

Some two miles up the coast TREGARDOCK MINE (O.S.14 S.W.) was developed on a more ambitious scale. The lode here was referred to by William Carnsewe (circa 1580) when in his position as Cornish adviser to the Company of Mines Royal he proposed a scheme for working it. "If Mr. Mohun [the mineral lord] would give me leave to show my skill I would make such a conveyance of water as to carry away all the loose ground and rubble in that cliff and make the lode easy to be wrought which, if it be effectually done, would surely yield a great mass of ores". This method of laying bare a lode by impounding water and then suddenly releasing it down a slope was known as "hushing" in Derbyshire where it was once very general. "In this attempt I would employ about £20 and no more but it must be practised in the beginning of winter that the floods may be taken over when they come".

Elsewhere Carnsewe wrote to a correspondent who had obtained samples of the lode - "touching Tregardock you have seen the place yourself and the ores, whereby you know what it is. Burchard [Kranich] did often tell me that it was one of the likeliest Places that he ever saw and I can show you ore in the rock there that beareth 5 oz. [of silver] in the 100 of ore. In the lode from the cliff it is almost a mile in length to the hill head wherein the vein goeth and may he followed and unwatered all along the same. But this cannot be done without more changes than Mr Weston [an official of the Mines Royal] will bestow. But in my opinion this is tile very best and very richest vein in all Cornwall and not so difficult to be brought to work as it may seem if skilful and diligent men had the governance of the matter". That some work was in fact done here at this time appears from a later remark by Carnsewe that the lode was not more than three foot broad over" and that "homo mortuus ibi" - words suggesting that the trials were attended with fatal consequences to some long-forgotten miner (Carnsewe Memoranda on Mines (Cornwall Records Office, transcribed by H.L. Douch).

According to tradition, Tregardock returned large quantities of lead in the time of Queen Anne but beyond this little is known of its subsequent history until the middle of the last century. In 1851 when working was renewed, a shallow and a deep adit were found to have been driven on the lode "by a former company" who had also sunk a shaft on to the deep adit. The dump was composed of spar, spotted with lead, whilst tile lode itself, then visible on the beach. showed good stones of ore on its hack. With a view to exploring this beneath the sea, a new shaft was started part way down the cliff. Sinking, however, was slow owing to the wetness of the season (February), and there being at that time only a windlass and small water barrels for baling the water. "The men" wrote the captain "have been taking down a part of the cliff for a whim and they will have to cut a road winding round the cliff for the horses to come to the whim." Soon after, a 30 in. cylinder steam engine was erected and the shaft was sunk to 30 fathoms below sea level. For some time very favourable reports were issued as to the developments at this horizon, but at length an officer of the Duchy called to enquire where the ore was coming from, pointing out that the Duke of Cornwall claimed royalty on all mineral taken from below high-water mark. On his requesting leave to inspect the underground workings, this was refused; and immediately afterwards the pumps were withdrawn and the engine sold. (101)

Operations were resumed in March 1857 but merely by extending the deep adit eastward from the foot of the cliff. By 1860 this had reached a length of 270 fathoms, and was connected to surface at 200 fathoms from its mouth by a whim shaft 50 fathoms deep. The lode in the end was then poor but a crosscut was being driven south towards another lode which had been seen in the cliffs. (102) Soon after this the mine was again abandoned.

In 1868 a further attempt was made to cross-cut to the South lode from the adit. The management, however, was entrusted to a man who had "passed the Zenith of his day" and who, according to varying accounts, had either lost his miner's dial or had never learnt to use it! The consequence was that after driving for eighteen months the level holed out to the cliff, having in all that time been driven at 45 degrees off course. (103)

For the years 1853-60 the recorded output of Tregardock amounted to 60 tons of 50 per cent. lead ore and 690 ounces of silver; (104) whilst some copper is also believed to have been sold. A number of features of this interesting Old mine can still be seen today at Minehousedoor Cove where "the winding road around the cliff", the base of the engine-house and a shaft with its whim-plat adjoining, recall the activity of a century ago. In 1957 the writer descended by a rusting chain to the beach where the lode was well displayed in tile cliff, penetrated at its foot by the old men's adit. Inside the latter was a flap-door which had served to prevent the ingress of the sea at exceptionally high tides. Since that time an extensive cliff-fall has taken place, completely filling the narrow zawn and obliterating all traces of the adit which will probably never be seen again.

(101) Mining Journal, 8 and 29 March 1851, 12 August 1854. Tregardock has sold 41 tons of lead ore, yielding £659, but is not yet paying cost. J Y Watson Mining Journal 31 December 1853.

(102) Mining Journal, 5 May 1860.

(103) Mining Journal, 4 March 1871

(104) Geolog: Mem.:, Padstow and Camelford