

The Great Flat Lode Trail – Circular Walk from “The Croust Hut Café”

King Edward Mine – The Croust Hut – ex Assay Building for South Condurrow Mine.

Clockwise – turn right at the Stamps Engine House and head up the bridleway to Higher Condurrow.

When you reach the road the large Engine House building to your right is the pumping house for the Great Condurrow Mine (Woolf's shaft, renamed Neam's Shaft after the chairman of Condurrow Mines Ltd., shortly after it reopened in 1906/07), 320 fathoms deep from surface – 80" Cornish Pumping Engine built by Harvey's of Hayle, which came third-hand from Garland's shaft at Gwenap United Mines. The engine had originally been built for Batter's shaft of West Chiverton Mine. Closed again in 1914.

Turn left along the road for a short distance then cross over and take the road off to the right.

Follow this for a little way until you come to a Carn Entral road sign and follow the bridleway up to the right. Across to your right on the horizon you will see Carn Brea Hill with its monument and Four Lanes TV mast.

Follow the bridleway for almost half a mile past a series of fields, the track will rise then fall steeply to a road junction at Brea Addit (or Betty Addit). Cross the road taking the road junction towards Carn Arthen.

Just across the road on the left are some steps and handrail down to the old addit, now blocked up. This is believed to be associated with some of the first mining operations of South Condurrow mine. Cross the bridge over Red River and shortly bear left following the side of the valley and above the village of Brea.

The road is made up as far as the large house on the right, on reaching the first street light and looking towards your left, old tin stream workings can be seen down towards the road you crossed earlier; the round concrete structures are called “buddles” used to separate tin from the sand that would settle out of the river. Brea tin-streaming works

The track continues on until you reach the road from Brea village to Pool, cross over the road.

Follow the track towards two Engine Houses in the distance. On your right is a dried-out leat which once supplied water to Old Cook's Kitchen and South Crofty (this leat carried water from Bolenowe Moor and was one of the main supplies to the waterwheels on Old Cook's Kitchen, as well as later providing engine condensing water and wash water for South Crofty mill) Heading towards the two engine houses will reach a foot bridge across the railway track. On the right of the railway bridge you will see a metal launder – this is a replacement of a much more substantial wrought iron one carrying the leat-water.

For the Great Flat Lode walk you don't cross the rail bridge but turn right and continue on the track under power cables and passing a disused shaft; note granite plaque “Rogers Shaft – Cooks Kitchen Mine – Capped September 2005”.

Diversion – Chappel’s Shaft - The two Engine Houses were part of the Old Cooks Kitchen sett of South Crofty Mine, the Engine House with a separate chimney stack is Chapple Shaft’s Engine House (c1838 – 50” pumping engine later (1872) recylindereed to 55”) (renovated in April 2013) note the use of timber lintels over the window openings, and the other is the Whim Engine House for Chapple’s shaft (c1860 - 26”beam whim) note tie-rod end caps made of old boiler plate and chimney has the brick capping in place, these can be closer inspected by crossing the bridge. (Metal Launder on right hand side of bridge).

The track comes back out onto the road, turn left and follow the road for 100 meters or so then turn off left again following the track parallel to the railway line that leads pass South Tincroft Man-Engine Whim House, a 26” double acting beam engine, constructed 1860’s and worked to 1894.

A little further on is South Tincroft’s Compressor House, likely to date from around 1887. Formally housed a horizontal compressor and engine that were mounted on impressive series of well-cut pairs of granite slabs set either side of a central pit.

Where the tracks comes out onto the road, cross over and those on foot can turn left while overs (cyclist, horseback) need to turn right. Pedestrians who turn left can follow the road around right and cross over a foot bridge that was part of the old Carn Brea Railway Station, in the station yard are information boards about the mineral tramway lines. While crossing the footbridge look right for a slight kink in the rail lines. This was created when the track was doubled in 1897; to keep clear of a shaft.

Cyclist etc. who turn right should follow the Four Lanes road around to the left until you come to the road junction for Tregajorran. On the immediate left is the road up to the old Carn Brea Station, so those taking the pedestrian route will re-join. Follow the Great Flat Lode route towards Tregajorran.

Follow the road for about 200 meters and then bear right passing a house called “Tregray House” and carry on going up through the village until the noticeboard for “Carn Brea Parish Council, here bear left leaving the road to follow the bridleway around the north side of Carn Brea.

After a short while you will see on your left the remains of Carn Brea Mine Stamps Engine House – most noticeable by the stepped (telescope) chimney stack; next is the stamps Engine House, known to be working in 1837 with a 32” diameter single-acting cylinder engine and still working in 1913. There is also a capped shaft marker for Teague’s Shaft, indicating that it was plugged by Cornwall County Council in January 1994.

Carn Brea Castle and Monument can be seen on the right. This hill top was occupied from Neolithic times. The first stacks of rocks are natural having been eroded by wind and weather.

Basset Monument (Built \pm 1836)

At the highest point of the hill is a 90-foot high (27m) Celtic cross erected as a monument to Francis Basset, 1st Baron de Dunstanville and Basset (1757–1835). Basset, a mine owner, gained his titles for erecting earthworks to defend Plymouth from combined French and Spanish fleets in 1779, and suppressing a miners' "food riot" in 1785. Along with others, he petitioned the House of Lords against slavery in 1828. The monument was erected by public subscription in 1836. It is inscribed "The County of Cornwall to the memory of Francis Lord de Dunstanville and Basset A.D. 1836.

Carn Brea Castle

Carn Brea Castle stands near the top of the hill. It is built on the site of a chapel built in 1379 probably dedicated to St Michael. It was built in the 18th century by the Basset family as a hunting lodge. It is considered to be a folly built on the huge uncut boulders that make up part of its foundations, giving the impression of the building melting into the land

Follow the paved bridleway until you meet some large stones on either side of the path with a track going off to the right, follow this track that continues around the base of Carn Brea.

Diversion – following the asphalt bridle way takes you down into Carn Brea village crossing over a stream and to St Uny Church and graveyard. Just off the road to the right where you cross the stream there is the Holy Well of St Euny, marked with a plaque. Baptism with water from this holy well was believed to safeguard against hanging. Shortly after the church you can re-join the Great Flat Lode Trail off to the left.

The Great Flat Lode Trail is now a small track following around the east side of Carn Brea to Church Coombe, passing over a small stream that comes from a disused quarry (this quarry supplied rock for the Redruth railway viaduct replacing a wooden structure, it is understood a tramway was built to carry the rock down to the site. The quarry operated between 1884 and 1888 when the viaduct was opened) the path inclines with the Four Lane TV mast on the horizon. Passing a footpath on the left that will lead back down the valley to Carn Brea Village, on the hill opposite can be seen the engine houses of Wheal Uny. The track goes down past some cottages and widens to a motor track that soon turns left to the main Church Coombe road.

On reaching the road turn left back along road towards Church Town and Carn Brea Village for approximately 500 meters under power lines to a track leading off to the right, just before the Church Town village sign. The valley area on the left of the road is would have been active in the late 1800s with tin streaming works fed from the Church Coombe Adit. In more recent time the water from the adit water was pumped around the bottom of Carn Brea to a sheepskin tannery on Pool Industrial Estate, the sloping roof pump house can still be seen.

From the Mining Trails noticeboard the track (bridleway) rises pass two fenced off shafts and bears right towards flat ground at an old walled shaft. On the east side of the shaft is a granite plaque indicating “Un-Named Shaft, Wheal Uny - Plugged Aug 1991 by Kerrier District Council”.

Mining Diversion - up towards Engine Houses for Wheal Uny Mine.

1 - Wheal Uny Hind's Shaft Pumping Engine House – Mineral Tramways plaque indicating the engine house was built 1869-70, and housed a 70-inch cylinder beam engine for pumping water from Hind's Shaft, the engine brought from Tywarnhale Mine, Porthtowan, and the Wheal Uny Mine closed 1892. Chimney stack has no drip ring.

2 - Wheal Uny Whim (Winding) Engine House for Hind's Shaft (complex brick drip ring collar on the chimney stack below brickwork) – Mineral Tramway plaque indicating the engine house was built in 1880 and housed a 26-inch cylinder rotative beam engine that drove a winding drum for raising ore. Set 90deg to Hind's shaft.

Follow the path down to re-join the Great Flat Lode Trail.

Follow bridleway on the flat the two Wheal Uny Engine Houses can be seen up on the left. After a short distance the first of two boundary stones will be seen on the left with a large letter "B" carved into the granite. On reaching the fields to the right, the track down from the engine houses re-joins on the left, and a marker for an unnamed Wheal Uny shaft can be seen just over the field fence. Continue along the bridleway to the road, passing the second boundary stones again with a letter "B" set into the hedge on your left – then go straight across the road to Copper Lane. 'B' for Basset or Buller?

Up the hill a short distance and turn right and follow the bridleway between fields associated with the riding school, on the right across the field is the sight of the old Seleggan Smelting Works with the remains of twin chimneys. Set up in 1887 on the East Wheal Basset dressing floors by the Cornish Tin Smelting Company, the works closed in 1931.

The track bears right (Wheal Buller area)

Remains of industrial buildings across the valley on the right is Wheal Basset

On the high ground to the left is Redruth (Four Lanes) TV transmitter mast.

On reaching the East Wheal Basset sett the first building remains to the right is that of a chimney and 16' Brunton type calciner installed in 1897 (designed by Nicolas Trestrail as the Oxland and Hocking calciner was giving trouble), followed by the Wheal Basset 'New' Stamps Engine House (double 30" + 30") positioned above the Flue Vanner House. The double engine house in which two stamping engines were installed working the same crank (the house was built in 1868, when the first engine was installed; the second engine was not installed until 1882; this set-up eventually powered a total of 96 heads of stamps) is one of the more curious features of the central mining district, and dominates the north-facing hillslopes facing Carnkie, adjacent to a former branch of the Basset Tramway.

The detached engine house chimney stack is set off to the left of the trail (tramway).

Down to the right opposite a polished granite seat in memory of John Barns is a pathway to inspect the Flue Vanner House.

Note this site is a marvellous viewpoint for many of the mining landmarks of the area.

On the right across the valley is Carnkie village and the mine buildings of West Basset Stamps on North Wheal Basset Sett plus the Lyle's shaft pumping engine house and whim. To the east is the bob wall of Thomas' 60" pumping engine house.

Back on the trail follow the upslope on what looks like a cobble-stone road (old tramway) pass a shaft marker "Un-named Shaft – East Basset Stamps" and a walled shaft following the bridleway with the power lines.

Cross a small private road and after passing two fenced shafts take the right footpath.

Continue on past two walled Wheal Basset shafts "Carnkie and Samson's Shaft" on the right and following the Basset Mines Tramway through tunnel under Loscombe Road towards the remains of South Wheal Frances. This tunnel was cleared and refurbished in 1997.

South Wheal Frances (Frances, Baroness Basset of Stratton, was the wife of the first Lord de Dunstanville) Marriott's Shaft Engine House is roughly central to the complex of mining buildings. The area is well worth exploring with the compressor house, ore bin, winder house and miner's dry.

Here in 1857 wire rope was first used in Cornwall replacing hemp rope and chains.

(South Wheal Frances, West Wheal Frances and Great Wheal Frances)

Back on the trail continue down to the right pass the miners' dry and change house with the next engine house on the right being 80" Pumping Engine House on Pascoe's Shaft built approximately 1887, engine broke in 1916 and eventually closed in 1918 after repair. Note unusual slit windows, in the belief that extra strength was gained. Also, the nicely proportioned stack with complex drip and capping courses.

This is shortly followed by Pascoe's winding (whim/capstan) engine house built 1879 – 30" (36"?) double-acting cylinder engine, the boiler house contained two Cornish boilers. A rather straight sided chimney stack with again interesting drip and capping brickwork.

Join the road heading down into Treskillard village following the signs through the village to the Shire Horse Farm and Carriage Museum.

Taking the path to the right of Shire Horse Farm the Daubuz Engine House (named after J.C. Daubuz, a principle shareholder and head of the tin smelting family) with its exceptionally massive truncated stack will be on your right, all the brick capping has disappeared. This is the western end of South Wheal Frances. Built in 1879 the engine house held a 30" engine for pumping and also a flat-rods for pumping a distance shaft. Note decorative protruding outer course of bricks to all window arches.

In the field on the right is Smith's (Baily's?) Engine House (c1880), lower openings blocked-up. Served Smith's Shaft of West Wheal Frances, it held a 24" engine for winding and stamps which closed in 1896. The house has the lower openings infilled, used as a reservoir? To the north east is a second building the site of a Holman's horizontal pumping engine.

Crossing over the stream (Red River) in two locations to the Bolenowe road, then turn left and follow uphill.

Mining Diversion – at the road turn right to visit the Fortescue's engine house.

Follow the road to a metal gate and stile on your left close to the engine houses, this takes you in to explore the engine houses and following this track a little way and another footpath is signposted across the field to return to the Great Flat Lode Trail.

Wheal Grenville Fortescue's Shaft Winding Engine House is the first building, built 1892, and housed a 28" cylinder rotative beam engine. Wheal Grenville closed in 1920. The beam and engine from this house were removed to South Crofty (New Cook's Kitchen Shaft) in 1922.

Followed by Wheal Grenville Fortescue's Shaft Pumping Engine House, also built in 1892 and housed a 90" cylinder beam engine, made by Harvey & Co of Hayle.

At the point where the asphalt road turns left the Great Flat Lode track carries straight on to Wheal Grenville Stamps Engine house. At this point on the right across the field are Wheal Grenville Fortescue's Shaft Engine Houses and the footpath where the above diversion comes back to the trail.

In this field you will see two (unnamed) shaft markers – capped 1992 and 1993. These mark the site of East Wheal Grenville Old Engine Shaft, the most southerly marker was the shaft for pumping and the other was the whim shaft.

At the top of the slope is Grenville New Stamps (c1900) – on the path side (rear of the building) lies a large depression that was the boiler house which housed two Cornish boilers. The original plan for this dressing floor was two rockbreakers and 112 heads of stamps, but in the event the stamps were increased to 136. They were power by a third-hand 36” beam engine bought from West Condurrow mine (alias South Tolcarne).

On the slope below the engine house is a long concrete wall that was once part of a Frue Vanner House, currently all very overgrown with brambles.

Approximately 100 meters pass the Wheal Grenville (New) Stamps Engine House take the track down to the right.

The mine chimney immediately on right, belonged to a calciner.

Follow the path down to the road, cross the road to follow the trail back to King Edward Mine. Crossing the road you will notice on your left the sad ruins of what was until recently an impressive engine house at Goold’s shaft of Wheal Grenville. R. Goold was chairman of the mines management committee for many years. Built in 1877-78 for a new 80” pumping engine on what was previously known as North Shaft. In 1906 the beam broke and a new one (38 tons) was cast by Holman Bros.; the engine was scrapped in 1928.

Follow the bridleway up to the stamps engine house built in 1869 and back to the Croust Hut.

Graham Sowell (2017)

With help from numerous references re: dates and enginehouse detail.