

War and Peace: the Economy of Cornish Copper Mining 1795-1840 and its Implications Regarding the Development of the Steam Engine

Jim Lewis

j.lewis@lineone.net

Abstract:

Cornwall's passport to international historical significance has mainly been its role in the development of steam engine efficiency. The county has provided historians with two unique resources to monitor that development - from 1811 Lean's engine reporter which has enabled progress to be charted over a long period and comprehensive details of copper sales and prices which have provided an accessible introduction to the economic background behind that development.

This paper attempts to highlight the main economic factors affecting the industry during a period of fundamental change and suggests that the major improvement in Cornish engines after 1815 was prompted by greater profits and confidence rather than a pressing need to reduce costs.