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“Fool's gold”
John Cole

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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

Letters

Fool's gold

The interest shown by Don Clayton,¹ Richard Porter and Roger Taylor² prompts me to expose my shame (inadequate research for an article of only fifty words) and provide a more authentic explanation for the bogus Liskeard Gold Mine. It was a foolish rather than a mischievous local responsible and A K Hamilton Jenkin gives a scathing account of this venture in his *Mines and Miners of Cornwall, Volume XIV*.

In the late seventeen hundreds a Liskeard resident and his son (a local clergyman) with more money than geological sense, discovered a vein of 'soft micaceous schist having a deep yellowish tinge' and, mistaking this for gold, spent considerable sums erecting machinery to bring this to the surface. Hamilton Jenkin is equally unkind to the surveyor who put the mine (probably the small rectangle just south west of the G of 'Gold') on the map in about 1803. But this is unfair. If the surveyor finds evidence of mining or quarrying he is bound to accept the owner's claim for the product and if he or she says 'treacle' then so be it.³

Changing the subject slightly, as did Richard, dubious river and stream accuracy has been noted elsewhere on Old Series one-inch sheet 25. On north Dartmoor numerous tors (high points of outcropping rock), Princetown Prison and Cranmere Pool were found to be perfectly accurate when compared with the modern Seventh Series, indicating instrumental fixation. But the River Tavy is badly in error at Watern Oke (5683) and the East Dart at Stannon Tor (6381). There are several other lesser examples. No amount of natural and gradual (or even man-made) change can explain these mistakes. There is also at least one instance of water flowing both ways, with the North Teign River joining a tributary of the East Dart north of Stannon Tor.

John Cole

¹ *Sheetlines* 74, 52.

² *Sheetlines* 75, 47-48.

³ Maybe the idea of a Treacle Mine is not so daft either. A correspondent to a local newspaper suggested that coarse sugar beet could crop two or three times a year whether harvested or not. These would overgrow each other and 'mulch down' similar to peat, several metres in depth. Sugar beet was a common crop in the Tamar Valley of West Devon and perhaps hundreds of years of compressed beet forming a dense black layer ...