3.0 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The History of Pendeen

Early settlement in the area of Pendeen was made up of scattered farmsteads and hamlets lying below the hilly moors, set amongst extensive open commons and wastes and ancient farmlands leading down to the sea cliffs. By at least the 16th century, these hamlets were partly agricultural, partly fishing and partly industrial, with tin stream-working in the Boscaswell Downs/ Calartha/ Portherras area, and some coastal extraction. Mineral extraction and processing was, indeed, already creating considerable local wealth when the principal local manor house (Pendeen Manor), was rebuilt in 1670 by John Borlase, newly enriched by the profits on tin.

However, it was the 1820's that saw the great expansion in the tin industry which was to create from this dispersed landscape of farms and hamlets recognisable villages (Pendeen/Lower Boscaswell). Apart from Geevor, most of the mines here were small or, like Boscaswell United Mine, intensely worked but short-lived, with the main period of working between 1820 and 1857. The majority closed in the 1870's tin crash and, except for Geevor, all mining activity in the immediate area ceased by the First World War.

Mining shaped the history and landscape around Pendeen. The view from Carn Eanes shows the close proximity of Geevor (left of centre) and the mining coast line, including Levant Mine (right) to Pendeen

Waterpower was always important in both extraction and processing of tin, and thus in the siting and make-up of local settlements. The numerous small, steep local streams were supplemented by complex leat systems that drove mines, stamping mills (those in the Portherras Valley were active in the 1870's, but gone by 1908) and an extensive system of
corn mills (especially the Rose Valley), a reflection of the continuing strength of local agriculture throughout this period.

It was the combination of local sources of tin, adequate sources of water and the convenient setting of both amongst extensive areas of open common land which enabled settlement to develop. In many ways the presence of the commons determined the physical shape and extent of the settlement, and continued to influence settlement topography well into the 20th century.

It was on the commons that the local mine complexes were built. The need to house miners led to the development of industrial housing, and the commons, and the long fingers of mine waste that appeared on them, provided ample house-building land as well as garden-intakes and grazing land for the cottagers.

There were some minor additions to the small cottage groups scattered along the main road at this time, but most early industrial housing concentrated around the edges of the common land at Lower Boscaswell (discussed in its own conservation area appraisal), and at three main areas at Higher Boscaswell - North Row, St John's Terrace and Carn View Terrace, probably all started in the 1820's. St John’s Terrace was very clearly built alongside an old linear mine dump.

Only slightly later (1850-52) came another intake from the waste to create the church, vicarage and first school complex – an event linked to the creation in 1846 of a new parish taking its name not from Boscaswell (the main local settlement) but from Pendeen, the famous home of the equally famous Borlase family.

The main road itself was improved in the 1830's, the route straightened slightly, mileposts put in and the surface engineered and raised (some earlier houses at Crescent Place and North Row predate the road and are well below its surface level). This east-west route to St Just gradually took on greater significance than the old network of tracks, and created the linear shape of the village, contrasting with the roughly north-south alignment of the mine dumps, cottage rows and tracks and Church Road complex. It was the main road which would determine the location and orientation of virtually all development in Pendeen from the mid 19th century onwards.
Pre-dating the early 19th century road improvements 1-4 Chuch Road are important buildings within the conservation area.

An alternative form of industrial settlement in the early 19th century was smallholdings, such as at Jubilee Place, set amid the old workings of Wheal Carn. A dispersed pattern which is recognisably different from the tightly packed Pendeen cottage rows, this area is considered to be outside of Pendeen village, and is covered by the Trewellard Conservation Area Appraisal.

Although Geevor continued to be a major economic force and local employer through the 20th century, the overall scale of local mining went into a steady decline from the 1870's, and the impulse for new housing disappeared. However, the village continued to be provided with service and institutional buildings (reflecting new legislation, community needs and social ideas), with a new school in 1916, Men’s and Women’s Institutes (1930's), and most recently a new doctor’s surgery. Since the final 20th century closure of the mines, and to some extent even before then, Pendeen has become more dependent on a wider range of economic activities. It is now predominantly a residential centre, with much new house building and conversion of old agricultural and industrial buildings.
The relatively recent doctors surgery, while an important community facility, is of poor design and fails to make any positive contribute to the special character of the conservation area.

3.2 Physical Development

Pre-industrial

The main settlement locally was at Boscaswell, now known as Lower Boscaswell, which still has remains of an Iron Age courtyard house and fogou. There seems also to have been a small, possibly agricultural settlement around the area that later became Wethered Shaft, probably including North Row, and a similar small hamlet at Portherras Cross. These were just a part of the series of farmsteads/hamlets scattered over a wide area around the common lands of Boscaswell Lower and Higher Downs.

The road up the Portherras valley (the B3318) was already a turnpike by 1809, the St Just-St Ives Road by c.1830/35. Given the evidence of stream working and mining since at least the 16th century, all these settlements would undoubtedly have had some industrial elements in them. Certainly by the time of the 1809 OS survey drawings, mining was well established - although the main settlements were as outlined above, there are scattered buildings and mine workings shown in the area of Jubilee Place (Wheal Carn); those at Portherras/Portherras Cross, as well as those already noted at Wethered Shaft/North Row, could be either older agricultural or newer industrial hamlets. There is also a scatter of buildings along the north side of Boscaswell Downs, in the area of Boscaswell Downs Mine and Trease Farm (and mine), and in the Portherras valley.
Industrial (1820 - 1986)

The earliest expansion of industrial housing occurred in four main areas, all influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the availability of land on the edge of the extensive commons of Boscaswell Lower Downs and Boscaswell Higher Downs. At Lower Boscaswell, individual cottages and rows appeared along the road on the north side of Boscaswell Lower Downs. Around North Row (even before its choice as the church site), the area called at the time of the 1841 Tithe Map ‘Town Place’, and now known as North Square, had already taken shape around the North Inn, and at Higher Boscaswell two very long rows of cottages were being developed - Boatman’s, or Boot Men’s, Row (now St John’s Terrace) and Doctor’s Row (now Carn View Terrace). All these had been started probably in the 1820’s, the two terraces were still being built in the 1840’s and 1850’s, so that by the 1841 Tithe Map, there had been considerable development of both mining and housing, and there appears to be some correlation between the mines and the apparently randomly scattered early housing developments.

The old workings around Wheal Carn in what is now known as Jubilee Place had sprouted a number of small-holdings, largely on and amongst the lode-back dumps, which continued to be worked through the 19th century. These are now mostly in Trewellard, although the earliest parts of Crescent Place and North Row were part of this process.

Active mining within the main settlement area was well advanced by 1841, with a lode-back dump, a count house, mine buildings and engine houses on the south side of the road, immediately east and south-east of St John’s Terrace. This row (then called Boatman’s Row) seems to be related to this mine, but the fact that it was built right up against the spoil heap may indicate that dumping here had finished, and that working of the mine had already shifted to the north to the Boscaswell (United) site. This latter site may have had an early 19th century origin, but only clearly appears in 1841. It was already extensive by then, with the surviving engine houses, leat house, counthouse, etc. all there.

Crescent Place and North Row (including 1-4 Church Row), probably the oldest settlement focus in this area, expanded from their earlier cores, so that by 1841 the hamlet of North Row was of greater extent than at any time since, including not only the surviving nos. 1-4 Church Road, and North Square, but also a series of now lost cottages and outbuildings between the two.

The Square (left) possibly developed during early industrial expansion from an old agricultural centre. The cottages on Crescent Place (right), albeit with some unfortunate recent alterations, still form a particularly fine group of late 18th / early 19th century domestic buildings at the western end of the conservation area.
Post-industrial

Post-Industrial development in Pendeen is almost entirely related to new housing provision. That in Lower Boscaswell should be regarded, at least in part, as industrial in origin, that in Pendeen is less obviously so. It is continuing, especially on the south side of the main road, formerly with a series of bungalows, now with small estates, nearly all of it on former mining waste dumps. There has also been the provision of recreation grounds, at Crescent Place, off Leat Road on the site of old dressing floors, at Borlase Park and by the side of the School and Vicarage.

Later 20th century development has had mixed impact. Facing the main road at Gwel-Mor (left) imitates the rhythm of earlier terraces and is set back behind small gardens but has poor detailing. The house (right) is of stone under a slate roof with sash windows but still fails to make any positive contribution
c1880 OS map
c1907 OS map