Mapping Museums project interview transcript

Name: Tony Brooks

Role: Founder/ex-chairman

Museum: King Edward Mine Museum

Location of interview: Study, Tony's house (Polstrong, Cornwall)

Date: 15/3/19

Interviewer(s): Toby Butler

For readability the transcript has been made using 'intelligent' transcription (removing ums, ers etc).

TB: Okay. Wonderful, so Tony, could you just give me your name, and if you don't mind, your date of birth.

BR: Tony Brooks, XX-XXX 1944.

TB: Lovely, and Tony, can you just tell me, I don't know if you have a role in the museum now, but what was your last role, if you haven't?

BR: My last role, I suppose, I was Chairman and a board member, and I stepped down about three years ago.

TB: Okay, but you were one of the founders of...

BR: The founder.

TB: The founder, okay, great. All right.

BR: Pretty well.

TB: Okay, perfect. So, as I explained, we're really interested in those early days. So, if you could just give me a sense of where the idea came from, where the impetus came from? And if you give me that back story, that would be great.

BR: Okay. Perhaps a little bit of background. And the School of Mines, Camborne School of Mines, fits very much into that. I was a student there in the middle of the last century and I worked abroad in mining, came back and joined the School of Mines in '76, was Head of Mining and one of my responsibilities was the field stations we had, which included King Edward Mine. So, I've, unlike many education establishments, the School of Mines staff often had technicians, buildings, responsibilities, unlike the university sector, where somebody else does that. My interest has been mining, mining history, I've been involved in conservation since I came back in '76, and one day in 1987, a colleague of mine said "oh, why don't we turn part of King Edward Mine into a museum?"

Now, let me explain what happened with that, the mine itself had developed by the School of Mine round about 1900, the underground was lost in about 1920, the surface was retained, the field station, we had an underground mine elsewhere which we still have, or I'm now involved in, and the buildings were used for educational purposes. In '74 the new School of Mines was built, which was bigger than the old one and much of the stuff that was done at King Edward was moved, which left us with a chunk of buildings, that were basically not utilised. And someone said, "why don't we turn some of this into a museum?" And we all fell about, and then I started thinking about it and started doing a bit of reading. And I'd done some research anyway, and we realised what we were looking at was a set of buildings that were totally unique, probably the oldest complete mine site in Cornwall, not quite in miniature, but it's all there, all the bits were there. I obviously, had control of the site, I had a certain amount of budget, and I'd done some research on it anyway. So, we said "okay, let's play around with this."

The objectives were, one, to conserve the site, even then we recognised that was the important thing to do. Secondly, to develop a bit of a museum, we weren't quite sure how, we hadn't got the background, perhaps at the same time, was to re-equip the plant, but the building had been stripped by then, but we wanted to put the building, the equipment back, as it was about 1910. This

conveniently fitted in with the, almost total, collapse of the Cornish mining industry, what was left of it, so there was stuff lying around, and one could collect things. Quite how we were going to do all this, remembering that it was an education establishment, we had no legal right to be there, apart from the Principal said "okay, Tony, do what you like" basically, which is what we did. So, we started playing with it. But the long-term objective was conservation, try and tell people in Cornwall, and particularly in our area, bits about mining, there was nothing in this area to tell people, and this was the centre of the mining world, in 1850. And, we wanted to find a way of doing that, so it was very looking at the sort of local view, the Cornish view, first.

We recognised that if it ever got to any size, we'd need to get some money from somewhere, ergo, if you've got a paying museum, that might be a way of bringing the income into make the thing work. And we were always aware that we were always going to be small, we couldn't throw money around and that's always been the process, which by and large has worked horribly well. But, as I say, we had the School of Mines behind us, but they weren't going to pump money into it. We hadn't got any grants, but we had these buildings to play with and we collected a few people together who'd got interested, predominantly people from the School of Mines. That was '87, and that got us started sort of playing with the buildings.

[0:04:22]

TB: Yes, so the people who got involved, were they, you were basically a lecturer?

BR: I was a lecturer, mining is my subject. We've initially, because my colleague was head of audio-visual aids, he was a sort of senior technician, and he managed to sort of gee-up some of his technicians. I was also involved, and so was he, with the Carn Brea Mining Society. And we sort of said, "look, we're going to start doing something." So, one Sunday morning, about 10 people turned up, sort of standing in the car park, in the rain, as always, windy, I think. And we said "what are we going to do?" And it sort of started from there. There was no real structure, initially. We never had an election, I was never sort of, sort of nominally in charge, because I knew more about it than the rest of them because of my background and my interest and the fact I had control of the place. There were also certain advantages because we had a couple of mining technicians based there, who ran the underground a couple of mines we had, who were sort of available, in the sort of vacations, they could be persuaded to go and do things, much to the, tend to find leave forms and go sick or something when we thought about this, but people would go and do things. So, I had access to that.

Also, I had access to the School of Mines engineering workshops, so we had things sort of screwed together and mended. So, that was kind of useful. And I had a lot of contacts from different, other things I've been involved in. So, I sort of tended to run it in an ad hoc sort of way. And the way to work with volunteers is to create areas of interest, encourage people and let them get on with it. So, I've always seen my role as a more of an initiator and an oiler of wheels, because I could find things, knew people, I knew just about everybody in mining in West Cornwall, so I could put my hand on things. Which perhaps other people couldn't. So, the project had the sort of political side, which was the bit that I did, and we had the other bit, we wanted lots of capable people to *do* things. And it sort of evolved from there.

[0:06:19]

TB: Yes. And so, you had the buildings, you said the machinery had actually been stripped out, I didn't realise that.

BR: Apart from the stamps, which you saw, there was no machinery in the mill at all.

TB: Crikey!

BR: Where the shop is, was an empty place clad with asbestos sheets, the top museum room we went into, was still a bit of a lecture room, we never used it, it had odd tables and chairs and things in it. The buildings were beginning to fall apart, the other buildings on the site weren't looking too good either, and the school really hadn't got the money to fix them. So, one of the attractions, from the School of Mines' point of view was, we had a bunch of volunteers that were doing things, they might actually cut the costs a bit by sort of fixing the odd thing, bring some shiplack back and we did tend, in the first couple of years, to do work on some of the other buildings as well, because they were falling down. Our long-term view was to preserve the site. Initially we were just working with the mill section, the bit that you saw.

[0:07:12]

TB: And the school still owned everything?

BR: The site was leasehold, long-term leasehold from the Pendarves Estate, and that was actually quite interesting as well, because there was a whole lot of politics running behind all this. Long-term leasehold, no problem, and I knew Philip Pendarves vaguely, but I knew his agent quite well, in conversations about renewing leases and everything else. So, I knew some of the politics behind it. Which, later on, became rather important because things got a bit fraught in terms of what's going to happen next, when people kept disappearing and leases, which I'll go into in a moment, it got quite involved. So, there was a lot of politicking going on, but that's very much on personal contact basis.

[0:07:58]

TB: And in those early days, did you have any budget from the School to do this?

BR: No. Peter said, I think he said probably, at that time, one of the concepts was, within the college, they were looking at ways of perhaps increasing our profile, so one of the suggestions that John Watton came up with, was "let's make a museum". Well fine, I think Peter said "okay" Peter Hackett, the Principal. "You can have £500" Mickey Mouse money. We also set up our Past Students' Association, which we'd been talking about for the last 40 years, we also set up a consulting company, to use the facilities of the school. And in fact, various staff finished up being Chairman of the Past Students' Association and Managing Director of the consulting company, but that's a different story. And I had a reasonable sort of budget because I had that and a couple of other field stations. So, things could fall off the back of that.

[0:08:49]

TB: Yes, I see, so you're working within these other hats that you had?

BR: Yes, that's right.

TB: And calling in favours.

BR: Yes. There were ways of doing it, one didn't waste it, but if you wanted a bit of timber or some screws, if you couldn't get them given to us, then we could probably buy them, because we were doing a lot of work on the site and fixing things, so it was a quid pro quo, really.

[0:09:11]

TB: So, the motivation to actually open a museum, as far as the school was concerned, was pretty much to do with, putting out a shop front to the public a little bit?

BR: That was the way, I think, it was sold. I don't think it ever actually did that. But if you like, the kick off came from that, so there was support from within the establishment to do it, the buildings were sitting there, redundant anyway, so it wasn't costing anything. And it's an ideal way of sort of, if you like, it didn't cost anything, we weren't paying any rent, there was almost no electricity, so we didn't pay for it, if we wanted water, you'd turn the tap on. So, it was an ideal way, if you like of doing things in a very small way, without this business of employed people and exposure and grants. For the first few years, we didn't have any money, really, at all. But for what we were doing, we didn't need it, because we were collecting stuff from all the place.

[0:09:59]

TB: Well just, before we get onto that, just tell me about your own feeling about setting up a museum, or that public facing part of things.

BR: That interested me, I'm interested in conservation, it's something I've always been involved with, mines and holes in the ground and conservation. If we could do something to spread the word about mining, which, again, would spin back into the School of Mines, that was obviously a good thing. It was all, tick the boxes, and I happened to be just the right person, I was in the right place at the right time, with the right buttons, which most people wouldn't have had. Just fortuitous.

[0:10:35]

TB: Yes. So, you were pretty happy to take this on?

BR: Yes. If I'd known it was going to take 30 years, I mean I had all my hair then, you know, I was a young man. If we'd known what we were going to finish up with, which you saw today with all the things gone on, we would have been over the moon about it, because what we managed to achieve, eventually, was everything we wanted to do. We wanted to conserve the site, one recognised, sort of deep down, that one would have to be in bed with Big Brother somewhere, to make it work. Now this came on later when we did, that's before Cornwall Council. Having travelled and talked a bit to museums, you've either got a lot of money, or you've got Big Brother somewhere who can spread the cost, National Trust was an option. Cornwall Council was an option, English Heritage, but they didn't do that sort of thing. And you start thinking of who are these people who can sort of have the background and expertise and the accounting, and the things you don't want to pay people to do. And that was the something we always felt we would need to do sooner or later, but had no idea how we were going to do it. We got there.

[0:11:42]

TB: So, let's go to the collecting, because at the moment you've got empty buildings, so, what I saw was the most extraordinary collection of really quite enhanced machines, so where did all those come from, and how did you gather them?

BR: Well, we started off actually in what is now the museum room, we thought we'd sort of clear that, and we started playing around in there and digging the floor up. The building was falling down so we managed to sort of patch that up a bit. A friend of mine was a curator of a museum in Torquay at the time, and somehow I heard that they were throwing a lot of Victorian cases out, I rang him up and he said "if you can come and collect them, you can have them. But you've got to have the peacock." I thought, what's that about? "Ah, okay, yes Brian, we'll come and get it." So we hired a van, and my two mining technicians and I had a day's holiday, and drove to Torquay and collected this stuff, and there were Victorian cases and the doors were all off, and there was a pile of this stuff, which we got in the van, there was a big glass case with a peacock in it, with no glass on the front of it. So, we brought that back and most of the cases you see up in the museum, came from there. We got a couple more, a sloping one that came from the Geological Museum in Penzance because they were throwing them out, so it was all sort of thrown together. Stuck a bit of paint on, we started playing with those, someone came round on a visit, and he saw the peacock and said "how much do you want for it?" We helped him put it in his car before he changed his mind. So that was that. Down the mill, we collected stuff for stamps, they were already there, we knew, pretty well, how it had worked when the School of Mines built it, at the turn of the century. So, we thought, let's try and set it up much as it would be about 1910.

[0:13:20]

TB: Why did you pick that date?

BR: It's Edwardian, basically the School of Mines started playing with it in 1897, they got the plant finally running about 1904, the steam winder went in in 1908-1909, so it was that sort of, the first decade of the twentieth century.

TB: Yes. So, that would have been at its...

[0:13:37]

BR: That was the period that we were looking at, the majority of the buildings were built by the School of Mines, all the timber frame ones, the Count House block wasn't, that was a lot earlier, that was 1870's, so why not go for that? Because that's what the building was like then. We had a stack of photographs of the way it looked like. John Watton was a photographer, and he was interested in mining photographs, and he sourced every photograph you can find, so we had an incredible lot of information. So, we thought, okay, let's try and put it in much the way it was, but you can't always find all the right bits.

So, there were two options, you either fabricate things exactly as they could have been, which a) would have taken forever, b) would have cost money and c) requires skills, and we had none of those three. So, we thought we'll put things in that would do the same thing, but the two shaking tables are more modern, but the same principle, the ball mill we've got in there is a slightly different shape, but the basic flow sheet, of how it worked, we put in the same way. We were fortunate.

Now, I'm a mining engineer, this is medieval treatment, frankly. After we'd started, and we started playing in the mill and tidying it up and sort of deciding what to do and started collecting things, a friend of mine brought someone up, a chap called Willie Uren who, he'd started, as a boy in the age of 14 in the South Crofty Mill, in 1939 when they had all the sort of equipment that we were going to put in. And, dear old Willy, he finished up running the plant, I think, he'd just retired, and what he didn't know about old fashioned processing, wasn't worth knowing. He was brilliant. A lovely man, very little formal education, but he could draw bits of diagrams of equipment to scale, for you, unbelievable. And he was able to sort of advise all the way through, "how do you hang up a wooden launder? Would you do it that way? Why?" "Because that's how it's done." And you find photographs, and that's how it is. So, we finished up, sort of jumping ahead, by completing the plant, over the years, because Willy knew how to do it. We all learned, and so a number of us became quite expert at this because we knew all, he'd bit a rusty bit of kit up and say "oh, I know what that is, that comes from that" and you'd think "really?" "Yes" and then he found a photograph, and of course, he was right.

So, what we have, we've finished up with, is a plant that works, up to a point, which reflects very accurately how it would have been done, put together with the advice of a guy who knew what he was doing. So, we got it right. People don't look at it and say "that's wrong." Because a) nobody knows, and secondly, it isn't. One of the pleasures of this, there was a lot of internal learning, a lot of falling about and collecting things. And, as I say, we started with nothing, but once we had a bit of an idea what we wanted, then if you plan far enough ahead, when the opportunity occurs, you say "ah yes, I want one of those, can I have it?" or "can I pay you for it?" of "can I borrow it?" or “when you’re not looking, can I borrow it?” or something. You acquired them.

[0:16:39]

TB: And these were coming from mines that had shut down? In the ‘80's?

BR: All over the place. You saw that wooden, round frame?

TB: Yes.

BR: That had been pulled out by the Trevithick Society from a plant down near South Crofty in 1968 or something, and it was stored in the remains of a china clay dryer, up in St Austell, I mean, the Society, it was a heap of firewood, there’s a picture of it in the book. And there were two of these things and we went and collected them. And we found a drawing of one of these things, and all these parts are all numbered, someone had taken them off and painted numbers on them, but then they'd lost the piece of paper, so they were all covered in bloody numbers, that didn't help. So, that's where that came from. One of the shaking tables came from a guy who was developing re-mining, off shore tin work, which never actually happened, he had a shed full of these things, so we got one of those from there. The, other bits came from Geevor, we got bits for the back in the sale of Crofty. When Geevor finally closed, the scrap men were actually going through it, and I paid the scrap man, I think that's the right word, politely, for a few bits, which was, I want the ball mill, there was one, I want a flotation cell, there was one. These things are like hen's teeth and it's just a case of a brown envelope, and we got the bits. And fortunately, we got all the bits that we wanted, bar one machine that we couldn't source, and that was the Frue Vanner. We searched the world for one of those, and we couldn't find one. We got very close, we found a set of drawings that someone had

microfilm, up in Leicestershire, and they sent a contact print of the micro film, so I emailed back and said "can you blow it up and send me a print, because then we can make all the bits?" they'd lost the micro film, it's so close! But it didn't matter, Willy actually, basically, built the thing from memory, because he made drawings of all the bits and we made them and you saw the completed thing. And if you look at the photographs, they're very similar, because he could do that.

So, we got bits from a plant down the Red River. I happened to be talking to Bill Ward who was the agent for Pendarves and the land owners do own chunks of landscape, and he mentioned this little tin plant that had been working waste material, had closed and the estate were taking it back and the plant was going to be scrapped to pay some of the rent that hadn't been paid. This was a Friday. And he said "well, the scrap man is starting on Monday, if you want to take anything between now and then, help yourself." So, phone calls round, the School of Mines had a mini bus, and a whacking great box trailer, so I borrowed that, and on the Sunday, we started taking it all apart. So, I took one load up to King Edward Mine, drove back, parked the van, was taking bits and pieces out, unbolting shaking tables, God knows what else, and this car pulled up. And this large man got out, he was huge, and he wanted to know what the blank blank was I doing with his blank blank plant. Now I talked to the man who was in charge of it, he was a builder, and he said "yes you can do it" and apparently it had been sub-contracted, this scrap man, and he didn't know what we were doing, and there were us pulling us to bits, and there was this gigantic man wanting to know what I was doing. So, I turned round, looking for support. And the whole crew had vanished. They just disappeared. So, I placated him. It actually worked out quite well, because I persuaded him to take a couple of big bits for us, we paid him a bit of money, the School of Mines gave him £100 for something, and we got the roof off the building, because we wanted to erect a building up at KEM and I wanted some timber and I wanted some sheeting, so looking several years ahead, we knew it was going to happen, so we managed to acquire that. As it happened, the sheeting wasn't any good but we did actually use the main joist. If you saw that big diesel engine, I don't know if you saw that, well those joists in the roof, came from there. So, actually, knowing what we wanted to do in the future, it's five years later before we used them. Now that worked quite well, eventually. So, we got a sack of stuff from there.

[0:20:36]

TB: So, you're kind of working with scrap men and people that were, or throwing some of these things away?

BR: Yes. I mean scrap men, or people who were involved in the plants, or people throwing things away, there was Tolgus Tin which had quite a nice little museum, and they finished up building a whacking great gold centre, down there, which is retail. And I got to know the guy who was involved with it, at some meeting, I forget what it was, and he rang me up two weeks later and said "oh, we're knocking this building down, it's full of bits, I don't know what it is, but you can have anything you want." Now, you know, we went down there, and the story goes with this, there's a great big shed, full of, well the big dipper wheel you saw, that was in there, the small one, next to, that was in there, it was all in bits. There was shed loads of the stuff. And a colleague of mine tells a story, that we were pulling this stuff out, Frank Kneebone, and he said, "but Tony, how are we going to move it?" So, I said "hang on a minute" and, according to Frank, I walked out in the road, waved this articulated lorry down, and waved it in. He tells the story and says "I don't know how he did it."

I said, "well it wasn't quite like that. I'd actually rung up the company that owned it, can I borrow your lorry?" Nicely, and the guy said "well it's busy till lunchtime and then you can have it for the afternoon." So, this 30-foot artic turned up. I heard the airbrakes come on, that's why I knew it was there.

TB: Yes.

BR: But waved this guy in. It was great fun. A lot of this, volunteer operations require an element of fun, it's all serious stuff but if people aren't enjoying themselves and not getting a buzz and not feeling they're achieving something, it doesn't work. And that's, I'm sure people will always tell you the same story. You've got to try and create that environment. And we were fortunate for many years for it to actually work like that. You can't make volunteers do anything, but if you can persuade them it's a good idea, then eventually they come to you and say, I've got an idea. You say, yes. And off they go and do it.

[0:22:27]

TB: I see. Yes, so it's as though it's come from them, then? They own it.

BR: There has to be a sense of ownership, and we never, really, ever had a structure, you don't need one. We met a lot of capable, intelligent people. Management was mid-morning coffee on a Sunday, sitting round the table chatting about this, that and everything else, and someone says, "oh, what about this?" and you talk about it and the thing would evolve. It sounds unstructured, but there was an overall general view where we were going, but it was subject to what we could get and what kit we could get, and the opportunities.

[0:23:00]

TB: And so, did the volunteers tend to work on, you said, I think, projects, so would they, two or three of them just really focus on one machine?

BR: Yes, you tend to find that people had certain things they wanted to do, and once they started doing it, it was their bit, so if they didn't turn up on a Sunday, you wouldn't go and play with what they were doing, because that was their bit. For example, the diesel engine, there were a couple of guys who very much worked on that, and that project took six years, seven years, to get it going, eventually. But there were people who did that. So, if they weren't there, then no one went in and moved the bits around and started bolting things on, because if you can give people bits of ownership, some people have tended to do landscaping, cut the grass and cut trees down, well that's what they did. And providing one could get a general plan, make them do in a general, overall view, then that's fine, because that's what they do. And then they go home and think about it, or they go and buy a bit or a nut and bolt or something, or whatever it is, and then they come back and "ah, this is what I'm going to do. Let's do that."

There were times, obviously, if you had a big thing, you hauled everyone together and you all piled in and did it. You arrive on a Sunday morning, and what's everyone doing today? Well so and so is already playing with his diesel engine, and somebody else is playing about with the winder, and Willie has got half a shaking table to pieces, or something, and it seems to work. It does sound unstructured, one or two people find that difficult, because, perhaps they've come out of, the kind

of work they've done, has been very structured and ordered. Volunteer groups, to me, work better if they're not quite so ordered, provided it's within a general structure.

[0:24:40]

TB: And did you find, were most of the people involved, I'm assuming, they're male, I'm assuming they're probably kind of, engineers or have mechanical kind of skills, or was it broader than that?

BR: Predominantly, but we had a range of people with different skills. Very few people had any mining or minerals experience. Willie obviously did, I obviously have a mining background and a mining history background, had a guy who was a television technician, mainly male, yes. Age groups tend to be older, though we did have a couple of guys doing Duke of Edinburgh Awards, who were very good, dug holes and all kinds of things, very capable, actually. David was a senior surveyor with Cornwall Council, Kingsley worked for Boots, sort of the retail side. It was people who had an interest in history and mining history, but not all of them. Some had more skills than others, we got some, we had a couple of guys who were very good on woodwork, one was a vet. A lot of people came out of the Mining Society, because it was of general interest and we used to encourage people, come on, come on a Sunday. Some people came for a week and didn't like it, some came for a year and some came for a decade and I think that reflects all volunteer type things. Providing things are moving on, so interesting, and when you finally get something to work, it's a big train set really. If you get something to work, everyone sort of, we're all children at heart, if it starts going round, everyone sort of jumps up and down and gets excited. You do. And this enthusiasm, enthusiasm which I'm sure you'll come across, you have come across, in order to be able to run these things, because that's what makes it work.

I also have a theory, I might be wrong here, that, the human animal is designed to work in groups, if you look at the way the apes operate, they operate in groups of about a dozen, don't they? And for somehow, actually, our group worked very well with that sort of size. If you've got bigger groups than that, you break them into bits. And it still works. You know, why are rugby teams, football teams, they're all the same size, it's something that we do. And if you can get that kind of group size, I mean, normally about 12, eventually we got about 25 on a Sunday, but people were doing really quite different things. One bunch was doing archaeological digging, so they really were doing something quite different, there were a number of girls involved in that, but yes, the archetypal sort of male volunteer, playing with trains, is what it's all about.

[0:27:13]

TB: It sounds like a wonderful time, so I presume that at this point it wasn't open to the public, or was it?

BR: No. We had a number of opportunities here. The buildings were in an awful state, there was round about, I forget the actual date, I'm actually trying to write all this up, actually. Round about 1990, we were, School of Mines was funded through the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and there was money for doing work on polytechnic buildings, if you like, like outside toilets, I suppose. Well, apparently, this guy came down to look at the School of Mines and the School of Mines building in Poole was really quite modern and really beautiful and not smashed up, he didn't

find much to do. And he came up to the mine, and my foreman, John Bullock, who ran the field stations for me, took this guy around and off he went. And he went away, fine. And about a month later Peter Hackett, the Principal called me in and was waving this piece of paper, saying "what have you done now?" This was fairly common, "what have you done now?".. And apparently, they'd been round up there, and the guy had found all kinds of things that needed fixing at KEM, the Count House building had asbestos all over the place, we had quite a lot of it in what is now the shop, there was all panels of the stuff. The roof on what is now the museum had been sort of patched and was falling off, the engine house, the derelict engine house that one of the walls had actually started to lean over, and had been condemned. And in this bit of paper, £14,000 to stabilise ruin. There was £100,000 to spend on the buildings up there. Most of which were derelict. We got some electrics in the mill, we got quite a lot done for that, I mean, it was well done but that was fortuitous, because suddenly Stan's Engine House was about to fall over and wreck the boiler house, and now there's money to fix it. Which was a good thing. The roof was leaking on another building, I mean, there were bits missing all over the place. So, we got all these things fixed up and fencing round things as well, and some security, we were very careful how we spent it, don't get me wrong, I mean, grants like that, you make the most of it. And we had to find 10% or something, but you can soon find receipts to do that. That was 1990 and that got the place sort of tidied up, we weren't open to the public, but it at least got us moving down the road a bit.

TB: Yes, to make it sort of safe.

BR: And I suppose we spent most of 1990s getting ourselves to the point where we were wondering what to do. Now, around us, round about 1990-1991, the thing called the Mineral Tramways Project was started, which was this concept that came from the archaeological unit in Truro, of linking all the mine sites with trails and footpaths and things, and this took off in quite a big way. It was managed by Groundwork Kerrier one of the Groundwork Trusts, which I happened to be a trustee of, conveniently. I got invited, I think. And, they were doing all this kind of works and it was recognised that King Edward would be a useful part of, sort of node, within this because it would be an interesting place for people to go and visit. But we weren't open to the public and they put in, conserving engine houses is expensive, I mean, I don't know what the overall project cost, millions eventually. Eventually it was 40 miles of routes and things, it's very good, excellent project. Anyway, at one point they were putting in a major bid for route ways, engine houses, derelict land, all the rest of it, they had to buy the land as well, though derelict. So, the idea was with derelict land, normally, you see you clean it up and put factories on it, we, or someone, managed to persuade the funding people, maybe you should clean it up, not knock the engine houses down, but preserve them and make them an asset in a different way. Which was done. So, a lot of these things got preserved, all down the Flat Lode from King Edward.

TB: Oh, I see, so that's why they're all still there.

[0:30:54]

BR: That's why they're still there.

TB: Right, because in South Wales they've all gone.

BR: That's why they're still there, and the landscape wasn't all flattened off and put into factories, they put routeways through it, and basically sort of kept it as amenities. Much of it is in public ownership, because it was privately owned by the South Crofty Company and they wanted money, so they want to get rid of these things. Every engine house you can see down the valley there, were all conserved under this huge, Mineral Tramways Project. At the same time, they put in, somewhere in one of the bids, King Edward Mine visitor centre £200,000 or something, that was it. Nothing happened. For years. Then about 1999, there was money came through and it was managed by then the district Council, Kerrier District Council, who we got on very well with, we knew the different officers because of Mineral Tramways, and all the rest of it. And someone said "well if we've got all this money, the £200,000 to spend on King Edward, how are we going to do it?"

Now, we had a preservation, we set a preservation group up basically to run a bank account, but it couldn't handle money. By which time, the School of Mines had joined Exeter University and the University certainly weren't going to do it. So, who was going to manage this? And this is where you wanted Big Brother. Now, round about the same time, in the early 90s, I reckon about 98 with this, in the early 90s I think, Trevithick Trust was set up, which is a little like a National Trust for industry in Cornwall. It was a good idea, there were funding and political difficulties with it, but in concept it was very good and the Trust finished up eventually running a whole lot of the mined sites, actually, Geevor, Levant, I think they've got the China Clay Museum as well. A whole lot of places. And the idea was, you'd have a sort of central body that would run these things. And, we looked, I was then a trustee of it I think, or I'd just stepped down as a trustee, so the answer was for the Trevithick Trust to lease part of King Edward's Mine site.

Now, going back several years. After we joined the university in 93, they needed to reorganise the leases with the Pendarves Estate. And so about 94, we needed to renegotiate the lease. In that, I managed to put in two things. One to get a right of way across the site which would get the Mineral Tramways across, because there's no right of way across the site, you just come up the drive. So, now the route goes straight through, so we were able to get that put in it, we also put in permission to use part of the site for a non-profit making charitable type body to run a museum. So, it's already in the lease, six years beforehand. It's, again, thinking ahead a bit. I didn't know how it was going to work. So, Kerrier said "Okay, why don't the Trevithick Trust run it?" This now meant getting a lease for them. This would involve the University, the Trust, Pendarves, through his agent, and Kerrier District Council, that's four lots of solicitors. You try and get agreement between four lots of solicitors to try and sort it out. It took a long time. The advantage was, the University that I was no longer working, I'd retired by then, asked me what I thought. I got on very well with Pendarves, and he asked me what I thought, I was involved with Trevithick Trust, they asked me what I thought, and Kerrier were quite good anyway, so I finished up actually advising three lots of solicitors. It was terribly incestuous! Everyone knew what was going on, but we got there. So, this money suddenly appeared at the beginning of 2001, and we had to spend it by the end of the year. Got a good contractor in, and this is where we got the thing going, all the shop area was completely built, there was nothing in there at all, a new roof on the (*unclear 0:34:35)* all kind of works, sorted the toilets out, new drains, new electrics, new switch gear. Everything we needed to get the whole place going. There's also money to do the museum bit because we'd done it in a sort of ad hoc way, we had, I think it was £15,000 to sort that out, do all the interpretation and equip the shop. And we managed to do that near the end, the building works finished in October, no September, I had three months basically to redesign the museum with a designer. I say designer, I, and my colleagues, sketched out

what we wanted, he screwed it together, he didn't do any of the input, because he didn't know what to do. So, the museum bits that came out, was our ideas and our thinking, based on what we'd done before and what we'd seen elsewhere. So that got the museum bit sorted out. We'd also got a grant earlier on to re-sheet the Stamps building, so that was in quite good nick. The shop was all done, and we opened, I think, probably it must have been, in a small way, in 2002, under the auspices of the Trevithick Trust. Which was beginning to find itself a bit stretched, I think, with the things it was trying to do.

[0:35:47]

TB: So, the money went through the Trust?

BR: It went through the Trust.

TB: Which made it easier.

BR: But the bankers for it, they managed it but the Kerrier District Council were the managers for it and if anything went pear shaped, they would be responsible for the money. And this is quite important, a little bit later on, it was all incredibly fortuitous because one was bouncing from one thing to the next. So, Trevithick Trust now had the lease of the museum bit, but not the rest of it. And, that went okay until about 1994. They did, I think, put one paid person in and a certain amount of volunteering.

There wasn't any money. When we wanted, we wanted to have a leaflet, a site leaflet. In between time, between '96 and '98, I'd run the Geevor Museum on a sort of part-time basis, setting that up, so I had a little background of how these things, places work, which was useful. And what you need when you've got visitors, is you give them a leaflet so they can find their way around. You don't guide them all the way around, because it's hard work, so we need a leaflet, but there wasn't any money. A friend of mine was a graphic designer, so I spoke to him and said could he design one for me, and there wasn't any money. He said "yes sure, I'll do that." He then managed to get it printed for nothing, so we had 5,000 copies of this thing, for nothing. I don't know how he did it, maybe he paid for it. And that got that going. There was nothing to put in the shop, because there was no money, but the School of Mines was employing out of their site, they were moving down to Penryn. They had a geological museum with a shop, a small one, and they were going to close it, so I bought all the stock, I paid for it £200 or something. We got hold of a local distributor of books who would supply books on sale or return, so we had a shop full of stuff to get going, and away we went. It was all done on a shoestring. And a certain amount of understanding and friendship from people.

And I can't stress enough, how much the support of outside people made it work, because people understand what you're doing and they basically support what you're trying to do, if it doesn't hurt them too much, they'll help you and they do. But you've got to get the politics right, so there's this under current of politics all the time on top of the doing the interesting bits. And that was the bit, probably I tend to be involved in, just because of contacts. So that went very well, the work was done well, we got on very well with the building company and the foreman, and a good working relationship at the time, so we opened in 2002. 2004 ish, the Trevithick Trust basically folded. Now what was going to happen? The site was privately owned £200,000 worth of European money had been pumped into it.

[0:38:23]

TB: Oh, so it was European money, that initial grant?

BR: It eventually came up, I think it was ERDF or something like that, would pay for the Tramways type thing, European money, it was a big funding exercise, I think it's predominantly that sort of thing.

TB: It was like a regional development thing, maybe.

BR: Yes, that sort of thing, yes. I forget the actual type, but that's where it came from. And Kerrier, of course, would handle all this with the Mineral Tramways, they actually organised it, but the cheques were written by Kerrier District Council. They sat in the middle, they held the monies, if you like. So, what's going to happen now? If the Trust pull out, and maybe, what's going to happen? So, they were responsible for the money, so Kerrier went round and turned to us and said "Can you guys run it?" We said "yes." So, we set up a limited company to give us a bit more structure and we started running it, I think about 2005. The University still had the head lease, we didn't have a sub-lease but no one seemed to mind about that, we sort of jobbed on with that one. Kerrier didn't take out the lease, but we were there and they had the money and they then, because Kerrier and Carrick, local authorities that no longer exist, were funding the Trevithick Trust, when the Trust went down, they transferred the money that they'd given to support the Trevithick Trust, to us. So, they gave us about £10,000 a year to run it. Which, just about covered the cost, we had a part-time paid person, and it paid the electric and we didn't get many visitors but we made it work. And that worked quite well, all volunteer driven, but then we had this part-time guy which was useful, the sums worked. But predominantly it was volunteers making it work and we're still playing about on Sundays and that jobbed on. We gradually, the visitor numbers went up; marketing is a problem, it's very expensive, you've got to get a return on it, it's not the sort of thing that people might say, you're in the wrong place, why have you got it there? No one goes there. But if you go down to the Minack which is the cliff side theatre, it's the most impossible place to get to, and it's packed out, so if you've got the right thing, people will find you.

So, we ran that until, about 2005, I forget the actual date on this, so we're running it and we're getting a grant for Kerrier District Council and our numbers are gradually going up, we made the books balance, we were beginning to maintain things. And then the University decided that because the School of Mines then moved to Penryn, that they weren't going to support it anymore and they were going to get rid of the head lease. Right, so the University are going to walk out, leaving all the rest of the buildings, we were sitting there with no lease, obviously it could have all gone back to the land owner, we could have been kicked out and Kerrier had been faced with the problem of paying back £200,000 to Europe and a complete loss of face, plus the fact that World Heritage was just about coming in then as well and it wouldn't look good. So, what's going to happen? We were still sitting there, with no lease, I knew Philip Pendarves and he said "well okay, you continue on, hopefully something will happen." So, he'd let us stay there for nothing. He insured the other buildings, this guy hadn't got any money, I don't know how he did it. Anyway, Kerrier thought about this for a bit, and we kept running it. And then there's obviously they had to have a report and they were thinking of buying it. Whereupon all the local authorities were scrapped and we became a unitary authority. So now what's going to happen? We've now got no lease, the people who are supporting us aren't going to exist, this is the politics again, running underneath all this.

Eventually what happened was, that Cornwall Council decided to buy it, paid it out, they left us running it, by which time now we've, if you like, had control of the whole site, which was long term, we recognised as going to happen, and this is 2009 ish, I think. That worked quite well and of course, Cornwall Council had the ability to get funding in a way that we certainly couldn't do. So, their economic development people, Tamsin Daniel in particular, was outstanding. Came up with all kind of ideas, we worked very closely with them. They had a very good funding officer, going back a bit, we'd got the steam winder back, we put it back on its foundations, but we hadn't got a building. We were thinking of building one but we didn't get round to it, and there was some rural tourism money, or something, which somehow, we got hold of, which put the building up on top of the winder. Perfect, brilliant job, and that was another bit of funding that Cornwall Council managed, but not the big one. They then looked at the overall picture as to what to happen, and clearly adapted reuse of the upper buildings was something we'd talked about. And, they eventually worked this big scheme up, which must have been about £3,000,000 I think, eventually, a lot of European money, Lottery money, they put £1,000,000 in as well.

TB: Wow! Crikey.

BR: Yes, I know. And they finished up with this huge project of fixing all the top buildings.

[0:43:37]

TB: And they were rented out as offices?

BR: The group I've been involved with, were not involved with that. Cornwall Council let them, they do all that. At the last thing they wanted was a bunch of volunteers who'd be involved with letting out buildings, it's not what you do. We've put the cafe into what was the Weybridge Stores, it cost a fortune. The building was held up by the woodworm, I think, holding hands, it was an absolute wreck! I mean it was wrecked 40 years beforehand. Anyway, we got this cafe, which actually worked quite well. Again, I'm not quite sure now, because I've moved away from there, exactly how that runs.

TB: It's stunning.

BR: But again, what you don't do is volunteer group is run your own cafe, you just don't do this, I've learned that from talking to other people, you franchise it and let the experts do it. And if someone goes sick, they sort it. And that seemed to work quite well, that's working quite well as well. So that got almost to where we are now, that the place covers its costs, I think it's working okay. Though I've sort of stepped down from it, for a number of reasons. We have preserved all the buildings, was hoping to preserve some of the landscape around it as well, because it's basically an eco-museum, if you like, it's the surroundings and the people and the community around you, which are basically important. Hopefully, it will make enough money to subsidise education, because education really is one of the bottom lines of what you do. If you like, conservation, education, preservation and then finally you get the tourists in because they've got to pay for it. It's got to run it, get people in, you've got to make money out of that and somehow that's got to fund it.

Currently Cornwall Council still give a grant, much as Kerrier used to do, I suspect now, that the numbers are getting a lot more attractive and they're doing a lot better. So, they might be able to start funding schools to come, because schools down here haven't got any money, they haven't got

any transport, if you could offer them a free bus and a free day and a free everything, you're going to get them. And our responsibility is to educate, because that's what the place is all about. It developed as that, and we want future generations to understand where it all comes from, you know, this sense of place, which is really one of the things that underpins it, we never actually say it, this re-underpins what we try and do, I think. We have a big open day in May or something, and that's free. Again, it's local people who come to that, it's not the tourists who come to that. The local people come, it's part of what people round here do, and if they know about it, you try and get in the local press and so on. Getting the punters in to pay for it is more difficult, the marketing side of it is awkward. And it's something which constantly needs to be re-addressed and something we haven't been good at. One recognises that. But a sort of change of management now, which I think is improving things immensely. A bit of a difficult phase for a year or two, which I'm not going to go in to because it's irrelevant, the things were not working the way they should do. That's now been rectified and people now involved, it's a more comfortable situation and I suspect David Burkett may have mentioned that in passing.

[0:46:35]

TB: Yes. We were just saying that there are some very strong personalities and also, there was, perhaps, a difference of opinion as to whether it's a visitor attraction and should be outward, more aligned to that, to it being a visitor attraction, or whether it's, in fact, as you said at the beginning, more of a conservation thing. Is that right? Was there a kind of debate about role?

BR: It's a combination of the two. Yes, you want to attract people, you want to do things. What you don't want to do is wreck what you're trying to do. The National Trust are good at this, and I try and liken what King Edwards is, it's a bit like a National Trust house. You've got this lovely house, which probably didn't have much in it, so they put the right furniture in to make a sense out of it, they have lots of volunteers doing things. Okay they've got more serious management than we have, and they do do events and they do do things and they do it well. But the bottom line is conservation and authenticity, isn't it? And that's the National Trust. You don't budge on that. If they're going to do something that's going to damage the building, they close it. And, you need to do that. By all means, do certain things, you know if you want to run a car show, or something in the fields, why not? But preferably get someone else to run it, rent them the field, give us £500 or something, go and do it. If you want to run that sort of thing, you don't really want to be wearing your volunteers out doing this, because volunteers don't actually want to do it, really, because that's not what they're into. To get people to run car parks, you struggle, because they don't want to do that. But if someone else is running it, that's their problem. So, yes, do it. And that, I believe, is the way to do it. Now what people are currently thinking I'm not sure, but I suspect it's a bit like that. Yes, you want to make it interesting for local people, but you don't want to sort of bastardise it just for the sake of a quick buck, which can happen, I don't think it has happened so far. And it shouldn't do. But you've got to make money. I mean to be brutal about it, if you haven't got money, it doesn't work. And these things are expensive, bits fall off buildings, there's a limit to what volunteers can do with a paintbrush and a screwdriver. You know, and you finish up, the advantage of Cornwall Council is they actually cover the major repair costs and I'm not sure whether they actually, insure, you probably find councils don't bother to insure, because it's cheaper to pay for it, so, small outfit you've got to insure, haven't you? I've got to insure my house, if I've got a million houses, I wouldn't insure them. But I can't pay someone to hold my money.

So, having Cornwall Council, we've managed to achieve Big Brother, Big Brother are right into it, because they're in for millions, both their own money and grant money, and the support we're doing anyway, and there's a lot of support from Councillors too. Cornish Councillors. That's another thing I've got to mention, that over the years there's been a lot of support from local Councillors. People know what we're trying to do, and have been, they say the right things at the right time. For them to have bought it, clearly it meant strong Councillor feeling to decide to do that, Cornwall is not a rich county. To support getting the Lottery bids and the rest of it, and then put capital into it, which comes out of a different pot than schools and pedestrian crossings, but it's still money. I think, again, because the Council have realised that what we're trying to do is real and money is part of Cornwall's psyche slightly, it's difficult to explain, but it's what the Cornish used to do. Its past is mining, isn't it, it's an unusual connection between the two. Something, when you talk to people, in local council, they're predominantly on your side. You're pushing this open door a lot of the time, providing you've done your homework and you've made the working relationship for people, because Cornwall works on relationships. Bill Ward, the Pendarves agent who could be a bit difficult, sometimes, a bit like the Chinese, if you did business with Bill you talked about lots of other things first, and then you got to the point and then he agreed. And it was a bit like that. He always said, "well in Cornwall the tide goes out and the tide comes in. If you do all the right things and are supportive, eventually it comes round and helps you". That's basically what we've tried to do, I think. So, that's the politicking that's been running on behind, you talk to the average volunteer, he won't be aware of all this, they don't need to know, it's not what people do.

[0:50:56]

TB: I'm fascinated by this, the role of mining in the national psyche, as you were saying. Because, clearly, I didn't know about the preservation of all those mines, I'm just comparing it to South Wales where all the pit heads just went, you know, and fast as well, it was almost, I'm not sure if there's a policy or not, but still, it was, still, you know.

BR: I think it was policy and they had to do it.

TB: Yes, they're dangerous buildings, all that kind of stuff.

BR: And there may have been a slightly different. Cornwall never had that sort of attitude of sort of them and us, the coal owners, the unions, yes, there were unions here, strikes were very rare. A lot of people went abroad, I mean people talk about Cornwall and tin but in fact it's Cornwall and copper. Copper is what made them money, here. From about 1750 - 1850, particularly from 1800 to 1860. We produced something like, something approaching half the world's copper at one point, it was huge. Then Cornishmen went abroad with their knowledge and technology, we sort of, we're the cradle of deep mining, here, mine's here are 1,500 feet deep in 1850, nothing like that anywhere else in the world. The world, of course, has got smaller. The Cornish then went abroad to help open mines elsewhere, which in turn, eventually, destroyed the industry here because we became more expensive, bigger deposits were found that would make your eyes water compared with what we had. The world had moved on. So, we had the Cornish diaspora, where there were people all around the world with Cornish connections. You talk to someone in Camborne or Redruth, they'll probably have a great uncle living in Nevada, or somewhere, or in Burra in Australia, and you got the sort of Cornish communities around the world. And again, you've got this Cornishness which, the Cornish see themselves as being a race apart, and they certainly feel

themselves different. "Oh, you're not Cornish, boy" the way they talk to you. That's not being nasty, there is this feeling which, I think, it must be very nice, I think the Welsh have got it to a certain extent, the sense of identity which is very strong.

Now, mining shaped things here, it shaped the townships. The railway didn't start in Paddington, it started in Hayle. It went from Hayle to Camborne and then it extended to Truro and Penzance and then eventually it joined up with Brunel coming across the river in 1859, so the ports were mining ports for shipping in coal and shipping out copper, and that's why they're there. The townships that are built around them, you can go to the back of some of these towns, and you've got rows of housing like you'll see in Sheffield. And, in fact, if the minerals hadn't run out it would have looked like Sheffield, but we had no coal and the other things, so we had no secondary industries. It's something that people certainly this part, the west of Truro, have a strong feeling about, even now, even the dilution of people moving away from it, very few people have worked in mining in living memory, probably. It's been there. You drive down the A30 there's a head frame there and there are chimneys all over the place and you do get this romantic view about it, people over romanticise the Cornish miner going underground, singing a psalm or something, with his pasty in one hand, but that's bullshit! It was tough, hard work. It was the best paid work around.

[0:54:06]

TB: Yes, I was talking to a coal miner, he was saying, it was like a boom town, kind of thing, because the money was quite good.

BR: It was industrialisation. We look at it in 21st century eyes, where people live a lot longer. Look at the cotton mills of the 1800s, conditions, people didn't live very long, but that was, people weren't forced to work in these places, it was the way it was, and people wouldn't have questioned it. Again, the other thing about mining here, I suppose you get in coal as well, that many of the people that finished up running the mines, managing them, were people who actually started from the bottom, two generations back they were miners and they finished up with nice houses in Camborne. But then you create the middle class, we didn't create the, what you might call the upper class, they were already here, there weren't many of them, the landowners, but mining produced a middle class which Cornwall is very short of, because there was no reason to have it. Once you've got mine captains to manage and people to build quite nice houses, but small ones, they were still in touch with the roots that they came from. They weren't living in the big house and living in London, with thousands of acres, or whatever it was, there were a few, a relatively few. So, there's a different view about it, I think, and coal mining has a bit of a, a lot of people didn't like it very much, there was a hate type of situation, it was a sort of them and us, I think. I don't know, but I get a sense of this with coal.

[0:55:38]

TB: Yes, it was probably a bit polarised towards the end. I was going to ask, the mines shut down, I guess, in Cornwall, I was surprised at how late it went on till, actually. That's my ignorance, but it kind of, was it the 80s that the last one sort of closed?

BR: Yes, if you go back to what happened, copper was the big one and the bottom fell out of that between 1870 and 1880, the copper mining dropped by about 90%, it collapsed. Tin mining had

always been around for a long time, a lot of it was initially alluvial but it was always a poorer brother. In 1820 copper was worth two and a half times the value of tin. Fortunately, some of the deep mines did find tin in depth, round Camborne particularly from about 1870 onwards, there was another collapse around 1895 when a lot of mines went, which is why School of Mines developed King Edward, because they needed something modern to show people. It then sort of bumped along, 1920 there was a big collapse after the First World War, and all the mines down the Flat Lode which you can see, were working till about 1920, they went. And really from then on you had about three or four, after the war there were two. We're going back quite a long time now. There was a bit of a sort of surge in the early mid '60s early '70s with Wheal Jane opened and Mount Wellington and we're up to about five, but only three big ones. Then the price collapsed in 1985, for all kinds of reasons, it is a long story about why that happened. And, Geevor went, 1986, 1988 I suppose, Wheal Jane went in '93, they got a certain amount of government support, quite a lot of government support that kept them going. South Crofty shut in 1998.

[0:57:25]

TB: Wow, right, that's really late then.

BR: Yes. People have been playing with South Crofty ever since, I mean there have been a couple of attempts to do things, the company of Strongbow are actually in quite a serious attempt at the moment now, I think, they may well get it open. It's going to be deep, it's going to be expensive. There are, of course there was an attempt, while we look at Cornwall, mustn't forget West Devon is geologically the same. And there was a tungsten mine opened up about four years ago, it was known as Hemerdon in the old days, now it's known as Drakelands, that was an open pit, a quarry. Which is actually a far more attractive, from a mining point of view, because you can do your sums, you can work out what you've got, you can drill holes in it, you can do test work. It's rather that than looking at something 2,000 feet down which, well we think it's there, boy, but is it? That went onto care and maintenance last September, the price was low, so we don't know what's happening with that. And there is some major prospecting going on in East Cornwall at the moment, around Redmoor, which again is a shallow deposit, which people looked at in the 1980s, they're looking at it again now. Whether something will come of it, I don't know. Many people say it would be nice to have a mine in Cornwall because that's what Cornwall does. There's a certain romanticism about it, isn't there?

[0:58:35]

TB: Yes, I guess so. I'm just wondering whether there's an issue with when you're heritage-ising something, for want of a better word, is there a tension when you've got local people who have perhaps lost their livelihoods when a mine has closed? (*Phone rings)*

BR: Excuse me.

TB: Yes, please do.

(recording stops and restarts?)

BR: Really, because the thing sort of shrank and shrank and shrank, and the numbers employed were relatively small, I mean, there will have been a few people, clearly, but the numbers compared

with the whole of Cornwall, was minute. I mean, people say, "ah well, of course, you know, the mining collapsed in the 1980s." Holman's Engineering Works was a far bigger outfit than South Crofty was. We had a big engineering company in Camborne here, which in 1950s was employing 2,000 people. It employed more people than the whole of Cornish tin industry at the same time. But people forget that.

[0:59:26]

TB: Is that still going then?

BR: No. That shut in 2002, it was shrinking and shrinking and shrinking, and then it got taken over by one people and then somebody else and they played around with it and then it got smaller and smaller and smaller. And it sort of disappeared, it was really a family firm, the Holman, the Holman family were very paternalistic and they ran it for years. They started, I think, the company in some form or other, operated for about 150 years. Big in Camborne, I mean you talk to people in Camborne, "oh yes, I used to work in Holman's as a secretary, or a fitter and turner." Anybody who had anything to do with engineering, that would have worked at Holman's or done their apprenticeship there.

[1:00:02]

TB: I see, okay. So, well it wasn't perhaps, quite as significant, at least economically?

BR: No, I mean the thing, the big ones who would have had the difference, for example the collapse of the copper industry, where the industry disappeared in 15 years. Massive immigration, immigration has been a feature of people here. It didn't happen when you get into the 20th century, a) the skills we have were less saleable plus the fact that many countries now prefer their own people and don't want to employ miners, they want to employ engineers, probably, but the average guy who drills a rock drill is not terribly saleable, these days you train your own, but 100 years ago, of course, it was quite different, particularly in the sort of British Empire, shall we say. It's like Mexico, a lot of Cornishmen went to Mexico, went to the United States. I went to a gold mine a few years ago, California, Empire Mine, and half of the people there were Cornish. There are two pasty shops in Grass Valley.

[1:01:05]

TB: Right! So, you've got this huge amount of migration, but then the people who are left, thinking about Camborne and Redruth and, you know, these are not rich towns, are they?

BR: No. They are deprived areas. I have to be careful what I say here. Cornwall has always tended to suffer from a brain drain, where the brighter ones perhaps go off to university, go to college, or whatever, tend to move out because the work isn't here. I have a son in California and a son in Belfast. I'm not Cornish but I've lived here for 40 years, and that's typical of what happens. So, there's a tendency for those with, careful how I say this, I don't want to get libelled here, but for those with get up and go, not to stay here and use their energies to make it happen, because it's very difficult, they go off and do something else. Which doesn't help. But that would be very common in North Wales, I should think, also I should think in Norfolk, any peripheral place. Okay today perhaps with computers and widgets, you can do a bit more of that. The population of

Cornwall is growing, I don't really know, because it's a nice place to live, I think. But we're a poor county.

[1:02:16]

TB: And how does the museum sort of sit with the local community? Because I know, yesterday I was hearing on the free open days, it is astonishing where thousands of people kind of roll up.

BR: We probably get 1,500 people. It's something we've tried to work, and not as well as we would like to. I mean a few years ago I was given an award by Camborne Town Council for services to industrial heritage, which, yes, my presentation by the mayor, got a plaque on the wall, that sort of thing, it was really for KEM, not for me. I don't know how much they know about it, there are people you will talk to in Troon, which is a stone's throw away, they didn't even know it was there until a brown sign went up. How is it perceived? You'd have to talk to them and find out, I think. People are supportive. When business come in, local people and you talk to them and you give them, King Edward is small enough, you can actually talk to visitors, and that, again, is about certainly guiding people. They do it in a slightly different way now, but you pick them up at the museum, go through and turn things on, and you've perhaps got six people, you finish up three couples who've never met, and they start talking to each other and they're talking to you, by the time you get back into the shop, you've really got, you know where the humour is. "And by the way there's a very good book here, if you buy it, I'll sign it", type joke, which actually works. And you can create almost a personal relationship with people, what the average person in Camborne, Redruth thinks about it, they probably don't think about it at all. If you drive through Camborne, you've got the National Trust Cornish engines, there are many people in Camborne who've never been to them.

[1:03:57]

TB: Yes, sure. I guess you always get.

BR: And I mean it be a) you've got to pay, or maybe they just, it doesn't grab them. I think it's important that places like King Edward and the other similar places in Cornwall work hard to create this sense of place. It's important, I think. We need to know where we come from. Give us something to be proud of. Something which you can say is different. It is important to do that and I'm not just saying that, I believe that we should be working, for example we always give free entry to anybody within the radius of King Edward Mine, within a mile or so, Troon Truman School can always come for nothing, because it's our school. The more they come the less likely they are to smash it up when they get, as teenagers. And I can remember on a couple of occasions we had a school party in, I forget where, Camborne or somewhere, and about a week later, or two weeks later, parents came round with a little girl who was one of the group. And she was overheard telling her parents, all how it worked and what this did and this, she was about eight, and clearly, she'd got it. And she will always remember that. And that is what is pleasing.

I think recognition of outside bodies is nice, we did get an award from the mechanical engineers, they have a heritage award, there's a plaque on the wall. This is given to places of real significance, so you've got things like the Spitfire aeroplane, huge places, and yet little King Edward, we've got this plaque and we're in the same book as some of these enormously world famous, engineering

places. A guy came round to visit one time and one of the guides, a paid guy we had at the time, was talking to him, and he was saying "yes, this place is really interesting, I think you could maybe get some kind of award. Who shall I talk to?" So, Ben gave him, this guy, my phone number, as you do. So the guy rang me up and we got talking, he said "I was quite keen on this, I'll send you lots of information and bits and pieces" and eventually we got ourselves inscribed and they came down, we had a big presentation, and a sort of lunch all laid on for them, a plaque on the wall, which we've still got, and we're now recognised as being a place of importance. So, that's good for the volunteers. It would pass people in Cranborne by, it's not what it's about, but they had recognition of what you've done, for the people who really know what they're looking at, we're in with the big boys. I mean, these are *serious* places. It's little King Edward with its little shed. And that's fun. But important. It motivates people. It's important to work with the local community and we should do more of it. It's quite difficult to do. One would hope that as the place makes a little bit more money it can afford to encourage the local schools and really, almost, not quite put money into it, but be able to spend money so you're not worried about, yes, we can get a school party, yes, we'll hire your bus for you, yes we'll bring in an extra teacher and pay them.

TB: Draw them in, yes sure.

BR: Because that is the time to get these people. Some of the kids you get here, at that sort of age, are absolutely delightful. Really are. Because you do get, you know, when you see young people, we did have one group come in, I think they were about 10 or 11 age, and there were about 30 of them, we got them in the survey office, and you could see at the back there were three or four of them who were just difficult and the teacher said "you've got to keep an eye on them, that lot are difficult." And we said "oh yes" because they're in a strange environment, for a start, and as we were going out of the door with this lot, giving them a guided tour round, I got hold of two of them, I said "right, I want you guys to help me. I want you to go at the back and make sure everyone comes along, I want you to come up the front and keep everyone together, right, you're going to do that for me, right." And they perked up, because I'd given them responsibility. And when we went all the way round and we finished up, these two kids, they were obviously real tearaways, and on their way out, this little kid said to me "can you tell teacher we were good?" You see, you can't do it in a school with 30 kids, but you can do it with small numbers and I'm a grown up and I don't have that situation. But you can do that, now if you can do more of that, somehow involve younger people in what we do, I don't know how you do it, it's important to do that. Because King Edward is not going to make money. That's not what it's about, it has to, clearly, not being stupid, you have to make the numbers work. But it's not meant to make a profit, so there's a serious side of all this, is the people bit.

[1:08:39]

TB: Can I ask, were you, the World Heritage Status, were you involved in any way, was it a bid thing or, how did that work?

BR: Not directly. I mean clearly when the people came round, the assessor came round. He came to King Edward and looked at it, we've always been a big supporter of the World Heritage thing. And we know that the officers involved with that, I forget the woman who runs it at the moment, I forget her name.

TB: Was that, did the Council put it forward, or do you know how that works at all? Don't worry if you don't.

BR: The initial idea for it, when, back in 1990, the director of the National Trust in Cornwall, Peter Mansfield, brought a friend of his down, a chap called Stuart Smith who was then the director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, which is a serious place, and I met Stuart, he was coming, I think, Peter was interested in the National Trust bits of what they had and how they could deal with them. I remember going round with Stuart, and I think the county archaeologist Nick Johnson, and probably Peter Mansfield, driving round looking at these sites. And we showed Stuart King Edward and a few other places, and I've got a notebook, I used to actually write a little newsletter, once every couple of months, mainly because in the School of Mines to say what was going on. I'm actually looking at it now, because I'm writing it up and I came across this reference that he actually mentioned the words World Heritage then. He saw it, he said, because he was very much into this sort of thing, and of course Ironbridge is, he saw the potential of that. And it was from his initial ideas, now quite where it got kicked through from there, it must have been Cornwall Council initially, but he had the initial idea. I think the way they did it, overstretched it a bit, because they were trying to get so many bits, they'd probably seen the plan with all the blobs on it. Everyone wanted a bit of it. I'm not convinced that was the right way to go about it. I think once you've picked the good bits, perhaps the sort of Camborne, Redruth and Flat Lode area, Geevor the coast down far west and maybe one other one, but you've got so many bits of it, that I think people have trouble getting their head round it. If you look at the map it's difficult. I can see what they're trying to do, everyone wanted a bit, each council wanted to have a say. I'm not sure it worked, but it was very difficult to sell.

[1:10:55]

TB: I was going to say, has it had any impact? I know up in Wales I talked to them about it and they said there's this idea that overnight it would kind of be a big deal and you have international, sort of, tourism, but they said, really, it's gone sort of 10 years until they felt that, you know.

BR: I'm not sure people will go to places, you've got a World Heritage site. Hello Pen. Pen, meet Tony.

TB: Hello, how you doing? Nice to meet you.

Pen: I thought you were recording something.

BR: He is, he's recording.

TB: Don't worry, it's all right.

Pen: Would you like a cup of coffee?

TB: I'm fine, thank you.

BR: Sure?

TB: No, I'm fine.

Pen: A cold drink?

TB: No, really, it's fine, I had a big breakfast.

Pen: You all right?

BR: I'm fine, yep.

[1:11:34]

TB: Right, so.

BR: Yes, I don't think it had, I don't think most people if you talk to people in Camborne, would know where the boundary is. It's difficult to identify with it. You don't sort of drive into it and the world changes. You know, national parks work, Dartmoor, you drive in and you know you're in Dartmoor National Park straight off. So, it's nice. I don't know, you'd have to talk to the World Heritage people, to what extent it's actually changed people's perception of things. Because I don't think it did in my case, but then again, I'm quite close to it. And I don't know whether other people see it a different way. It was a good thing, at ticking the box, it's something else you can do and you've notice, you drive up and the sign we've got is a World Heritage sign with, we took the sign and put King Edward underneath it, which was the idea of one of my colleagues, which I think other people now do, we thought that's a good way of putting it and putting our name at the bottom. We tend to use that on headed paper sometimes, as well. But, whether, I don't know is the answer.

[1:12:46]

TB: Yes, yes. Don't worry, I was just curious as to whether there's, it feels like an overnight kind of impact, of anything like that.

BR: It's like people saying "right, well you've spent £2,000,000 on the site, and you have a business plan." I have problems with business plans because you produced them to keep the Lottery happy but they see through them as well. But we've had business plans with numbers on, "oh well the numbers are going to increase by 10% a year." Why? The marketing budget hasn't gone up. And if it does, there's going to be a lag, and it doesn't always work that way. You think, well I'm not sure, you could spend £1,000,000 on the site and you would not get one more visitor through the door because the locals might know about it, but the guy coming from Rotterdam or Rotherham won't. So, he will come because of the advertising blurb, because someone has told him that it's a good place to come, but the fact you spent £1,000,000 on it, long-term it will because you produce a better product, but it's not going to go, you're not going to get a spike. I don't think.

[1:13:46]

TB: Just on visitor numbers, I think they're about 3,500 a year, I think was a figure that came out yesterday. I'm just wondering whether, have they been sort of fairly steady at that kind of level, would you say over the years?

BR: Yes, I used to keep a graph up until about five years ago. I don't think I've kept it now, showing, just for interest, to see visitor numbers, visitor income and shop income. The shop one hasn't worked quite as well for a number of reasons, but I think that's going to improve. It has been

gradually increasing, it depends who you count. You see some people would say, I remember when we joined the Cornwall Council, they said "why don't you just count every visitor who comes on the site?" So, open days you count all those, and right across you've got volunteers coming on, you should count them as well. Of course, you get silly numbers. It does make your numbers look good, but when we started counting that way, so we said "okay, every time a volunteer comes too, we'll count them, because it's part of footfall." Of course, visitor numbers went crazy, but that didn't tell you anything. What tells you, the people who've put their hand in their pocket. The number of free people, if you're a member of the Carn Brae Mining Society or the Trevithick Society, you count as a visitor, well you are. From Cornwall Council point of view, but you aren't from an accountant's point of view. I'm more interested in the accountant's view, but it's nice to know more people are coming. So, really you want to keep information in different ways and what the total footfall is, take volunteers out, then footfall, then take all the free people out then see what you've got. So, really, if you've got three bits of information, then you can make some valued judgements. There's a tendency of people to collect information for information's sake. You collect information to make decisions, like an accountant, you do not, on your spreadsheet your accounts, put down, cost of buying a mobile phone, because it's not a decision-making point. Other things are, so you need to, the important bit about it for me is information, it's making decisions, they're normally financial. So, what you do and what have you done.

[1:15:40]

TB: So, was your graph then, looking at the paying customers and how was that line? Was it kind of flat, or up or down?

BR: It was increasing every year. I think only up to 2010 or something, the first few years it was increasing, I don't know where I've...

TB: And opening hours, I understand they're basically, well Easter, through the summer into the autumn and every day but not Sundays, has that always been the case?

[1:16:06]

BR: They vary. Initially when we started, we were doing it sort of four or five days a week. And we did try and do it in September but the numbers didn't work, certainly running with volunteers, the numbers were relatively small. Over time they've managed to increase the days when it's open and lengthen the season a bit. Providing you've got enough volunteers so you don't wear your volunteers out. Which is something that concerns me.

We designed it initially to run with two people, we were recognising that people were going to be a problem. One person in the shop, one person guiding and the guiding only took place from the museum down to the mill, so people could find their way around, personally if I go somewhere, I prefer to do it anyway. I think they're doing something different now, I think they do more guiding and they have two in the shop and two guiding. Now that's a lot of energy, awful lot of effort, do you go on doing that? Or do you, perhaps, not open quite as much, and use that volunteer effort to paint a building, or something? These are the sort of decisions you have to make or maybe the people who work in the shop don't paint buildings, anyway. So, it's horses for courses. It can be a bit fraught and of course you get days when the place doesn't open because you haven't got people.

As I say I haven't been involved at the site for the last three years so I don't quite know what is happening now, but there have been occasions when the place doesn't open, which is not good when people pitch up. It's a difficult one. If you worked out the cost of a volunteer at £8 an hour, which is the minimum, and you got four people on site for what, six hours a day, minimum? Six days a week, you wouldn't be open. So, you tend to depend upon volunteers, which is fine. But it would be nice to have at least one paid person there to take, do the day to day bits and pieces that you need. I mean people have become directors, we call them directors for want of a better word, they're not different from the other volunteers, they just do the admin, and a lot of people don't want to do admin. We certainly had the situation when I ran the board, we could have picked an equally competent board from the ones who weren't, but they didn't want to do it. I want to go and play trains, I don't want to do that.

[1:18:28]

TB: Yes. Well, just tell me a little bit about the governance because you said it started off as a kind of a society, which couldn't even have the money, really, it was kind of much more (1:18:37 *crosstalking*)

BR: We occasionally got donations, so we set up a bank account, and it worked from that point of view.

[1:18:41]

TB: And then it was a limited company.

BR: Then we turned it into a limited company.

[1:18:44]

TB: Did it stay as that, or did it turn into a charity at some point?

BR: We turned into a limited company in 2005 but we wrote the memorandum of articles as if it was a charity, so people were actually referred to as Trustees. A few years later, I suppose it must have been, I forget the date now, where are we now, 2010 perhaps. It seemed attractive to become a charity because there might have been options for things like Gift Aid, or even getting grants. And, I took, well a colleague of mine had a look at it and found it too difficult or something, so I had a go at it, got onto the Charity Commission, and the first thing they did was find someone sensible to talk to. They were totally outstanding. I can't think of the woman's name. I think I wrote them something and she said "right, send me your articles, tell me what you want to do." So, I sent the articles of memorandum to see what we could do. The Memorandum needed a slight change, but not very much, it was a couple of lines. The articles were fine as they were, they're going to need changing, they'd got a bit out of date, but in order to get to tick all the boxes, it all worked, and it went through sort of on the nod, really, and this person was amazingly helpful. I was impressed with the way it was dealt with, because most of us had no experience of this. Unless you've got an experienced person, well I organise charities, they start charging you to do it. And this was, well not quite a morning's work, but it wasn't much more than that, again, having got the right person, it comes back to the politics again. If you know all the right people to talk to, then it works.

[1:20:18]

TB: So, did you then stop becoming a limited company?

BR: No, we were both, so we had to be both. So, we had to return to the Charity Commission and to Companies House. The return is basically the same, it just meant we changed the front cover. But we were still a limited company. I know they're currently looking at changing that and going to a CIO, I think, is that what it's called? Which is probably the right way to do these things, and the way these things tend to go. But the thought was, being a charity, it would give one the option though we'd never actually got on top of the Gift Aid, but some thought was, if you want to get grants, then people like charities. It ticks a box. And I think that probably helped when we were looking for the money to do the major, the sort of 3.5 million works.

We talked to, the charitable body who gave money which was a mixture of part HLF and part, one of these, what's the guy, Roy Webber, I think, the thing that buildings at risk, there's a funding for buildings at risk, which is quite separate from what everybody else do. And we were then looking, obviously at the buildings there, and some of our buildings had been defined by English Heritage, as buildings at risk. Which is another attractive thing, to fix them. So, this chap, we pretty much told him what we wanted to do and he offered us £100,000 towards the overall cost of what we were going to do. That was quite attractive, and then he rang me up one day and said, “look, I'm down in Devon, would you like me to pop down for a chat?” Now my experience is, if you get people across the table and start talking to them, and he came down and we explained what we were going to do, he said "well, rather than sort of scatter it around, I'd like to put the money into one thing, like, the cafe. I could increase it to £200,000." That was by talking to somebody and having a project and knowing what we wanted to do. And he could see where it was going to go. And, of course, it got done and the money got spent and I think, we'd begun to realise that many of these bodies who've got money, actually have trouble giving it to the right causes because they have restrictions with whom they can give it to. And because we ticked all the boxes, it was a seriously, yes, building at risk, boy! I tell you, if you look in the book, yes.

So, that actually was, again, money that sort of came out of the sky and it happened on a number of occasions and there was another case when, earlier on, this must have been early 1990s, we were concerned about the building that contains the stamps, because the corrugated was rusting and the water was getting into the fabric of the building, it was timber framed. And, because I knew people in Groundwork Kerrier there's a thing called UK2000, which was funding for volunteer bodies supplying materials. The chap who run it, I obviously knew him and explained that we were looking to fix this up, because we needed to do it. And he looked at me and said "God you're going to have trouble doing that with volunteers aren't you?" And I said "yes." He said "there is a clause in this, that if you find bits difficult, you can always have a contractor do some of it." So, the whole thing was done by a contractor. It was money very well spent. I mean, the money came through the School of Mines, actually, we ordered the steel from South Wales, it was good quality, local contractor did a very good job, and the same time put the building over the diesel engine, which we were going to try and do. That was a very good use of grant money, because he understood how it worked, he understood they want to get value for money and the end result was what the thing was set up to do in the first place. But if you take me at face value, you wouldn't have done it. Again, it's talking to people. And understanding what the philosophy is behind grants, because people, in my

experience, people want to help you. How can you tick their boxes, for them to do that? I might be a bit naive about this, but there's a sense of that.

[1:24:12]

TB: I'm just wondering how you felt, there's an extraordinary bit about this which is that, this was a school of mining, it was going to be a school of mining kind of museum and clearly it has, you know, the university pulled out, which is, must have been a moment of strangeness.

BR: Well, we started this in a small way, the idea was we'd have this thing it might help, but it was never a big deal at all. It was just something, that was the excuse to get started, but we never actually got to the point of actually doing it to do that. So, it was really quite peripheral, the School of Mines had no real involvement in it, apart from the fact we were looking after a building that was falling down, and looking after the place a bit, and generally sort of helping.

[1:24:52]

TB: Yes. But, there's also a kind of element of, is the heritage of the school itself, isn't there? I'm just thinking about that amazing lecture theatre, which I understand isn't open to the public, usually, but you know.

BR: That is brilliant.

TB: It is, it's got an amazing feeling to it.

BR: I mean if you look at the photograph I've got, taken about 1899, it hasn't changed! And you walk into that building, I don't know whether you sensed it, but it has a feeling about that building. Visitors, when they walk in, they say "hey, there's something special here. Is it because it's wood?" There's something about that building. Now, in some respects this is part of the heritage of the School of Mines, and there's something which we've always wanted and we'll hopefully develop more rather tell the story of it, it's not the most exciting story for the visitor. Nor are rock drills, frankly, they're lumps of metal. When these go round, it's interesting. Very much so. But one has a duty to tell that story because that's why it's there, so you have to mix doing the things that are important for the site, and doing things that are important to make sure we don't bore the socks off the visitor. Because the displays we have, you could argue, are reversible, so you could put different things in and take them out. But we want people to be interested and enjoy themselves. Most visitors don't come back, the locals probably do, most visitors come to Cornwall, they will go to a site and say "I've done that." Though occasionally you get people who come back and some people do travel a long way, if they're interested in that sort of thing. So, do you really want to go all out for the incoming visitor or just do enough to keep them happy and not wear yourself out in the process? Because you need their money. Being brutal. The going rate is 30 pieces of silver, isn't it? But you've got to have these people. And you want them to enjoy themselves, and it's actually quite nice when you work in a place like this, you meet some very interesting people. You really do.

[1:26:43]

TB: Well, I'm just thinking about, we haven't talked about the actual displays and the exhibition side itself, and it sounds like you had some very strong ideas about that. Were you influenced by other sites particularly? Or was it something that you kind of?

BR: Are you talking about the museum?

TB: Well, it's funny because we noticed this, yesterday, that you say the museum and then you have the…

BR: Winder House.

TB: Yes, the workshop and where the machines are.

BR: The mill, yes.

TB: The mill, that's it, yes. And then there's also things like the lecture theatre, which, as you say, perhaps not open anyway. But to the visitor, it is all museum in terms of, it's called itself a museum, and that's the whole site. But, even in the machine sort of space there's displays on the walls and explanations and so on.

[1:27:26]

BR: There are bits, there shouldn't be too much.

TB: So just tell me about how you kind of, how that came about? How you thought all that through.

[1:27:32]

BR: In the mill, the bit down the bottom, unless they've put more in recently, because I haven't really been involved the last two or three years, there was very little. Because people are going to be guided through that, and therefore if you put signs all over the place, it detracts from what the place is. On an open day you want signs, because people will wander around. When you're taking a visitor through, really you want the place to be as if it's working, almost, as if the people have just gone home. So, you want a few bits lying about on the floor, but not messy, it should be safe. The kit should work, but it shouldn't be sort of all full of explanation of what this and that is, and I don't think it should do. We did put one up which was, dear old Willie with his van and shovel, because he built the place and here he is looking across that, and that's important, so if you can get that and tell the story about him.

[1:28:14]

TB: I loved that, it was almost like a little memorial there, somehow, but in a really kind of engaging way, I thought that was great.

BR: I designed that, and I hope it got a sort of sense of the feeling about the man himself, because you could see him looking across the mill, and there he is with his cap, his tie, his crumpled shirt and his sports jacket. He's that generation, he did not own an anorak. He did not own a roll neck pullover. Willy was the classic sort of man with his, but he'd come and put his overalls on, but

he'd still have his tie on and his cap, because that was Willie. And it's important to capture that because those, it's people. And I found the difficult bit.

Half the population are female, probably, and they see things in a different way than males do. When I've been to a lot of museums, Pam, my second wife, but we were married for 25 years, and I tend to go to museums and railway things, because we both like that, and I do particularly, so I drag her round mine sites all over the place. And one tends to see what other people do. And I also watch the way that she reacts to things, for example, up on the wall in the museum, you've got these three people on the wall which is the sort of social comment between the miner, mine owner, if you like, and the landowner. Which is the society it was in 1900, that idea came from the Killhope Museum up in Durham, because they had a stand of cut out people, Pam liked that, because she looked at them and she could identify with that. So, one has tried, and it's difficult, but I want pictures of people. There's enough techy stuff in there. But if you look in the museum there are a couple of pictures of some women, about to go underground. Now, we found those photographs, very rare, we could identify who were in it and they were taken of course, at King Edward. We try to use King Edward as the model, so almost all the pictures in the museum, are King Edward pictures. Why not use that as a vehicle to explain it? Because there's enough there to show these things. So, we've got these people standing there, so we want to make a comment about women going underground and women never worked in mines, and who those people are, and how rare that was, because someone took the picture of it. And you notice, and one thing we tended to do, certainly when I was running it, we had a camera in the museum and when people have finished watching the film, we'd go and send a guide up and you could watch the way people react and look at things. And you could see different people look at different things, and you watch them, and watch the way that female visitors come in, "oh I don't want to go to a mining museum" and the children "don't want to go to a mining museum" and Dad's loving it! And suddenly you get these pictures of people, and people start looking at them, and they spend more time, people looking at them, the blokes don't, they're off looking at the machinery, but the women are looking at the pictures, people. And that's important.

So, in the mill there shouldn't be much interpretation, they may have added more, but I would be against that, because you don't need it, because you're going to explain it. And I don't want people reading things in there, I want them to take a different experience, because the mill is an experience, isn't it? They don't have to understand it. The museum bit, and the Winder House, the two of those, the Winder House is a bit more modern, the concept there was to try and actually educate and try and teach people and the way that I designed those was to have a) put pictures, the danger, of course, the book on the wall, have some information in quite large print, and then have smaller stuff that people may or may not want to read. And eventually it will come up on little tablets. Because that's how people do it. Someone has walked straight past, some people read every bloody word, and if you can do it like that, people will probably read the first bit, and look at the picture, fine. That's 90%, but there are other people who want a bit more, and that's how that it evolved, and we're trying to get a bit of a house style of doing it, it's just quite cheap.

And we did the same thing in the Winder House, there was a mistake with that. What happened was, because it again, that was Cornwall Council money, they, of course, didn't just pick their friendly designer, they had to go out and get quotes, didn't they? Of course, you do, so they finished up with people in Bradford were going to do the designs. I've had to talk to someone, I can develop

plans with you because I can sketch things, and there's an understanding. I mean, they're nice enough people, but they were sending down Pdfs and I was looking at them on my computer, and I thought, right well, I'll print a bit of it off 100% size because it's important that you can put it on the wall and read it. The first thing you do with a panel, is you put it on the wall, can you read that? If you can't, then it's wrong. So, I get these up, I remember I printed out one of them, just a corner, A4, to look at the print size, that was fine. So, yes. So, I printed these panels, but of course they didn't print them to 100%, did they? They printed them at 90% to fit the size, which, had it been down here, I would have a full size run off, I didn't think to ask. So, the print on the Winder House is just a little bit small.

[1:32:56]

TB: Right, I see. Yes.

BR: Which is a bit niggly. But there, again, it's trying to use, telling the story of Holman's again we had quite a lot information. I think different people like different things. Some people are very complimentary, some people say there are too many words. You can't please all the people.

TB: No, sure. And as you say, people.

BR: And by and large I think it works. For design by people who wouldn't know, we haven't got degrees in museum science, you know. We're a bunch of ordinary people. But by watching what other people do, I think we got this reasonably well with some of that. If I did it again, I'd probably have fewer words.

[1:33:34]

TB: Well there's always something nice, I don't know how recent this is, but there's the sort of trail around the site as well, and I don't know if that's something which you were involved in.

BR: The thing was designed, we're talking about the museum bit, was designed to operate with two people. So, you've got to put fencing to keep the animals in, sorry, tourists. So, that was designed that you would come out of the back door, the boiler house wasn't in use then, you keep going round and you had your thing, we told you what to do and you went up to the shaft and you looked at that. You went into the Winder House then you came out again, then you went into the museum. It's a logical sort of step to go. Shaft, Winder House, Museum. Museum starts off with a bit of geology, a bit of explanation, we had a film in there, which was actually telling the story of the place, they could watch that and we could watch them on cameras. When they finished, and they always sort of finished up in there, we send a guide up, they'd seen the site, they'd seen the film, most of them, and you had them half way down the route for what you wanted and then you could start finding out what they wanted to do, do some explanation to try and get logic. And the logic, of course, was you finish up in the plant at the end, you follow the process through, and of course you finish up coming through the shop, as all good museums do. I think that was logical. The attempt was to try and get, it doesn't work perfectly, to get some progression and particularly you wanted a good bit at the end, or people will get bored. But the fun bit is going round through the mill. And they forget the fact that they're standing about in the museum going "God what's all this?" Because they found they enjoyed that, of course they had contact with people. The key thing, if you visit places, if you've got guides who relate, people get an experience out of it. And they start telling you

about their holidays. And that's important. Because to exercise, and you can do it with small groups, and you can do it with a small place, you can't do it at the science museum, or York Rail museum, can you? It doesn't work like that. With a small place you probably can. So, I don't know what you felt about it, you only had a quick glimpse, but we try to get some sort of logic out of it as best we could within the limitations of the space.

[1:35:33]

TB: Well I was really impressed by the range of it. I mean, I was thinking, what are the five big questions as a tourist driving along the A30? It's like what are those towers? What do they do? You know, I might have heard of the women going down the mines, what did they do? In answer to all of those things, but also, you've got a very, if you wanted it, an incredibly kind of detailed sense of the entire process.

BR: You can go further with it. I mean it's probably a bit too much of that. We did have one set of visitors, originally in the entrance bit the car sign, which they've now changed, we had a thing called the Mineral Tramways display, the first one, we had a second one. But this was even the previous one. We had this thing in there and these visitors came in and that day we were going to reorganise it and move it all around. And this was 15 years ago, at least. And this couple came in and they came at about 11 o'clock and they got their ticket and they wandered off and didn't come back and we were moving all the stuff around. Anyway, they didn't get to the mill till lunchtime, so I said "we're going to have a pasty, and maybe they'll come back." And they came back and did the rest of it, and when they left, they said "it's the only museum they've been to that changed when they were there." (*laughter)*

TB: That's amazing. So, they were there for a whole day, basically, yes. And you could be, you know, there's enough there.

[1:36:49]

BR: Yes, and there's a comment in the visitor's book, which we liked, I did put it on one of panels, "uniquely excellent." That's the thinking man's comment. So, we picked that up, I don't know if it's still there now, but I put it on something down near the shop.

TB: Oh, I like that, yes, it's, lovely.

BR: It's something which, if you like, that's what we were trying to achieve. Remember, none of us have any experience in this sort of thing. It's very amateur in the basis of it not paid, but not amateur in the way everyone is trying to do it. There is also some quite seriously dangerous equipment in there.

TB: Yes, I was going to say, that's a responsibility in itself.

BR: When we first put the shaking table in, someone came along and said "Oh you have to put a fence in three feet away." Really? Why? "Well, it's dangerous isn't it?" Well so are the stairs. You're more likely to kill yourself on the stairs than you are with that, what you don't do is run machinery unless there is somewhere there. So, on open day the machinery does not run unless there are people standing there. So, you can get right up to that shaking table, and put your fingers

on it, and kids can pick the stuff up, because that's also important. This hands on, I think, particularly for children, give them a mineral to hold, is it heavy? Get them to inter-react with things, the Big Dipper wheel, when it is stationary, people will walk past it. You turn it on and watch what people do, they start looking at it and they start learning, they find it interesting because it goes round. The stuff is potentially dangerous but I think there's enough guarding. So far no one has been hurt. So, the thing is, the best part of 15 years running it.

[1:38:30]

TB: Has there been, a final question, and thank you, by the way, for all your time, it's been absolutely fascinating, it's been great. I will send you the transcript of this, so if that's useful for your writing up of things, I don't know, it might be. What's been the toughest of this entire thing, I know it's been 30 years, as you said, what's been the toughest moment? And also, what's been, for you, the best moment, where you've just really thought, I'm really pleased with this?

BR: The toughest moments, I think, and it's difficult to say this, there's been struggling with some of my fellow directors who had a very different way of doing things in terms of communication and professionalism. Now that sounds very critical. It is critical. And I found that difficult and I got to the point I was going to meetings I didn't want to go to. And that's not the way it should be and that was the time to step down from that because it was not a happy situation. Because I put a lot of effort into it. But having said that, people say "oh, don't you feel bad about it?" And I said "look, I achieved what we set out to do." I say “we” because all this had been done because of everybody else. I can do anything if I can find a man to do it for me, that's my saying, and that's true. If you want to do something, think big. We'll put a winder in. You're joking? You're going to get this winder back and put a building round it, you must be out of your mind! In fact, we had a big visitor from English Heritage people years ago, "you'll never get this place to open. You'll never get it to work." And they were being serious. And we said "yes we will." You've got to believe in what you're bloody well doing. And if you go on telling people what you're going to do, to say that we actually managed to get the whole site, get the whole place, get Cornwall involved, have £3.5 million spent on it, open to the public, have a working plant, having buildings that aren't going to fall down, from a bunch of volunteers, is remarkable.

But I had previous experience of this, the engine houses at Botallock, I don't know if you know them, there's two of them, right down by the cliffs down the far west, and they were falling down and someone had pointed out, the Carn Brea Mining Society about 1980, "oh, they're falling down." So, "we'll do something about it." So, we wrote to the Council and they wrote back and said, "Not our bloody problem." We then wrote to the owner, wrote back, "not a problem". So, we said, "right, we'll fix them." Small mining society are going to fix two engine houses, halfway down a cliff, owned by somebody else. We did it. It took five years. It was a mixture of all kinds. Again, it's things falling into place, the right grant from one person, then the manpower services system was then running, so we got all the labour for almost nothing. Again, this cliff hanger thing, it's not going to work, it's not going to work. It did. And I think if you think, if you've got a good enough idea keep telling people, it sometimes actually happens. But you've got to think big. "We're going to try and do that." You don't do it, sometimes it doesn't work, but sometimes it does.

So, the best ones, I don't think there's a best moment, I think the moments have been, the best moments have been working with people. The fun and the buzz of things happening, smiling faces,

the small children, it's the people bit. And it's been working, all this could not have happened if it wasn't for the help of all these people outside, the volunteers, the Councillors, people who gave us bits of kit, we borrowed cranes. We actually borrowed a rigging crew from the Culdrose Air Base, a 30-ton crane and four riggers for a day because one of our volunteers, his son-in-law has something to do with the rigging crew and we were putting the winder in, it was in bits, and we got this crane and it turned up and they put it in for us. And then the guy on the way out said "oh you've got that load on that wagon outside there, we can take that away and get it shot blasted and painted for you." And he put it in his lorry and took it away. And he came back. We kept getting this, because what we were trying to do was actually quite good and despite some of the problems, we've had with management over the last few years, it's actually a very robust thing. It's a good idea.

[1:42:44]

TB: Well that's it. It seems to have captured people's imaginations, whoever they are. They get it.

BR: That's what you've got to try and do, and it's up to the people involved in this, and I'm sure you've talked to other people in smaller places. You've got to have enthusiasm about it but you've also got to be realistic and don't think you're going to get £10,000. Yes, talk to a guy doing a business plan "oh well, we'll draft this, you're going to have 12,000 visitors in three years' time." Why? You know, you look at these people, and they're experts, you say "it's ridiculous." They won't listen to you.

I remember we were talking to the Lottery about this big grant, and the idea was it would fund a man for a couple of years to help to run things, and obviously when the money ran out, we were making enough money because the business plan showed that, that we'd be employing him in perpetuity. And I said "these people aren't going to turn up. I'm planning for failure." And he looked at me and said "what do you mean?" And I said "look, if it doesn't work like this, and this guy falls off the table in two years' time, we must be able to run this without him being there. We cannot get ourselves in the position where we've come to depend upon him." Which could happen, sit back and say do it. They looked at me aghast when I said it until they realised I was being quite serious. I said "what I'm planning is for the future and making allowances for the fact that things don't always work." And you've got to have a fall back.

[1:44:03]

TB: Yes. This £3,000,000 thing, the whole project.

BR: Yes, that was great, but I mean employing people out of it, if we finish up at the end, most of the money is spent on the buildings rather than the museum bit, hardly any on the museum to any great extent. But the point was you've got to be realistic and say, "look, this isn't always going to work" and have a fall back. Now we've been pessimistic, a pessimist who was an optimist who was a realist. You've got to look at the bad bits and knock it a bit first, and then screw it together again to make it work. Not just say "yes it's going to happen, there's the business plan." Bullshit, it doesn't work.

[1:44:38]

TB: Did that actually happen? Did you have someone for a couple of years as part of that?

BR: Yes, as part of the Lottery thing we had two, one person was doing events, I think for about 18 months, we had one guy for two years. I don't think, again being critical, I don't think that the management made full use of him. I worked with him, get him involved, get him involved with marketing, he was very frustrated. He didn't like the way things were being run, after I left. I'm not being clever about it. Yes, at the end, they weren't making the £20,000 extra a year to pay him.

TB: So that's gone back, in fact, to the old system, of volunteers.

BR: So, it's back to the way it was before, which is fine, it works but you've got to think that way. And I'm always looking at projects, the first thing I do is take them to pieces and find out what's wrong with it. And people say "oh, you're always finding fault." Now hang on a minute, let's look at that first, find out why I can't do it. My wife says that, "you always say you can't do it and then you think about it and say you can." But I've thought out, we all do this, think about how we're going to make it work. But recognise it might not. Because sometimes it doesn't but you can get out of it.

[1:45:47]

TB: Yes, I see. Is there anything we haven't mentioned that you'd like to? It's been great, it's been a really good.

BR: I don't know, there's an awful lot of stuff to be quite honest. You can go sort of endlessly at different things we got involved in.

TB: Yes, just on the museum front.

BR: Oh, the things that went, oh dear, collecting stuff, you've no idea! The places we went to.

TB: That must have been so much fun, though, just kind of rolling up at some, you know, some shed and seeing this pile of stuff.

BR: Pulling bits of equipment out.

TB: It must have been absolutely brilliant.

BR: Yes, on one occasion, I mean at Holman's Works, and there was this rather nice armoured cable, and dear old Willie was going to, the power was all turned off, and Willy was going to sort of cut the cable off, a nice length of armoured cable, and Frank Love, one of our volunteers, he had an electrical background, said "I'll just put a meter on it." And it was live. The whole thing was supposed to be turned off, it's completely dead, the building hadn't been used for years, there was a whacking great cable like that, it was live.

TB: Oh my God! Was he all right?

BR: He didn't cut it, we tested it first.

TB: Oh, I see, that was close, that's brilliant.

BR: We had a lot of moments, but yes, I think I was involved with Geevor for a couple of years, and that was actually quite interesting, that was rather different the way that was set up, sort of a number of extra employees sort of volunteered and then finished up with jobs. So, Geevor was very much creating jobs but it's still a conservation project. It's also with Cornwall Council. Have you been to Geevor yet?

TB: I haven't actually, no I've seen pictures of it and stuff, it looks amazing.

BR: Mike Simpson is the guy to talk to. He was one of my students when I was a lecturer, that's how it works.

TB: It looks stunning from what I've seen of it.

BR: It's big. You've got two and half acres of buildings, for a start. And so, it is King Edward on steroids. It's a real full sized mine. I always said if you come to KEB first, we'll explain how it works, you can go round that mill in half an hour and you've got a fair understanding of how it all works. Go to Geevor, it's just confusing until you begin to understand the principles, then you can walk round and look at it and say "yes, I can see basically how all this works." But it's huge. We've got two shaking tables, they've got 50. It was an operational mine. So, King Edward is sort of, it's a microcosm really, because it is so small and you can do an awful lot in a very short time, you haven't got to walk half a mile to get anywhere, I can walk round the site, the museum bit in two minutes. Almost, yes. Geevor, you walk all the way down to the bottom, all the way back up again, it's huge, but it's different and it's an exciting project and the location is fantastic, over by the sea. I actually worked underground there as a student, once. Again, the interest, going back, 30 years later I think, 40 years later.

TB: Yes, wonderful. Look, thank you so much, I'll stop it there.

Audio ends: [1:48:28]