

THE GROWTH OF DEVORAN

Devoran reached its greatest development in the past about 1870, but not so long ago there was a local expression 'as dead as Devoran docks'. There was some building in Devoran Lane between the wars, but it is only quite recently that land has become available for further development. Now the 'Dead Docks' are being replaced by 'Desirable Dwellings' and the village is expanding.

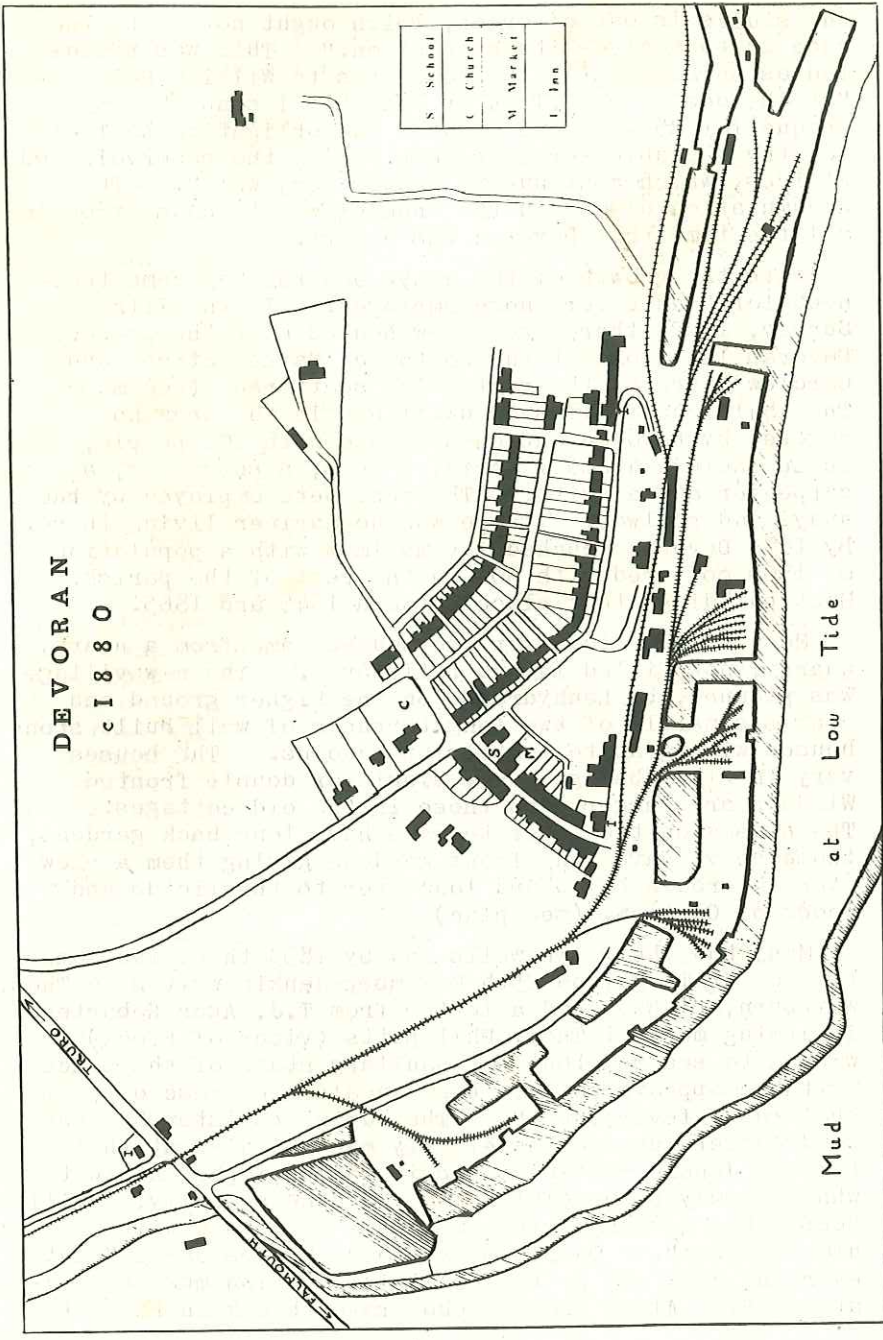
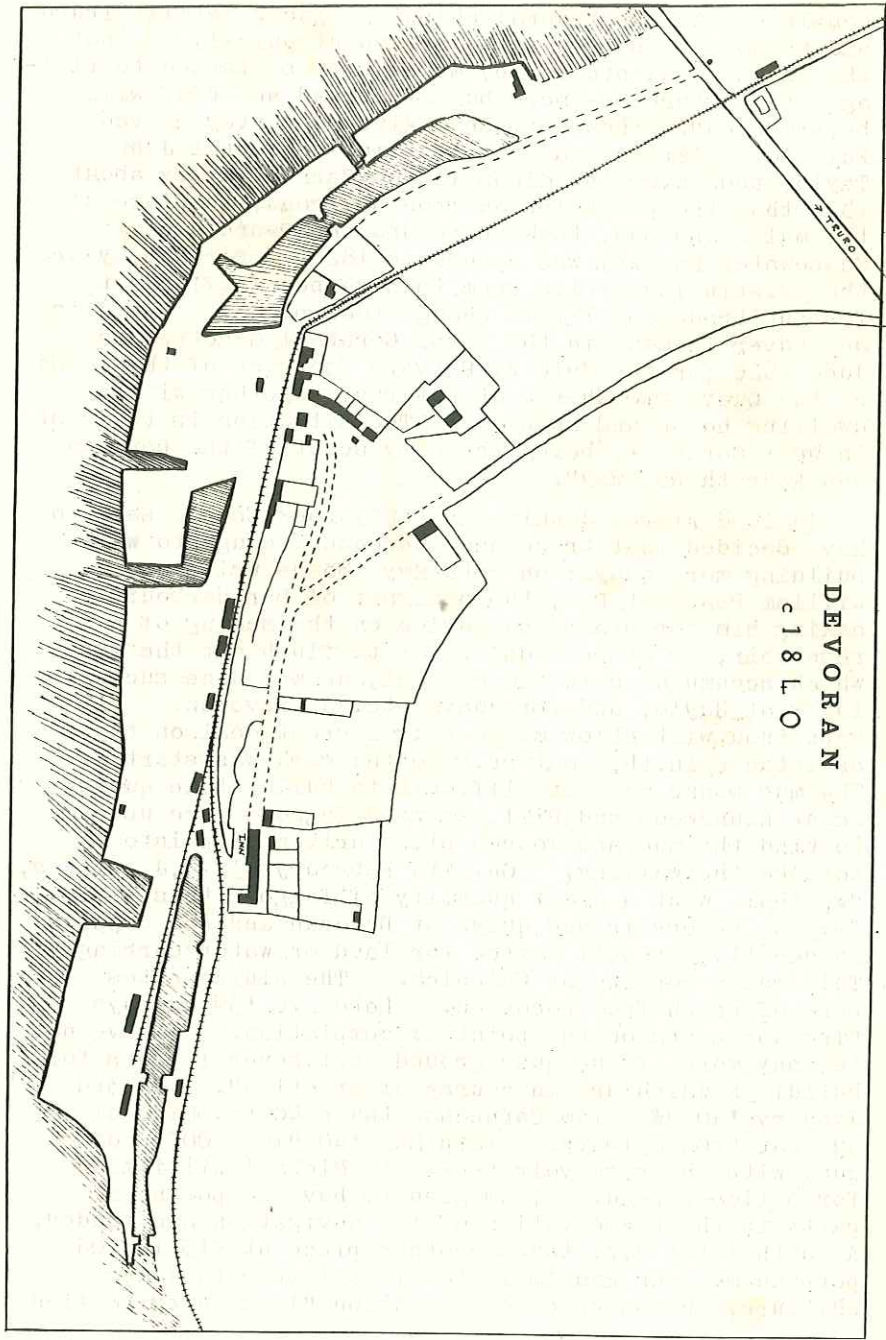
About 1800 the ground on which Devoran stands was used for farming and the slopes running down to the river were probably covered with gorse, but the mines up the Carnon Valley were being extensively worked and their prosperity depended on the pumping engines which needed coal. Alfred Jenkin, the far sighted steward of the Agar Robartes of Lanhydrock, who was also a mining agent, saw the possibilities of the deep tidal water at the foot of the slope. On November 25th, 1794 he wrote to Lanhydrock about "a 30 acre croft called Nullas Downs - at the foot of the Downs Reed carries on a considerable trade in coals, timber etc. He will spend £400 to £500 building a new dwelling house there". Elsewhere Jenkin mentions Devoran Cock, or Devoran Wollas (now mid Devoran) to which Nullas Down belonged as having been purchased by Robartes in 1577. As other pieces of land adjacent came into the market he seems to have advised their purchase.

On 24th May 1821 he writes of Devoran as "a small quay on Restronguet Creek but higher up than Lemon Quay, it belongs to Magor, Baynard & Co., Coal Merchants. It is only calculated for small quantities but we save 6s0d a ton over Lemon Quay." In winter communications with the mines were very difficult. On 2nd January 1817 Jenkin writes, "such frequent rains for the last month - the roads from the mines to the wharf are so badly cut up, particularly those to Pill that all the wheel carriages are stopped and the mules are the only conveyance at present". On 4th April 1817 "I am under great apprehension of soon feeling the effects of the wet season we had last autumn. Both hay and corn were so much injured by it that the horses and mules in this neighbourhood have suffered exceedingly".

As early as 1806 plans had been discussed for canals to carry the traffic of coal, ores etc., and it was reported that "the Gwennap mines are to have

canals cut to the several shipping places betwixt Truro and Falmouth, and are to be set about quickly so that the estates now ate out by mules will be turned to tillage and pasture --- more butter, bread and beef will be produced". However, an engineers survey proved this to be impracticable and it was not until John Taylor took over the mines in the Carnon Valley about 1820 that the plans for an Iron Railroad, in place of the mules and mud, took shape and the Redruth and Chasewater Railway was opened in 1826. For some years the existin facilities seem to have been sufficient for the trade and little change took place. There is an advertisement in the Royal Cornwall Gazette 3rd June 1826 for the Sale by Private Contract of the lease of the Quays and Wharfs at Devoran, together with a dwelling house and stable. "The situation is the best in West Cornwall, being the only depot of the Devoran and Redruth Railway".

In 1838 Alfred Jenkin and Lanhydrock Estate seem to have decided that trade had increased enough to warrent building more quays; on 26th May '38 he writes to William Pease at Par, the designer of Par harbour, asking him for plans and advice on the making of a reservoir, to store tidal water to flush out the mud which accumulated in the channel, as was done successfully at Hayle, and for quays etc. at Devoran. "I hope thou wilt allow me to rely a great deal on thy assistance in this matter," so the work was started. The mud banks made it difficult to build stone quays, as at Roundwood and Pill, so wood faggots were used to bind the mud and wooden piles driven deep into it to make the walling. On 11th February '39 A.J. writes, "we shall want a great quantity of faggots this spring for the reservoir and quays at Devoran and the coppice in question is well suited for land or water carriage". This was a coppice at Calenick. The sluice gates were of beech from Boconnoc. Later in '39 he says "The works are on the point of completion. I have not let any more of the quay ground, but several plots for buildings which are in course of erection". On 3rd January '40 "William Carne has taken 40 to 50ft. of quay at 5s0d a foot". 12th May '40 "let 200ft. of quay with the reservoir behind to Michael Williams for a timber pond. I am glad to have so potent a party in the preservation of the navigation and trade". A month later M.W. takes another piece at £15.16s.0d per annum. On 2nd April '41 in a letter to James Whitburn, in charge of construction "I am sorry to find



the sluice is out of order, which ought not to be the case so soon after its completion." This was remedied as on 21st April '41 he writes to William Pease, "at the desire of J.T. Agar Robartes I send thee my cheque for £5 --- as a mark of the obligation he feels for thy valuable services in planning the reservoir and sluices, which continue to answer very well". The accumulation of mud in the channel was to cause trouble all the time that Devoran was a port.

With the growth of the quays and railway came the need for houses for those employed. In the Tithe Survey, 1842, there are a few houses near the present Devoran Inn, some at the bottom of Market Street and Carclew Terrace, the rest being scattered. (see map) The 1841 census gives 40 dwellings in the area now covered by Devoran and Carnon Gate with 205 people, these include 4 small farms, 3 inns, a shoemaker, a carpenter and a smith. The rest were employed by the quays and railway. There was no mariner living there. By 1871 Devoran reached its maximum with a population of 1500 compared with 900 in the rest of the parish. Most building took place between 1845 and 1865.

Most of the stone for the houses came from a nearby quarry, now filled in and built over. The new village was planned, by Lanhydrock, on the higher ground and consists mainly of two long terraces of wall built stone houses with granite lintels and quoins. The houses vary in size, being either single or double fronted. Windows are larger than those in the old cottages. The houses on the lower terrace have long back gardens, those above have long front gardens giving them a view over the roofs below and look over to the fields and woods of Carclew. (see plan)

Many had their own wells and by 1853 there was some type of drainage; on 25th November Jenkin writes to Thos. Whitburn, "I have had a letter from T.J. Agar Robartes informing me that Thos. Phillpotts (vicar of Feock) wishes to see me about the sanitary state of the place as there appears to have been an alarming case of cholera or fever there". The burial register has the word cholera against an elderly man who died at that time. Jenkin continues "as it may be important that whatever may be needful should be done speedily, I will despatch a messenger informing him that thou wilt meet him tomorrow". On December 5th he writes again "Whatever the cost may be the drain in question must be made at once". After another cholera outbreak in Falmouth

in 1854 he writes to Thos. Phillpotts, "with respect to Devoran thou art mistaken in thinking that nothing has been done there, about 500 ft. of large drainpipes are being laid there and I expect an equal quantity next week. What I am doing there has no reference to W. Treganowans premises where the greatest nuisance is, the Board of Health must take such steps with reference to that as they think proper". On September 9th he pays F.M. Chell for making and laying 180 pipes £9.13s.6d. this cost to be shared between the property owners.

Streets were originally unpaved but on 5th March '56 Jenkin instructs Whitburn "to pay on behalf of Mrs. Agar one third of the £42.14s.7d. being the cost of paving the street from Sampson's Wharf to the Market House". This is not the present Market House which was built in 1862 but an earlier one, probably on the same site. Lanhydrock also kept a firm eye on the type of house built; Jenkin wrote to Whitburn on 26th March '56 "I return herewith the plan of the houses proposed to be built by J.H. Nicholls. The size is quite too small for that situation and I would rather leave the ground unoccupied than have houses of that description built on it. The length from out to out being only 36ft. and deducting therefrom 2ft. for the external walls, 9ins. for half the middle wall and 4ft. for passage and partition leaves only 11ft 3ins. for each front room, the back rooms will be still smaller as the stairs will have to come out of each.

By 1857 the terraces were being provided with footpaths, Jenkin writes, "It will be necessary to have granite curbstones for the footpaths, quarry stones are constantly liable to be displaced and there would be frequent expense in replacing them". These stones are probably still to be seen there. Larger houses were built for the merchants who were living in Devoran also for the Harbour Master, Railway Superintendent, Mine Agents and others in responsible positions. An advertisement in the Gazette in 1848 gives a good idea of the type of business carried on at that time in Devoran.

To be sold at the
'Crown & Anchor' Inn, Devoran

Newly erected Dwelling House, Barn, Stable and outbuildings together with 3 acres of enclosed land. For the residue of a term of 99 years on three lives

aged 15, 14 and 12.

Household Furniture. Mahogany and other tables and chairs, fourpost and other beds, bedding and furniture, looking glasses, drawers etc.

Husbandry. 2 cows, 1 heifer, 2 carthorses, part of a mow of wheat, rick of hay, chaff machine and implements of Husbandry.

Stock in Trade. Bricks, slate for flooring, rag slate, common slate, laths, several tons of coal, lime, limestone etc.

Red, yellow and spruce pine, birch, American and English oak, large quantity of planks, slabs, purlins, rafters, beams, etc. Old and new iron, 2 porters barrows, 2 iron lime barrows, 4 wood barrows, 2 beams, 3 stands with scales and weights etc.

Property I. Quay and railroads connected therewith lime kiln with inclined plane, rails, whim and chain with storehouse adjoining.

II. Plot of ground with counting house.

III. Schooner 'Merton' rebuilt 1847, register 80 tons with masts, rigging etc.

IV. Three quarter share in Brigantine 'George' register 114 tons with masts rigging etc.

V. Lighter 'Stoddart' burden 60 to 70 tons with all appurtenances.

VI. Boat 'Alfred' burden about 5 tons.

This man emigrated to Australia in 1849 and his family followed in 1853, at which time Lanhydrock allowed the wife a rebate of half the rent then owing.

A later unreserved sale of a Mine Agent lists mahogany furniture in all the main rooms, carpets and rugs, double sets of china dinner and tea services and sets of glasses, a large quantity of linen, copper kitchen utensils and a library of 250 volumes; also a bay mare, a cob, four wheeled gig, saddles etc.

The incidents in the everyday life and the entertainments of this busy little port will provide a separate chapter.

