

St. Ives Old Cornwall Society 2018 Summer Pilgrimage

Ever since the St. Ives Old Cornwall Society was founded in 1920, there has been an interest in other areas of this County. Little wonder then that a few short years after the Society came into being, visits termed as “Society Pilgrimages” to such places commenced. Other Societies in Towns and Villages were started and as our motto is ‘Gather ye the fragments that are left, that nothing be lost’ these groups also incorporated visits in their yearly programmes of meetings and events.

These attracted many members in participating to attend on a somewhat regular basis. Some summers pilgrimages were made three or four times as members desired to learn more of Cornwall and the Heritage that is on the doorstep of each Society. Come the 1950s through to the 1980s a Mrs Hosking, formerly Miss Geen, a well respected St. Ives Stennack Junior School Teacher, having then married and retired from her teaching occupation, undertook to organise the pilgrimages for our Society. Adverts were placed in the town’s newspaper giving booking details and ending on many with the words ‘bring your own lunch’.

In more recent years Pilgrimages have been on the decline, for whereas in former days a Charabanc was hired, the cost today has made this somewhat expensive. However, this year 2018 it was proposed, if those car owners were prepared to fill their empty seats with other interested members, an attempt would be made to revive the tradition of gleaning from Cornwall’s history and beauty.

A suggestion was forthcoming and the decision was duly made that the day should consist of a visit to the Area of St. Agnes. So on a beautiful June day six full cars made their way to our first location. This was at the Blue Hills Tin Works where we were met and greeted by Mr Wills its owner. After a most thorough description by him of the origins of this tin processing works, we than made our way around the site literally stepping back in time as all the working machinery are from the period when mining was the foremost occupation in our County. A little culvert of water provides the power for the entire procedure by an overshot water wheel. This being from the tin ore being crushed and then stamped until it is fine sands. Further operations enable the separation by water of the tin from worthless sands and sludge. Those mechanical aids and tools, made especially for this industry over the past, reveal to us the ingenuity of the pioneering Cornish who made their name so well known throughout this world.

The tin concentrate is also refined there on this site, and from the resulting sparkling white tin, objects are made that attract visitor’s eyes which subsequently results in purchases being made. All in all a very worthwhile time spent and our realising that in bygone centuries the Cornish Tinner and Miner endured much hardship in winning the Tin from the solid rock. The genius too of the machinery and tools that they made bear witness to their ingenuity to contrive the dialect saying that ‘if you do not scheme then you will have to louser’ meaning, ‘a bit of thought will make hard work somewhat easier’.



Bidding farewell to Blue Hills Tin Works we wended our way back to the Village of St. Agnes where we partook of refreshments in several of the tea rooms which cater so well for 'visitors' such as ourselves and the many others travellers who find this attractive village being so quaint and well kept.

The next visit on our day of discovery was to the St. Agnes Museum. There we were welcomed by Roger Radcliff and Liz Thompson, both such energetic volunteers of this unique museum. The building a former Cemetery Church and Chapel, was indeed a source of great interest, as the displays and exhibits truly depicted the areas past in much detail.

Its mining legacy was much emphasised, when the adjoin Trevaunance Cove had its own protective Piers resulting in a Harbour which catered for the huge seagoing traffic in transporting mineral ores and importing timber and coal all principally for its numerous local mines. Seine net fishing, farming, local dignitaries etc., etc, literally filling the two floors of the Museum. When the time to depart was come thanks were expressed to those who had made the Museum and attraction a mine of knowledge to 'one and all' of our group. It was then time to depart and journey to our abodes, but singing the praises of those of mines and artefacts who had made that day such a one to fulfil our Societies motto yet again.

'Gather ye the fragments that are left, that nothing be lost'

Brian Stevens, Chairman