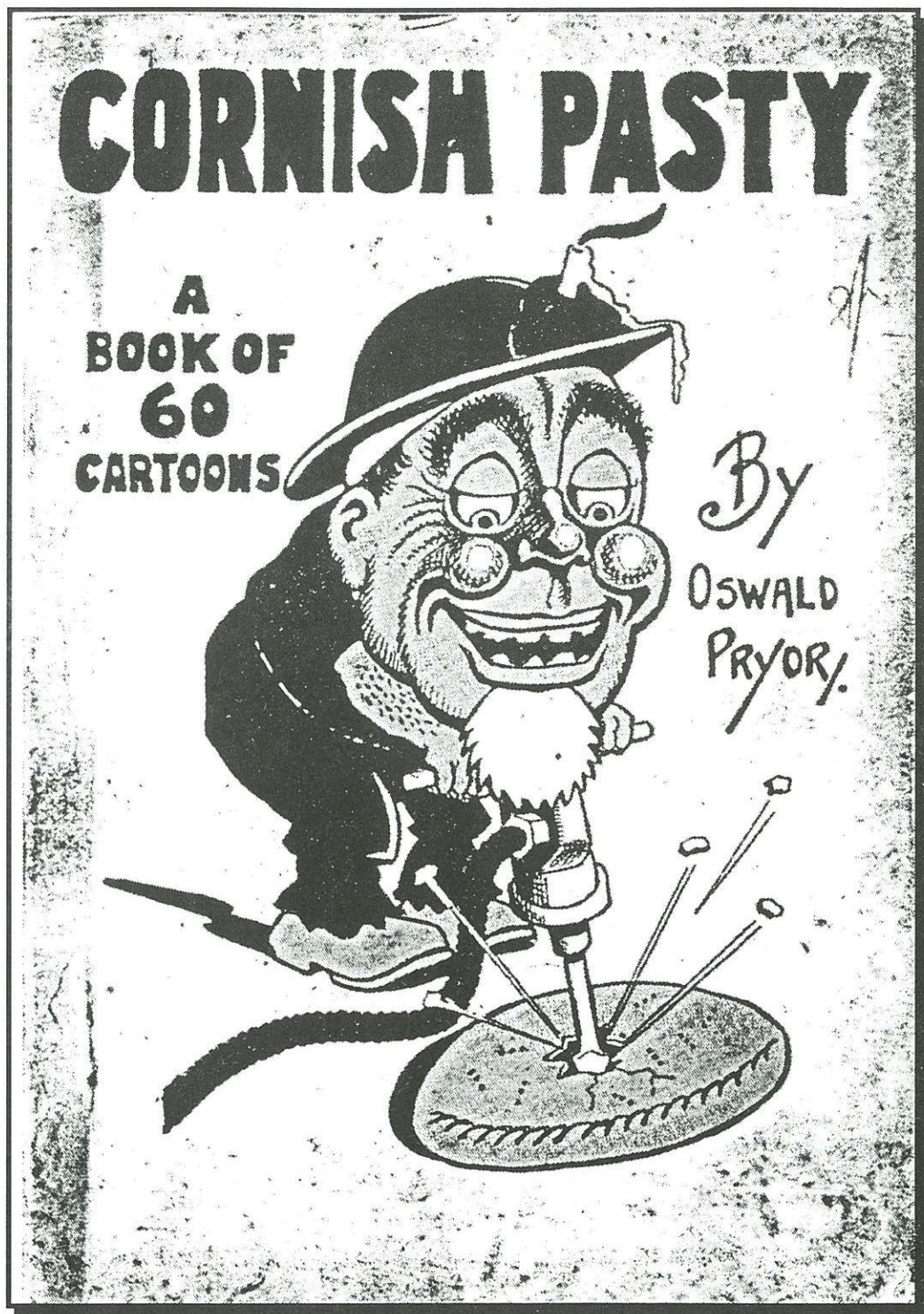


Food for Thought

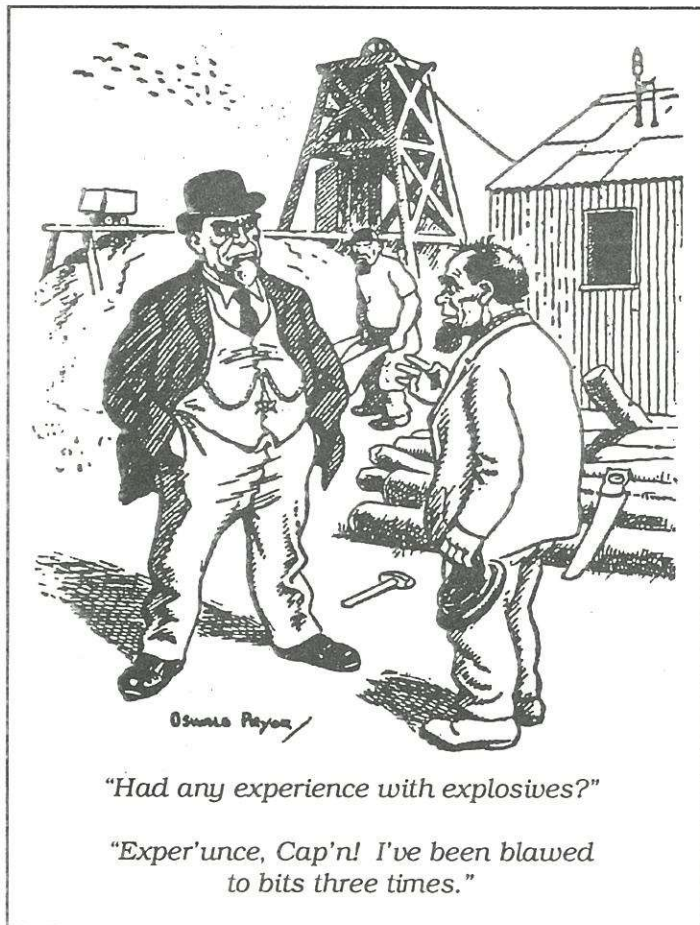
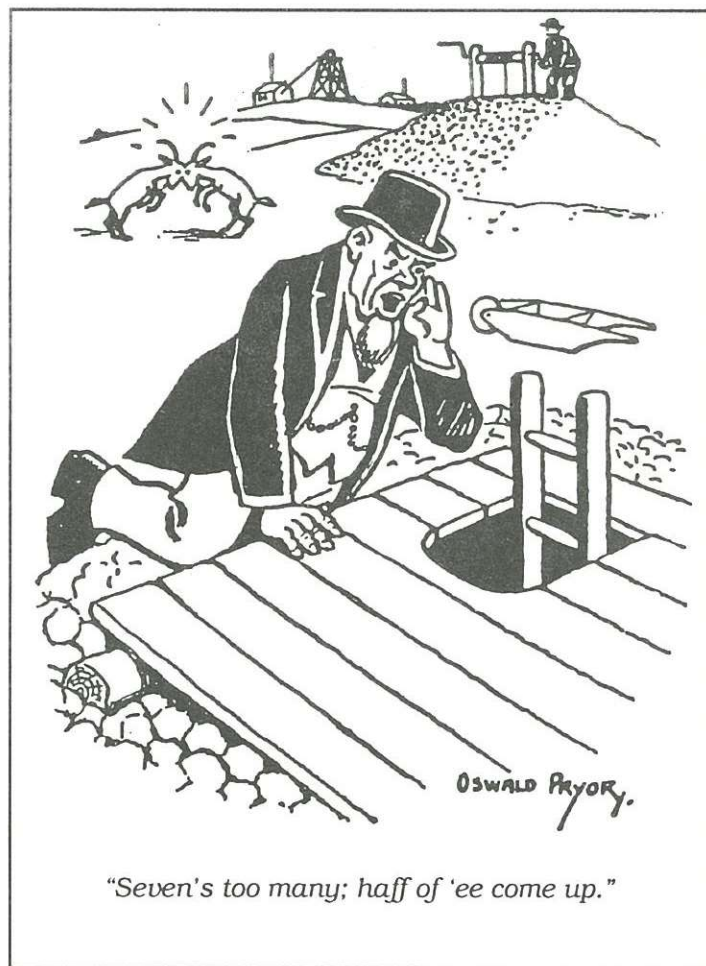
by Steve Roberts

Early in 1999, the wires of 'MiningCollect' were buzzing with information on the subject of the Cornish Pasty, a combination of meat and vegetables completely encased in a protective (but edible) crust of pastry. Having exhausted all angles of pasty construction and contents, discussions moved on to the more usual matters, but I was prompted to remember the book with the name 'Cornish Pasty' by Oswald Pryor. Collectors of mining books may not be too familiar with 'Cornish Pasty' but are more likely to have encountered the author's other work: 'Australia's Little Cornwall' This dealt with the rise and fall of the Moonta mines, and with the 'Cousin Jacks', as Cornish miners were known when anywhere other than in their home county.



Cover of the book 'Cornish Pasty' showing a 'Cousin Jack' with typical beard and candle in a lump of clay drilling into a pasty!

Oswald Pryor was born at Moonta Mines, South Australia. He began work in the mines when just thirteen and was Surface Manager by 1911, holding the position until the company folded in 1923. With his intimate understanding of both Cornish humour and mining humour, Pryor began drawing cartoons that were published in the Sydney 'Bulletin'. In 1950, sixty cartoons were published by the artist in the form of a book. These were guaranteed to strike a chord with Cornishmen the world over. Both of my copies of 'Cornish Pasty' were printed in Australia. I don't know if they were sold in England, but both contain hand-written messages as if they were being sent from Oz to the folks back home in Cornwall.



The cartoons contain many subtle observations, and those of us who have known Cornish miners recognise them instantly in Pryor's caricatures - the small beard on the chin, trousers with large patches that are too small and won't do up properly, the gold Alberts (watch chains) of the officials and the candle stuck to the hat by a lump of clay. The backgrounds contain a wealth of detail - old boilers, pumping engines, piles of timber, headframes, ore trucks, horse whims and winches. Many cartoons depict goats that are usually up to no good. Goats were farmed as a valuable source of meat, milk and fur, but the creatures were so successful that they became a nuisance and got everywhere!

'Australia's Little Cornwall' was published in 1962. It was illustrated with photographs and, of course, the odd cartoon. Both books are quite rare in the UK, which is probably a good job, as Oswald Pryor says in the introduction to 'Cornish Pasty': "Carroters in this book are intended to bear close resemblance to livin' pursons"



"Can't understand 'ow I got the sack, boay, I burnt twice s'much coal as they other stokers."



"Beats me 'ow they all knawed I coomed from Moonta."

Mine, all Mine!

by Steve Roberts

Well, perhaps this should really be called "His, all his!!" The story relates to a friend who lives about half a mile away and who, by several twists of fate, came to be a mine owner.

Picture a photojournalist who, as is typical of the breed, always manages to find a ten foot snake or two and a brush with death to spice up even the most mundane story. This man, one Ian Robinson, had returned from a spell in the US, living out a of a VW camper van. Whilst on a visit home to his native Devon, England, he decided to track down his father, who he had not seen since the family split up some forty years earlier.

After many disappointments and wasted journeys, he was about to give up and re-join Uncle Sam when a chance tip-off led him to a large house at Horrabridge. The house was virtually derelict, but he found his father living in a large caravan (sorry - trailer) in the grounds. Sadly, there was little time to catch up with the lost years, as Ian's father died, leaving him no longer with just a VW 5,000 miles away, but now with a massive eight-bedroom house that was uninhabitable and nine acres of grounds that contained many curious bumps and holes. Resisting the temptation to cash in his inheritance and return to the States with all-new camera kit, Ian set about raising the money to restore the house. In the course of the surveys required before anyone in the UK will lend a penny on a property, it transpired that the house was originally two houses (it still has two front doors) and that the pair were built for the Captain and Manager of the fledgling Sortridge Copper Mine in 1853.

Old maps showed the locations of long-gone buildings and explained other features - not