

MURDOCH & WATT

William Murdoch (1754-1839) spent most of his life in the service of Boulton & Watt, the great Birmingham firm of mining engineers, and his story is closely connected with that of **James Watt** (1736-1819) and Redruth.



Murdoch (*left*) entered the service of Boulton & Watt in 1777, the same year in which Watt erected his first

Cornish mine engine at nearby Wheal Busy in Chacewater. Murdoch reputedly secured his position in the firm by wearing a wooden hat turned on an oval lathe which he had constructed himself, thus providing proof of a high order of mechanical knowledge and skill!

In 1779 he was sent to Redruth to erect steam engines on the mines and the following year he started a foundry in the town. For the next 20 years Cornwall was Murdoch's home; there he married, and there his sons were born. He was well liked by the great majority of the people concerned in the mines. In 1784 Murdoch built an innovative miniature steam-driven self-propelling locomotive and in 1792 he lit his then residence, Murdoch House, with piped coal gas – probably the first building in the world to be lit this way!

James Watt (*right*) rented No. 12 Plain-an-gwarry in Redruth as a base for conducting his firm's business.

By 1783 there were 21 of his engines at work in the county with only one of the previously used Newcomen engines still in operation. Seven years later the number of Boulton & Watt engines had risen to 45. Not only was their new advanced engine far more powerful than the Newcomen engine but also fuel consumption was less than a third – a great saving in the days when coal was shipped in from Bristol or South Wales.



REDRUTH TOWN TRAILS

This leaflet guides you on a short walk from the centre of Redruth to Plain-an-Gwarry to the north of the town, exploring its historic, architectural and mining heritage, starting and finishing at Alma Place.

It is one of a series of leaflets and trails being developed around Camborne-Pool-Redruth (and included in the short-listed bid to secure World Heritage Site status for Cornish Mining).

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are interested in the history of Redruth, more information can be found in the following publications, available at most local bookshops or the **Cornwall Centre, Alma Place. Tel: (01209) 216760**

Redruth & its People (1988) and *Victorian Redruth* (2001)

both written and published by **Michael Tangye**;

Annals of an Ancient Cornish Town – Redruth by **Frank Michell**,

published Dyllansow Truran (1985);

Redruth Town Guide published by

Redruth Town Council (01209) 210038

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Redruth's first Rugby Football Team, 1875.

Portrait of James Watt.

Redruth Brewery Company.