he regards not his fatigue, but braving the length of the way, the darkness of the night, and the pelting of the wind and rain, he sets off with his glimmering lantern in hand, and pursuing his intricate course amidst shafts, and banks, and fragments of all sorts of machinery, arrives at length at his journey's end, where he does not, I fear, always find a comfortable meal prepared for him; for it is but too true, that the household economy of our common miners, is for the most part bad enough. *(RCPS 1835)*

It is not surprising that the miner found no 'comfortable meal' prepared for him. Mr Richard Lanyon pursues this theme in lengthy papers in the Reports of 1836 and '37:

The diet of miners generally, I am quite sure, is totally insufficient to compensate for the wear and tear of their severe and peculiarly destructive labours. The wife has little or no acquaintance with household duties, having left the cobbing shed, where the whole of her life has been spent, to become at once the provider and manager of a domestic establishment. He leaves a cheerless home, to follow his disagreeable and dangerous calling, supplied with food of the meanest and most indigestible kind, which generally consists of a piece of baked dough, mixed with little if anything else, technically termed a 'Hoggan', and this is supposed to be adequate to his support. *(RCPS 1836)*

Dr Carlyon writes of the men taking with them ***a small quantity of food, such as bread and butter, bread and a bit of mutton or pork, or a cold pasty***, but it was just as likely that the miner's *croust* would consist of a lump of baked dough, perhaps warmed on a shovel over his candle; and if it contained any protein at all, it would probably be a piece of fish which had been on the back of a donkey for a day or two.

Richard Lanyon confirms Dr Carlyon's view of the effects of his labour on the miner's health:

Daily observation attests that the wan and sickly aspect is by far more frequently seen, than the ruddy glow of health; and alas! That the wrinkled brow, the stoop, and the decrepitude of premature old age are very much oftener met with, than the veteran strength and maturity of three score years and ten! *(RCPS 1836)*

These conditions did not prevent the young and fit men racing each other back up to grass:

Boys for instance, whose health is yet unimpaired by working under ground, with more buoyant spirits, are notorious for their attempts to signalise themselves by feats of climbing, which are often carried to a very dangerous extent. Frequently after efforts of this sort, they reach the surface almost breathless, and they are instantly obliged to sink on the ground in almost a lifeless state to recover themselves. *(RCPS 1836)*

Bal Maidens in their working clothes - Tincroft
RCPS Archives

Life expectancy

Lanyon made an exhaustive comparison of the ages of miners with those of men working in other labouring jobs. His test group consisted of 120 labourers and 240 miners, which speaks to the preponderance, if not the popularity, of underground work. Among the labourers, he found the average age to be 47 years and 9 months, with 14 men above the age of 70, and 8 above the age of 75; among the miners the average age was reduced to 32 years and 5 months, with only 2 men above 65. Above 70, there were none.

However, at least the Society's Annual Reports were drawing attention to the importance of the miner as well as the mine, and to the conditions in which the adventurers and mine owners forced him to live and work. Richard Lanyon again expresses a real understanding and sympathy for the people whose cause he has taken up, and tries to shame the adventurers into action:

When we recollect how very little, comparatively, Cornwall is assisted and enriched by agriculture and manufactories, and how very few labourers are employed in them, when compared with the number of those engaged in mining pursuits; and that to the successful exertions of the latter she is indebted for by far the largest portion of her immense reserves, which success only depends on their wellbeing; - we shall at once see a motive which should actuate the lords and adventurers of mines to exert themselves to alleviate the distress of this useful class of men, - a race of beings of superior intelligence, and not inferior in moral character to any description of labourers, - who not only bear want and hardship cheerfully, but impressed with the fact that in the natural course of events they are hastening through toils, and dangers, and privations, to meet an early tomb, who yet struggle on, patiently and perseveringly without encouragement or adequate reward, and too frequently die with the painful conviction on their minds of leaving their wives and children to the care of the parish officers. *(RCPS 1838)*

The ironic emphasis placed on the word 'care' makes clear what sort of help is actually available from the parish. He continues:

How such a reflection must embitter the last moments of a man of acute feelings (for such the miner possesses), those who are husbands and fathers can best appreciate. By the sweat of his brow he ought surely to have made some provision for such a contingency; but unless he has been a member of a Friendly Society, or a depositor in a Savings Bank, he leaves his family houseless and penniless. That such a wretched condition should be the lot of anyone, it is painful to observe. And this becomes much more so when we know that it falls on him from whom we derive our entire subsistence, whilst from the same source many enjoy ample fortunes.
(RCPS 1838)

As long as he remained fit and continued to work, the miner might claim certain benefits:

The advantages which accrue to him may be easily enumerated: if he be injured, all his wants are supplied by the Mine club until he is able to resume his occupations, and he is attended also gratuitously by the Mine surgeons during the same period. In most instances, the contributions to the medical man are such as to ensure his attendance during illness, but this does not universally obtain. In this last case, the miner derives no assistance either from the Mine club or doctor; and independently of the loss of his wages, and the pain and suffering of disease, he has also the very uninteresting prospect of a Doctor's bill, generally an unpalatable dose. *(RCPS 1838)*

In 1841 Mr William Wale Taylor, Surgeon to the Fowey Consols, recounts how he urges one of the men to leave off working underground, but is told,

"I have a wife and a large family of young children to support, how can I keep them on nine or ten shillings a week (the wages of a surface, or agricultural labourer here), when I can barely manage on twelve or thirteen shillings a week; I will try it on a little longer."

That little longer renders the case soon hopeless. There is also another important consideration to a miner; … while he works at the mine, he is certain of receiving seven shillings a week from the sick club when disabled, as long as he lives; this advantage would be entirely lost if he changed his employment. *(RCPS 1841)*

Richard Lanyon's heart is with the miners, with the women as well as the men, and year after year he pursues his aim of describing and improving their lot:

Being employed from their girlhood the entire day at the mine, little time or opportunity remains for them to acquire any knowledge of matter of so much importance to the health and happiness of those with whom they become connected, and such a passion for dress exists also among the unmarried portion, that the members of it never calculate on making a provision for any future contingency. They are consequently unable to render the hardworking miners any assistance in furnishing their domicile in case of marriage.
(RCPS 1838)

"A passion for dress..." - Dolcoath
RCPS Archives

Action at last

So the annual search for a mine owner who was prepared to install a Man Engine continued; and finally, in 1842, came hope. Although not mentioned in the Annual Report, the handwritten Minutes of the Committee meeting of December 23rd 1841 quote a letter sent to the Society:

'A deputation of the Committee of Management of the Tresavean adventurers met on this mine by appointment the Revd Canon Rogers, for the purpose of considering the propriety of making an experiment of a plan produced by Mr. Loam, for getting up out of this deep mine, the miners from their labour. - When it was agreed to adopt the plan, by way of trial, to the extent of 28 fathoms; and if found to answer, with the intention of completing it to the depth of 280 fathoms. … The Revd Canon Rogers read an estimate of the expence of the machinery which is calculated at £1670..8s..9d to the bottom of the mine 280 fathoms.'

Positive action at last! A trial Engine, worked by a waterwheel, was dropped to a depth of 28 fathoms at Tresavean Mine in Lanner, and proved successful. Next year the Annual Report declares:

The experiment which has been this year so successfully tried in Tresavean mine …. is one which your Committee have regarded with feelings of no common gratification. If the exertions of the Society had been attended with no other result than this … it might exult in the consciousness of having rendered an essential service. (RCPS 1842)

The Report continues:

From the very first commencement of the Society, its darling object had been to carry out a scheme by which the miner should be relieved from the toil and peril to which he is exposed, in going to and from his work in the deep mines. For years this object has been under their consideration. And now we must say that if there was anyone who still entertained any doubt as to the beneficial working of the society to which they belonged, let him go and visit the great work at the Tresavean mine. (RCPS 1842)

"No machine could be better for the purpose" - Dolcoath
RIC Archives

Originally, some of the older miners had called the innovation 'an engine to kill men', and certainly there were accidents caused by fear, giddiness, being crushed between the step and the slippery soller, or by falling objects; however, these were rare, and just one year after its installation the Society received a letter signed by 391 working miners of Tresavean:

Gentlemen,

Having learnt from the agents of this mine, that you are desirous of having our opinion, as operative miners, upon the machine recently erected here for the purpose of lowering and bringing us to the surface, we do so most readily.

It is now about eleven months since this machine has been erected, and we give it as our most unqualified opinion, that no machine could be better for the purpose, and we are quite satisfied respecting its safety.

We understand that your society gave a large sum of money, for the purpose of carrying into effect this machine, which to us is of more importance than we can find language to express, and would humbly beg your acceptance of our thanks for your aid in this matter.

This letter was framed and hung in the Polytechnic Hall.

To cap it all, in the same year the Society actually received Royal Approval:

From the Duchy of Cornwall,
Somerset House, London

Sir
I am commanded by the Council of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to acquaint you that the Council have seen with much satisfaction the proceedings of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society during the past year, and are particularly gratified to learn that the experiments which the Society had tried for the purpose of lowering and raising miners by machinery had proved so successful. In consequence of the representations which you have made, the Council feel justified in authorising an additional donation of £20 for the present year.

This is immediately followed by a *caveat*:

But they desire me at the same time to state that they cannot recommend to Her Majesty to make any increase to the annual subscription of £5 already granted to the Society from the Revenues of the Prince of Wales.

A wise and cautious move by Her Majesty. Increases in annual subscriptions are seldom welcome to members of societies.

The word spreads

It was now 1842, the Man Engine had finally been built and installed in a Cornish mine, and it was time for the rewards. In October the owners of Tresavean invited the Committee of the Society to inspect the machine in operation, in order that they might claim the first part of the Premium (£300). This was agreed immediately, and in the following July, four intrepid members of the Committee – Messrs Gilbert, Blee, Hunt and Capt Richards – thoroughly inspected all the underground workings, and returned safely to grass – though not without some awkward moments. As reported in the West Briton of 4th November 1842,

"In every space there was a candle fixed against both rods so that the shaft was well lighted, and in different parts men were stationed. We went to the bottom at a time when nearly all the candles were burnt out. While we were on the journey, our light was extinguished, and there we were, moving up and down, making no progress, until Capt. Reed kindly came to the rescue and handed us a lighted candle. But the miners themselves say that they can pass from one rod to the other in the dark…"

The Committee therefore ***expressed their entire satisfaction with the manner in which the machine had been constructed,*** and the remaining portion of the Premium (£200) was duly paid. Nor were the Tresavean adventurers any less happy; an analysis found the cost per man worked out at less than 1 penny per day, as opposed to up to 6 pence in lost labour before the installation, and ***a saving at the rate of £2000 a year.... results from the use of the machine.***

The efforts of Charles Fox and the Society had finally succeeded in developing and installing an invention which changed for the better the lives and working conditions of thousands of men and women, working in the most important industry in Cornwall.

Man-riding gig - Dolcoath
RIC Archives

Safety cage - South Condurrow
RIC Archives

The end of the Man Engine

The Tresavean Man Engine, now driven by a steam engine, was eventually dropped to a depth of 290 fathoms, and worked safely until 1858, when, following a dispute, the mine was allowed to flood, and the engine was removed. Models were installed in as many as 15 other mines – the first being United Mines in 1845, with Fowey Consols following in 1851. Both followed the Tresavean example, with two rods operating at the same time, though all later Engines operated on one rod, presumably for economy. After a number of extensions, Dolcoath's Engine descended over 2,000 feet, and brought men back to grass at over 80 feet a minute. It ran successfully for more than 40 years.

In 1855 the Levant mine installed an Engine, which operated until 1919. In that year, however, the cap at the top of the rod broke and 31 men and boys died, many were injured, and 75 children orphaned. Nearly all other Man Engines in Cornwall had stopped operating by 1900, Levant being the last to keep going. After this disaster, Levant also dismantled its Engine, and moved to gigs and cages, like all the others. It had been found these could carry men safely and fast, thanks to stronger and more reliable wire ropes. Readers will remember that this was another of the original aims of the Cornwall Polytechnic Society in 1833 - to invent ***an improved and safer form of Wire Rope.***

It has been suggested that the Society offer a prize for a Man Engine to raise visitors to the Theatre and the Well Lane Gallery at the Poly.

With thanks to John Morris (Allihies, County Cork), Ken Brown (Hayle), Joff Bullen (Camborne), and Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro

Michael taught English and History in Canada for 30 years before moving to Cornwall and becoming involved with the Poly, where he was Administrator for 11 years. He is now on the Board and edits the Poly Magazine

The Man Engine shaft at Tresavean today
1500 feet deep

The underground photographs, used by courtesy of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, were taken by J.C. Burrow FRPS, 50 years after the Tresavean Man Engine was installed. Working by candlelight, the miners would never have seen the interior of their mines in such remarkable detail.

'The Cathedral' - Condurrow. RIC Archives

Low vessel

Jason Wason
from Mimbres to Mashiko

Anthony Fagin

He may have the most memorable name in British ceramics, but the work of Jason Wason (a childhood nickname that stuck) is not as widely known in this country as it deserves to be. Is this because he sees himself as an outsider, a somewhat solitary spirit, at one remove from the commercial mainstream and the vicissitudes of artistic fashion? He lives as he works, uncompromisingly and entirely devoid of excess, on the windswept moors of West Penwith in Cornwall. On a fine day he can look out from this ancient edge of England over the blue Atlantic to the Scillies and beyond. During winter gales when the wind lashes the rain horizontally and with visibility down to zero, he occasionally has to erect a temporary buttress to prevent the end wall of his wooden studio from blowing in. In this demanding environment, Wason produces an extraordinary body of work. Its austere beauty and strong presence are a combination, as with all good work, of the person and the place.

As a potter, he is largely self-taught. He presented himself at the Leach Pottery in St Ives to enquire about buying a Leach kick-wheel one day in 1976. Janet Leach was on duty and offered him a job to replace someone who had just left. He took it. Over the years he acquired good workshop practice and an acute eye. 'At the Leach,' he says, 'I knew I was near a deep well.' As Bernard Leach grew older and his eyesight failed, one of Wason's nightly duties was to read aloud to Leach who, characteristically perhaps, chose his own autobiography, *Beyond East and West*, for the evening's reading.

Before arriving at the Leach Pottery, Wason had set up a craft co-operative in Scotland, having spent the previous decade travelling, principally in the Middle and Far East and North Africa. During his travels, the traditional wares of the people he moved among had always spoken to him to such an extent that he knew that as soon as he returned he would answer the call to become a potter himself. What was it that had appealed to him about pots? It was their functionality, aesthetic and indispensability to all people in all ages. The fact that they remain humanity's most durable good and that archaeologists depend on them to interpret past civilisations, added to the allure.

Balance

All Wason pots are well-mannered, having been rigorously controlled in the design and making. Their strong, sculptural shapes and delicately poised articulation, together with the rich, unglazed surface treatment, imbue them with a dignity and a presence that are their hallmark. They are, for the most part, based on vessels and other container forms. But they have left functionalism behind and evolved onto another plane, where simply being rather than being for some purpose, is the essence. 'If a pot has a presence and a sense of balance, but overall, a stillness, a quietness; then the thing works,' he says. At a time when some may strive for asymmetry, Wason's pots, including those not thrown on the wheel, are perfectly symmetrical. If his work contains echoes of anyone else, it is of Hans Coper. Not too surprising, perhaps, since many are made on the very wheel that Coper owned and Wason inherited.

Studded bowl

Today Wason is closely associated with Japan, where his work is highly regarded. He had his first solo show in that country at the Maruzen Department Store in Tokyo in 1992 and spends increasing amounts of time there, touched by the esteem in which potters are still held and by the skill and craftsmanship that continue to flourish. Six times he has visited Japan, on three occasions as artist in residence at Seto City Cultural Centre in Aichi prefecture, one of the country's great pottery areas. There he works with his friend Yasuo Terada, a fifth-generation potter from Seto. Although their work has little in common, they frequently exhibit together. Wason admires Terada's deep knowledge of traditional Japanese firing techniques. Terada has established the Seihoji Ancient Kiln Park on the Chukyo University campus where, together, they have fired the vast ogama and anagama kilns.

Wason sees himself as connected with Japan but not influenced by it, and feels honoured to have his work in the permanent collection of the prestigious Mashiko Museum. Likewise he is delighted to have been invited, during his most recent eight-week visit, to exhibit again in Tokyo later in 2006. But he is acutely aware that he should never seek to emulate the work or the traditions of his hosts, even if his own integrity would allow it. His work flows from a quite different source and that is precisely the reason why he and other international artists are invited to work in Japan. In this highly traditional culture there is a strong desire to incorporate fresh ideas – to embrace the exotic – to the mutual benefit of host and guest.

Mimbres

In 1998 Wason was awarded an Arts Council grant to go to New Mexico in order to study the work of the Mimbres potters of the southwest region. Here again this left no discernible influence on his work, but the effect of immersing himself in other cultures has ultimately strengthened the character of his own work.

Blue necked pot

Workshop table

So what is the source of Wason's inspiration? He professes not to know: it is a tender thing, which should never be forced or intellectualised. If the muse is not there, he takes his canoe out on the ocean or walks his dog on the moors and clifftops. Or he gets together with other Penwith artists and musicians at their regular Deaf Dog Full Moon Band sessions.

During his most recent trip to Japan he surprised himself by starting down an entirely different path and producing an installation that he called City of Stones, but he does not know where it came from nor why. Rather than question it, he simply went along with it and in the end it felt like growth. The individual pieces, resembling the skeletal ribs of an animal, carry an incised or impressed zigzag pattern familiar from some of his vessels. Some have rectilinear slots, others a tiny balcony or pulpit. The original pieces were fired in the ogama kiln in a large brick saggar filled with rice husks and shells from a nearby sushi restaurant and achieved a texture resembling desiccated, wind-worn, desert rock. Since his return he has not yet managed to recreate that texture, but continues to experiment.

Jason Wason's work can be seen at Austin Desmond Fine Art, Bloomsbury, London.
www.jasonwasonceramics.com

Anthony Fagin is a photographer and sculptor, living in Falmouth. Visitors to the ***Poly*** *will have seen his 'Overcrowded World' half way up the stairs to the Well Lane Gallery.* *This article first appeared in* ***Ceramic Review****, the international magazine of ceramic art and craft (issue 220 July/August 2006), and is reproduced here with permission.*

'Overcrowded World'
Anthony Fagin

Algiers, c.1925, watercolour, 17.9 x 26cm, A153. (detail)
Before and after conservation.
The before shot shows the rash of foxing marks across the surface of the watercolour caused by the mould growth.
It also had a rust hole which had to be filled.

Returned to former glory!

Catherine Wallace

The restoration of the Poly's Tuke collection is complete. Cath Wallace, project co-ordinator, reports on the painstaking work of conservators Sue Corfield and Gilly Kinloch who made it happen.

The Poly's Tuke collection is the largest single public collection of works by Henry Scott Tuke RA RWS (1858 – 1929) in the UK, with over 265 paintings, watercolours, pastels, etchings and drawings. The Poly has had the collection in its care since 1965, when the bulk of it was given to the Society by Brian D. Price. It spans Tuke's life from works he undertook when he was just 10 years old, to self portraits done in 1927, two years before his death. Since 1995 it has been housed for security reasons at Falmouth Art Gallery.

Recently, a new Tuke committee was formed at the Poly, and in December 2004 a fundraising plan was put into action to raise the considerable sums required to cover the costs of restoring all the works. By August 2006 this had been achieved.

As with all works of art that are approximately 100 years old, the collection has suffered from the ravages of time, particularly the works on paper. The main problems were diagnosed by paper conservator Sue Corfield of Blue Iris, based in Sancreed.

"A particular problem associated with paper is acidity, and the greater the acidity created within, or in contact with the paper, the greater the damage and vulnerability," says Sue. *"It's like when you walk into an old bookshop - the smell that hits you is the acidity in the paper, and in old books the paper is very brittle and brown."*

The evidence of the damage caused by this acidity was visible in the works in several ways.

First, nearly all of the works suffered from surface and ingrained dirt, which tends to occur when greasy deposits from the handling attract dirt, which lodges in the fibres.

Another visible sign is discolouration, which is caused by the paper breaking down due to age and poor quality mounting board and backing material, turning the paper yellow or brown.

Due to the damp conditions in previous houses and storage of the work, mould was another problem, which is visible as brown spots known as 'foxing' and a powdery mildew on the surface. Water stains are also visible signs of acidity and dirt where the paper has brown tide marks. This weakens the paper and makes it more vulnerable to mould growth and tears.

Materials have changed over the years for sticking down mounts and paper, but previous tapes using animal glue and some synthetic adhesives cause damage where they have stuck to the original work.

From a provisional survey, Sue Corfield reported that 36% of the collection was in good condition, 42% was fair and 22% was poor.

As part of the project I was commissioned to catalogue the collection. This included removing all existing works from their frames and removing any old mounts before giving them to Sue and Gilly Kinloch to treat.

Sue Corfield's first challenge was to remove as much of the old backing boards as possible, which is very time consuming. The best way to do it is by water, but this cannot be done until the pigments in the watercolour are tested for their sensitivity.

What is exciting about this phase of the process is that a number of drawings and sketches, previously unknown, have been revealed on the back of the works. (See illustration opposite of the sketch on the reverse of an Italian Youth drawing.)

The first treatment after the removal of the backing material and any adhesive tapes is to give each work a surface clean. This is a dry process and involves removing mould particles and dust with a 'groom stick'. One of the pictures in the collection which caused Sue the greatest problems was a pastel of *Philip Barking Nets* c.1884, done

Philip Barking Nets, c.1884, Pastel, 29 x 21.5cm, A102
Before conservation, showing mould marks where it has eaten away the pastel.

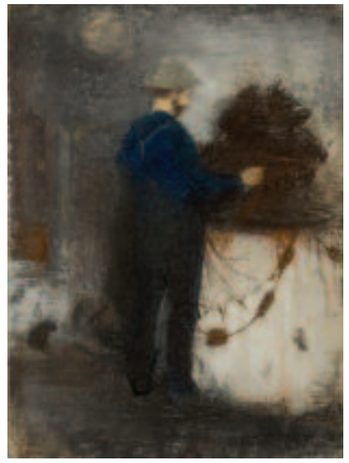
while Tuke stayed in Newlyn. The mould growth on this pastel was extensive, and it had attached itself to individual particles of pastel and in places eaten into it, creating a spotty dappled effect. This meant removing the mould particle by particle.

The next phase for all watercolours, after the pigments have been tested, is to wash each one in water. This sounds alarming but the works float on the water and washing is done by osmosis whereby dirt is drawn out through the back of the picture. This is why it so important to remove all the backing material first.

If after this process there remain stubborn stains and discolouration, the works are bleached. This is done with extreme care after drying the work and constantly accessing its reaction to the treatment. After bleaching the work has to be washed again to remove all traces of the bleaching agent. If an item is washed and bleached, it also gets a de-acidification treatment which involves placing the work in a bath with magnesium carbonate. This acts as a buffer against future acidity, helping to arrest the process which will happen with all works on paper.

Then works are lined onto an acid-free paper as the surface gets disturbed in the washing process. *"I use 100% cotton Waterford Weston paper 190 gsm which is laminated with Japanese cream paper for aesthetic reasons. This is also used to reinforce the original, especially if it is in weak condition and it makes it easy to release if the original needs to be remounted. It also provides a margin, which is hidden by the mount, for handling."*

The final process for the works on paper, which can be controversial, is retouching. It is only applied where there are missing



Philip Barking Nets
After conservation, all mould removed painstakingly particle by particle.

areas and in tears and holes and where there has been bad foxing. *"I use watercolour, watercolour pencils and pastel. The latter two materials are reversible,"* explains Sue.

From a display point of view, it was essential that the works were presented in the highest quality materials as possible to prevent any further staining and deterioration. Each work was mounted and backed with 2,200 micron Museum board in cream. The mounted works are now kept in acid-free solander boxes and will be displayed in standard frames with museum uv glass.

The oils in the collection, of which there are 80, were less complex for the conservator Gilly Kinloch to deal with. They were all cleaned by removing the discoloured layer of varnish, and a new layer was applied after any damage had been repaired. Some paintings were affected by mildew, which is a kind of fungus which grows in dark, humid and warm surroundings.

The main work was removing 17 oils on canvas from their backing boards, which they had adhered to, and wax-lined onto new canvas stretchers. *"This allows the work to breathe,"* says Gilly, *"and gives the picture a softness, which was the original intention of the artist."*

The cleaning process for both oils and watercolours has revealed inscriptions and dates previously unseen or recorded, and has preserved the collection for another 40 years at least.

Reframing of the oils is yet to be completed, and further funds are required to print and publish the catalogue illustrating all the works in the collection.

(All illustrations are © RCPS Tuke Collection)

Portrait of an Italian Youth, c1880/81
Charcoal on paper, A14

Sketch for Boy in a Tree, c.1882
Charcoal on paper, A14a
Revealed on the reverse of Portrait of an Italian Youth

Catherine Wallace is a freelance writer and curator. She was curator of Falmouth Art Gallery from 1993 - 2000. She then ran her own arts agency until 2005.

Author of Under the Open Sky: Paintings by the Newlyn and Lamorna Artists 1880 - 1940, Catherine has written the catalogue for the Poly's Tuke collection and is currently writing a book on H. S. Tuke to be published in 2008.

Basking, 1899, watercolour, 13.9 x 21.4cm A100
Before and after conservation, which involved removal of surface dirt, washing, bleaching, de-acidification, light re-touching and infill of large wormholes.

Hepworth's Museum St Ives.

It was hot; the afternoon was hanging low;
the streets were dozily quiet below Hepworth's
garden wall. I paid my fee and wandered through
the rooms, it was cool. I'd been before so there were
no surprises except for German tourists reading a
guidebook loudly in English. I had to get away from them.
I just wanted to be like you with those powerful arms and
wrinkled face where smoke had wreathed its sculptured
trace but as the years have passed this shrine decays.
The summerhouse with single bed is cream, not white;
the candlewick bedcover is dotted with dead flies.
Miss Havisham stopped all the clocks, but lived, yet here
the space is kept as if you might return but you wouldn't
like it if you did: your tools are pocked with spots of rust,
your apron stiff and hard with dust and plants have grown
away into their own space, no longer the shapes you knew.

Vivienne Neale

Walking in Falmouth

I come out of sleep
and open my ears
to the hiss of the wind
in trees and shrubs,
a distant motorbike
revving uphill,
a blackbird singing
in a neighbour's garden,
the sudden intrusion
of a screeching gull,
the peep peep peep
of a backing lorry,
voices of children
walking to school,
two mournful blasts
from a ship coming in
on the morning tide,
then St Mary's bell
—three times three
and a steady nine –
telling the time
tolling the timeless.

Bob Rogers

The House of the Moon

Glass feathers have grown
on the window pane. The winter moon
has played the same high C all night
in coded syncopations.
Now the keyboard cover comes down
as half-light grimaces in the east.

The bedside lamp makes the room
a rosy frame around a picture
of hunched grey sky.
Glum warmth leaks from the space
where I left my crumpled sleep.

I was raised in the house of the moon.
Now I work in an office all hours of the day.
Today is the day I should refuse.
But the moon has set and my room is rented.

This is the desk, the office, the town
where capital is milked from the day.
Today is the day I should refuse.
A day I should keep for the moon.
Instead I work on columns of figures,
feeding the ashes of yesterday's fire
in someone else's house.

Andrew Nightingale

Behaviour Patterns

Butter melts in a pan,
patterned with bubbles
where the heat is underneath.
The rain last night
left trails in the sand
that read like a secret message,
a Linear B, an alien script
with uncrackable encryption.
I don't want to sleep.
I'm looking for patterns.
It's no accident.
It's what I'm programmed to do.
The stars are in constellations,
the clouds pull faces
and when breakers crash
I look for Mandelbrot patterns.
I'm a parasite feeding
on raw data.
I can't be cured.
I see patterns on patterns
of patterns until nothing
can possibly make sense.

Andrew Nightingale

Beyond Reason

What have you to lose? (Pascal)

'Oh look,' she says
pointing to the sky.
'A new moon,
and not through glass!'

Then she crosses herself,
closes her eyes
and goes silent
making a wish.

'Being superstitious
is weird enough,' I say,
'but why cross yourself?
You're not Catholic,
You're not even Christian.'

'Belt and braces,'
she says with a grin,
'just belt and braces.'

Bob Rogers

The Gallery of the Polytechnic Hall, 1882 with busts. "Would he have been happier at the Red Lion?"

Samuel Foote - Cornish Actor and Playwright 1720-1777

David Peters

On October 16th 1852 Neville Northey Burnard, the Cornish Sculptor whose statue of Richard Lander sits on the monument at Lemon Hill, Truro, was considering a bust of Sam Foote for display in the Polytechnic Hall. He wrote to the Secretary of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society with a suggestion:

"You know I suppose that Sam Foote the comedian and wit was a Truro man. Do you think a man of his stamp would be considered in character or out of place in the Gallery now forming your Hall? Foote was born at the Red Lion, Truro, and I gave the hotel keeper a chance to secure it. If Foote had been a man of science or high moral character even I should have waived all considerations of the Red Lion and fixed upon your Hall, but as he was what he was I thought he would be more at home at the Red Lion."

On the 29th he wrote again:

"I should be glad to know the decision of the Committee respecting the bust of Foote.

I think all things considered he ought to be there, the world would alter very much for the worse if all the wits and comedians (I mean the natural ones not the actors) were to be excluded from it. Drab does very well but "so much of it" (as Jan Moyle said) "is enough".

The bust was not made, and it is evident that Burnard himself was aware that Foote was unlikely to be favoured by the members of the Society. In 1830 Jon Bee, in his essay that accompanied the reprint of the plays, had acknowledged that *"his genius is difficult to promote before a puritanical age in a Country that is no more Merry England".*

The members of the Committee were never going to accept that Foote was entitled to join the other eminent Cornishmen in the Gallery. He was not only the writer of satirical farces, often censured by the Lord Chamberlain, but was a gambler and a frequent guest of the debtors prison. His life was remarkable but not edifying. They would have remembered Richard Polwhele's reference to him in his *History of Cornwall* as *"a libertine in every sense of the word".*

Foote's social background was entirely acceptable. His father was a well-to-do JP in Truro, the holder of the lucrative office of Receiver of Fines for the Duchy of Cornwall, and in war time Joint Commissioner for Prizes. He later became MP for Tiverton. He was the owner of valuable land at Boscawen Street, Truro, where he built a fine family house – this later became the Red Lion. So Foote was not in fact born in a Public House, but in a house that eventually became one.

Foote's mother was the daughter of Sir Edward Goodere Bart, whose wife was a granddaughter of the Earl of Rutland. Foote was educated at the Grammar School (the site being indicated by a plaque at St. Mary's Street) where he showed great acting proficiency in the plays of Terence. His Master, Mr Connon, when Foote's notoriety had reached the gentle folk of Truro, banned all further productions of Terence and regretted his part in the development of the School's most famous pupil. He is recorded as *"regretting that a school of morality should have been a nursery for buffoonery".*

Foote went up to Worcester College, Oxford with the help of family connections, without obtaining a degree, and studied law at the Temple. In January 1741 he married Mary Hicks, a young and innocent Truro heiress with land at St Clements. He soon abandoned her and his interest in the law, her money enabling him to enjoy the pleasures of the City. Mary died early of consumption, and Foote's contemporaries in London and those who wrote about him were not aware of this marriage; Foote never mentioned it, putting it about that he had married his washerwoman.

1741 was a very significant year, for in that year both his mother's brothers died in unusual circumstances. Her elder brother Sir John Dinely Goodere had inherited his father's entailed estate which, as he was a bachelor, would automatically pass on his death to his brother or his brother's male heirs; but Sir John cut off the entail and willed the estate to his sister and her family. The aggrieved brother, Captain Samuel Goodere RN, bided his time and later, affecting reconciliation at a friend's house, invited his brother to board *"The Ruby"* lying in the Bristol Roads where, on his instructions and in his presence (he providing the rope), two of his seamen strangled the Baronet. The Captain was tried and executed on the 30 March 1741.

Foote, who had already dissipated his wife's fortune and was desperate for cash, rather than disassociate himself from this connection, agreed for the sum of £10 to write

"The genuine memoirs of Sir John Dinely Goodere Bart who was murdered by the connivance of his own brother, together with the life history trial and the last dying words of his brother Capt. Samuel Goodere….. dedicated by S. Foote of Worcester College Oxford Esq, and nephew to the late Sir John Dinely Goodere Bart."

This, his first publication, was sold by a book seller living near the Old Bailey; curiously, it endeavoured to rescue the Captain's reputation.

Foote soon came into another fortune which enabled him to spend his time at the theatre and in the fashionable coffee houses at Drury Lane, engaging with the *beaux esprits* in lively dramatic criticism. He was a shrewd and respected critic, antagonistic to the prevailing style of acting, believing that lines should be spoken with credible and dignified enunciation, that actors should be dressed in the appropriate period costume – Caesar should wear a toga, not a wig – sets should be realistic, and contemporary plays should reflect actual society and draw on real persons.

After three years he was once again insolvent, so his translation from critic to player/playwright was driven from necessity as well as inclination.

His debut took place at The Haymarket on the 6 February 1747, when he played the part of Othello. This was not a success. Neither Tragedy nor even genteel Comedy suited him either as writer or actor. As an actor, his portrayal of Fondlewife in Congreve's *"The Old Batchelor"* was much admired; his success as a dramatist lay in satirical farces where the audience were aware of the person being ridiculed; even his friends and patrons were not spared.

S Foote

In *"The Author"* he used the character Cadwallader to lampoon his friend and patron of the Arts, Mr Aprice, with such success that Aprice was accosted wherever he went by people quoting lines from the play and imitating his mannerisms. This ridicule became so intense that the poor man sought and obtained an injunction from the Lord Chamberlain prohibiting further performances.

Foote was not however prepared to risk making an enemy of Dr Johnson. When the Doctor heard that Foote was contemplating a play satirising him, it was reported that the Doctor asked his servant *"What is the price of a cane?" "Six pence." "Here is a shilling - fetch me the stoutest and tell Mr Foote that at his first performance I shall visit the theatre, go on stage and thrash him soundly."* The play was not written.

Foote was not apologetic about upsetting his targets. His self-justification was expressed as follows:

"In exposing follies, I never lost my credit with the public because they knew I proceeded upon principle."

In 1748 Foote was left another fortune by a relative of his mother (perhaps part of the Goodere Inheritance). He abandoned the theatre and went to France for four years until his money ran out again. Wishful thinking by those he had offended led to rumours that he had been killed in a duel, died of an illness brought on by "the fever of youth", or hanged. On his return in 1752 Garrick wrote a new prologue to Foote's play *"The Englishman in Paris":*

"Paper! boy." "Here, Sir, I am." "What news today?"

"Foote, Sir, is advertised." "What! run away?"

"No, Sir; this week he acts at Drury-lane."

"How's that? (cries feeble Grub) Foote come again!

I thought that fool had done his devil's dance;

Was he not hanged some months ago in France?"

In 1762 Foote had a serious accident while visiting Lord Mexborough with his friend Sir F B Delaval and the Duke of York. Foote, who was not a horseman, had vainly boasted that he could ride as well as most men he knew. The Duke provided him, as a practical joke, with a highly spirited animal. He fell so badly that his leg had to be amputated. This event did not end his acting career; but a one legged actor named Foote was an obvious target for the professional punster.

His popularity is illustrated by an amusing and affectionate letter which appeared in the *Universal Museum and Complete Magazine* signed by Bipes, which concludes:

Sam Foote playing 'Fondlewife' in 'The Old Batchelor' by Congreve 1745

"In the time of Richard the Third no man appeared in court without having one shoulder higher and one leg shorter than the other; may we expect to see the company at the Bedford coffee-house stumping about the room with their wooden legs in hopes of being as witty as Foote?"

Foote turned this misfortune to his advantage and persuaded the Duke, who regretted his part in the incident, to obtain for him a Royal Patent to produce plays at the Haymarket. The Duke was successful and Foote received a Royal Patent for life. Until 1788, when an Act of Parliament put an end to the situation, only two Patent Theatres were allowed to present full length plays in London, so this was a very valuable acquisition. Foote obtained the site of the old theatre at The Haymarket, rebuilt it, and put on his first production in May 1767. It is known that he made the considerable profit of £1700 from his first production, which he immediately lost gambling.

Foote's plays were especially successful when he ridiculed eminent people. In 1776 he presented to the Lord Chamberlain the manuscript of his new play *"A Trip to Calais"* which satirised the Duchess of Kingston, portraying her as Lady Kitty Crocodile. The contents of the play were leaked to the Duchess, whose influence was such that she obtained from the Lord Chamberlain a mandate against the piece proceeding on the grounds that it would prejudice her forthcoming trial for bigamy. This did not stop Foote from publishing it, so its contents became well known.

The Duchess of Kingston was notorious. Jon Bee said, "*Of her sexual foibles it was impossible even to caricature them on the stage; her enactments in private life and her public exhibitions were a reproach to the age.*"

In March 1749 she appeared in a masquerade as Iphigenia wearing a short petticoat drawn up to show her legs. Making a grand entrance, which lived long in the memory of those who attended, she announced, *"I am ready for sacrifice."*

The Duchess had secretly married Captain Hervey, the brother of the Earl of Bristol. She later decided she would do better by marrying the Duke of Kingston. By means of a suit of Jactitation of Marriage she sought a declaration that no such marriage existed, and that Hervey had boasted without justification that he was married to her. Hervey, who was well rewarded for doing so, did not defend the action. She married the Duke.

But her marriage certificate was later found, and she was tried and found guilty of bigamy by her peers in the House of Lords. She would have been branded on the hand, but for the fact that just before the verdict, Captain Hervey's brother died and so she became the Duchess of Bristol. Apparently branding a Duchess was a penalty not known to the law.

Although Foote insisted he was not referring to her in the play, everyone recognised who he had in mind when Lady Crocodile says to her gossip,

"But do not indulge a surmise which was circulated even in Rome itself, with too much success, that anything sensual tainted the intercourse between the Reverend Pontiff and me."

Although the play was withdrawn, Foote wrote another play, *"The Capuchin"*, where although the character of Kitty Crocodile was removed, he introduced Dr Viper, satirising the Duchess's chaplain, Mr Jackson. Jackson (it is not known whether at the insistence of the Duchess or just to please her) brought an action against Foote for homosexual assault, the only witness and alleged victim being an aggrieved former coachman. The case eventually came before Lord Mansfield and was thrown out. But because of his poor constitution, age, and the stress of these proceedings, Foote never recovered his health and appeared only sporadically on the stage. Fortunately the Patent proved invaluable, for he was able to assign it during his life for the handsome sum of £400 a quarter.

There is not space to say much more about Foote's plays (more than twenty in number) but a brief account of *"The Minor"* will give some idea of the notoriety that he sought and achieved. In this play Mrs Cole, a bawd, is a born again Methodist, often played by Foote with his cork leg. Mrs Cole was recognised by theatre goers as Jenny Douglas, a notorious London procuress who had already been satirised by Hogarth. She gives the credit for her reformation to Dr Squintum (a popular name for George Whitefield the famous Methodist preacher, who had a cast in one eye) and even though he does not appear in the play, he is mimicked in the epilogue.

Foote sent his manuscript to the Archbishop of Canterbury, requesting his Grace to look over it and make such amendments as he felt appropriate; but Thomas Secker wisely did not take the bait, observing that if he altered a word the play would be published "as corrected and approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury".

In one scene Mrs Cole tells a young man that before she obliges him she has to go to a service at the Tabernacle, but after the service she will bring him a nice innocent little country girl. When she returns she says to the girl,

"Come along, you bashful baggage. Don't you remember what Dr Squintum said – 'a woman's not worth saving that won't be guilty of a swinging sin'".

Foote claimed that he played on the prejudices of the time rather than exposing real abuses.

Finally here are some contrasting opinions of the man:

Rev. Richard Polwhele talking of the people that Foote knew in Truro:

"They shrank from his observation. They knew that every civility, every hospitable attention, could not raise them from his satire."

On his death in 1777 the following appeared in *"The Gentlemen's Magazine":*

"No man ever contributed more to the entertainment of the public, so no man oftener made the minds of his companions expand through his mirth and good humour."

Perhaps most telling of all, this remark by Samuel Johnson:

"The first time I was in the company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow I was resolved not to be pleased, and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner, pretty sullenly affecting not to mind him, but the dog was so very comical that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself down on my chair, and fairly laugh it out. Sir, he was irresistible."

Sam Foote playing 'Fondlewife' in 'The Old Batchelor' by Congreve 1745

Sources:
"The Works with Remarks and an Essay": Jon Bee 1830

"Sam Foote Comedian":
Simon Trefman 1971

"Cornish Characters and Strange Events": S Baring-Gould

"Truro in the 18th Century":
June Palmer

I would like to thank the Courtney Library at the Royal Institution of Truro for their assistance.

David was for many years the Chairman of the Society, and is its immediate Past President. He became a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedd in 1998, former Chairman and singer with Duchy Opera, and is presently the Chairman of the International Male Voice Chorale Festival.

Raison d'etre

'It's a good job you
weren't killed in the war,'
my granddaughter tells me,
'otherwise I wouldn't
have a grandad.'

Bob Rogers

Rehearsal

Near-Ta the Poly

Daniel Richards

In 2003 a friend, Ciaran Clark, and I decided to write a comedy for the stage. So with eighty pounds in a jam jar and a cast of eight enthusiastic but untried young actors and friends, we set out to create our own theatre company. A young theatre company run by young people. We performed our first show in December of the following year at the Falmouth Arts Centre. But my relationship with the theatre goes back many years before this, when at the age of five or six I was first bitten by the acting bug.

I wish I could remember the exact moment that I realised I wanted to work in theatre. All I can say is that my fascination probably began while watching a show at

the Polytechnic. I remember sitting in the auditorium with my parents watching fantastically inventive productions by Miracle or Kneehigh. Perhaps it was the thrill of being close to a make-believe world without having a cinema or television screen there to protect me. Maybe it was the fact that these people had enormous power; they could make a room full of two hundred laugh, cry, boo, hiss or, most spellbinding of all, keep perfectly silent, listening intently to every word. It was a power almost Godlike. They could create whole worlds in their own image where characters behaved only as they wished, where, unlike the real world, good could triumph over evil, and things would usually work out all right in the end. Whatever the lure, I knew that I wanted to do this myself.

When I was five years old my mother suggested that I attend a "play in a week" theatre workshop run by Keri Jessiman (or Keri Scott, wife of Bill Scott, founder of Miracle Theatre Company.) So this was my first ever performance on the Arts Centre stage. A friend and I devised a play called *"The Thing from the Crypt"*. Despite its dark title it was a comedy. At least *we* found it hilarious. Nevertheless, that day, I had my first taste of thespianism, and loved it.

From then on I tried to be involved in every theatrical piece I could find, mainly working with Kerry at her weekly drama workshop at King Charles School. The more I went, the more I loved it. I was happiest when I was being someone else in front of an audience.

Two or three times a year we would return to the Falmouth Arts Centre to devise another "play in a week" and perform it in front of friends and family. The smell of the auditorium and backstage is one that still makes my spine tingle with a heady cocktail of memories and hopes. Memories from childhood and of past productions by Near-Ta tinged with sadness, of course, as the happiest memories always are, and hopes in a future that is as unpredictable as the dust specks that dance in the spotlights.

Near-Ta's first production was *"Puss Puss"*, a tale of political upheaval among the feline population of Slough. With obvious references to the rise of the Fascist dictators, it turned out to be a hilarious yet thought-provoking piece. Following this success came *"Keep It All In"* in which an unfailingly cheerful Paul is, like Job in the Bible, afflicted by a succession of troubles which, unlike Job, finally cause him to crack. Rather risqué in parts, the play features two blatantly homosexual farmers with social aspirations who sing a song "We've Both Got Some Knob In Us."

Ciaran Clark

On our first anniversary we performed an adaptation of the classic Dickens' tale *"A Christmas Carol."* Using original text and throwing in our own jokes, we brought the story to modern London, turning Scrooge into a loan shark living in a high-tech top-floor apartment. Most recently we have performed *"Troy Story"*, our own take on the story of the fall of Troy in which a motley crew of sub-standard manhood and *women* accidentally become the heroes of Greece. Needless to say, the legend must be changed.

Of course none of these shows could have been possible without a fantastic band of brilliant friends who have helped us along the way. Ciaran and I are very proud to have worked with them all, and I hope we can continue to work together as a company. In the future we are looking to tour other parts of the county (or maybe the country), but our home will always remain the Poly.

Near-Ta is now beginning a period of transition. Some of the stalwart members of the company will shortly be starting University and further education courses in other parts of the country, and consequently things are bound to change. But whatever the future holds, I am confident that we will continue to tread the boards with new productions and huge enthusiasm. At least in the future we will not need to convince the Poly that we are serious and dedicated performers. My attitude is that with so many great memories "in the bag", let's go out and get some more.

Here are some important lessons that I have learned on the Arts Centre stage. Never rely totally on technology. The phrase "break a leg" should never be taken literally. Never attempt to pop a fake breast with an earring; and most important of all, never mention the name of the "Scottish play". These lessons stay by me and I live by them today.

Daniel has appeared on the stage at the Poly in many guises, ever since he was so high. In 'Rehearsal' (previous page), he is the one at the bottom. Near-Ta's next production will be "Stythian's Ghost", playing at the Poly on 15th and 16th December.

The Deer Healer

The painstakingly restructured heartland
of the business liaison park
boasts grazing deer, a lake
and acres of mature woodland.

A relaxed executive directorate
is returning from the hunt
and entering the clubhouse.

On a bed of lettuce leaves,
the magical strength of muscle,
in its nebula of gristle and bone,
is teased apart by indolent knives.

'Let me put it to you simply,' he smiles,
unassumingly, 'who pays your wages?'

With the dumb stare of a blank cheque
I walk in a dungeon of woods with his words
following a step behind me.

Skills of the fool: don't ask,
keep to your corner, and to what you know,
the healing of deer, how to tend the herd,
the nurture of health and strength.

Andrew Nightingale

Checking Rabbit Hangs

('hangs': wire snares for catching rabbits)

Pegging out washing with strands
of cobweb hanging horizontal in dewy air
- something like women's work
you wouldn't have done, father -

I, your reluctant son, remember the stillness
of another such morning we walked the fields
together,
threads of dew spreading across us
as we checked rabbit hangs
and for once seemed friends.

Now I am ten, twenty years older
than you were then
still regretting, as I know you were,
we couldn't find reconciliation in the end,
and still not knowing
how to take my own son
and hug him like a bear.

Bill Mycock

Mustard Seed

I'm confused by time,
antelope hours leaping towards dawn,
racing the counterglow of the moon –

By the gecko minute
motionless on the wall above my head –

Sometimes time faces both ways at once
and I lose the mustard seed of myself

Sometimes I'm awash with time,
ghosting its own autobiography alongside me

Even though it's not autumn,
leaves fall from the marriage tree

till its branches are bare,
unclimbable
and full of birds who will not sing

Penelope Shuttle

Mariés au Village

(oil, tempera on canvas
by Marc Chagall, 1969)

I am drawn to the idea of opening
my arms and flying
in the manner of a Chagall painting
over rooftops and church spire
lambs' wool cockerels and leaping red goats
in the cool blue light of crescent moons
holding the hand of my wife
in her bridal dress
to stop her floating away

But there is such gossip in the village

Bill Mycock

Space

The space left in between us is so slight.
You might just fit a hand between your skin
and mine, might pull a fallen hair and feel it
go, but still, it seems there is a narrow gap
where I betray you every day in margins
where you cannot ever follow.

When you ask me what is on my mind, I lie,
and say 'all kinds of things' and never tell you
what you want to know and never say the
name I think you dread; the name of one who
filled that narrow space and wedged us both
apart and took your place.

Vivienne Neale

Lover

You're expensive as a daylong phone-call
to Cuba, Vietnam or Mexico,

costly as a pleasure-dome of spices,
the collision of three air-buses over Heathrow,

or songs flayed
from the hearts of a million exiles -

Whose liar are you nowadays?
Who will you bankrupt today,

with your desires, your powers
and your promises?

How many beggars, shivering
in shop doorways,

will remember you -

the only one who understood them,
the only man they'd ever love?

Penelope Shuttle

Cloud Cover

high

Each sun-up, I'm spoiled for choice -
which guise to put on
mood to adopt? High days

and holidays, whether to wander
in angel form, idle across the sun
tossing my locks to best advantage

A fairweather friend, I pass by and flick
a ponytail of brief shadow
on the child mouthing candyfloss

medium

When it's fair to middling, we crave company
foregather over Land's End and Ding Dong
Embracing, assimilating, we advance

in stately procession. Slatey shadows
on Trencrom, Godolphin, follow
our crescent path eastward

The circus has come to Redruth town
great grey jumbos loom over Truro
and west, the baby elephants tag along

low

Low days, I'm granny under a drab quilt
a whiff of damp sheep whose fleece
repels me, turns dankness to diamonds

Thin air grows heavy with me
I slide across windows, cling to your walls
suck up all the colours

deafen you with quietness
You'll forget everything but that
which you fear to remember

Even the rain smells dead
You can't recall the electric freshness
of rainfall on new green

Lousy weather! - you say to your neighbour's
boy
His answer will stump you
It's better than nothing.

Jane Tozer

Squirrel

Through my
bedroom
window

I watch
a squirrel

run down
the trunk
of a tall
Scots pine

In irregular
jerky
stops
and starts

the way
a blob
of water

trickles
down the
steamed-up
glass

on a winter
morning.

Bob Rogers

Seeing

The seal is here:

a slither of silver grey,
a comma in my bay,

vanishing below
the opaque sea
then reappearing,

a thought set free

dawyth agar

Ballade Of The Old Books

Where have Buchan and Hannay gone?
Where are the Gestes and P C Wren,
Quatermain, Hope and Prester John,
And all those others who thrilled us when
Empire was empire and men were men?
Where are Drummond, Mason and Hay?
We shall not read their like again:
Nobody writes like that today.

Ruritania's gone from our maps,
The Great Game's over and nobody's won.
We'll see no more of those plucky chaps
Who joined the Legion, or foiled the Hun
When war was a game of tip and run.
The Street called Straight only goes one way:
Greenmantle's dead, and the job is done.
Nobody writes like that today.

Prince, you had better stay clear of trouble.
Rudolph Rassendyll's passed away,
And there isn't another royal double.
Nobody writes like that today.

Michael Swan

Sir Autumn

Sir Autumn roars by,
golden nobody

ambitious as the sky,
alone as anyone

Autumn, reader
between the year's lines,

everyone's thoughtlessness

He can't tell a wedding ring
from a smoke ring,

tells a lie
every time he opens his mouth,

lies in wait for winter
all his life

Penelope Shuttle

Each year the cherry blossom

this time the Barbara Cartland ultra-pink
extravaganza danced for weeks
like fluffy debutantes
at ballet class
well-choreographed
by Degas

the wind
its usual roguish self
ruffling and lifting petticoats
never too far

but that was April. Now it's early May
and summer gales
have mimicked autumn

laying a one-night only
colour-changing putti-minded never-lasting
Eastern carpet
of rich un-English
wild exotica

Caroline Carver

Only Child

Suddenly I see a cab
and watch how Daddy
helps gently, as if you'll
break. It's not the face
I recognise: shadowed,
empty, shrunken and
without the surprise you'd promised.
'Mummy, my knees ached from waiting. You
said you'd bring a friend for me to play with.'

A neighbour takes my hand
for treats and cake;
but looking back
the door clicked
shut, but I saw you stagger
awkwardly and cry,
then lean against the wall
with fingers pressed
into your eyes.

What I didn't know,
at three, was your grief
at losing a child who
had breathed
for 24 brief hours.

Vivienne Neale

Coverack

The end of April is yellow and white
ground all three-cornered garlic and celandines

the beginning of May is white and yellow
every hillside clouded by gorse and may

the end of April is walls of scent
doors opening silently into summer

the beginning of May is carpets of sea
windows to wide horizons and gates ajar

walking between these months is a path
balancing land and water, held in the arms of new grass

always heading west, wanting to run
to worlds all fresh with flowers

and air surprised by its warmth. Something's begun -
white as new linen, yellow as remembered sun.

Victoria Field
(Victoria Field is Writer in
Residence at Truro Cathedral)

Truro Cathedral

the cathedral air is cool and comforting as water
deep full of te deum laudamus

pillars tall as winter reeds
reach nearly to the high surfaces

but their feet are rooted
in a sunlit terrace of moving lights

where coloured windows play like small children
pretending to throw their treasures to the floor

sounds weave in and out of the soft stone
in murmuring ripples of thought

reaching back to join fathers and mothers
grandparents great-grandparents

in a continuing legacy
of meditation

nothing good ever abandons the cathedral
escapes through those great doors

although the watery air hesitates when the organ breaks in
with such majestic purpose

like waves crashing on a not-so-distant shore
only subdued by the other-worldly choir

at these times
the meditative air-water stands with bowed head

before the altar of
this greater waterfall

Caroline Carver

H.S. Tuke's house and studio above Swanpool Beach

Tuke's Roller

Brian Price

Tuke's cottage past Swanpool had been connected with the silver/lead/arsenic smelting works which was operating there for a short time around 1860. There is still part of an underground tunnel flue, with a side entrance which may be found near the top of Pennance Point Cottage garden just below the path up to the point. It originally took the poisonous fumes from the smelting works to a stone chimney stack high on the point, which was still standing in Tuke's early years, hence the local name "stack point". On the town-side of the site of his cottage may still be seen level terraces with remains of the actual works. The mine itself was somewhere at the back of Swanpool lake. A flight of granite steps led up from the lowest of the terraces to the front garden of Tuke's cottage, long since fancied and acquired – I remember most of them still there in the early 1960s.

On the moors above Grassington in Wharfedale are the remains of a much larger system of such chimney tunnels, just below the surface and built by cut-and-cover, for the same purpose. Oxide of arsenic condensed in these tunnels, a by-product which was scraped out periodically (a lethal job) and used for making anti-fouling paint for ships. The cross-section of the Pennance tunnel is just big enough for one to stand up in them, but sections of it have fallen-in or been filled. The lower end of the tunnel was near the back of Tuke's cottage.

Tuke's first studio was a small square free-standing affair on a higher terrace, later becoming a small billiard room when he had built his larger lean-to studio at the base of the steps. Further towards the town he made a practice cricket pitch with nets on one of the terraces, dating back to his "cricket period" just after 1900. At first it was a grass pitch, for which he had a large granite roller, but by 1914 it was concreted. Staples in the concrete for the net guys may probably still be found. Falmouth boys often practised cricket there with Tuke.

In the middle of World War I, when that coastline was a restricted area and Tuke found it difficult to paint on the beach or go boating for his painting, someone rolled his granite roller over the cliff on to the stony shore immediately beneath. There it remained, and in the 1960s was at about half-tide lying on the stones near the cliff, a very heavy granite cylinder with rusty iron pivot-pegs at the end-centres. Originally it must have had an iron harness with a handle. Tuke thought it had been vandalised by soldiers who were patrolling the coastline during the war, and was very annoyed.

But Cecil Berriman, in his Reminiscence recorded on 13 August 1967, told us otherwise. Cecil knew the place well, because his mother had been brought up beyond Tuke's cottage in the old coastguard's cottage (renovated in the 1960s as Pennance Point Cottage) and several of his aunts had been Tuke's housekeepers for a time. It was Cecil's mischievous brother Fred Berriman who had dispatched the roller to the foreshore.

"... and with another boy, they had a big granite roller down there, that other brother [Fred] of mine, he was a hard nut in they days, I hurried back to see this roller overboard and it rolled right over the cliff."

"Did Mr.Tuke know who did it?"

"No!"

"That was in 1916. So you were 11 then. How old is Fred?"

"Fred is eighteen months older than me ... Fred was a masterpiece in they days, a hard nut, always doing devilish things."

I was determined to rescue the roller as a piece of Tuke memorabilia. Helped by a party of friends, on 27 July 1971 I took my rowing dinghy down to Swanpool Beach on a boat trailer while the tide was receding, and we left it high and dry by the roller until the tide was rising again. We made a loop with a stout rope, and tied the metal peg-ends to it with a harness of more rope. As the boat floated over the roller with the tide, we held the rope loop around the boat amidships, so that the roller was lifted off the stony beach and suspended from the dinghy underwater. Then we rowed slowly to Swanpool beach – an extraordinary sensation, as with each stroke of the oars we progressed only about three inches. At high tide, we propelled the roller as far as we could up the sand underwater, then removed the rope loop and left it on the beach. There was little danger of it being pocketed! Early the next morning we manoeuvred the boat trailer beside the roller as the tide was rising, and manhandled it underwater on to the trailer. Even with acknowledgements to Archimedes it was very heavy. Eureka! The deed was done.

We brought the roller back to the store of the Tuke Collection, which at that time was in a basement garage at Harbour Court, New Street, and there it stayed; until many years later, owing to concerns among the Harbour Court residents, who had found out what lay beneath them and imagined a lethal burglar raid, we were compelled to find alternative accommodation for storing our Tukes. The store was dry and fireproof, but it became the very antithesis of being confidential.

The roller became a problem. Where next would we store it? We thought a Poly member might like it in his garden as a sundial base ... Supporting a sundial may appear to be its only task now, but the initiated know that it is a piece of Tuke and cricket memorabilia, worthy of preservation.

40 years ago Brian Price gave to the Poly the extraordinary gift which has become the Tuke Collection.

To complete Brian's story, the paintings and memorabilia were moved from the Harbour Court garage to the Falmouth Art Gallery, where they are now. However, the massive roller, which probably started life on a farm as part of Cornwall's agricultural heritage, is the sort of object only to be found in an art gallery when entered for the Turner Prize.

Consequently a pick-up truck and three stout men were hired to transport the roller to Flushing, where it spent some years in Michael Carver's garden as, indeed, a sundial.

When he moved to a house with a 45 degree lawn, David Peters – then Chairman of RCPS – agreed to adopt the roller; and there it now stands, adorning his garden, and holding a most attractive bowl of erysimum linifolium.

"Silence I Discover Is Something You Can Actually Hear"

Haruki Murakami

This Rock's my size: my length my shape my bed - me
I mould to it: it to beach to pebbles to sand to sea

Rainbow seaweeds, smelling their own dying, reflect shore's line. In strings
In heaps. They breathe, exhaling ants, sand flea, sand fly, sand lives

I am alone

Skyblueemptycanvas, one rip of smoky vapour. Earlyday
Warms every inch of flesh. My flesh. Half-moon in daylight

Looks the other away.

My breathing - deepslow in, hold, slow out, hold, deep in…
The ins and outs, the licks of gentle sea. Yes. Silence has its sounds

Head back in rest, the stretch of cliff, bottom to top to sky
Its panoply of greens, its perfumes, reaching down

Reaches down to claim me

Dawyth Agar

FALRIVER LINKS

Car Free Days Out

New services for 2006 :
Helford Passage & Evening services
to Falmouth, St Mawes,
Mylor Yacht Harbour
& Flushing.

Boats | Buses | Trains | Places to go | Great Days Out www.falriverlinks.co.uk