

THE SMELTING WORKS AT PENPOL

On the South side of the parish an arm of the Restronguet Creek runs north from the village of Point to the bridge at Penpol, with deep water on the east side of it. In 1817, Sir William Lemon of Carclew leased 8 acres of Penpol Croft, with stone quarries, to John Swan, gentleman of the parish of Feock, to erect and build a quay or wharf, with storehouses, to be called Lemon Quay; and in November 1818 there was an advertisement in the West Briton that "Prime Welch Coal" was available at the newly erected Quay in Restronguet Creek, adjoining Penpol, called Lemon Quay. In January 1818 John Swan & Co. advertise that they are ready to receive Copper Ores to be shipped to Wales (for smelting) and to purchase coal brought back in the ships carrying ore.

The Penpol Smelting Works were built soon after because in April 1827 John Swan "is now ready to receive samples of Lead Ore for assaying, and to treat for purchase"; but in 1828 he was involved in a lawsuit with Viscount Falmouth and was made bankrupt. He is described as "of Truro, Merchant" supplying mining and building requisites such as coals, timber, iron, candles, leather, Bridgewater bricks, tiles and laths. The sale was held at Pearce's Hotel, Truro, now 'The Royal', on September 22nd and describes the works:-

"the newly erected Lead Smelting Works contain 2 Calcining Furnaces, 2 Flowing Furnaces, 3 Refining Furnaces, with all necessary Working Tools Moulds, Test Rings etc. and stock of bone ashes. In complete repair and calculated for smelting 180 tons of Lead a month".

Lemon Quay was also to be sold and details could be obtained from Mr. Wm. Penrose of Tregie, Feock. In 1829 creditors received 10s0d in the £ and another 2s0d in 1831.

In 1829, William Stevens of Feock, Yeoman, leased a piece of land "on the beach under Penpol estate" with liberty to erect and build a mill on the plot of ground nearest to Lemon Quay. The walls to be stone and the roof slate and to erect a Dam or Weir across Penpol Creek and hatching and sluices convenient for a pond for scouring the channel in front of Lemon Quay. The Mill has disappeared but 'Bone Mill Pond' still exists, with stepping stones replacing the sluices, and is used as winter quarters for boats.

In 1830 the Lead Smelting House lease was drawn up between Sir Charles Lemon and William Penrose of Tregie and R. & W. Michell (a Truro partnership with an interest in the Calenick Tin Smelting Works, also suppliers of minin accessories) but on 28th March 1838 (according to the monumental tablet in Feock Church) William Penrose died suddenly and the lease was changed. The Michells continued, Juliana, the widow, took William's place and William Stephens joined them. The copy of the lease in the Whitford papers is engraved the Penpol Head Smelting Works.

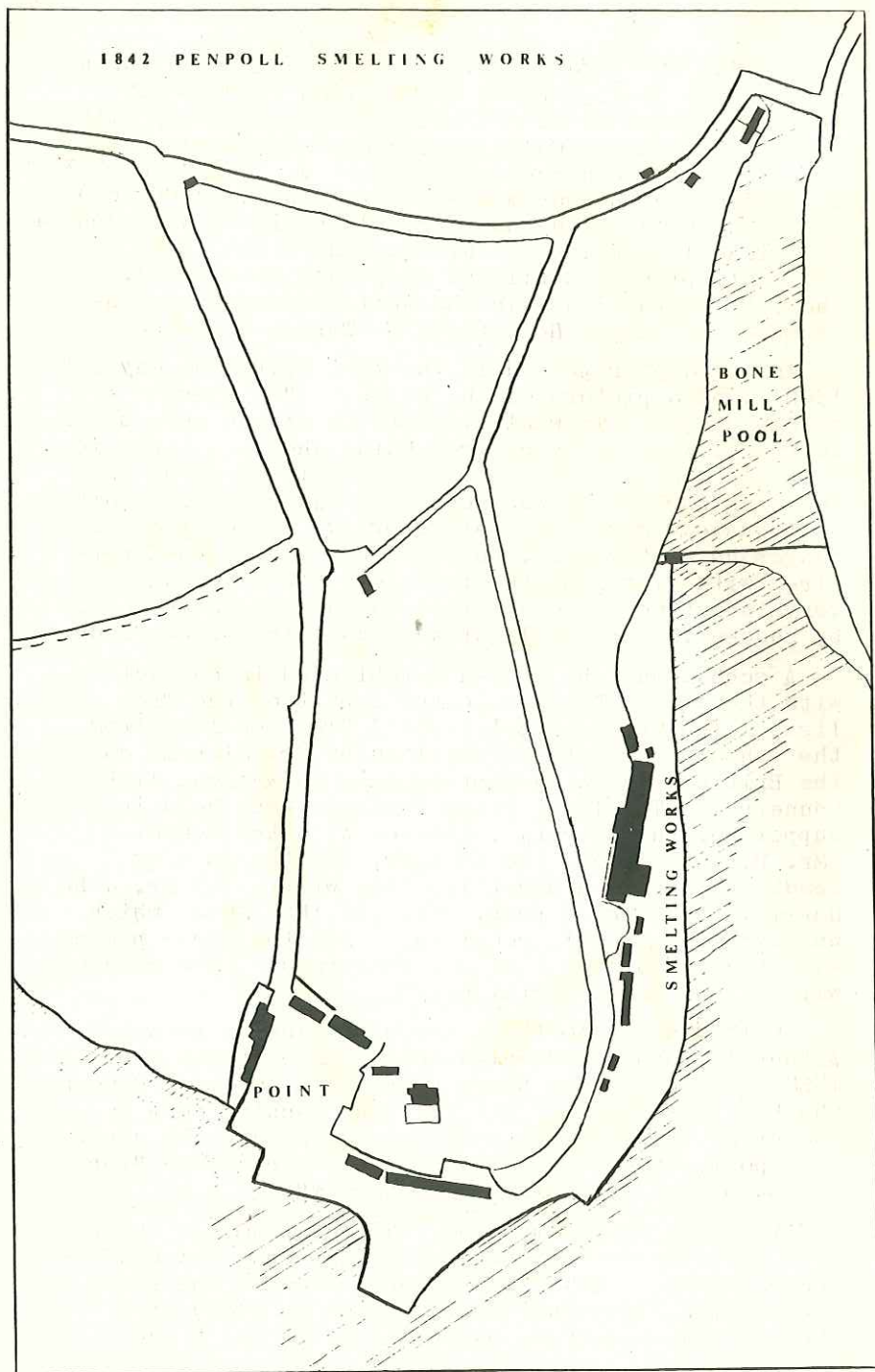
An accident reported in the West Briton on May 1st 1840 gives a picture of the works. "On Tuesday evening last, Mr. Trewhella, clerk to Mr. Knight, brewer in Truro, was returning from Point when his horse fell over a plank projecting in the road in front of the Smelting Works - he was severely injured - but prompt assistance - gives hope of recovery. The place is dangerous at any time, but the road having been repaired with slag from the furnaces, its boundaries are very indistinct, and at night the danger is increased by sudden flashes of light when the fire is stirred".

A school must have been established in connection with the works, because in the report of the Tre-lissick Tea Treat (W.B.1.7.1848) "The scholars from the school at Point, established by Mr. Michell on the British & Foreign system, came in waggons with banners". The first Penny Readings were held in support of the library connected with the school. "Mr. H.B. Champion, the manager, for the opening reading selected a beautiful tale written by Mr. John Harris, the Cornish poet, entitled 'Nat Moss' which was exceedingly well received. All the other pieces elicited the approval of all concerned. The readings will be continued fortnightly".

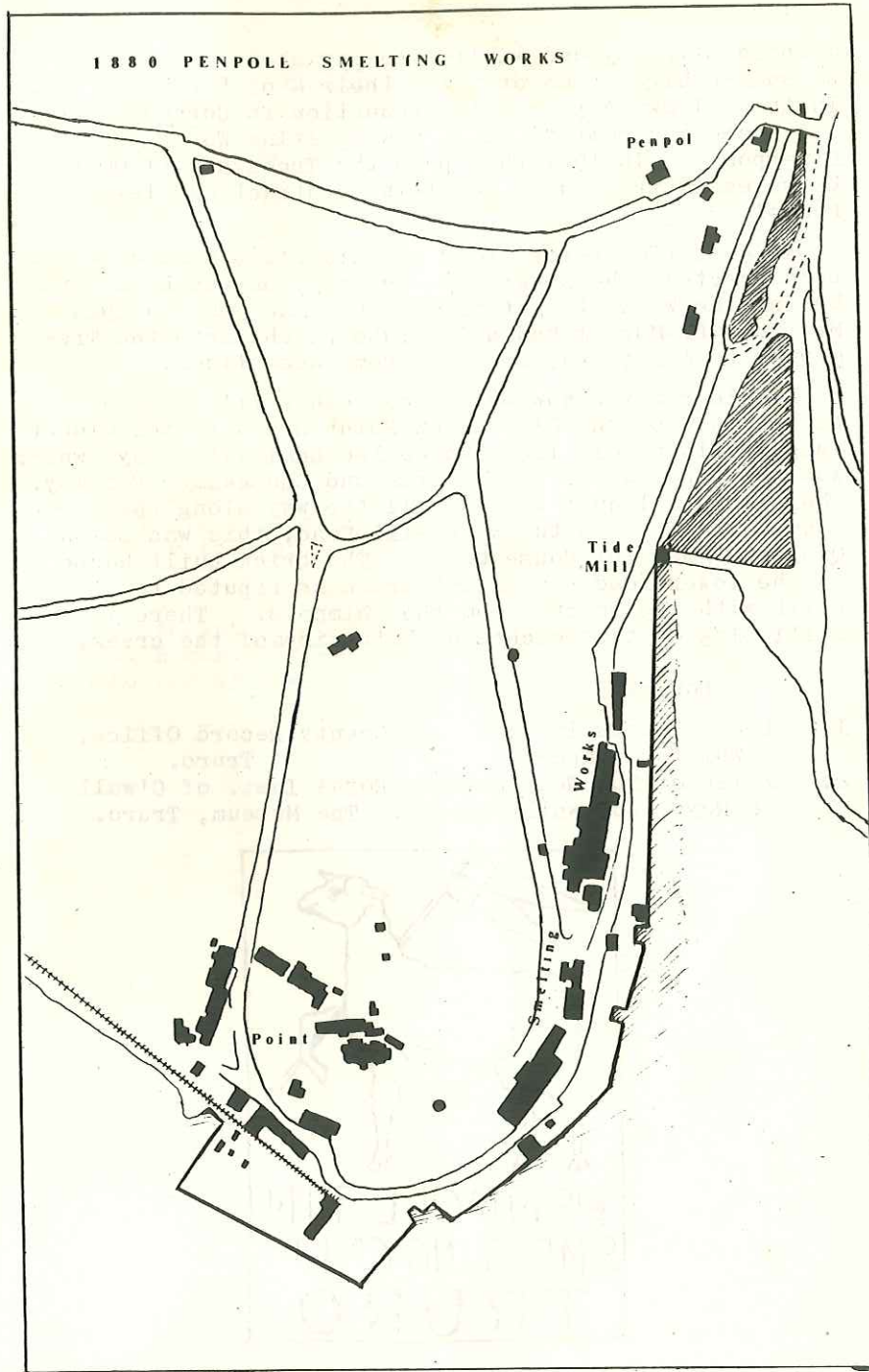
In 1870 and 1880 there are other leases between Arthur Tremayne of Carclew (Sir Charles Lemon died in 1868) and the London based Penpol Tin Smelting Company, who had possession of all the land running down to the creek, together with the bone mill and the upper mill pool, except for a piece of land retained "for the purpose of building a schoolroom".

By comparing the maps of 1845 and 1880, it can be seen that the Penpol Company had set up a new and extended works. The figures published for the fortnightly Tin Ticketings (established in 1887) show them to have been keen buyers whenever the price

1842 PENPOLL SMELTING WORKS



1880 PENPOLL SMELTING WORKS



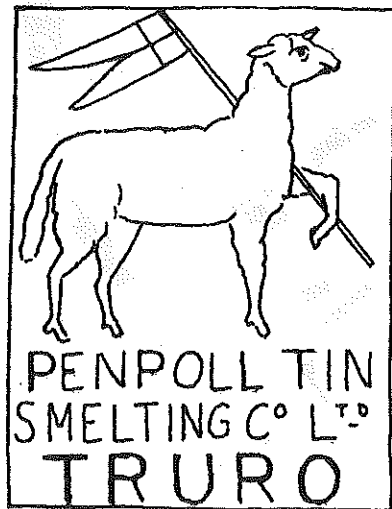
dropped slightly and willing to pay above the average to snatch high grade ore from their 4 or 5 competitors. In the following years tin production in Cornwall declined and the company built new Smelting Works near Liverpool. In 1921 they paid the Tremaynes £1500 to be released from their repairing contract and left Penpol.

At some time before 1880 arsenic flues must have been erected; there were two chimneys on the high land behind the works to get rid of the fumes and in 1924 Mr. Fred L. Morcom had a 'tribute pitch' from the Tremaynes to carry away arsenic from these flues.

Little remains now but traces can still be seen. At the foot of the hill below Point Green is the oldest quay, built before 1800 and called Daniell's Quay, which was the terminus of the Devoran and Chasewater Railway. There is still quay walling all the way along the river bank, almost up to the Bone Mill Pond, this was Lemon Quay and Smelting House Quay. The brick built house on the lower road near Point Green is reputed to be built with the bricks from the chimneys. There is still slag on the beaches on both sides of the creek.

Sources:

1. Lemon leases in the County Record Office, Whitford papers. Truro.
2. Files of The West Briton Royal Inst. of C'wall & Royal Cornwall Gazette. The Museum, Truro.



Acknowledgements

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