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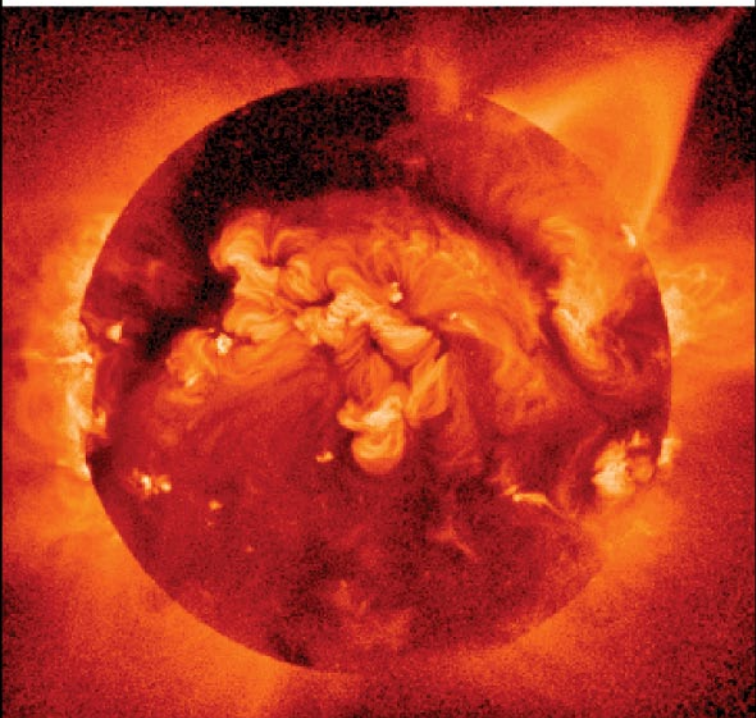
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Hydroplutonic Kernow

Gwennap Mining District



A local leisure map with public rights of way and tourist information



1:25 000 scale

4 cm to 1 km – 2½ inches to 1 mile

Preface

Invited by **The Falmouth Convention** to plan and deliver a field trip as part of an event designed to examine ‘particular geographies, histories and narratives in Cornwall’, **Urbanomic** chose to take a trip through some of the remains of the region’s industrial past.

The Gwennap mining district, once described as the ‘richest square mile in the old world’, will be the setting for our journey into an historical process that assembled the powers of geology, mechanics, hydraulics, mineralogy and metallurgy, salvation and combustion, fire and water, steam and capital, into a mighty, infernal machine that traumatised the Cornish landscape and kick-started the industrial revolution.

Visiting lesser-known sites where these components interacted and evolved during the height of the mining trade in Cornwall, we will discover what lies beneath the tourist emblem of the abandoned engine-house. With the guidance of rogue scientists, agrosophists and geophilosophers, we will uncover the complexities of subterranean poetics and aesthetics, and confront the industrial behemoth that made the earth scream.

The deep background to the strange complicities we have discovered during our research has begun to fall into place. Read through the ‘geo-cosmic theory of trauma’ espoused by legendary ‘cryptographer’ Dr. Daniel Barker and further developed by Iranian philosopher Reza Negarestani, the question the Convention poses – that of the relation between the regional and the global – has reconfigured itself into a question of the relation between the singular and the universal, when ‘the only universal history is the history of contingency’.

The trip will unfold the superficial delights of the Cornish landscape, to reveal the unique configuration of cosmic and terrestrial forces that created it – a configuration that capitalism has retrospectively endowed with necessity, and which must be designated as *Kernovian Syndrome*.

They are situated in a bleak desert, rendered still more doleful by the unhealthy appearance of its inhabitants. At every step one stumbles upon ladders that lead into utter darkness, or funnels that exhale warm copperous vapours. All around these openings the ore is piled up in heaps ready for purchasers. I saw it drawn reeking out of the mine by the help of a machine called a whim put in motion by mules, which in their turn are stimulated by impish children hanging over the poor brutes and flogging them without respite. This dismal scene of whims, suffering mules and hillocks of cinders extends for miles. Huge iron engines creaking and groaning invented by Watt, and tall chimneys smoking and flaming, that seem to belong to old Nicholas's abode, diversify the prospect.

William Beckford, reporting on his visit to the Consolidated Mines of Gwennap, March 1787.



Introduction to Hydroplutonics

The unconscious of planet Earth is haunted by a primal Hadean trauma. At the birth of the solar system, deviating from the protoplanetary disk that is to become the central body, a tiny, uniform spherical mass emerges from the solar nebula. Within 500 million years, a sudden sinking of matter into a dense metallic core – the ‘Iron Catastrophe’ – precipitates the formation of a differentiated, layered planetary structure, its molten inner matter surrounded by a thin rocky mantle and cold crust. At the same time as this brittle surface seals into the depths the repressed secret of Earth’s ‘burning immanence with the sun’, the magnetosphere is created, shielding the planet against the coruscating blasts of solar wind that periodically erupt from its massive and irrepressible relative; causing the emission of gases that trigger the chemical reactions that will produce water; and gravitationally securing the hydrocycle that will govern Earth’s climate.

But the face of Earth does not remain still. The shifting visage of the planet results from the combination of external processes

– climatic denudation and deposition – and internal processes – the movement of igneous or magmatic fluids. These two groups of processes transform the surface of Earth and shape the destiny of everything upon it. Their energy sources are, respectively, the sun, and its repressed runt sibling, the inner core of the earth. Thus, the thin crust destined to shield the inhabitants of Earth from its primal trauma, wears on its face the continually-shifting expression of the helio-plutonic bond.

Water is the secondary medium which enables the Earth to remain solvent and ‘work through’ its internalised solar nightmare; but water also colludes with the sun in its continual epidermal irritation of the planet. If both solar energy, driving external geological processes, and plutonic energy, driving internal geological processes, are mediated and complexified by the presence of water, then every movement of the slowly cracking mask of the earth’s surface, including the movements of biological life, human industry and culture, can be understood as expressions of this *Hydroplutonic Conspiracy* ...

Periodically, the pressure of magma in depth impels it to move in the direction of least resistance: repressed energy erupts

onto the surface, forming igneous intrusions through the crustal rocks. The terrestrial symptoms that crystallise around these periodic outbreaks of plutonic catharsis are far-reaching and ramified. The purpose of our trip is to explore the group of symptoms known as 'Kernovian Syndrome', increasingly recognised by geophilosophers and specialists in plutonics to be an important factor in the etiology of life on Earth.

Kernovian Syndrome is associated with the intrusion of a granitic batholith across the southwest corner of Britain – plutonic rock formed from cooled magma that squeezed through a fold in the rock running ENE-WSW during the late Carboniferous or early Permian period. As this igneous rock surfaced and cooled, hydrothermal processes formed certain metallic deposits whose presence was to have important consequences – implicating humankind in the Hydroplutonic Conspiracy in a number of remarkable ways ...

As the industrial machine dedicated to extracting these deposits escalates, and humans invade the underworld, new and yet more complex aspects of the Hydroplutonic Conspiracy become evident, as we shall see during our trip.

Itinerary

- **Kennall Vale Gunpowder Works**
Hydraulic Capitalism
- **Perran Wharf**
Bring the Port to the Mine
- **Devoran Quays**
The Entrepot of the Mines
- **Point Mills Arsenic Works**
The Sublimation of Mundick
- **The Great County Adit**
Hydraulic Capitalism Revisited
- **Wheal Busy**
Infernal Engines
- **Gwennap Pit**
From Subsidence to Sanctification
- **Carn Marth**
A Bleak Prospect

Guides

Robin Mackay

Geophilosopher, Urbanomic

Paul Chaney

Agrosopher, FIELD CLUB

Kenna Hernly

Researcher, Urbanomic

James Strongman

Geologist

Shaun Lewin

Transversal Oecologist

Iain Hamilton Grant

Philosopher, UWE

URBANOMIC is an arts organization based in Falmouth in the southwest of the UK. Our activities include curation of ideas-led events at the project space **Urbanomic Studio**, and publication of the journal **Collapse**. Our programme of events, residencies and publications aim to stimulate new thinking that crosses the boundaries between philosophy, science and contemporary art.

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The Falmouth Convention is a three-day conference in an unconventional form, with an emphasis on artists as participants and on exchange of views and experiences. Conceived as an international meeting of artists, curators and writers to explore the significance of time and place in relation to contemporary art and exhibition making, it will begin by examining its own locale, with field trips led by artists, curators and local experts, looking at particular geographies histories and narratives in Cornwall.



THE FALMOUTH CONVENTION

<http://www.thefalmouthconvention.com>