

'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



*"Pasties are a Saturday lunchtime tradition at The Old Mine House. As usual, Ian (left) insists it's not his turn to buy them, but Steve is wise to this old trick! The picks should help to sort things out!"*

least two depressions that turned out to be choked shafts several hundred feet deep. Ian had often scratched around in these to find old stone bottles in amongst the trash that had been tipped in them after the mine's closure when Queen Victoria was still on the throne! Unraveling the history of the place, he found that two or three years of optimism were ill-founded, as the rich copper deposits found five fathoms from surface decreased with depth. By 1868 the mine was abandoned, but three buddles in a field show where efforts were made to recover tin in 1883 and a lone adventurer was later to handpick arsenical pyrites from the tips in the 1920's. Some years later, the Second World War was part of the tips being taken away to build a multinational airfield at Harrowbeer, Yelverton.

Records unearthed showed that the mine suffered two deaths as a result of an inrush of

water. The mine captain was one of the victims, his body being recovered from the river some way away. Much patient searching led Ian to the captain's final resting place in a Tavistock graveyard.

Today the mine reservoir, dressing floors, shafts, and a collapsed adit remain in dense woodland. Ian Robinson has had the house renovated at great expense in the true mining tradition, using other people's money! He is steadily repaying this by accommodating large groups of paying guests who come to enjoy Dartmoor's purple heather and sparkling streams. The house, formerly known by the suburban-sounding "Avondale", has now reverted to its previous name 'The Old Mine House'. Offers are invited for an orange VW rusting away in a MacDonald's parking lot in Boulder, Colorado!