

OLD TIN WORKS IN THE CARNON VALLEY, now demolished and covered

(MSS) Mr T O G Richards 7 11 1972

(Written in answer to a query from the S W Electricity Board)

The following is a rough history of the Tin Works which were used to extract Tin, Arsenic, Wolfram and many other metals including a minute quantity of Gold and Pitchblende.

1800-1889 approx worked by Trythalls who lived at the now closed P O and shop at Cusgarne. Their employees had to purchase goods there.

Following this Wheal Jane used the works to burn the tin deposits and separate the Arsenic etc.

They used oil engines, to generate d.c. electricity for lighting, steam and water wheel power. Due to the depression in price the mine and works closed about 1912.

At this time another company (German) built the Lower Carnon Valley works to treat the valley deposits. I think it was named the Carnon Valley Syndicate, the power for this was brought direct from Hayle by the Cornwall Electric Power Company. Steel pylons were erected in 1912-13 to the bridge at Bissoe and then to the new works on twin wooden poles with top spreaders. The works were sited where the Devoran Sewerage Works now stand.

The new tin works had not been in production very long when World War I started resulting in the staff being interned and the whole works was dismantled and auctioned by Messers Peter Hamley and Sons of Plymouth. Prices much exceeded the original costs. The company had to guarantee certain costs to the C.E.P. Co but who paid is not known. The H.V. power line was dormant for many years.

Following the end of hostilities another company- The Rafimpa Nigeria Co., London E.C. used power from this line and worked the valley deposits for tin at the old works abandoned by Wheal Jane and now demolished. This company carried on to 1922-(24?)

Various other undertakings used the same works but with new ideas to treat the available deposits.

Bissoe Tin By-Products under Mr Schiff of considerable fame in mining circles and formerly of Wheal Jane. Mr Schiff also helped Madame Curie in the discovery of Radium by his work on Pitchblende in the valley and later at Trenwith Mine St Ives, where he spent the whole of his fortune. His brother was also very active and a director of S G Minerals Syndicate Ltd who launched the B.T.B.P. Ltd. S.G. Minerals were at 150 Southampton Row W.C. 1. Another company may be of interest but I cannot say the times when in operation: Bissoe Tin Sand and Alluvials which was proposed in 1918 and shares later put onto the market.

All these companies used power from the above mentioned line and I think the works now covered closed 1928-1930.

There were some local people who had charge of the works: - Capt. J Bray, Mr W.B. Bray, Mr Schoff- he was active in various quarters up to 1945 and died

at Gunnislake in 1952 almost penniless. A Mr Scults was also active in one of the undertakings.

During the 1920's C E Dower started distribution at Carnon Downs and the Hicks Mill area, and a branch line was taken from Bissoe P.O. to Truro. I might add that during the H.V. line construction work was carried out non-stop during the hours of daylight.

I am still trying to get the dates more accurate.

Signed; Owen G. Richards.