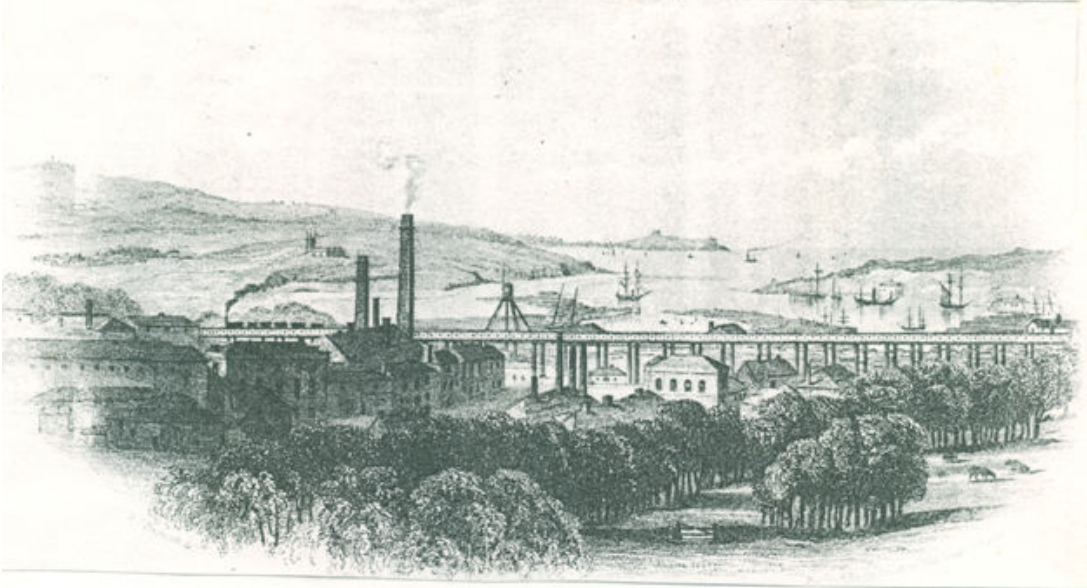




# ***HAYLE***

***CORNWALL***

***A BRIEF HISTORY***



## HAYLE : A BRIEF HISTORY

The modern town of Hayle is largely a mid-eighteenth century development and its name, deriving from the Cornish language "Heyl", meaning "Estuary", is sourced in the river mouth which cuts a sandy swathe through the central towans (Cornish for sand banks) of St.Ives Bay in Cornwall.

Tin seeking Irish and Bretons visited the area during the Bronze Age, whilst the National Trust hill of Trencrom, overlooking Hayle from the western edge of the estuary, bears the remains of later Iron- age settlements. Later again, tin trading was carried on by the Romans, who established a camp further up river at St.Erth. From 1550 onwards Irish Christian missionaries were in the area and their mark is to be seen in the dedication of several local Churches to Irish saints, for example St.Uny at Ielant, St.Fingar at Gwinear, St Herygh at St.Erth and St.Piala - in recent years re-instated with St Felicitas - at Phillack. Hayle town lay within the parishes of these two latter churches, the majority within Phillack, until a Western portion of Phillack was seceded in 1870 to form the parish of St.Elwyn, its church being completed in 1888.

Even earlier evidence of Christian presence is to be seen in pottery fragments found at Phillack Church together with the "Chi-Rho" stone (in Greek x-p, the first two letters of "Christ"), built into the south gable - where, as found here, the open loop of the 'p', dates it as the oldest form of 'rho'- and also in the c.450 AD. burial stone of a mystery early Christian, probably Irish, noblewoman called "Cunaide" to be found at Foundry. This, discovered by Harvey in 1843 when expanding the works site at Carnsew, now lies alongside a slate mis-interpretation panel in the hedge of the foot-path he carved out of the adjoining Iron -age Fort of Carnsew, now known as "The King George V Memorial Plantation". Together these archaeological artefacts establish the Hayle estuary area as the earliest location of Christian activity in Cornwall.

**(COVER:**

**1. HAYLE ESTUARY FROM THE IRON-AGE FORT AT CARNSEW, NOW KING GEORGE V MEMORIAL PLANTATION;**

**2. HAYLE ESTUARY c.1860.)**



**(THIS PAGE)**

**HAYLE ESTUARY AND SANDS FROM HAYLE TOWANS.**



**NEAREST LEFT :**

**THE "CUNAIDE" STONE.**

**(Latin Inscription reads 'Here (in) peace, lately went to rest Cunaide. Here in the grave she lies. She lived years thirty three.)**

**FAR LEFT:**

**THE MODERN MIS-INTERPRETATION PANEL AT CARNSEW FORT.**

By the time of the Domesday Survey (c.1086), most of the area we now know as Hayle fell within the manor of Conarditon, or Conerton, a name existing today in the form of Connor Downs, a nearby village. This was under the rule of Brictric, a Saxon nobleman, passing to the Arundel family in the thirteenth century and to the Hawkins of Trewithen in the nineteenth century.

Most of the present town of Hayle grew within the estate of Penpol, owned in the sixteenth century by the Godolphin family and from 1890 until 2004 by the Ellis family in the estate house of "Penpol". There were three other main estates, or divisions in Hayle, each leading to its own waterfront, "Trevassack", the manor house of which was demolished in the 1970s and "Trelissick" and "Bodriggy" of which the manor houses remain.

However it was two centuries later that Hayle was to explode onto the industrial scene with a vigour and dynamism which few could have imagined, in ways which made the history of Hayle a microcosmic mirror of the history of industrial expansion in the nineteenth century and an integral part of the pioneering inventiveness of those times.

Two enterprises were to forge this transformation as, from a modest copper-smelting works established in 1756 at the eastern reach of the river at lower Ventonleague (the opposite bank to Phillack Church) grew the thriving business which was to give this area the name of "Copperhouse", whilst a foundry business established by John Harvey in 1779 at the opposite end of the estuary, gave the name of "Foundry" to that area. Rivalry between the two companies, sometimes dubbed 'the thirty years war', was bitter and lifelong, leading to many protracted legal disputes and including actual fist cuffs. Testament to this rivalry are the various granite stones to be found around the town - some incorporated in the old clapper bridge across Lethlean Lane for example - bearing the initials "H" or "CCC", not as the casual observer might suppose, representing "Hayle" and "Cornwall County Council", but staking out the boundaries of the two rivals' properties. It was September 1830 before the concluding hearing of the dispute was held at "The Hayle Hotel" (built in 1825, subsequently renamed "The Penmare Hotel" and demolished in 2004) with Richard Trevithick Junior as witness.

The participation of Richard Trevithick Senior in the enterprises at Harvey's Foundry brought to the town perhaps its most celebrated connection.

Richard was married to John Harvey's daughter Jane and the original "White Hart Hotel" in Foundry Square, now the Masonic Lodge which adjoins the neo-classical replacement, was built by the Harvey family for Jane in 1824, as security against the unpredictability of her husband's career. In 1838 the family also built the grander version which is now the defining landmark of Foundry Square.

Richard Trevithick, working at the foundry amongst engineers William West (a Cornishman and another Harvey son-in-law), Arthur Woolf and others, was to perfect inventions numerous and wide-ranging : the renowned "Cornish" Boiler and Engine; the screw propeller for ships; in 1804 the world's first railway locomotive and arguably, the world's first motor car. For following the successful development of high-pressure engines, a high-pressure steam vehicle, cast at Hayle, was given its first road trial in Camborne in 1801 and in 1802 was driven on the road in London, successfully for some five or so miles.

In its own right Harvey's Foundry was involved in projects of equal importance, building the first Cornish Boiler to be used at sea and developing a fleet of merchant vessels for a "Steam Packet" service, plying mainly between Hayle and Bristol. By 1834 the Harvey Company had created a substantial ship-building operation at Carnsew whence vessels up to 4,000 tons were constructed and launched. In the same year the company completed construction of the impounding pool at Carnsew (known locally as "The Basin"), with its sluice gates and curved granite sluicing channel, designed specifically - and successfully for over 130 years - to deflect the water to maximum sluicing effect in contrapuntal conjunction with the other sluices, in order to keep the channels clear of sand.

The reliability and prowess of the foundry was such that by the mid 1850s, Harvey engines were pumping three quarters of London's water supply. But perhaps the Harvey Company's most significant contribution to engineering excellence was in the construction of the two pumping engines, one which drained the Severn tunnel in the 1880s and the other (with later contributions from two other Cornish companies) involving the casting of a massive 144" cylinder, which was used from the early 1840s to reclaim the 70 square mile lake in Haarlem in Holland. This, known as the Cruquius

engine (after an early pioneer) and in use until 1933, is today a Dutch National Monument preserved by "The Cruquius Trust Museum"

At the other end of the estuary the development of copper-smelting had brought to the town an equal and much earlier measure of international achievement. Commenced in 1756, a partnership commonly known as the "Cornish Copper Company" was to become the only large scale copper-smelting business in Cornwall and later its prestigious iron foundry was to manufacture some of the largest Cornish beam Engines. The company's contracts extended not only throughout the breadth of this country but as far afield as Spain, Jamaica, Australia and even, in 1858 to Odessa in Southern Russia.

Amongst its achievements can be listed the building of the "Cornubia", the first working locomotive to be designed and built in Cornwall, made especially for the newly completed Hayle railway line in 1838; the manufacture of the chain links for the Hungerford Bridge of 1845; half of the chain links for Brunel's Royal Albert Bridge across the Tamar at Saltash (this, following a glowing report from Brunel himself after his visit to the premises in 1840) and perhaps most famously the links for the Clifton Suspension Bridge, completed in 1864 and after which Clifton Terrace at Riviere Cliff, overlooking Copperhouse Pool, was eventually named .

Despite the intense rivalry, the Cornish Copper Company shares with Harvey the honour of casting cylinders for the largest steam engine ever built. For whereas Harvey had cast the first cylinders for the Haarlem project in 1843, the supplementary 144" cylinder was cast by the Cornish Copper Company in 1847.

A similar convergence of work is to be found in the London waterworks at Kew Bridge. Here a 100" engine manufactured by Harvey in 1871, worked side by side with a 90" engine of 1846 made by the Cornish Copper Company. This latter remained in service until 1943 and, subsequently restored to full working order in 1976, is now the largest preserved steam engine of any kind to be found in the world.

Sadly, despite its 1850s expansion into the building of ships up to 500 tons, the Cornish Copper Company did not escape the effects of the declining

mining industry, nor the demise of its most active partners, so that by 1865 it was moving towards its final winding up of 1869.

Until recently, its site was occupied by J & F Pool (latterly under the parentage of Ash & Lacy p.l.c. of Smethwick, Birmingham) a business begun by 'Tinman' James Pool in 1848 and continued by his sons James and Frederick in partnership in 1862. Manufacturing punched screens and other artefacts for the tin-mining industry, this firm was to become British medal winning metal perforators and developed what was in its time, the accepted national standard gauge. An example of this Cornish Standard Gauge can be seen locally in Helston Museum and more significantly, in the Science Museum, South Kensington, London, bearing the stamp "J & F Pool".

Surviving buildings of the Cornish Copper Company include the three storey former offices at 9/10 Market Place; No2 Pond Walk - probably the Manager's first residence - and his more imposing abode, Riviere House, overlooking Copperhouse Pool, built in 1791.

Most noticeable and to the stranger baffling remains of the Cornish Copper Company are the curious and often curiously placed shiny black blocks to be found throughout the town. These are 'Scoria' blocks, the waste slag of the copper smelting process, much of which was poured into moulds, usually measuring 18" x 12" x 6" and whether moulded or not, put to use for virtually any building purpose. Best examples are perhaps the Black Road and its twin-arched Bridge at the head of Copperhouse Pool, built in 1780, the steps cut into Riviere Cliff up to Clifton Terrace and Copperhouse Dock.

At the Foundry end of town, although the engineering works and shipyard had closed down by 1904, other lines of business survived and although the name of Harvey was finally dropped in the 1980s, a building supplies business, now run by Jewson still operates from part of the original Harvey site at Carnsew Road.

Although in various ownerships and use, many of the original Harvey buildings remain : the offices at 24 Foundry Square (now renovated and the office of Harvey's Foundry Trust); Harvey's 'Emporium' at 22-23 Foundry Square (now Barclay's Bank); the Ironmongery store at 16 -22 Foundry Square and of course the two White Hart Hotels.



**FORE STREET COPPERHOUSE.**



**FOUNDRY SQUARE.**

(LEFT BACK) HARVEY'S IRONMONGERY – OFFICES – BRUNEL'S 1852 VIADUCT (REVISED VERSION).  
 (FRONT LEFT) THE 1838 WHITE HART HOTEL (FRONT RIGHT) THE 1867 MARKET HOUSE.

Leading off Foundry Square in Foundry Hill, parts of the remaining structures of the original Hammer and Grist mills and Ropery Buildings have been renovated and preserved as a public amenity and include a Children's Play Area, gardens, a ropery/riverside walk and an outdoor amphitheatre, achieved through community effort via the Hayle Town Trust.

Continuing public interest led to the formation of the Harvey's Foundry Steering Group, through which the remaining Foundry/Engine House and adjoining farm complex (which serviced the works) won agreement for co-operative regeneration as a Heritage and Small Business centre with owners The Guinness Trust and subsequently gaining the support of the nationwide "Regeneration Through Heritage" organisation, part of HRH The Prince of Wales "Prince's Trust". Subsequently Harvey's Foundry Trust was formed and via Penwith District Council, 2003 saw the completion of Phase 1, the renovation of Harvey's office at 24 Foundry Square plus a revenue gaining new-build at Plantation Lane and 2006 saw the completion of Phase 2, renovation of Foundry Farm as craft workshops. The final Phase (3), encompassing restoration of Harvey's impressive barn/engine housing structure and pattern store for the creation of similar appropriate uses, will concentrate upon the development of a heritage centre and focus on the whole area as a significant part of the "Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site" designation granted in 2006.

Although of the greatest significance to the modern history of Hayle, the Harvey and Cornish Copper Companies were not the only thriving enterprises to be found in the town during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. At the easternmost end, a William Hosken of Carwin Farm, parish of Phillack, had, in 1852 commenced milling at Loggans, a mill still standing, (listed though deteriorating), bearing the date 1852 on its South gable. In 1890 Hosken was joined by Richard Trevithick, second son of the famous innovator and a Truro based miller, J.S. Polkinghorne to form the partnership "Hosken, Trevithick and Polkinghorne", the initials of which "HTP" were to become a household word for flour throughout the west of Britain. In 1895 the firm acquired Harvey's ironmongery store (the cheerful multi-windowed building still resplendent at 18-20 Foundry Square) and commenced making its renowned "Cornubia" biscuits.

By 1913 the partnership owned a large farm, 50 horses, 3 traction engines, various lorries and its own "Liverpool & Bristol Steamship Company", whose "Cornubia" and "M.S.Hedley" brought the wheat for Loggans Mill, via a canal excavated at the edge of Copperhouse Pool, to the Copperhouse wharf. It was at the time the largest wholesale grocer South West of Bristol. However by 1927 the manufacture of Cornubia biscuits in Foundry had ceased, for during the 1890s the company had acquired a mill in Plymouth and - as now - so then - further rationalisation led in 1930 to the closure of the Loggans Mill and the company's centralisation in Plymouth

Hayle also had its own Brewery, established by the Ellis family in 1813 which was in production until 1934, when it was taken over by the St.Austell Brewery. Of this enterprise, most of the original buildings, situated in Sea Lane at Copperhouse, remain and the owner, descendant of the Ellis family has donated to the community, its original office for use as an outreach of the Harvey's Foundry Trust archive group.

Probably the largest single industry in Hayle, a munitions works of the National Explosives Company at Upton Towans, employing some 1,500 during the 1914 war, was not established until 1888 and despite some tragic and spectacular accidents was not to have a lasting influence on the town. Of no local origin and sited at the town's edge, it has disappeared into the memory of but a few since it closed in 1919, though that area of Upton Towans is still known locally as "Dynamite". However, whatever relics remain on the duneland site are now carefully preserved under the aegis of Cornwall Wildlife Trust

The infrastructure of Hayle improved dramatically from 1825 when, by Act of Parliament, enablement was obtained to construct a bridge and causeway across the sands at the western end of the estuary, continuing the road through to The Royal Standard Inn at the end of Penpol Terrace. Until then there was no direct link from Hayle to Penzance and the Royal Standard, then known as "Passage Place", was the departure point for a hazardous trek at low tide or a ferry trip at high tide across the sands to Lelant. This departure point had originally been immediately in front of the "Royal Standard", but during Harvey's 1819 construction of "Harvey's Wharf", now South Quay, arch rivals, the Cornish Copper Company had built East Quay well out into the river in order to restrict its competitors' access to the harbour as far as it legally could.

Harvey himself, when building his almost quarter mile, uniquely scalloped wharf at Penpol Creek in 1819, had had to incorporate a tunnel through it, opposite Passage Place, in order to maintain the established rights of way across the sands to Penzance. This was later filled in.

By 1833 Hayle was of sufficient importance to earn the privilege of Coinage Town status and, by Act of parliament in 1834 had its own railway. This was not the one so prominent today with its Brunel designed town centre viaduct across Penpol Creek, opened in 1852 and through which unusually the main road passes twice, but the "Hayle Railway" which ran from Foundry Square along Penpol Riverbanks (now a harbourside walkway) across Copperhouse Pool sluice gates to continue along the edge of the pool (now King George VI Memorial Walk) towards Loggans and beyond to link up with the various mining areas of the district. Along the route as it crosses Copperhouse Saltings is a stone bridge constructed in 1837, reputed to be the earliest surviving railway bridge in the country.

During the same period the port of Hayle had become extremely busy and by 1862 had its own Customs House which, situated just beyond the Copperhouse Pool sluice gates is today the Hayle Harbour Office. In 1866 its own lifeboat, the "Isis", donated by the Oxford University Lifeboat Fund, made its first rescue mission in St. Ives Bay. The original memorial plaque can be seen in the viaduct "Isis" gardens at the end of Penpol Creek, whilst the University's generosity is actively commemorated in the town's first racing gig, the "Isis".

Although several markets and fairs were commenced in Hayle, one such, documented as St. Bartholemew's on Tuesday 5th September 1837, none had long-standing success and all had ceased by 1837. Nevertheless the town supported two market houses. One built in Copperhouse by the Cornish Copper Company in 1839 and until recent years the offices of J & F Pool, was a replacement for an earlier unidentified market house, noted by author W.H Pascoe as pre-1814. The new house originally sported a Clock Tower which reputedly showed both local time and with a red hand, London time apparently with an hour's difference.



**FORE STREET COPPERHOUSE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY**



**HARVEY'S WHARF AT PENPOL CREEK PRE - 1894.**

The other Market House and Public Hall was built in 1867 by a consortium in which the Harvey Company was a substantial shareholder, to provide a similar facility for the 'Foundry' end of town. Occupied now by Lloyd's Bank its apparent architectural eccentricity is explained by the fact that following an extensive fire in 1935, its first floor was never rebuilt.

The quality of public life in Hayle was further enhanced by the construction in 1893 of the august Passmore Edwards Institute, donated by its philanthropic namesake in memory of his parents who once lived in the town. Designed by the revered Cornish architect Silvanus Trevail, it currently houses the British Legion and includes several public rooms.

In 1996 Hayle Town Council completed a project to convert Carew House at Bodrigny, originally a Children's Home and latterly a Residential Care Home, into Hayle Community Centre, with the then hope of encompassing in the grounds, the much needed facility of a multi-purpose hall for the town. This option remains whilst it is now also the location of the Council Office and Chambers.

Public life in the form of Local Government, not surprisingly, directly reflected the working forces of the town, for when the old Elizabethan system of local administration was replaced in 1866 by a Local Government Board, its first Chairman was a Harvey (William) and he and his successors, a West (William) and another Harvey (Frederick) between them covered consecutively the next fifty years. In the twentieth century, following the local government reorganisation of 1974, Hayle was granted the privilege of a mayor and the opportunity to create a Mayoral Insignia. Commemorating the marine and mineral enterprises of the past a boldly simple medallion was crafted bearing a steamship flanked by the ancient symbols of minerology, the twin forces which inexorably shaped the lie of the land and the lives of the people and stamped the name "Hayle" on the international map.

Hayle flourished during the nineteenth century years of industrial expansion and declined with the rest of the country when the recession set in. Today it has a very different character for the twentieth century brought the tourist and a shift of emphasis to its three miles of golden sands and surrounding countryside, although it escaped the fate of becoming a characterless tourist trap. The estuary itself is now an SSSI, a County Wildlife Site and an RSPB Reserve and its reaches at Carnsew Pool and adjoining Lelant Saltings,

together with the in-town Copperhouse Pool, make it a magnet for the casual Rambler as well as the serious ornithologist.

The harbour and all other waterways, (of both Harvey and Cornish Copper Company origin) remain in single private ownership and though awaiting repair, since the latter half of the twentieth century have seen a steady growth in pleasure boating and an expansion of the fishing business especially in the shellfish trade. Hayle's population has grown similarly and in the twenty first century is in the region of 8,000.

The modest image of the town of Hayle - set in an open estuary on the wild and beautiful North Coast of Cornwall, with a vibrant legacy of World Heritage significance – belies an identity of time and place which begs no fabrication and hides extraordinary historical and environmental depths which this brief outline only begins to touch.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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T R Harris : MS., undated, c. mid 1940s, unfinished, unpublished, sourced at Cornwall Record Office.

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