

NEWS FROM THE JOHN HARRIS SOCIETY

# *Bardh*

SPRING 2026 No. 78



**CELEBRATING THE MINER, POET & PREACHER**

## CHAIRMAN'S *Ramblings*



Adrian Mitchell

Hello and welcome to this exciting new edition of *Bardh*. Whether you are a new member of the John Harris Society or an existing member, we would like to thank you for your interest in the works and writing of John Harris, Cornish Miner, Poet and Preacher.

His works are a wonderful collection of writings consisting of his poetry on religious faith, family life, local people, his working environment and the sublime Cornish natural environment. It is a privilege to be the guardians and promoters of his literary works.

We strongly encourage you to attend our AGM on 14 March, 2026, where we shall undertake some short moments of Society business and then we are delighted to welcome the Revd Roger Bush to speak to us.

If you've not heard Roger speak before please make every effort to come and hear this wonderful literary speaker and published poet.

Here at the society we continue to promote and highlight the works of John Harris all over the county and throughout the year; we encourage you to join us at any of our planned events. My heartfelt thanks go to all of the society volunteers who make this activity so pleasing and possible. Until we meet again, may I wish you all every blessing.

Adrian

From SONNETS TO THE MONTHS

## MARCH

*With fresh gales rushing through the shivering trees,  
Drives crashing March. The white clouds southward fly,  
And up between them shine blue fields of sky,  
The lark's first carol rings among the leas.  
Now search the moorlands for the earliest flower,  
Timidly blushing 'neath the tempest's wing,  
Violet and primrose in the shelter'd bower;  
While little lambs are sporting by the spring.  
Beside their teams the merry plough-boys sing.  
Twitter the birds where golden furze-flowers shine;  
The crocus blossoms in the garden ring,  
And wood and wold are full of lays Divine.  
The hopeful sower sows the precious seed,  
With trust in Heaven, upon the furrow'd mead.*

## THE JOHN HARRIS SOCIETY



### Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 14 March, 2026, 2pm  
at Troon Methodist Church

Guest speaker:

**THE VERY REVD ROGER BUSH**

Subject:

### THE QUIET REVOLUTION

An exploration of the impact that writers and poets like John Harris had on the industrial, social and cultural life of mid-Victorian Cornwall, or how Marxism never got beyond the Tamar.

**Followed by refreshments**

## Contacts

### OFFICERS

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### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription fee - £15 per year  
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pandglangford@gmail.com

### NEWSLETTER

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**From the Treasurer:** I am so grateful to those members who have amended the instructions to their banks and have paid the new subscription of £15 per member per annum.

I would still appreciate it if payments can be made **by the end of March**, as the **first three months** of the new year are always the most demanding on our finances.

Payments made direct to The John Harris Society, Sort code 30-97-00, account no. 00480676 save the JHS bank charges. Please include your name

as a reference. If that method proves inconvenient, cheques can be made payable to The John Harris Society and sent to Paul Langford, Durlston, Pennance Lane, Lanner, Redruth TR16 5TL. If paying from outside the UK, please use the following method which will not incur a charge: BIC: LOYDGB21298 and IBAN: GB42 LOYD 3097 0000 4806 76.

Many thanks for your ongoing support for The Society.

*Paul*  
Spring 2026

# A busy year for JHS members

The last 18 months or so has been a record period for making presentations and holding exhibitions which are briefly reported on below. In each case, a number of JHS members assisted in various ways, for which we are most grateful:

### CONSTANTINE HISTORY GROUP:

This took the story of John Harris beyond its usual geographical boundaries which proved worthwhile. Those gathered asked questions and really enjoyed our visit.

### REDRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH:

Their Thursday open meeting proved to be a good opportunity to spread the word with great appreciation. The presenters were then entertained to lunch!

As a result of our visit we re-gained a former member of The Society.

### REDRUTH TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD:

A lively afternoon developed as those present marvelled at all John Harris achieved with so little formal education.

### LANNER METHODIST WIVES GROUP:

About 18 ladies enjoyed the illustrated presentation and were particularly interested in the family links between John Harris' family and the Langfords.

### TRURO SPIRES TREFOIL GROUP:

A number of their members were unwell but those present warmly welcomed the team and listened intently to the story.

Their invitation came as a result of us having been at Redruth Townswomen's Guild.

### TRURO PUBLIC LIBRARY:

This was a new venture for us as we were there for the five days of the Autumn half-term holiday. The staff were most hospitable and obliging. Twelve members staffed the exhibition during that week and many links were made.

At each venue, literature was distributed and in most cases books were sold.

We are particularly grateful to member John Gillbard who generously gave us a number of Harris originals from his private collection and asked us to sell them for our funds. This enhanced our funds by £185.

*Paul Langford*



♥ REDRUTH  
THE HEART OF CORNISH MINING

The John Harris Society staged an exhibition at the Redruth International Mining and Pasty Festival on Saturday, 20 September 2025, in Redruth Library.

As well as the usual exhibits, including some original Harris books, the art material produced by Truro and Penwith College was on display.

Three films – Caroline Palmer’s two DVDs and

## Much interest in exhibition at Mining and Pasty Festival despite the rain!

the BBC documentary on John Harris, Mystic Melody – were run throughout the day.

The exhibition was well received. Despite poor weather conditions there

was a good footfall and some interesting conversations were had. A number of sales were made.

The library and town council staff were very helpful. *Tony Langford*



All photos by Roger Langford and Steve Crossman

Poet's 205th anniversary is celebrated in style

Highlights of the John Harris Society's October 2025 birthday event, which was spread over two days, included a fascinating guided tour through the National Trust's mining site in Pool.

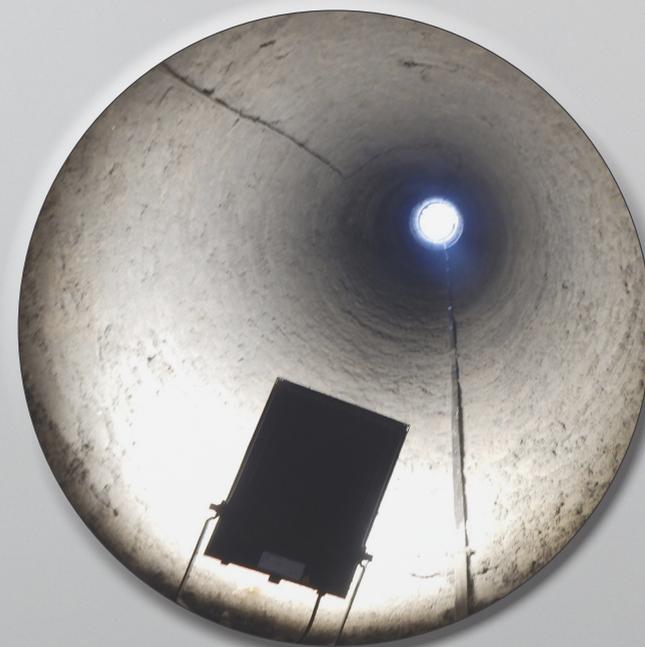
Some 19 people visited the East Pool and Agar Mine; the tour started with a viewing of a film documentary of mining in the area, and then the visitors were expertly guided through the site to look at the buildings, including pumping engine house, mining equipment and displays, as can be seen from the photographs here. For most it was a first visit to the mine, and they found it both informative and enjoyable. It was



Inside the pumping engine house.

followed three days later by the annual Sunday service at Troon Methodist Church in celebration of the poet's birthday, led by Pastor Adrian Mitchell, chairman of the Society. Members then headed to the Penventon Park Hotel in Redruth, where, as usual, they received a very warm welcome and a delicious lunch.

*Steve Crossman*



East Pool and Agar Mine. Inset: Looking upwards inside the stack.

# Mine visit heralds birthday event



A photographic mural display...



...and opposite, window art, depicting a miner and machinery at work.



Engineered map:  
Celebrating  
Cornwall and its  
mining heritage.



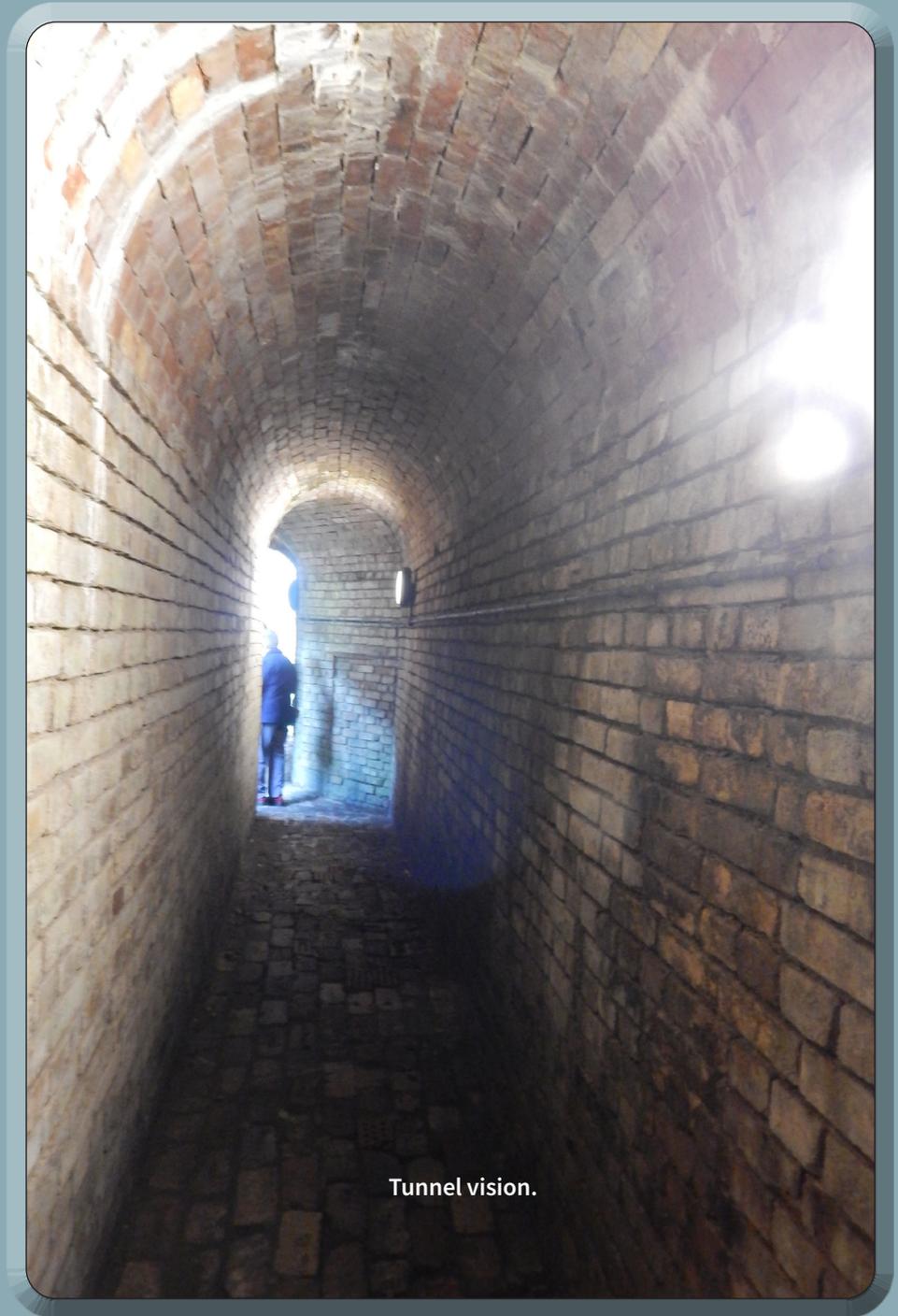
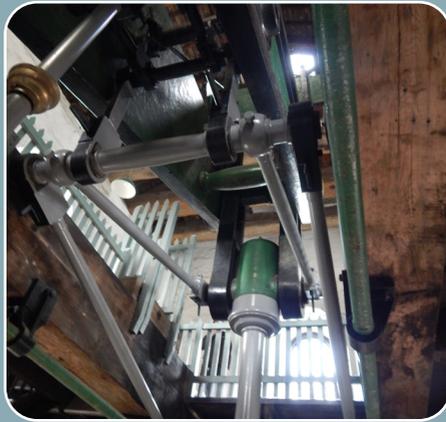
A model of the East  
Pool and Agar Mine.



Settling in to watch the film.



Walking to the next building. Below, views inside the pumping engine house.



Tunnel vision.

by Tony Langford

**J**HS members will be saddened to learn that Elisabeth Rickard passed away on 19 October, 2025, at St Clair House, Camborne.

A founding member, Elisabeth served on the committee for many years, including a long stint as treasurer. She hosted many committee meetings at her home in Troon and in her quiet, unassuming way endeavoured to ensure the JHS was issuing accurate information about John Harris and his work.

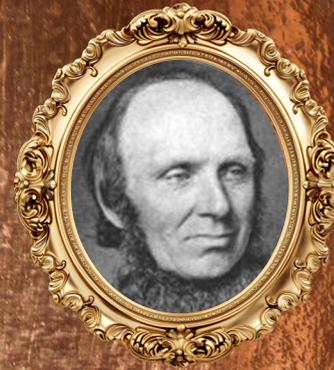
## Founding member made remarkable contribution to JHS

Elisabeth was part of the team that compiled *The Extinguished Candle Re-Lit* anthology and wrote a short biography of John Harris for that publication.

She also helped to interest the BBC into devoting a whole programme in its Radio 4 *Poetry Please* series to the John Harris Society and took part in the programme. Following a pasty lunch in

Balwest Sunday School, the recording took place on Tregonning Hill and in Balwest Chapel car park. After a busy day Elisabeth entertained the presenter and producer to tea at her home.

Elisabeth made a remarkable contribution to the John Harris Society and, in recognition, was made a Honorary Life Member.



**JOHN HARRIS**  
1820-1884

The John Harris Society aims to publish this newsletter twice a year, free to members. We welcome articles from you – anything connected with Cornwall, John Harris, poetry, including other poets and Cornish life.

## the miner the poet the preacher

**J**ohn Harris was born in 1820 at Six Chimneys on Bolenowe Carn, near Camborne, the eldest of 11 children. Largely self-educated - he started school when he was six or seven years old, before finishing at the age of nine - John had an insatiable appetite for reading from his early years.

On his ninth birthday he started work, briefly as a ploughboy, then for a tin-streamer operating in Forest Moor.

When he was 13, John went to work underground at Dolcoath. He was to ply this arduous occupation for 24 years, seeing the famous mine pass from copper to tin.

Poetry, or verse-making as he called it, had been part of John's life since his first attempts at rhyme at school when he was just eight years old.

Whatever he was doing, verses were forming in his mind and he scribbled these down whenever and wherever and on whatever he could. He used the clean side of cast off labelled tea wrappers, and when no paper was available, would scratch his poems on slate, using a sharp pointed nail.

In his mining days his miner's 'hard' hat was sometimes used for this purpose. When no ink was available, he used blackberry juice.

He fitted his writing into a busy life that, apart from his work and his family responsibilities, included being a Methodist lay preacher and a Sunday School teacher.

John Harris left Dolcoath in 1857 to take up an appointment as a Scripture Reader at Falmouth, a post which he threw himself into with enthusiasm.

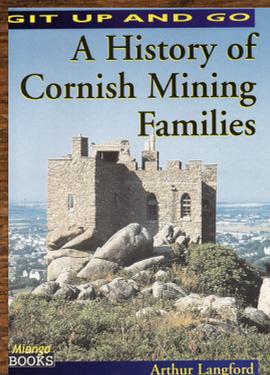
He continued writing poetry, and began writing peace tracts and became a Quaker.

John Harris died in 1884 and lies buried in Treslothan Churchyard.

Tony Langford

**PRELIMINARY NOTICE**  
A summer's afternoon  
stroll through  
**FALMOUTH**  
Saturday, 20 June, 2026  
2-4pm  
More details to be announced

**ON SALE:**  
BOOKS  
& DVDS  
LINKED TO  
**JOHN  
HARRIS**



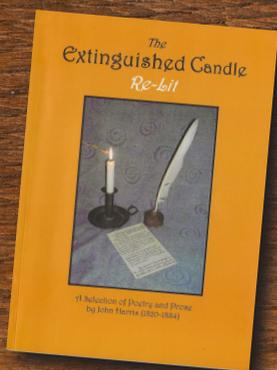
Published in 2002, this book by Arthur Langford, a great nephew of the poet, catalogues the lives of Harris' forebears from 1743 and his siblings. **PRICE: £7**

**MAWLA, NANCEKUKÉ  
AND MORE ABOUT  
PORTHTOWAN AND TOWAN CROSS**

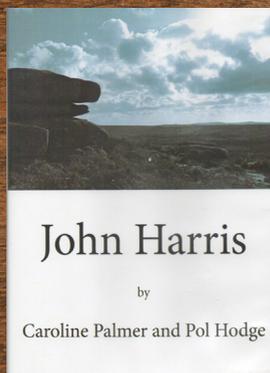


CAROLINE PALMER

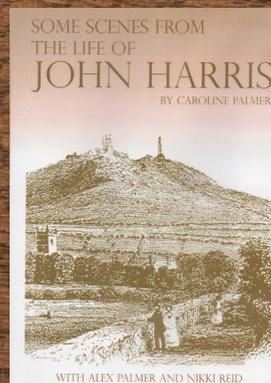
Caroline Palmer's book, published by Pen and Ink, covers topics from farming to family life, from mining to Methodism and much else. **PRICE: £9.99**



*The Extinguished Candle Re-Lit* is a large selection of poetry and prose by Harris, published in 2009 by The John Harris Society. **PRICE: £5**



Created in 2004 by Caroline Palmer & Pol Hodge, this DVD was filmed by Leo Phillips, of Cornwall Media Resource, on Carn Brea and at Cornish Engines in Pool. Copper and Tin, adapted from a Harris poem by Sue Farmer, was sung by Kontekh Karrek Community. **PRICE: £5**



The creation of Caroline Palmer, this DVD was filmed locally and takes in various aspects of the poet's life. The film won Best Documentary at Buxton Film Festival in 2011 and was shown at the Cornwall Film Festival in the same year. **PRICE: £5**