

The
Luxulyan Valley

In the Autumn of 1992, ownership of the Luxulyan Valley passed as a gift from English China Clays International Ltd. (now Imerys) to Cornwall County Council and Restormel Borough Council, ensuring its future preservation as one of Cornwall's finest historic landscapes.

Since then the management has been in the hands of a Steering Group consisting of representatives from Restormel Borough Council, Cornwall County Council and The Friends of Luxulyan Valley. Early in 2001 the management structure was expanded to include other interested parties.

The Friends of Luxulyan Valley was formed in 1996 to enable like-minded individuals to be involved in the preservation and protection of the valley, to influence and assist in the management and to promote education in the history, natural history and other aspects of the valley for all interested parties.

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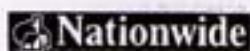
The Friends of Luxulyan Valley wish to thank John Smith of Cornwall Archaeological Unit for his encouragement and co-operation in allowing us to revise material from his 1992 publication 'Walking the Tramway Trail' and to Liz Luck for her work on the revised text.

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Grateful thanks are also due to



Local Heritage initiative



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Introduction

In the Autumn of 1992, ownership of a large part of the Luxulyan Valley passed as a gift from English China Clays International to the joint management of Cornwall County Council and Restormel Borough Council, ensuring its future preservation as one of Cornwall's finest historic landscapes.

This booklet is an introduction to the valley's remarkable history and industrial remains, as well as its interesting natural features. A brief guide such as this cannot aim to be comprehensive, and for those who wish to delve deeper there are two excellent publications - the Cornwall Archaeological Unit's *The Luxulyan Valley* and *Ecological Survey* of the valley - which provide full and detailed information.

While this book concentrates on the Valley's industrial heritage, it is worth remembering that the woodland is an important ecological resource and is home to a healthy population of birds, animals and insects. Any woodland management reflects this and generally consists of controlling the spread of undesirable, invasive plants such as rhododendron, laurel and in some areas, sycamore.

Where trees are felled, it is normally to encourage coppice regrowth of oak, hazel and willow, to improve age diversity within the woodland by planting new (native) trees or in the interests of safety.

Two suggested routes through the valley are described on the following pages, and together they take you past most of its important historic features. However, using the map on centre pages, or the Ordnance Survey Explorer map no. 107 any number of different walks can be devised.

You are advised to start from the small Black Hill car park just north of the Treffry Viaduct, and both walks are described from this starting-point, but they can be adapted to the alternative car park at Pons Mill. There is little provision for parking elsewhere. Please also note that vehicles larger than a mini bus cannot negotiate the very narrow approach lanes to either end of the valley.

The paths and tracks within the valley are well defined, but some have uneven surfaces and in winter all are likely to be muddy; suitable footwear is thus essential. Young children should be supervised at all times; being an area that was once intensely industrialised, inevitably there are potential hazards such as water leats, old machinery and sudden drops. However, the valley is ideal for school study groups, encompassing as it does many aspects of local history, industrial archaeology and natural sciences.

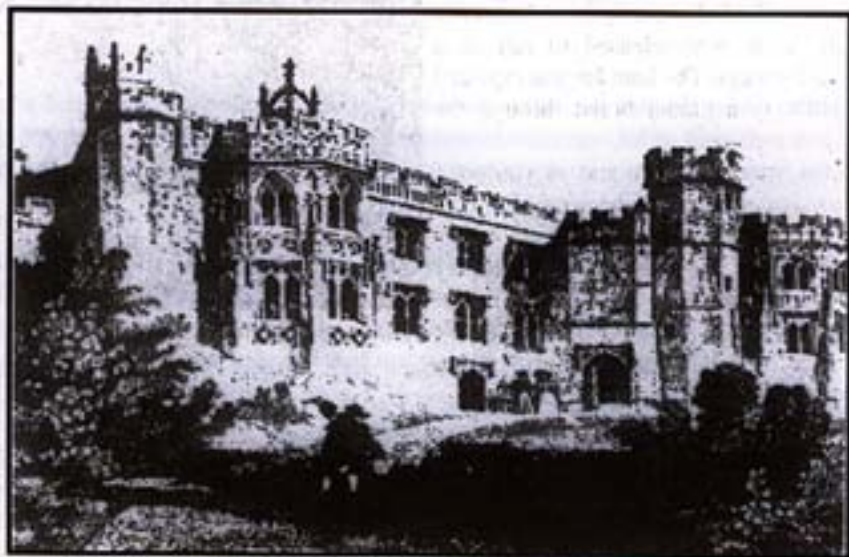
We ask that school parties or other organised groups contact Restormel's Countryside and Landscape Officer, sometime in advance of their visit (Tel: 01726 223300).

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The extraordinary concentration of industrial remains found in the beautiful setting of the Luxulyan Valley is the testament to one remarkable man's energy, imagination and enterprise. Joseph Thomas Austen (he later changed his surname to his mother's maiden name of Treffry) was born in 1782, heir to the great house of Place in Fowey and an ancient but somewhat impoverished estate. The story of how he transformed much of his part of Cornwall, and his own fortunes, is told in detail in *The King of Mid-Cornwall* by John Keast (published by Dyllansow Truran in 1982).



Treffry's interest in the Luxulyan valley began with the need to find a nearby outlet for the copper ore from his rich Fowey Consols Mine on Penpillick Hill. This led him to build Par Harbour and link it by canal to the inclined plane running down Penpillick Hill to just below Pons Mill. He built his first leat through the valley in the 1820's to carry water to the mine, and, realising the potential of this snaking corridor that could link quarries, mines and clay-pits to his new harbour, began the development of a complex interdependent system of tramways and leats which culminated in the magnificent construction of the Treffry Viaduct.



Following Treffry's death in 1850, the valley saw more changes and developments, particularly in association with the clay industry, granite quarrying and new railways and tramways - so that what we see today is layer upon layer of Cornwall's industrial history preserved in this wooded valley for all to discover.

The Walks

Both walks are described from the Black hill car park, (Grid ref: 058572).

ROUTE 1:

Leave the car park between the two standing stones, and up the steps onto the leat path. Turn right to walk alongside the leat.

The Fowey Consols Leat was the first significant engineering work undertaken in the valley by Joseph Thomas Treffry. It was built in the 1820's to carry water from nearby Gatty's Bridge to his extensive Fowey Consols copper mine on Penpillick Hill, some three miles to the south-east. There the water was used to provide power on the surface of the mine.

The leat was constructed to a very high standard, its inner banks faced with stone in many places, and is still capable of carrying a large volume of water at high speed; a system of sluice gates controls its flow. For more than a century, part of its course featured an amazing wooden aqueduct which carried the water around the front of the precipitous Carmears Rocks; the water was released to run as a waterfall on Sundays. The launder was replaced in the 1940's by a tunnel bored through the rock.

Watercourses attract wildlife and as you walk you may catch a glimpse of a brown trout in the leat, or a handsome dipper flitting above its surface. The woodland to your left is largely beech; that to the right is rather more mixed planting which dates from the late nineteenth century and contains ornamental conifers and shrubs such as rhododendron and Portugal laurel.



Do not cross the timber bridge, but continue along the leat path which passes underneath the Treffry Viaduct.

The Treffry Viaduct. Now a Scheduled Monument and owned by the Cornwall Heritage Trust, this noble edifice was the first large civil engineering structure of its type in Cornwall. It was the brainchild of Joseph Thomas Treffry, although much credit for its design and construction is due to his steward William Pease, and to the local masons who built it between 1839 and 1842. The quality of stonework is still immediately apparent today. The Treffry Coat of Arms adorns its northern side, above the central pier.

After crossing another bridge over the leat and a walk of ten minutes or so, the track reaches the top of the wheelpit and the head of the Carmears Incline.

Your first indication of what is ahead may come from the sound of a waterfall (providing there is a good flow of water in the leat), because this is where the water in the Carmears Leat cascades into the wheelpit and joins the lower Fowey Consols Leat. For a full description of this fascinating site, see page 5.



Please note that, despite recent works to improve public safety, the wheelpit area is still full of potential hazards. Children should be supervised **AT ALL TIMES**.

Having explored the wheelpit and its surroundings, return to the top of the wheelpit, continue in the same direction as before and follow the Carmears Incline down to the floor of the valley.

For a description of the operation of the incline, see page 7.

All the way down the long steep incline - through deep cutting and along high embankment - you will see the parallel lines of granite setts which supported the tramrails, reminders of what an extraordinary undertaking this was. When it was completed in 1841, Treffry was enormously proud of his new inclined plane, declaring: "The highest Plane, I believe, in the Kingdom is my Plane by the side of and partly through the Carmears Rocks".

You pass the massive, craggy Carmears Rocks, which posed such an engineering challenge to the builders of leats and tramways, part-way down the incline on your left, and walk under the bridge carrying the Velvet Path.

