

South Crofty Mine



South Crofty was Europe's last working tin mine, closing in 1998. One of the reasons for closure was a disastrous fall in the world price of tin. The recent extraordinary rises in the price of the metal mean the mine once again could become viable. In fact, the mine became operational again in 2004 when preparatory tunnelling works started. The mine holds resources of a number of metals, including tin, copper, zinc, indium, wolfram and silver.

The former South Crofty mine is an amalgamation of twelve earlier mines worked in the past for tin and copper ore. From the 1860s onwards tin became increasingly important as its price improved; and the higher it rose, the more the mine deepened.

The sinking of two new vertical shafts in the 1900s and a period of extensive crosscutting (a tunnel driven across the long axis of the ore) led to the discovery and development of 12 new lodes within the granite, essentially a new mine on hitherto unknown mineralisation beneath the old workings.

Later extension of the South Crofty Mine west led to the discovery of yet more lodes. However, the prevailing economic climate restricted further expenditure. In 1985, there was a disastrous fall in the price of tin, seriously curtailing the tin mining industry in Cornwall. Following the award of government finance in response to the mining crisis in Cornwall, a massive reorganisation of the mine took place and much of the older section of the mine was abandoned. In the 1990s, the greater part of the original South Crofty mine was also abandoned, and eventually, on 7th March 1998, mining ceased for viability and regulatory reasons (rather than through exhaustion of mineralization and resources).

The assets of the mine were purchased by Baseresult Holdings Limited in 2001 with the aim of resuming mining operations in the Camborne Redruth mining district. The mine is now owned by Western United Mines Limited. [Click here](#) for their South Crofty website and more information on the mine.

Geology

Essentially the surface of the South Crofty and surrounding area is situated on "killas", a series of metasediments, hornfels and skarns, close to the granite contact (which crops out at surface a little to the north of the railway and is aligned ENE). In depth, the granite underlies the entire area but is encountered at increasingly greater depths northwards.

The granite surface slopes NNW at angles of 40 to 50 degrees but has rolls and ridges, rather than being planar. It is thought that these local undulations may have some controlling influence or association with the localisation of mineralization. The Granite is that of the Carn Brea stock, which forms the prominent hills of Carn Brea, Carn Arthen and Carn Entral south of the mine site. A series of "greenstone", typically metadolerite, dykes and metabasite sills crop out to the north. Evidence of skarns, pegmatites, quartz floors and greisenized areas have been disclosed but, to date, none have attained economic significance.

[Click here](#) to download a PDF document detailing the geology of South Crofty Mine.

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Note: The Worshipful Company of Pewterers organised a Company visit to Cornwall in 2010 . The Master was joined by around two dozen Liverymen and Freemen. Staying in Mousehole, their itinerary included visits to pewter manufacturers, St Justin's and the old tin workings at Geevor Mine, where (amongst other things of great interest) there is a wonderfully evocative museum (Ed.). They were entertained and informed by two talks by local historians, the first by Stephen Hall, who concentrated on the West Penwith area , particularly the agriculture, fisheries and mining; and secondly, by Alan Collins, on the local history and local pewterers.

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