

A photograph of three people in suits and sunglasses carrying a large red flag on a city street. The man on the left is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a brown tie, with dark sunglasses. The man in the middle is wearing a dark suit and dark sunglasses, looking upwards. The woman in the foreground is wearing a dark suit, a blue and white striped tie, and bright yellow sunglasses. They are walking past a brick wall on the left and a city street with buildings in the background.

PAUL FARMER

# AFTER THE MINERS' STRIKE

A39 AND CORNISH POLITICAL THEATRE  
VERSUS THATCHER'S BRITAIN

VOLUME 1



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Cover image: A39 in street theatre mode at Camborne Trevithick Day, 1985

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# THE TALE OF TREVITHICK'S TOWER

*by Paul Farmer and Mark Kilburn*

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## OUR PANEL FOR THE EVENING:

Lady Julia Doddle.....Sue Farmer

Sir John Doddle (her husband).....Mark Kilburn

The Rev. Gerald P. Green.....Paul Farmer

## SCENE: INTRODUCTION

*THE SET CONSISTS OF A TABLE AND THREE CHAIRS. BEHIND THE TABLE AND CHAIRS STANDS A CLOTHES RAIL. ALL COSTUMES ARE HANGING ON THE RAIL AND CHANGES ARE MADE BEHIND IT.*

*THE CHARACTERS WELCOME THE AUDIENCE AS THEY ENTER: CHATTING, SHOWING PEOPLE TO THEIR SEATS ETC.*

*EVENTUALLY THEY TAKE THEIR PLACES ON THE STAGE.*

LADY J: Well good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this public meeting—kindly sponsored by the County’s Cultural & Social Amenities Department—called to raise funds for the projected building of Richard Trevithick’s thousand-foot-high tower. Now before I explain the nature of the meeting a little more fully I would, first of all, like to introduce the other two distinguished guests on the panel.

On my left I have a man known throughout Cornwall first and foremost as a member of the clergy, but also as a keen beekeeper, taxidermist, authority on the Cornish Beam Engine and its place in Cornish social history—you may have witnessed his annual re-enactment of the crucifixion on Bodmin Moor; ladies and gentlemen, the Rev. Gerald P. Green.

*LADY J. LEADS THE APPLAUSE.*

And now to the next member of the panel. On my right—and on just about everyone else’s (LAUGHS)—a well-known face from the world of Cornish business and commerce; a former Conservative MP and Minister, until he was forced to resign in 1982 as a result of the ‘Redhead-in-the-bed’ sex scandal; a self-made millionaire, he has a string of highly profitable abattoirs throughout Europe and South America and lists his hobbies as foxhunting, judging beauty-contests and collecting Nazi memorabilia—my dear husband, Sir John Duddle.

*APPLAUSE FOR SIR J. SIR J. REMAINS GRUMPY.*

And so to the final member of tonight's distinguished panel. A woman well-known to afternoon television audiences throughout the region through her chat-show 'Doddle At One'; a woman concerned with social and moral questions of the highest order; a woman who has applied to all the major Aid agencies in the hope of being able to work among the starving in darkest Africa; a woman who....

SIR J: Get on with it!

LADY J: (REGAINS HER COMPOSURE) My very self, Lady Julia Doddle.

*APPLAUSE FOR LADY J.*

LADY J: And so we come to this evening's meeting. Now over the past two or three years there has emerged in Cornwall a strong body of opinion that the authorities should honour Cornwall's most famous son, the engineer Richard Trevithick. And so, to coincide with Industry Year, the County Council's Cultural & Social Amenities Department have kindly sponsored a series of public meetings throughout the county to test the grass-roots opinion and raise funds for the projected building of Trevithick's tower, originally designed to commemorate the passing of the Reform Bill. Now the tower is due to be built—entirely with the funds raised at these meetings—in Truro later this year. But you, the great British public, will have the final say as to whether or not this project goes ahead. As you will have noticed, a voting slip was handed to you as you entered this evening. Now if at the end of this series of public meetings, the majority of voters wish the project to go ahead, Truro will be the site of this magnificent tower. If, however, the majority vote against the project, then one of Cornwall's most famous sons will be left consigned to the oblivion where he now resides. So—every vote counts! Voting will take place at the end of the evening. Now, without any further ado, I shall hand over to Rev. Green to outline the evening's proceedings.

*LADY J. SITS. THE REV. GREEN STANDS.*

VICAR: Thank you, Lady Doddle. This evening's meeting has been designed in such a way as to illuminate the public's awareness of

Richard Trevithick and his monumental contribution to mankind through the audio-visual mediums of song and dramatised scenes.

SIR J: What the bloody hell is he on about?

VICAR: All manner of viewpoints will be expressed (LOOKS AT SIR J.), regardless of the extreme nature of those views, and the public can be assured a high standard of dramatic expertise from the panel members as we are all members of the (PRAZE-AN-BEEBLE) Amateur Dramatic Society.

SIR J: Get on with it, man!

VICAR: One can only recall with delight Sir John's masterly performance as Pinocchio in the 1982 pantomime. Now: to show you what we mean, we're going to give you a little example; a little dramatised scene. I'll introduce this one so that you get the picture and then later on when you're used to them we'll just whizz straight into them, shall we? Places please, Sir John and Lady Julia.

## SCENE: JAMES WATT'S PATENT

*SIR J., LADY J. TAKE THEIR PLACES FOR THE SCENE, AS  
THOUGH IN THE PARLOUR OF A CORNISH COTTAGE.  
LADY J. KNITS, SIR J SCOWLS.*

VICAR: Now, here we are: the kind lady you can see sitting there knitting is Mrs Trevithick, young Dick's mother.

LADY J: (VERY BAD CORNISH ACCENT) Even' to 'ee, Sirs 'n' Mums!

VICAR: Oh yes, very nice, lady Julia; really getting into the spirit of it there—and the stern gentleman reading the newspaper—Ah! I think we agreed you would be reading a newspaper, Sir John....

SIR J: Did we?

LADY J: Here you are, dear.

*SHE GIVES SIR J A NEWSPAPER.*

SIR J: 'The Camborne Packet'? Really? Isn't there a Telegraph, or something?

VICAR: ...And the rather stern, bad-tempered chap with the newspaper-

*SIR J IS OFFENDED*

-is Richard Trevithick Senior, Dick's father. As we are rather short of personnel, let me see, this (LADY J'S HANDBAG) shall perform for the moment represent our hero himself, as a child. Now, to set the scene: it is supper time at the Trevithicks' cottage at Penponds, near Camborne. The year is 1780.

*VICAR TAKES A SEAT AND WATCHES.*

MRS T: Come along, Dick. Eat up your greens like a good boy.

MR T: Eh?

MRS T: Not you, Dick. Young Dick here. Look at him; he will not eat that cabbage. Don't you make that face at me, young man! And stop shovelling those greens round and round your plate. You tell him, father. I can't do anything with him.

MR T: Eat your greens, Dick. there's a good boy.

MRS T: Well, that's no good, is it? He isn't going to take any notice of that.

MR T: He's eating them, isn't he?

MRS T: No he isn't. Oh Dick!

MR T: Now stop that, Dick!

MRS T: Look, he's thrown it all over the floor. For goodness sake, say something to him.

MR T: All right, all right. (STANDS) Dick! Eat your greens or... or I won't let you play with the coal.

*SATISFIED, HE SITS AND OPENS HIS PAPER.*

*MRS T IS FLABBERGASTED*

MRS T: Is that it? He won't let him play with the coal! (MIMICS) 'I won't let you play with the coal'. What kind of creature did I marry? Are you man or maid? He would probably prefer not to play with the coal. What have you been doing making him play with coal?

MR T: Look, I am trying to read my paper.

MRS T: Hide behind it, more like. In case your little nine-year-old son leaps up and punches you on the nose. Go on son, go on. Hit him with your teddy; put him in hospital.

MR T: All right, all right! You want threats, I'll give you threats. (GETS UP. POINTS AT YOUNG T.) Right. You eat your blasted greens, or I'll take you up to the mine and bounce you 90 fathoms up and down the shaft. Then I'll roll you up into a ball and throw you over the roof of Dolcoath engine house. Then if you still won't eat your nice greens, I'll give you to the Bal maidens for their dinner, and they'll eat you up with their big green teeth. Grrrr! (ROARS, PULLS HORRIBLE FACE AT YOUNG T AND THEN MRS T. THEN HE SITS, WITH NEWSPAPER.) Anyway... think of those poor starving children in Ireland.

*HE READS. LONG PAUSE.*

MRS T: You beast!

MR T: Eh?

MRS T: You big bad granite headed beast!

MR T: What have I done now?

MRS T: What have you done? look! How dare you speak to my poor little man like that? Oh look at him, he's shivering in his little trousers.

MR T: But... but... you told me to threaten him.

MRS T: No I did not!

MR T: Yes you did!

MRS T: Didn't!

MR T: Did!

MRS T: (SHOUTS) Didn't!

MR T: Oh well, have it your own way. I'm going to sleep.

*HE COVERS HIS FACE WITH NEWSPAPER AND SNORES.*

MRS T: (TO YOUNG T) There there. Don't you worry about that nasty man. Just eat up your nice greens for mummy, because if you don't eat up your vegetables you'll never grow up to become a big strong clever engineer like (POINTED) Mr James Watt.

*SHE WATCHES MR T EXPECTANTLY.*

*HIS FEET MOVE AGITATEDLY. HIS WHOLE BODY VIBRATES.  
HE JUMPS UP.*

MR T: What?

MRS T: (INNOCENT) 'What' what, dear?

MR T: What do you mean, what what? You know very well what what. James Watt, that's what. Ha!

MRS T: Oh yes. That's right. Mr James Watt. You tell young Dick here, if he doesn't eat up his greens, he'll never be as clever and rich as Mr Watt.

MR T: Haven't I told you? Never mention that man's name in this house. Do you know what he called me? Do you know? (PREPARES TO TELL US.)

MRS T: Impudent, ignorant and overbearing.

MR T: Im-.... (LOOKS AT HIS WIFE.) Yes. Impudent, ignorant and overbearing. I mean, I'd like to know who he thinks he is. I'm every bit as good an engineer as he is. Well, aren't I?

MRS T: Yes, dear.

MR T: There wouldn't be a ha'porth of difference between us two if it wasn't for the patent!

MRS T: Oh good. Daddy's going to tell us all about the patent again.

MR T: That patent of his is an insult to scientific progress. How can you take out a patent on a bucket? Eh? That's all a condenser is. You show me the difference between Watt's condenser and a bucket. There isn't any. Yet because of that patent, we Captains of the Western Mines can't make any improvement in the steam engine without giving him royalties. Times are hard, we've got to go down! A hundred fathoms, two hundred fathoms. The tin price is low, we need more of it. Sometimes, in those engine houses, you can feel history rushing past you; you can see the improvements you could make—improvements that might make your name for ever. But no! History has to stop so that Mr Boulton and Mr Watt can make their fortunes out of the invention of the bucket! When will it end? I'll tell you what I'd like to do: I'd like to take hold of James Watt by the throat, get hold of his parallel motion and thrust it—

VICAR: (INTERVENES HASTILY) Ah yes, suffice it to say that relations were uneasy between James Watt and Mr Trevithick senior. Thank you, Sir John, that really was rather good.

*SIR J AND LADY J COME OUT OF CHARACTER.*

SIR J: Rather enjoyed it, actually.

VICAR: And you, Lady Julia. What a little firebrand, eh?

LADY J: One does one's best, Vicar!

## SCENE: PRIMITIVE STEAM ENGINES

VICAR: And now the panel would like to demonstrate Mr. Newcomen's engine and the nature of Watt's innovatory condenser.

*THE PANEL DEMONSTRATE THESE ENGINES USING THEIR BODIES.*

## SCENE: TREVITHICK AT SCHOOL

VICAR: Now Sir John will tell us all about Richard Trevithick the Camborne schoolboy.

*SIR J. STANDS, CLEARS THROAT, RUMMAGES THROUGH PAPERS ETC, TO THE EMBARRASSMENT OF LADY J. AND THE VICAR.*

SIR J: Richard Trevithick went to school in a time when men were men and little girls didn't exist. There were no teachers' unions causing untold disruption, naughty people were given a good thrashing across the bottom and, when you left school, you either went into the army and starved or else worked for the landed gentry and starved. There were plenty of opportunities. Britain was a great nation, and the greatest years were still to come. There were wars—lots of them—which meant jobs, creation of wealth, Britain a great world power. The Spanish were threatening us with the Armada, and the Battle of Hastings was a year or two away. Churchill was Prime Minister, Henry VIII was King, and....

VICAR: Sir John. I think you're beginning to drift from the subject.

SIR J: Eh? Oh yes. Trevithick. Well, from the evidence accumulated it seems that Trevithick was a bit of a waster, to say the least. His schoolmaster reckons he was a 'disobedient, slow, obstinate, spoiled boy, frequently absent and very inattentive'. Now, how an idiot like this came to be Cornwall's greatest inventor is beyond me! Personally, I think he was the illegitimate son of the Earl of Northumberland, discarded at birth when it was obvious he lacked the essential business acumen necessary to thrive in the world.

*THE VICAR COUGHS LOUDLY.*

But enough of my suppositions. The sad fact is Trevithick left school and went straight on the dole—typical of a vast majority of British youth who haven't the initiative to get up off their backsides and make a go of something. I mean the lad was growing into a giant!

Why on earth didn't he get a job as Samantha Fox's bodyguard or something?

LADY J: Samantha Fox wasn't alive then, dear.

SIR J: Eh? Well, I'm sure there were plenty of other upwardly mobile young ladies about! Now he grew into such a giant that his physical prowess became almost legendary in Cornwall, and it is with this in mind, and his current period of unemployment, that our next dramatised instalment concerns itself, in the form of a song. So, if the Vicar would kindly take up his instrument...

*THEY TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS IN FRONT OF THE TABLE,  
REV. GREEN WITH GUITAR.*

*SONG—'BIG MAN RICHARD'.*

ALL: (SING) He was a very big man, a very big man  
He could lift a mandril with just one hand  
He could write his name on a beam so high  
With a weight suspended from his thumb  
He was a very big man, a very big man  
He could crush a stone in the palm of his hand  
He could fight like a bear, under his command  
And the surgeons admired his frame

VICAR (INTER): But as he walked alone all day  
Through the Cornish mines  
His mother's words kept ringing  
Like alarm bells in his mind

LADY J (as MRS. TREVITHICK): Ere, Richard my handsome—where do you think you're goin' today?  
Ere, Richard my lover—it's time you got yourself a job with decent pay

VICAR & SIR J: But Richard played in the engine-house  
All day

ALL: REPEAT VERSES 1 & 2

VICAR: REPEAT INTER

SIR J (as MR TREVITHICK): Ere, Richard my handsome, where do you think you're goin' today?

Ere, Richard my lover—it's time you got yourself a job with decent pay

VICAR & LADY J: But Richard played in the engine-house  
All day

VICAR: And by the time he was nineteen he was engineer to no less than seven Cornish mines!

*CHORD*

SIR J (as MR TREVITHICK): There must be some mistake!

LADY J: Said his father....

SIR J (as MR. TREVITHICK): He's not qualified to be a mine engineer!

*CHORD*

VICAR: 'Shows how much you know!'

LADY J: Said the Mine Captains...

VICAR & LADY J: He's Number One!

SIR J (as MR. TREVITHICK): Is he? Well he can pay a bit more housekeeping then!

*SONG ENDS. THEY RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.*

LADY J: Well, what jolly fun that was!

VICAR: May I just say, Lady Julia, what a lovely voice the good Lord bestowed on you—a most delightful experience for one's ears, if I may.

LADY J: Why, thank you Vicar!

*THE VICAR KISSES LADY J's HAND. SIR J. LOOKS ON.*

SIR J: Yuk!

LADY J: The year 1797 saw one or two major changes in the life of Richard Trevithick. Firstly, his dear father, Richard Trevithick Senior, passed from this world into another. But, on a happier note, Richard

married a very nice young girl named Jane Harvey—the daughter of Harvey from Hayle Foundry. The young couple started married life in Camborne with Richard earning his living as engineer to many mines throughout Cornwall.

VICAR: It was about this time that Trevithick himself came into conflict with Mr James Watt. The Cornish miners were determined to make a nonsense of the Watt patent and began installing engines here, there and everywhere. James Hornblower patented a double-cylinder engine, but straightaway Watt claimed an infringement. Young Trevithick was employed to report on the performance of this engine in comparison with the Watt engine—proof of the high esteem in which the young engineer was held by the Mine Captains.

SIR J: It was at this time that Trevithick met Edward Bull, who was employed by Boulton and Watt as an erector. The two fell in together and, with the encouragement of the Cornish miners, began erecting Bull's engines. Mr. Watt soon pounced on this infringement and an injunction was granted. Quite right too, I must say.

VICAR: With the young, hot-tempered James Watt Jnr. now at the helm, injunctions were served on Trevithick and Bull and, as if to make an example for all of Cornwall to take note of, a lawsuit was brought against Hornblower, which was awarded in favour of Boulton and Watt.

SIR J: 'Send forth your trumpeters and let it be proclaimed in Judah that the Great Nineveh has fallen; let the land be clothed in sackcloth and in Ashes! Tell it in Gath, and speak it in the streets of Ascalon. Hornblower and all his hosts are put to flight!'

LADY J: No, no, no! Don't tell me! It's...John Keats!

VICAR: Wrong, I'm afraid, Lady Julia. It was James Watt Junior on hearing the court's decision.

LADY J: Goodness gracious, was it really? (TO SIR J) Was he on opium, dear?

SIR J: Perish the thought!

VICAR: And so in 1800 the Watt patent expired, to the relief of the Cornish mining communities. Trevithick was a free spirit, able to work without the threat of injunction hanging over his head, and he plunged into a world of ideas and exploration characteristic of this giant, whirlwind of a man. Trevithick's first contribution of note was the Plunger-pole pump—hence the pun 'plunged into a world of ideas'. (THE VICAR LAUGHS. NO ONE ELSE DOES). The plunger-pole pump was an old invention patented by Sir Samuel Morland in 1675 and Trevithick's adaptation became the central feature out of which the Cornish engine developed. So, with the help of the panel, we will now demonstrate the Trevithick Plunger-pole pump.

*THE PANEL MAKE THEIR WAY IN FRONT OF THE TABLE. THE  
VICAR MOVES SIR AND LADY J AROUND ACCORDINGLY.  
SIR J. IS SMOKING A CIGAR.*

Now, Sir Samuel Morland's pump was old, outdated and bulky—rather like Sir John here. Trevithick's new version meant that the engine here (TAKES HOLD OF SIR J) pumped the rods and the rods (TAKES HOLD OF LADY J) pumped the water, reversing existing practice.

*SIR J AND LADY J MOVE MECHANICALLY, SIR J ACTIVATING  
LADY J (THE RODS) INTO A PUMPING ACTION.*

VICAR: Trevithick's dream at this time was to design a truly portable steam engine for use as a 'whim'—a device, up until then horse driven, which was used to raise ore from a mine. Watt had tried to do this and failed.

SIR J: Trevithick increased the power of small Watt engines by feeding them steam at 25 pounds per square inch instead of atmospheric pressure. Fifty of these were installed and they were a great success—but Richard Trevithick was not yet satisfied.

LADY J: So he did away with James Watt's pride and joy, the separate condenser, relying on the expansion of the 'high pressure steam' to drive the piston. He did away with the crossbeam—and to make it even more portable he mounted his new little engine... on wheels!

VICAR: The steam exhausting straight from the cylinder without first being condensed made a strange new noise never heard before. It went: Puff puff puff puff, puff puff puff puff!

*VICAR CARRIES ON DOING THIS. SIR J JOINS IN. THEY SLOWLY COME FORWARD.*

VICAR: Wooo wooo! Choo choo choo choo!

LADY J: (OVER ABOVE) In the Camborne home of Mr and Mrs Trevithick, strange things could be seen running round in circles on the kitchen table. From Camborne in Cornwall came self-propulsion and the modern world!

*THEY MOVE AROUND THE STAGE LIKE TRAINS.*

## SCENE: CAMBORNE ROAD CARRIAGE & LOCOS

*THEY FORM A LINE WITH BACKS TO AUDIENCE, STILL MOVING LIKE TRAINS.*

*THE VICAR PICKS UP HIS GUITAR, LADY J. A DRUM. THEY PUT ON SUNGLASSES.*

*INTO SONG 'CAMBORNE LOCO-KING OF THE ROAD'. VICAR IS BUCK, LADY J. IS MARY-LOU AND SIR J. IS JOHNNY.*

*JOHNNY SITS ON CHAIR WITH STEERING-WHEEL, BUCK AND MARY-LOU STAND BEHIND. JOHNNY DRIVES THROUGHOUT. THEY SING:*

JOHNNY (SINGS): One cold and windy Christmas Eve in 1801  
A light was shining, even though the working day was done

MARY-LOU (SINGS): A tall man stood there stoking up a boiler in the yard  
And the 'Puffing Devil' caught the locals off their guard

JOHNNY (SINGS): Men began to gather round the fire in the hold

It was Richard Trevithick—King of the Road!

BUCK (SINGS): Well the smoke began to bellow and the steam began  
to hiss  
Andrew Vivian said:

JOHNNY: 'This is a sight not to be missed!'

MARY-LOU (SINGS): They jumped onto the carriage and Trevithick  
gave the word  
Then off they went up Beacon Hill...

BUCK (SINGS): 'Just like a little bird'

JOHNNY (SINGS): She went along just fine with that heavy human load  
And Richard Trevithick was King of the Road.

MARY—LOU (SINGS): Well three days later they started off again  
And Davies Giddy waited to see the little gem

BUCK (SINGS): But after several hours somebody brought the news—

JOHNNY (SINGS): 'That the carriage has broke down and everyone has  
got the blues'

MARY-LOU (SINGS): The next day Giddy learned of the damage that  
was done  
It seemed the carriage started off from Camborne on its run

JOHNNY (SINGS): But then they hit a boulder and the carriage ran  
aground  
They said:

MARY-LOU (SINGS): 'We'll fix it later when Trevithick's bought a  
round!'

BUCK (SINGS): But they left the engine running and it burned-out to  
a shell

JOHNNY (SINGS): And Richard Trevithick was as mad as hell (x 2)

*END OF SONG. THEY CONTINUE AS IF DRIVING ALONG A  
HIGHWAY.*

MARY-LOU: Hey, Johnny! I sure am impressed with your 1958 twin-cylinder, fuel-injected Lincoln automatic. It's the hottest thing on the streets!

BUCK: Yeah, Johnny. I sure am envious. All the guys in High School would give their right arms to get behind the wheel of this baby!

JOHNNY: Gee, thanks you guys. My dad bought it for my seventeenth birthday. Sure is somethin', huh?

BUCK & M.L: Sure is!

JOHNNY: If I graduate next year my dad says he'll buy me one of those crazy Trevithick road carriages everyone's talkin' about.

BUCK: Jeez...you don't say!

MARY-LOU: (STROKING JOHNNY'S SHOULDER) Wow, Johnny!

JOHNNY: Yup, siree. One cylinder, steam-powered—Trevithick tore down a garden wall when he first tested it back in 1808.

BUCK & M.L.: Mean machine!

MARY-LOU: Didn't Trevithick build all those high-pressure steam locomotives too, Buck?

BUCK: He sure did, Mary-Lou. The Pen-y-daren locomotive, designed in 1804 was the result of a wager between Sam Homfray and Arthur Hill, who said it wasn't possible to haul ten tons of iron along a tramway, but Trevithick done proved him wrong.

JOHNNY: Yeah, and Trevithick tried to interest the coal mine owners in the machine to transport the coal underground, but they wouldn't pay out the money to change the wooden track over to iron!

MARY-LOU: Lousy jerks!

BUCK: That's right, Mary-Lou. But even worse—in 1808 Trevithick laid a track in central London and waged a bet that his locomotive could move faster than any mare, horse or gelding in the country, so as to prove the usefulness of his inventions. It was called

'Catch-Me-Who-Can', but was totally ignored and so Trevithick went back to Cornwall.

JOHNNY: Just goes to show the contradictions inherent in a capitalist society, Buck.

BUCK: Sure does, Johnny.

MARY-LOU: Any of you guys want some coke?

JOHNNY: Not when I'm driving, thanks Mary-Lou.

MARY-LOU: Hey! Isn't that Sammy-Joe and her boyfriend?

ALL: Hey...Sammy-Joe!!!

MARY-LOU: Sure was a guy ahead of his time, that Trevithick.

JOHNNY: Sure was, Mary-Lou.

MARY-LOU: Hey—whatever happened to the 'Catch-Me-Who-Can'?

*SHE NUDGES BUCK WHO FALLS ONTO JOHNNY. THEY SHOUT AND CRASH, ENDING UP IN A HEAP ON THE FLOOR.*

BUCK: It went off the rails, Mary-Lou!

MARY-LOU: Aw, shucks!

*BLACKOUT. THEY RETURN TO THEIR SEATS BEHIND THE TABLE.*

## SCENE: HIGH PRESSURE STEAM

SIR J: With the sound of the first puffer, the world had changed forever: but no industrialist wished to exploit the rail and road locomotives at that time because it was cheaper to keep horses.

VICAR: Now, let us examine this phenomenon with which Trevithick's name has become inextricably entwined—that is, where it is remembered at all: high pressure steam. How does it work?

We have seen that Watt's engine created a partial vacuum in the condenser, and thus in the cylinder with which it was linked. Then atmospheric pressure would drive the piston down to fill the vacuum we all know nature to abhor.

*SIR J BEGINS TO INFLATE A LARGE BALLOON.*

LADY J: Now, observe the balloon. The balloon represents here a Trevithick high pressure steam boiler. The air inside the balloon is the steam under pressure and this room is the cylinder: off you go, John.

*SIR J ALLOWS SOME AIR TO ESCAPE FROM THE BALLOON,  
MAKING A RUDE NOISE.*

LADY J: Now, what does this represent? Sorry? When the steam is allowed out through the valve into this big, unpressurised cylinder (INDICATES HALL) what does it do? Yes, that's right: it expands, doesn't it. Trevithick discovered that this expansion of the steam would drive the piston up; the steam was then allowed to leave the room—sorry, cylinder—and the piston would fall. The result was a revolution in steam engine design and an ability to use steam power for new applications.

VICAR: Watt's engines could never have been used in a self-propelling vehicle because of their sheer size; but he had patented a design for a steam carriage some years before, apparently in order to prevent anyone else inventing one. He was extremely irritated by Trevithick's success:

SIR J: (DOGMATIC SCOTSMAN) High pressure steam? Trevithick should be hanged! The boilers will explode... I hope. (LETS AIR NOISILY OUT OF BALLOON.)

LADY J: Anyway, although the Cornish Giant himself felt he was getting nowhere with his locomotives, the story of the efficiency and convenience of his strong-steam engines was spreading throughout Britain.

*ALL BEGIN WALKING ON THE SPOT.*

VICAR: The engineers of Coalbrookdale, the holy cradle of the Industrial Revolution, were amazed by Trevithick's little masterpieces.

LADY J: Richard Trevithick was now a big business.

VICAR: He was nearer to fame and wealth than he ever had been or would be again; on the very brink....

SIR J: Stop!

*THEY STOP.*

SIR J: Now, as any inspired man of business will tell you, this is the critical time, my boy. what you want to do is find yourself a couple of wealthy people, butter them up a bit, get them to invest and move into a neat little factory unit in some assisted area somewhere; high unemployment, frightened workforce, you know.... After that, you concentrate on developing a viable consumer interface and blackballing the opposition from the Rotary Club. After all, Old Boy, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. Have another pink gin, and here's death to the taxman and the union bully boys, eh what? You know, I feel a great nostalgia for my early days—bribery and violence: modern up-to-date management methods. If you've got a good product just sit back on it and get fat.

*VICAR AND LADY J LOOK AT EACH OTHER.*

LADY J: I'll bet Trevithick didn't do that.

VICAR: No. Because if he had done that, he wouldn't have been Trevithick....

*ALL START TO WALK AGAIN.*

VICAR: ...He'd have been James Watt. And he would never have dared to use high pressure steam.

*THEY WALK FASTER.*

*UNSEEN BY THE OTHERS, SIR J TAKES A LARGE BALLOON FROM HIS POCKET AND BEGINS TO INFLATE IT.*

VICAR: However, he did call on some gentlemen friends of his to help draw up a patent application that would make him as rich and famous as James Watt.

LADY J: Humphry Davy, Davies Giddy and Count Rumford.

*FASTER.*

VICAR: But they let him down rather badly.

LADY J: All appeared to be going well. Engines to his designs were being used in London, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Cornwall, South Wales.

*FASTER.*

VICAR: He told Davies Giddy that he could sell fifty engines in a day, at any price.

LADY J: But he didn't have any business sense.

VICAR: More to the point, unlike Watt he didn't have a partner with business sense.

*FASTER.*

LADY J: Trevithick had to spend all his time travelling around the country from factory to factory settling questions of design or construction.

VICAR (COCKNEY): 'Oi, Guv, where does this bit go?'

LADY J: And because he couldn't be in two or twenty places at once, he began to lose orders.

VICAR: He had to place orders all over the place and didn't have time to give the factories proper instructions.

LADY J: Some of them had no working drawings.

VICAR (COCKNEY): 'Where did you say this bit went, Guv'nor?'

LADY J: As Trevithick appeared to have forgotten about them, some of the factory owners regarded the inventions as their own.

VICAR: They took liberties.

LADY J: And with the materials being so severely tested by the strong steam, it's surprising that there weren't any accidents.

*BY NOW ALL ARE RUNNING.*

*THE BALLOON IS NOW HUGE.*

*SIR J PRICKS IT. VICAR AND LADY J ARE KILLED IN THE  
EXPLOSION*

## SCENE: THE GREENWICH EXPLOSION

*SIR J IS THE YOUNG MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE  
GREENWICH EXPLOSION. HE LOOKS SHEEPISHLY AT  
THE BODIES.*

YOUNG MAN: (RAISES HAND.) I swear that the evidence I shall give to His Majesty's governmental enquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Yes sir, I was in charge of the boiler in Greenwich which exploded, killing three of me mates and one died later. It was one of Mr Trevithick's engines. You see, what happened was that bloody safety valve on the boiler kept making this horrible 'ssss' noise, and all this steam kept coming out, see? It was really getting on my wick, and I've never had a boiler blow up on me before so I....er....well, I jammed up the safety valve a bit...with a four-foot spanner.

Yeah, and then...well it went dead quiet, see, so I says to my mate Boris, 'Boris', I says, 'this boiler's nice and quiet now, so how about you looking alter it for a bit while I nip out and catch a couple of eels. I'll bung you a couple for it.' 'Desmond,' he says, 'You are on.'

So I comes hack a bit later and there was this horrible ominous silence, and there's Boris staring at the boiler, not at all happy, is he. And the engine is stopped! I could not believe my eyes, because the heat is still piling into the boiler, which means it's making steam; and if the engine is stopped, the steam has got nowhere to go and just stays in the boiler, building up pressure. 'Boris', I says, quietly.

'You've stopped the engine.' 'You are right, Desmond,' he says. 'And to tell you the truth, I am not entirely sure that I have done the right thing.' 'You haven't, you crazy git,' I shouts, but I don't think he heard me, because at that moment the boiler went up and blew him to Kingdom Come.

*LADY J. AND THE VICAR ARE NOW ON THEIR FEET. LADY J.  
AND SIR J ARE 'THE SUNETTES'.*

SUNETTES (SING): In The Sun, Sun, Sun  
Everybody's having fun (x 4)

VICAR (AS TV AD MAN): This week in your sizzling, soaraway Sun. The shocking truth behind the Greenwich explosion. We talk exclusively to James Watt about the threat posed to the nation by Richard Trevithick and high-pressure steam. Read how Trevithick and his private army of hired thugs terrorise Camborne shoppers in custom-built steam-carriages. Read about Trevithick's perversion for small-scale locomotives. Read the startling allegations about his affair with eminent scientist Davies Giddy. All this and more—in The Sun.

SUNETTES: In The Sun, Sun, Sun  
Everybody's having fun (x 2)

TV AD MAN: Also in The Sun this week: 'I WAS A LABOUR MP'S SECRET PLAYTHING'. The tragic story of call-girl Helen's night of passion with a prominent Labour politician. We lift the lid on the biggest political scandal to rock Britain since the 1974 Jeremy Thorpe trial, when Norman Scott bit off more than he could chew. Only in your super, sizzling, soaraway Sun!

SUNETTES: In The Sun, Sun, Sun  
Everybody's having fun (x 1)

TV AD MAN: All this week we've got prizes galore in The Sun. Take part in The Sun's Best of British Humour extravaganza and you could win a bumper prize. Just send in your favourite joke about immigrants, Irishmen or Argies and you could win a pair of plastic breasts. (PRODUCES PLASTIC BREASTS). Yes, we've got 50,000

pairs to give away this week. Wear them at the office party like this (DEMONSTRATES) or use them as a makeshift umbrella. (DEMONSTRATES). All this and more in your sizzling, soaraway, totally impartial Sun!

SUNETTES: In The Sun, Sun, Sun  
Everybody's having fun  
In The Sun!

*BLACKOUT.*

## SCENE: THAMES ARCHWAY

*LIGHTS UP.*

*LADY J. IS VAZIE; SIR J. IS DIRECTOR AND THE VICAR IS  
ENGINEER. THEY ARE STANDING.*

DIRECTOR: 'One body politic & corporate by the name and style of the Thames Archway Company, created in the year of our Lord one thousand, eight hundred and five to build the first tunnel under a major waterway anywhere in the World; towit, beneath the mighty River Thames 'twixt Rotherhithe and Limehouse. It will be capable of taking horses and cattle, with or without carriages, and foot passengers; an eighth wonder of the world'—and at the moment, an enormous great cock-up.

VAZIE: Yes, Mr Director.

ENGINEER (NORTHERN ACCENT): Very true, Mr Director.

DIRECTOR: Well? Don't just stand there agreeing with me! You, Robert Vazie! This is all your fault!

VAZIE: No it isn't.

DIRECTOR: Engineer?

ENGINEER: (CHECKS REPORT) Well... yes it is, actually.

DIRECTOR: Hah!

VAZIE: What does he know about it? I know I started this job, but everything was fine while I was in charge.

DIRECTOR: Engineer?

ENGINEER: I can only go some of the way with that. Now if you study my report, page 1027 paragraph 3, you will read 'Vazie started the tunnel. Vazie dug a hole'. And it was a very nice hole, I'll grant you.

DIRECTOR: These Cornishmen do dig a fine hole, don't they. Well? Vazie dug a hole, and.....?

ENGINEER: And...? Oh, and nothing. Vazie dug a hole. That was it. Vazie's contribution to the tunnel under the Thames was a hole in Rotherhithe.

ALL: And a very good hole it was too.

VAZIE: We dig a good hole, we Cornish.

DIRECTOR: You see, Vazie, when you dig a tunnel—you are quite right—you do go down, well done. But then you have to go 'along'; along, Vazie, under the river! (STRIKES VAZIE.)

VAZIE: But I had plans!

ENGINEER: (READING) 'But Vazie had plans: he intended to drive a small tunnel, or 'driftway', under the river. This would be a drain during the construction of the main tunnel.'

VAZIE: Good, eh?

ENGINEER: 'But he soon hit quicksand and water.'

VAZIE: Yes.

ALL: So he called in Richard Trevithick!

VAZIE: He's a madman.

ENGINEER: He's a genius.

*ENGINEER AND VAZIE REPEAT THESE LINES AND THEY  
BECOME A RHYTHMIC ACAPELLA BACKING.*

DIRECTOR: He was a damned comedian! He demanded a thousand pounds. Oh, I said yes. Then there was the steam pump and a load of tin miners he brought up from Cornwall. Still, you've got to hand it to these Cornish: they do dig a good hole.

(SINGS TO THE ACAPELLA BACKING) Trevithick built a tunnel,  
From Rotherhithe to Limehouse.  
First he built a driftway,  
Just five feet high and two feet wide.

*WHEN NOT SINGING THE VERSES, EACH TAKES OVER THE  
BACKING.*

VAZIE (SINGS): With a thousand feet of tunnel,  
He'd achieved low water mark;  
But then there came a big tide,  
And the water filled the driftway.

ENGINEER (SINGS): The last to leave was Captain Dick,  
He nearly didn't make it.  
But came up with a bright idea,  
For draining off the quicksand.

ALL (SING): Trevithick built a tunnel,  
from Rotherhithe to Limehouse,  
But the poor man only makes history,  
when the man with money allows.

*UNENGAGED PARTIES KEEP SONG GOING WITH 'DO-DO'S  
DURING DIALOGUES.*

VAZIE: (SLIMY) You see, Sir? The man is quite useless.

DIRECTOR: Yes. Perhaps I ought to send him on his way. I don't like the cut of his jib.

ENGINEER: Don't be a fool. The man is a miracle. It would take most of us twenty years to achieve what he's done in six months. And now he's drained the quicksand.

(SINGS) And now he's drained the quicksand.... (CARRIES ON SINGING THIS AS PART OF THE BACKING.)

DIRECTOR: Hmm. If he's inefficient, then I'll sack him for wasting my time. But if he's too good, he threatens my position.

(SINGS) He threatens my position.... (CARRIES ON SINGING THIS AS PART OF THE BACKING.)

VAZIE (SINGS): Trevithick sealed the damage,  
 With china clay dropped from a boat;  
 He said he liked a challenge,  
 Then he crawled back down his tunnel.

ENGINEER (SINGS): To build the full-size tunnel,  
 A cast-iron tube laid in a ditch,  
 The great ideas are simple,  
 He's got only a few feet to go... (CARRIES ON SINGING THIS LINE AS PART OF THE BACKING.)

DIRECTOR: (SPEAKS RHYTHMICALLY) Only a few feet to go?  
 Trevithick will be a hero!  
 Trevithick will be powerful!  
 Trevithick will be a rich man!  
 (SHOUTS) Stop!

*EVERYTHING STOPS.*

DIRECTOR: I'm afraid I do not like the way things are going. I am commissioning an independent report from a famous firm of North Country engineers.

VAZIE: (SINGS, DIRECTED AT DIRECTOR) He's got only a few feet to go, he's got (etc.)

ENGINEER: (READS) 'The engineer of the Thames Archway tunnel project, Mr Richard Trevithick, has shown most extraordinary skill and ingenuity in passing the quicksand, and we do not know any practical miner that we think more competent to the task than he is. We judge from the work itself, and until this occasion of viewing the work, we did not know Mr Trevithick.' These Cornishmen dig a good hole. (USING THIS LINE, TAKES OVER THE SINGING FROM VAZIE.)

VAZIE: But I had got the knife in,  
I had the Director's ear,  
I had friends who might be useful,  
To a Tory's political career.

DIRECTOR: (SPEAKS RHYTHMICALLY) Trevithick will be famous,  
Trevithick will be top,  
Trevithick will make history,  
But not if I say (SHOUTS) STOP!

*ALL STOP.*

ALL (SING): Trevithick built a tunnel,  
From Rotherhithe to Limehouse,  
But a poor man only makes history,  
When the man with money allows.

*DIRECTOR AND VAZIE CARRY ON SINGING THIS QUIETLY,  
GLOATING.*

ENGINEER: (OVER SINGING) Oh well, shame about that. He was nearly there, as well. And what a revolutionary idea! Better leave the Rotherhithe tunnel for Brunel, I suppose. But it's a shame, because it will take him 18 years and ruin his health and all his backers. And Trevithick nearly made it big this time. Perhaps next time...-

*SIR J AND LADY J COME OUT OF CHARACTER. THEY  
RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.*

*VICAR (ENGINEER) GOES TO COSTUME RACK AND  
CHANGES INTO DICKINSON.*

**SCENE: DICKINSON/TYPHUS/BANKRUPTCY/  
CORNWALL**

SIR J: Ah! we've got there, my dear.

LADY J: Oh, have we? Good. I've been so looking forward to this bit.

SIR J: Quite so. Ladies and gentlemen, sadly it is seldom that one encounters in this the world of (INDICATES ROOM) Art, with a capital A, a kindred spirit with whom one feels a total sympathy.

LADY J: One feels—how shall I put it?—that this is the right sort of person.

SIR J: Quite so, my dear. Now at this point in the story of this chap Richard Trevithick, my lady wife and I were fortunate enough to stumble across someone with whom we could immediately identify, didn't we, Lady Julia?

LADY J: Oh yes, John. You see, now came a most exciting development in Mr Trevithick's life, and it all came about like this: one Sunday afternoon, he was sitting in the backyard, as they call it, of his quaint little terraced one-up, one-down back-to-back cottage in Limehouse.... I don't know what he was doing; I've never seen one of these places –

SIR J: No doubt he was playing tennis, my dear.

LADY J: Do you know, I'm absolutely sure that you're right John, because he was suddenly seized with an absolutely desperate thirst and immediately seized a cup of water from the water-butt and drank it down. For a moment, he quite forgot that the water-butt was not an ethnic, rustic hand tooled example of traditional country crafts like we have up at the hall for watering the lawns –

SIR J: My wife chose it herself.

LADY J: But instead, it was the nasty old cast iron boiler from a steam engine. Eurr! But, to his surprise, the water didn't taste at all bad. And that set his mind thinking.

SIR J: He was that sort of chap, do you see. Intellectual sort of chap. Can't stand them myself.

LADY J: Why not fit cast-iron water tanks into ships? They could be made to measure to fit into the odd corners where nothing else would fit.

SIR J: And then—water in the iron tanks could be used for ballast and easily be pumped in and out.

LADY J: And then—if the tanks to keep the water in could be iron... then why shouldn't the hull to keep the water out be iron too? Actually, I still don't understand how an iron ship manages to stay afloat. How does it stay afloat, Johnny?

*SIR JOHN DOES NOT KNOW.*

SIR J: Oh, ah.... Archimedes, Eureka, that sort of thing (ASIDE) damn your eyes. Anyway, after that there was no stopping the man. He thought of telescopic iron masts, iron navigation buoys, iron floating docks—one might say that he had too many irons in the fire. Eh?

LADY J: (SILVERY LAUGH) Oh really, Johnny! Anyway, while he was thinking about ships, he thought he'd jolly well invent a new method of framing them and conceive of a revolutionary way of shivering his timbers, or something.

SIR J: Bending the timbers, my dear. He was that sort of chap, you see. You've got to hand it to him, I suppose. Not a bad afternoon's work. His mind turned to the idea of patenting all these inventions and setting up a little yard to build them. But now we hit a slight problem: Richard Trevithick was as usual broke. What could he do?

*BOTH ARE GLEEFULLY EXPECTANT.*

LADY J: Yes, what could he do?

*ENTER VICAR AS ROBERT DICKINSON. HE IS A SPIV, WEARS A HORRIBLE HAT AND SMOKES A CIGAR.*

DICKINSON: What you need is a partner, John!

LADY J: Hello!

SIR J: Yes, here he is.

*SIR J AND LADY J ARE DELIGHTED TO SEE DICKINSON. THEY APPLAUD LOUDLY, ENCOURAGING THE AUDIENCE TO DO SO.*

DICKINSON: My card, John. (GIVES CARD TO SIR J.)

SIR J: I say, Mr Dickinson—this card is blank.

DICKINSON: (TAKES IT BACK) What? Oh yeah. Never mind. You know who I am, obviously.

LADY J: Of course, Mr Dickinson. (GIGGLES.)

DICKINSON: Hello darling. (ASIDE TO LADY J) Outside, round the back, in the dark, ten minutes time and there's a fiver in it for you. All right?

LADY J: Oh, Mr Dickinson!

DICKINSON: Never fails, the old charm. It's me silver tongue. Oi. Tosh!

SIR J: Yes, what is it, Robert Old Boy? Fancy a pink gin?

DICKINSON: (INDICATES AUDIENCE) You know me; you know them. Introduce me to them.

SIR. J: Where are my manners? Robert Dickinson—the people of TRURO; people of TRURO—Robert Dickinson: businessman!

DICKINSON: Charmed! Delighted! (HE LEAPS INTO THE AUDIENCE. AND SHAKES HANDS, EXAMINING WATCHES WITH AN EYEGLASS. HE TAKES THINGS FROM PEOPLE'S POCKETS AND TIPS THEM FROM A HUGE WAD OF NEWSPAPER BANKNOTES.) Get yourself a drink, John. (HE SHOWERS THEM WITH USELESS NOTES AND RETURNS TO THE PLATFORM.) They love me. Now to the purpose of my visit at the request of, and great expense to, these two here: my demonstration tonight is entitled...Tosh?

SIR J: 'The Right Approach: the Modus Operandi of the Modern Man of Business'.

LADY J: And woman!

DICKINSON: How true. Now, to assist me in my talk, Brenda here has agreed to play the part of—a great test of her memory this—a young woman. Thank you, Brenda! (CLAPS.)

LADY J: Brenda? (STEPS FORWARD AND CURTSEYS, CONFUSED.)

DICKINSON: Here we go then: hello, little girl.

LADY J: (YOUNG GIRL WITH LISP) Hello, Mithter Dickinthon.

DICKINSON: Very good, very good! Tell me little girl, would you like a sweetie?

LADY J: Ooh! Yeth pleath, Mr Dickinthon! (TAKES SWEET.)

DICKINSON: (TO AUDIENCE) That's what we call 'the Sweetener'.

LADY J: I thay, Mr Dickinthon: whatth that you've got in your hand?

DICKINSON: Oho! (EVIL LEER) All this money? That's called my Big Wad. My daddy had one, so now I've got one.

LADY J: Ooh!

DICKINSON: Would you line to hold it my dear?

LADY J: Oh, I don't know. (TO AUDIENCE) Thall I? Yeth, I thall! Yeth pleath, Mr Dickinthon; I'd like to hold your Big Wad.

DICKINSON: Right you are, my dear. There! (GIVES HER LARGE WAD OF NEWSPAPER MONEY.)

LADY J: Ooooh! Ith'n't it big! What thall I do with it, Mr Dickinthon?

DICKINSON: Anything you like, my dear: you can buy things with it, like machines and people and politicians.

LADY J: Ith that what you did with it, Mr Dickinthon?

DICKINSON: That's right, my little beauty.

*BELL RINGS.*

DICKINSON: That's it; time's up. (HOLDS OUT HAND.)

LADY J: Eh?

DICKINSON: Time's up. You have to give it back now.

LADY J: Ohhh! Do I have to?

DICKINSON: Yes, I'm afraid so, my dear. Otherwise I'll send for some great big bailiffs to terrorise your family and wreck your home.

LADY J: Oh. I thuppothe you'd better have it, then. Here you are. (GIVES MASSIVE WAD TO DICKINSON.)

DICKINSON: Thank you my dear. (HOLDS OUT HAND AGAIN.)

LADY J: Whatth that for?

DICKINSON: I'm still waiting.

LADY J: But I've given your Big Wad back to you.

DICKINSON: Yes. And now I want some more.

LADY J: What for?

DICKINSON: For letting you hold my Big Wad.

LADY J: But I haven't got any more.

DICKINSON: In that case—Come here, me proud beauty!

*LADY J SCREAMS.*

*DICKINSON SWEEPS HER UP, VAMPIRE-LIKE.*

*SIR J HOLDS CLOTH IN FRONT OF THEM, BEARING WORDS  
'THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE'.*

SIR J: How fortunate for Richard Trevithick that at this moment of ferrous revelation, his path should cross that of this man.

DICKINSON: (EMERGING FROM BEHIND CLOTH) What you need, is a partner, John!

LADY J: (EMERGES, BREATHELESS AND FLUSHED. MARGARET THATCHER:) Men like this can make our once great country great again.

*DRUM BEATS TATTOO.*

DICKINSON: I am just the man for the job.

SIR J: Amassing a small capital by the sweat of his brow...

*ALL LOOK EVASIVE, CLEAR THROATS ETC.*

... he casts around for still waters to lay him down beside and spies—the Spirited Inventor!

DICKINSON: I will look after all the financial aspects, you understand...

SIR J: He invites him into partnership to exploit the innovation.

DICKINSON: I like that: 'Exploit'. Exploit is definitely a 'me' word.

LADY J: (MARGARET THATCHER) Men like this will get us back on our feet and keep us on our toes!

DICKINSON: Even if you haven't got any shoes.

LADY J: But they need Incentives!

DICKINSON: We need Incentives!

ALL: Want More Money!

SIR J: Ladies and gentlemen; we live in fast changing times. For those who cannot keep up, we cannot afford to maintain a soft wayside to fall by. But for us—the chosen ones of economic chance—I give you a new National Anthem: The British Entrepreneur!

LADY J: (SONG: 'THE BRITISH ENTREPRENEUR' ACCOMPANIED BY ROBERT DICKINSON ON THE ACCORDIAN.) The poor must take their chance;  
The hungry must just eat their cake;  
Ye Rich, rise and advance!  
We praise those on the make.  
The Army and the Law,  
Your property will store;  
While ye make money for  
The British Entrepreneur,  
The British Entrepreneur!

ALL: (REPEAT SONG.)

DICKINSON: In 1811, sick with typhus and brain fever, Richard Trevithick was declared Bankrupt. There will now be a short Intermission.

*INTERVAL.*

# THE TALE OF TREVITHICK'S TOWER: PART TWO

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## SCENE: ON TREVITHICK'S RETURN TO CORNWALL; CORNISH ENGINE &C.

LADY J: Well, ladies and gentlemen, if you will please return to your places? We'll get on.

On recovering from typhus and brain fever, Richard Trevithick returned to Cornwall, where he was given a home in Hayle by his brother-in-law. There, he produced new innovations in steam engine design.

VICAR: Initially, there was the Cornish Boiler, first used to drive old Watt and Newcomen engines with high pressure steam. The fire burned inside the boiler in tubes, unlike James Watt's old kettles. The Duty, or efficiency, of the engines immediately doubled.

SIR J: And then came the famous 'Cornish Engine', using ideas first used in Trevithick's Plunger Pole Pump. The 'Pole', the lower end of which formed the piston, moved up and down above the engine and was connected to the pump rods below. It was a simple design, and the first Cornish Engine, at Wheel Prosper, became known as the most economical and efficient engine in Cornwall.

VICAR: Yes: you see, the high cost of importing coal to Cornwall led to a perpetual search for improvements in efficiency. Trevithick led the field: he explored 'Compounding', which means that when the steam is exhausted from the cylinder, it goes into another cylinder and does more work.

LADY J: And he built agricultural machines that were cheaper to run than a horse; and a strange steam-jet ship's engine; people thought it a device for hurling grenades. And Trevithick worked on for the Progress of Mankind!

*ENTER JOHN BRYANT (PLAYED BY THE VICAR). HE IS A LABOURER.*

BRYANT: My name is John Bryant and I was an engineman up at Dolcoath mine. We all remembered Cap'n Dick with his strange inventions and his war with James Watt; but we'd heard he'd gone upcountry and we were a bit surprised when he walked into the engine house one day.

In his hands he had a piece of paper and he strode about the mine looking at our three great engines. 'Well, boys,' he says, 'I'm going to make these engines of yours shake the shafts out of themselves.' 'What's wrong with them as they are, Cap'n Dick?' we asked, but it weren't no good. 'Progress,' he says: 'More work for less coal; a better Duty'.

So off he went and came back a couple of days later with these new boilers, 'Cornish' boilers. He told us they would put steam into the engines at a pressure of forty pounds a square inch. One of us enginemen says: 'I wonder if they will, Cap'n Dick.'

Anyway, these Cornish Boilers were mounted, and we were set on them for a night shift. Three o'clock in the morning, the mine Captain comes up to grass. He comes in our engine house and he kicks that new boiler and he says, 'Damn that Dick Trevithick! The water's rising fast in the mine. Can't you boys pump any faster?' 'No sir,' we says, 'We're doing the best that we can. Must be these here pressurised boilers. They don't agree with our old engines'.

Anyhow, next afternoon, Cap'n Dick himself comes in, don't he, and he's looking black and teasy. He looks at those boilers, and he looks puzzled; then he examines the engines, and he looks baffled. He says, 'There's nothing wrong with these engines. They're working perfectly'. He went to the shaft, and sure enough, the water was falling in the mine. So what was wrong the night before?

Three o'clock the next morning, he's back; roused from his bed because the mine was flooding again. He looked at the engines and boilers and then at me, all odd, like: 'Well, John, somebody has been tampering with my new boilers. They're only operating on half the correct pressure.' 'Well, blow me down, Cap'n Dick!' says I, 'I can't think who could have done that. Can you, boys?' Everyone says no. Trevithick gives us a little talk, about how there was no need to be frightened, because the boilers were all made by Harvey's of Hayle and there weren't no exploding rubbish. 'We're not scared, Captain Dick,' we said. 'We know what we're doing.' 'Yes', he said, 'That's just what I'm afraid off.' Off he goes.

But would you believe it? Two hours later, he's back again! This time he's got a lot of men with him. He goes straight to those boilers and has a good look, then he turns on us: 'It's you! You've dropped the pressure; Dolcoath Mine is flooding!' 'Weren't us, Cap'n Dick,' we says. 'Who in Hell was it then?'—almost screaming, he was. We thought about that. 'Must have been they Knackers,' we decided, 'They mine spirits.' We're simple folk, us Tinnars.

Well, he didn't know whether to kill us or weep on our breasts. In the end he sent us all home and they got new men in to work Dolcoath engine house.

*DURING THE LAST PART OF BRYANT'S SPEECH MALE  
LUDDITE (SIR J) AND FEMALE LUDDITE (LADY J) ENTER  
BEHIND HIM.*

F. LUDDITE: And did his machines work smoothly after that, brother?

BRYANT: Oh yes, sister. For one whole day. The next night gunpowder found its way into the coal heaps. There was building work at Dolcoath after that.

M. LUDDITE: And were the engines more 'efficient' now, brother?

BRYANT: Yes indeed, brother. So 'efficient' were they that in due course the Newcomen and Watt engines were demolished. Trevithick built a 75-inch engine and Dolcoath was pumped by two engines, not three. And a lot of men lost their livelihood.

F. LUDDITE: Progress!

M. LUDDITE: That's right, sister. It's Progress when the working man or woman is thrown out of work, or out of a home, or off the land. This is the age of Progress.

BRYANT: Progress creates prosperity. Everybody knows that.

F. LUDDITE: True, brother: prosperity for the woman, replacing the higher-paid man. Prosperity for the eight-year-old child replacing her worn-out mother.

BRYANT: (TO AUDIENCE) But how rude of me! I haven't introduced you all. Although they are my brother and sister, I'm afraid I don't know their names. Who are you, sister?

F. LUDDITE: I come from the cotton mills of Lancashire, where we live our lives in filthy back-to-backs and work 14 hours in the day and six days in the week. On Sundays we clean the machines. We were driven to the town by an Act of Enclosure, when the squire and the parson and the gentlemen farmers divided our common land up between them.

BRYANT: And may you never rest, sister?

F. LUDDITE: Oh yes brother, sometimes we rest. Sometimes they stop the machine to remove the remains of one of our children, sent in to tie up a broken thread.

BRYANT: And who are you, brother?

M. LUDDITE: I am a stockinger from Nottingham in the cold East Midlands. Our lives were hard and grim, but one day they brought new machines into our factory and told us all to get out. Our jobs were offered to whoever amongst us would agree to work for half wage. More offered than were needed, so they lowered their offer: half the new wage to be paid in truck.

BRYANT: These are the ways of 'Progress': machines created to decrease the terrible workload of mankind in his attempt to tame the world have been perverted to make our lives worse. But we are all for Progress; so we have forsworn our allegiance to that mad, blind bastard George the Third and taken a new oath—

ALL: To Good King Ludd!

BRYANT: In the name of Good King Ludd, I turned the tap on Trevithick and put gunpowder in his furnaces.

F. LUDDITE: In the name of Good King Ludd, I burned down the graveyard mill where they murdered my mother, husband and child and where they were killing me.

M. LUDDITE: In the name of Good King Ludd, I declined their truck and helped to goad their mules with this.

*A LARGE SLEDGEHAMMER.*

This is called the Great Enoch.

ALL: SONG (UNACCOMPANIED): 'THE GREAT ENOCH'.

VS 1.

The working people of this land,  
Hard of arm, hard of hand,  
We live in misery but know what life should be:  
A life of pleasure, like the Lords,  
Like the Ladies, like King George,  
With joy that there can be,  
In honest industry.

VS. 2

But then came Arkwright, Compton, Watt,  
Trevithick and his chariot,  
Standing in the steam,  
Like figures in a dream.  
Now one can do the work of eight,  
There's seven starving at the gate,  
And one with new regime,  
A slave to the machine:

CHORUS:

Our hammer is the Great Enoch,  
The clever and the sly,  
have imprisoned all you common people,  
Told you that you must not fight,

The clever weaklings know what's right:  
 They make the Combination Laws,  
 That stop you talking on street corners,  
 Saying you won't work for nothing.  
 Follow King Ludd! Smash their prisons!  
 Great Enoch will smash their prisons!

VS. 3:

This is an age of dark despair,  
 Self-made men, laissez faire;  
 Helping you work hard,  
 By seeing that you starve.  
 So overseas go British wares,  
 To happy natives everywhere,  
 They're made to work and buy,  
 Or the bayonet asks 'Why?':

*REPEAT CHORUS*

VS. 4:

If one can do the work of ten,  
 Why should our lives be harder then?  
 Machines and land and coal,  
 The property of all:  
 Equal work and equal wage,  
 Equal rights, the golden age.  
 When common sense is born,  
 King Ludd will die unmourned.

*REPEAT CHORUS.*

## SCENE: HERLAND:

*THE ACTORS REMAIN IN THE SAME COSTUMES. THEY  
 SPEAK NEUTRALLY, DISPASSIONATELY.*

LADY J: In future days, the trains would come  
 To every Cornish town and home

And turn them into granite caves.  
Driven overseas by hunger  
When the mines could work no longer  
The Cornish folk embraced their brother.

VICAR: Trevithick, father of the train,  
Was driven from his home by steam  
The first of all the Cousin Jacks to go.

ALL: But first came Herland:

SIR J: James Watt in his later years,  
When asked if he'd excelled his peers,  
Would proudly point to the South-west:

VICAR: 'The Herland engine is my best'.

LADY J: Then Arthur Woolf, the engineer,  
Built another engine there.  
At Watt he sneered, and all the rest,

VICAR: 'My Herland engine is the best!'

SIR J: Trevithick saw no-one above  
Himself in steam, his life-long-love,  
And no doubt thought, unconsciously

VICAR: 'Just one last blow before I flee'.

SIR J: He challenged Woolf, he challenged Watt,

LADY J: He challenged God to call a stop.

VICAR: He challenged steam, he challenged fire,

SIR J: The strength of iron –

LADY J: - against desire.

VICAR: A Plunger-Pole Puffer, with  
Two Cornish Boilers linked to give  
The pressure to drive the machine:

SIR J: One hundred and fifty pounds of steam!

ALL: Friends and foes thought he'd gone mad

VICAR: And he behaved as though he had.

Materials did not exist,  
To build an engine such as this.

LADY J: At Herland Mine they built in strife,

And pieces of Trevithick's life;  
And when the engine was complete,  
Even that victory was defeat.

LADY J: He challenged hope—

SIR J: He challenged law—

VICAR: He challenged God to say 'no more'!

LADY J: He challenged wife—

SIR J: He challenged friend—

ALL: The desperation of the end.

*THE ENGINE RUNS. DRUMS, BLUE FIRE AND SMOKE. THEN  
SILENCE.*

LADY J: Trevithick, father of the train,  
Was driven from his home by steam  
The first of all the Cousin Jacks to go.  
In future days, the trains would come  
With economics to each home  
And turn them into Cornish caves.  
Driven overseas by hunger  
When the mines could work no longer  
The Cornish folk embraced their brother.

SCENE: ENTER UVILLÉ.

*ENTER UVILLÉ (SIR J). HE IS AN ATTRACTIVE BUT INSANE  
SOUTH AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN.*

UVILLÉ: (DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE, WITH MUSIC) I'm the ghost of  
Uvillé, Swiss emigre;  
I own a silver mine down in Peru.  
Now I have come, over to Brum (i.e. Birmingham)  
In order to pull off a business coup.  
But what a blow! James Watt says no!  
Steam engines will not work in the Andes.  
We thought to dig for siller,  
'Mongst the llama and chinchilla,  
But I must return with tail between my knees!

(SPOKEN) Oh woe! Buenas noches everybody. I am Don Francisco  
Uvillé and, with my partners Don Pedro Abadia and Don Jose  
Arismendi, I have bought the rights to dig for silver in the mines of  
the Incas, fourteen thousand feet up in the Peruvian Andes. But the  
mines are flooded: what can we do? Aha, I have it. Don Francisco  
Uvillé has the answer! Everyone has heard of the great James Watt  
and his marvellous steam pumps, no? So I embark on a great ship  
to come and seek him out in his works at Soho, Birmingham. Four  
months I sailed, and I arrived in London. Immediately, I find Soho—  
but alas, it is the wrong Soho so, pausing only for a fortnight or two,  
I hurried to the lovely Black Country.

But then—calamity! James Watt tells me that because atmospheric  
pressure is so small up in the mountains, his engines will not work.  
Also, the parts are so heavy that they could not be carried by the  
little donkeys which are the only means of transporting them the 160  
mountainous miles beyond Lima. Alas, so much for the wealth of all  
the Incas!

*IN TIME TO MUSIC:*

I return to London, my mission undone,  
I went out for a walk through Fitzroy Square.

In a shop window—Oh bravissimo!  
 A little model engine, I declare!  
 Give it to me, quick! Who's this Trevithick,  
 You tell me has designed this thing of steam?  
 Send him a communiqué,  
 That I come, Great Uvillé!  
 To lead him to his nightmare in my dream....

*LAUGHS NASTILY AND MADLY.*

(SPOKEN) See you later. Shhhh....

## SCENE: UVILLÉ AND TREVITHICK

LADY J: However, Uvillé did not travel directly to Cornwall to see Trevithick: he first wanted to try the High-pressure steam engine at altitude. So he bought the little model for 20 guineas, took ship for Lima and carried the engine on the back of a mule over the mountains to Cerro de Pasco. It worked there beautifully.

SIR J: Of course.

LADY J: I beg your pardon?

SIR J: Of course. It's all quite simple. The Watt engine would not run up there because it works using atmospheric pressure. Atmospheric pressure is much less at fourteen thousand feet. But the metal and water resisting the engine will still weigh the same. Whereas Trevithick's High-pressure steam boiler would produce the same pressure wherever it was.

*PAUSE.*

VICAR: (TO AUDIENCE) Did you get that? Never mind, Sir John. Satisfied that this was the engine for him, Uvillé finally set off for Cornwall. There he met and broached the scheme to Trevithick and, of course, it was exactly the sort of hare-brained enterprise to by-pass the more objective parts of his intellect and make straight for the all-powerful imagination. Trevithick was hooked.

SIR J: He sank everything into a scheme based in mountainous and trackless wastes on a continent in a state of political collapse following Spain's conquest by Napoleon. 'El Libertador', Simon Bolivar, was pledged to liberate the whole of South America from imperialism.

LADY J: And in October 1816, Richard Trevithick set sail for this morass—believing everything Uvillé had told him—as if to take up a contract just beyond the Tamar. Unfortunately, the guiding light, the mastermind of the silver mines of Cerro de Pasco was completely and utterly mad.

## SCENE: SOUTH AMERICAN ADVENTURE-I.

*LIGHTS DOWN.*

*LADY J. AND VICAR ENTER AS MASTER AND BOATSWAIN.*

MASTER: Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN: Here master: what cheer?

MASTER: Good, speak to the mariners: fall to 't, yarely, ere we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

BOATSWAIN: Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly my hearts! Take in the topsail. Tend to the master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!

*ENTER SIR J. HE CLIMBS ABOARD THE BOAT (A CHAIR).*

SIR J: The whaler 'Asp' set sail from Penzance on October 20th, 1816. Four long months they sailed, dropping anchor in Callao Bay on February 17th, 1817. Awaiting the Viceroy's order to disembark, Captain Dick stood on deck and admired the 'stupendous Andes, which, far higher than the clouds, seemed like the boundary of the world'.

*BOATSWAIN AND MASTER FORM A GUARD OF HONOUR  
AND PLAY MUSIC.*

Trevithick was welcomed in Lima like a conquering hero. Church bells rang, a guard of honour assembled, and his horse was shod with the finest silver. The richest and most influential men in Peru greeted the Cornishman with a new agreement to extend the workings of the mine on a grand scale. Very soon, under Trevithick's supervision, the machinery at Pasco was put in good order. Trevithick was hailed as a saviour.

ALL: Viva Don Ricardo Trevithick. Viva! Viva!

*EXIT SIR J.*

MASTER: (WHISPERS TO AUDIENCE) But very soon conspiracy reared its ugly head in the form of Francisco Uvillé and the lawyer, William Page.

BOATSWAIN: Jealous of the enthusiasm that greeted Trevithick and his success in the Pasco mines, the gruesome twosome planned to dispose of the Cornishman now the mines were in good order.

MASTER: Silently, Uvillé plotted—

BOATSWAIN: First, obstacles were put in Trevithick's way to prevent him from running the Pasco mines smoothly.

MASTER: Then, vile, ungodly rumours were spread concerning Captain Dick's honesty and moral certainty.

BOATSWAIN: The major shareholders demanded answers to these questions.

MASTER: 'Has Don Ricardo got his fingers in the till?' they asked.

BOATSWAIN: 'Is Don Ricardo batting on a sticky wicket?' they wondered.

MASTER: But little did they know of the twisted thoughts flooding the mind of Francisco Uvillé!

*THEY PLAY UVILLÉ'S TUNE.*

*ENTER THE GHOST OF UVILLÉ.*

UVILLÉ (DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE WITH MUSIC): My plan was very simple, my plan was very smart  
I would dispose of Captain Dick once and for all.  
Having worked up his temper since I arrived in September  
It was clear he was ready for a brawl.  
So I sent him to Sierra—the Peruvian Riviera  
Prospecting for minerals as he went.  
Along went a guide and two men by his side  
Named Judson and Watson, from Kent.

(OVER MUSIC) Unknown to the gringos the guide was my trusty eunuch slave who had orders to dispose of the engineer. Along the mountain passes of Peru a traveller could encounter all kinds of bandits and undesirables. It was a great pity to have to kill such an eminent man as Don Ricardo Trevithick, but you must understand, a man such as myself cannot live on lire alone. I needed complete control of the Pasco mines. But, as you will hear, things did not go according to plan!

(DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE WITH MUSIC)  
That night as they slept beneath the silvery stars  
My slave carried out the dirty deed!  
He silently crept to where the men slept  
And crushed their tender heads with great speed.  
But only two skulls went 'crack', so my eunuch went back  
To gaze upon Trevithick's bloody head—  
But the bed wasn't slept in—he'd gone off prospectin'  
My slave had squashed a pasty instead!

*END OF MUSIC.*

The fool! Trevithick had managed to escape the clutches of Francisco Uvillé this time, but it seemed that fate would not be so kind again. Growing opposition to Spanish colonial rule reached open manifestation in Peru just after Don Ricardo's arrival. The Spanish army was being routed in all parts of the country by the rebels. So, when Trevithick returned to the Pasco mines he was met not by the wrath of Francisco Uvillé, but by the Marauding Nationalist Forces.

*ENTER LADY J. AS THE MARAUDING NATIONALIST FORCES  
(MNF).*

*SHE IS PULLING A TROLLEY. ON THE TROLLEY SOMETHING  
IS COVERED BY A SHEET.*

MARAUDING NATIONALIST FORCES: Buenos noches, señor.

UVILLÉ: Do I know you?

MNF: I'm the Marauding Nationalist Forces, señor.

UVILLÉ: Of course.

MNF: I've just been in a great battle, señor, at the Pasco mines. We've been on the march all day, señor. My feet are killing me!

UVILLÉ: What is it you are pulling?

MNF: It's a bit of Don Ricardo Trevithick's pumping engine, señor.

UVILLÉ: What?

MNF: I'm going to keep it, señor—as a souvenir.

UVILLÉ: A souvenir?

MNF: Si, señor. After we defeated the Spanish Army at Pasco, we smashed all the machines up and threw the bits down the mine shaft. But luckily I managed to save this bit to take back home to mi mamá y papá.

UVILLÉ: My beautiful machines....

MNF: You see, señor, my mamá is very old—not steady on her legs—so I say to myself 'Rodrigo,' I say, 'Your mama needs a push-chair.' And then, I....

*UVILLÉ IS CRYING.*

Er, señor. You are suddenly down-in-the-dumps, señor. If you would like a bit of pumping engine too, señor, I can give you some of mine.

UVILLÉ: You do not understand. I was a shareholder in the Pasco mines. If it was not for me Don Ricardo Trevithick's beautiful machines

would never have been seen in Peru. It was me who sent to that strange little place known as Kernow in search of pumping engines. But did I get any thanks? Not a sausage, my friend. And if it wasn't for that buffoon of a eunuch and an unreliable ticker, I could have taken complete control of the mines at Pasco. I could have changed the course of history! I would be remembered as a great man. A great, great man. But will I be remembered now, señor? Will men build statues of Francisco Uvillé? No, my friend. Once I could have owned the richest silver mine in the world, but now it is too late. I am consigned to oblivion.

MNF: Oh dear, señor.

UVILLÉ: Oh dear! Is that all you can say? Oh dear? You stupid revolutionaries mess everything up. You know nothing. And now you have destroyed the Pasco mines!

MNF: We had to, señor, to halt the Spanish war effort.

UVILLÉ: Who is in charge? I wish to make a formal complaint to your commanding officer. Where is he?

MNF: Señor, my commanding officer is a great man, known throughout the Americas as 'El Libertador'. I must warn you that he will not take kindly to your protesting about a mine or two while he is shaping the American continent.

UVILLÉ: I don't care what his name is! Where is he?

MNF: Very well, señor. I introduce you to 'El Libertador' himself—Simon Bolivar!

*MNF REMOVES SHEET TO REVEAL BOLIVAR SITTING ON A CHAIR, THINKING. HE IS SMOKING A HUGE CIGAR AND WEARING A GREEN COMBAT HAT.*

UVILLÉ: You are Simon Bolivar?

BOLIVAR: No, Bolivar isn't my real name. I'm just breaking it in for a friend.

UVILLÉ: I am the ghost of Francisco Uvillé.

BOLIVAR: Pleased to meet you, Señor Uvillé. I never forget a face, but in your case I'll make an exception.

*BOLIVAR TAKES UVILLÉ'S PULSE.*

BOLIVAR: He's either dead or my watch has stopped.

MNF: Señor Uvillé died in 1817, before the battle at Pasco. He was an acquaintance of Don Ricardo Trevithick.

BOLIVAR: Trevithick? Isn't he the one that worked his way up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty?

MNF: You remember. After the battle at Pasco you forced him into your army.

BOLIVAR: Military Intelligence is a contradiction in terms.

UVILLÉ: What I demand to know is, why did you smash up all the machines?

BOLIVAR: What's a few thousand dollars to a man like you? Mere chicken feed. A poultry matter.

UVILLÉ: But you destroyed the mining industry in Pasco! The economic base of the whole region!

BOLIVAR: You know, you haven't stopped talking since I arrived. You must have been vaccinated with a phonograph needle.

UVILLÉ: Señor, your manners are intolerable! I refer you to the book 'Etiquette for Beginners' by Carlos Santiago.

*UVILLÉ PRODUCES A BOOK FROM HIS JACKET POCKET  
AND HANDS IT TO BOLIVAR.*

BOLIVAR: My publisher sent it to me to review, but I was so long writing my review I never got around to reading the book.

MNF: Señor Uvillé tried to kill Don Ricardo Trevithick.

BOLIVAR: I thought about killing him too, but I had a change of heart. Lot of good that did me. I've still got the same face.

UVILLÉ: This is impossible!

*BOLIVAR STANDS AND TAKES UVILLÉ'S UMBRELLA.*

BOLIVAR: That's what I thought, so you know what I did? I told him to invent me a carbine, because my old peashooter wasn't worth the lead I was feeding it on.

*BOLIVAR FIRES THE UMBRELLA AS IF IT WAS A GUN. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A BIRD FALLING FROM THE SKY.*

(TO AUDIENCE) That'll do nicely!

MNF: But even a new carbine didn't stop the Royalists overrunning the Pasco mines again!

*MNF SEIZES THE UMBRELLA AND POINTS IT AT UVILLÉ.*

*UVILLÉ PUTS HIS HANDS UP.*

BOLIVAR (TO UVILLÉ): I blame his parents.

*PAUSE. UVILLÉ REGAINS HIS COMPOSURE.*

At which point our friend, Senor Trevithick, hop-hoodled it to Chile and made a fortune recovering brass canons for the government. Which reminds me—has anybody lost a glass eye?

*BOLIVAR TAKES A MARBLE OUT OF HIS POCKET.*

*UVILLÉ AND MNF CHECK THEIR EYEBALLS.*

MNF: Trevithick could have retired a happy man with all the lire he made in Chile, but he lost the lot pearl fishing in Panama.

BOLIVAR: Is that where she is? The last time I went fishing for Pearl she told me I was using the wrong bait.

UVILLÉ (TO MNF): What happened then?

BOLIVAR: Wouldn't you like to know!

UVILLÉ: What happened to Trevithick!

BOLIVAR: Oh, him. His luck really ran out. He teamed up with a Scot named Gerard.

*MNF WALKS ROUND UVILLÉ AND BOLIVAR AND STANDS BETWEEN THEM, PUTS ON A TARTAN HAT.*

MNF/GERARD: (BROAD SCOTTISH ACCENT) How ya doin', Jimmy? Fancy a wee dram at ma place?

*UVILLÉ AND BOLIVAR LOOK ON IN HORROR.*

BOLIVAR: I think this is where we get off!

*EXIT BOLIVAR AND UVILLÉ.*

## SCENE: FURTHER ADVENTURES IN SOUTH AMERICA

GERARD: (TO AUDIENCE) Well, that seems to have seen them Charlies off alright. My name's Gerard, by the way—James Gerard. Now you may be wondering what a wee Scot like masel is doin' in a place like Peru. Well, I could have done worse, I suppose. I could have ended up in Bognor Regis! Do you like the exotic palm trees? £3.99 from Trago Mills!

What happened was, it all started when I took a fancy to one of the Macgregor lassies. Now in Lanarkshire, where I'm from, we Gerards and them Macgregors are bitter enemies—I don't know why; I think ma great-granddaddy was an Aberdeen fan or somethin'—so ma Dad didn't take kindly to me knockin' about with the opposition, if you see what I mean. So he says: 'Look. It's either the Macgregor girl or I cut off your inheritance' and bein' the cocky wee laddie I was I took the Macgregor girl—which was a big mistake, because she ran off with the milkman. So, without a penny in ma sporan I takes off and ended up as a trader on the Pacific coast. After a wee bout of heavy drinking and seven or eight wives later I met up with Captain Dick, god bless him. We had a whale of a time poking around the silver mines in Costa Rica and bought the mining rights for seventeen cases of Johnny Walker. But the problem was the mines were stuck at the

top of this huge plateau, so me and Dickie decided to make our way back to London to rustle up a wee bit of capital investment. Well, it was a long ride from Peru and I didn't find the prospect of sailing round Cape Horn very appealing, so we decided to hitch, and what a joyful experience that was! Not only was there me, Dick and ma trusty manservant, there were these two little horrors on their way to public school named Montague. I said I'd see 'em safely back in London for £650—but I ain't kiddin' you, it was a close run thing. Where are they? Hey, Montagues—get over here!

*ENTER VICAR AND SIR J. AS THE MONTAGUE TWINS. THEY ARE IDENTICALLY DRESSED.*

GERARD: I mean, just look at the state of that! I can't tell 'em one from the other, so I called this one Montague One and this one Montague Two; or was it this one Montague One... Never mind! Take it away, boys!

*THE TWINS PLAY GUITAR AND MARACAS—SONG:  
'GERARD'S ISTHMUS TANGO'.*

GERARD (SINGS): Through the swamp and dark forest we did run  
Not to fear! Hope is near—there's the sun!  
We draw closer, but too late—it's out of bounds  
Don't close the door! All we want is a few pounds!  
So you make us crawl an inch, we crawl a mile  
Drag our dignity in tatters all the while  
Beg for cash—spare a penny, it's OK  
Interest rates will pay you more and more each day  
We build a raft, all for money—no mistake  
Eat your fill—we want a slice of Christmas cake  
Don't be mean, we can all accumulate  
A bag of pennies, serve them on a dinner plate  
But the wind is getting stronger all the while  
And the boys are getting hungry, they don't smile  
We may not make it, then the silver will be lost  
Merchant bankers everywhere will count the cost

*INTER & DANCE*

We eat monkeys by the score, we dress in rags  
 But don't worry—we can live on beer and fags  
 Cartagena is not far, that's where we'll go  
 If we're lucky and there's money to borrow  
 Just one chance is all we ask, is that too much?  
 For a lifetime of despair and rancid muck  
 In the distance I can hear my children cry  
 The rich have had a share, but why can't I?

*LIGHTS DOWN.*

## SCENE: WELCOME HOME

*LIGHTS UP. THE THREE HOSTS ARE A GENTEEL WELCOMING COMMITTEE. THEY WAVE UNION JACKS*

LADY J: My Lords, Ladies and gentlemen of this our Great Britain; plus her Empire, including Cornwall and other territories overseas: today we are here to honour a great man, a famous man; a man who, in striving to lift himself from his humble beginnings in an industrial and distant part of the Country has in fact elevated himself from mere engineer to pioneer, a mountaineer of achievement; an Inventor whose name will ring down through the ages.

Yes, we are fortunate indeed, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, for today is an historic day. For today we have seen the first journey of this revolutionary steam-locomotive here on the Stockton and Darlington railway. It was a triumph for both its inventor and the whole of mankind and will guarantee fame everlasting and, of course, the pecuniary posterity of the great man we feast here today—in short, he's going to be bleeding rich.

So my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the father oi the steam locomotive— Mr George Stephenson!

*ALL APPLAUD VIGOROUSLY, 'AT LAST' ETC. THEN STOP.  
 DOUBLE TAKE.*

ALL: George Stephenson?

LADY J: Yes, I bet you all thought that was the welcome awaiting Richard Trevithick on his return to Britain, didn't you? Some of you are still hoping for a happy ending. No. When George Stephenson heard himself described as the 'Father of the Steam Locomotive' or 'the first man to run a locomotive on rails', he didn't see fit to deny it, although he had himself watched Trevithick's Newcastle locomotive running on a track in 1805. But Stephenson, like Watt, was in the right place at the right time: Trevithick was always in the right place, but twenty or fifty or a hundred years too early.

The welcome which Trevithick received on his return to Cornwall was somewhat less substantial....

*THREE BUSINESSMEN SPRAWL ON CHAIRS, DRUNK, SMOKING CIGARS. THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE HUNTIN', SHOOTIN' AND FISHIN' SET. THEY DO A LOT OF SPITTING AND BELCHING.*

1ST B (STANDS): As representatives of various business interests in Cornwall and other parts of Great Britain, we would like to cordially welcome you home to the Cornwall of your ancestors, Mister, er....

2ND B: Trelawney? Tregonnigie? Treworthal?

1ST B: Yes, Mr Tre-(ahem) back to his native Cornwall, to which reports of his wonderful exploits on the continent of, ah... have preceded him.

2ND B (STANDS): Yes. For you, Mr Tre-em-ah are to be thanked for the very existence of deep mining in Cornwall today. The legacy of your inventions has put new life into the Cornish mines and we estimate that we have benefitted to the tune of about half a million pounds.

*ALL APPLAUD.*

3RD B (STANDS): Yes! Now everywhere can be seen the high-pressure steam engine, each example based on your ideas. Your 'Strong Steam' has made every one of us rich—except you! We see that you are indeed a son of Cornwall. All you have left from your eleven years of wandering are these pitiful souvenirs:

*HE PRODUCES A BAG. AS HE MENTIONS THE ARTICLES, HE TAKES THEM OUT AND PASSES THEM ALONG; THEY DISAPPEAR INTO BUSINESSMEN'S POCKETS. FINALLY, THE BAG ITSELF IS PASSED ALONG AND DROPPED ON THE FLOOR, EMPTY.*

3RD B: A gold watch; a drawing compass; a magnetic compass and a pair of silver spurs.

1<sup>ST</sup> B: Much as we would like to, we cannot bring ourselves to pay the money owed by us to you as royalties for the use of your ideas, but we do have a jolly good scheme, don't we chaps?

2<sup>ND</sup> B: Yes: why don't you petition Parliament for a grant in recognition of your marvellous inventions? They might give you a bob or two. we'll give you an excellent reference, won't we boys?

1<sup>ST</sup> B & 3<sup>RD</sup> B: Yes, rather!

ALL: Hear hear! Hear hear! Hear hear hear hear...!

## SCENE: THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS

*LADY J. DONS WIG AND BECOMES PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER.*

*THEY CHANGE THEIR POSITIONS SO THAT SHE IS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE OTHER TWO, WHO STAND SIDE BY SIDE FACING AUDIENCE. MP 1 IS SIR J; MP 2 IS THE VICAR. A BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT SHINES UPWARDS ONTO THEIR FACES.*

SPEAKER: Order! Order!

ALL: Hear hear hear...!

SPEAKER: Order!

ALL: Hearrrr...!

SPEAKER: Order! I can't hear myself speak!

MP 1: (CONSIDERS HIMSELF A GREAT ORATOR) Mr Speaker, it is my opinion that if the Right Honourable Gentleman the member for Eton and Oxford would just shut up, then you would be able to near yourself speak.

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 2: Mr Speaker: it is my opinion that if the Right Honourable member for Harrow and Cambridge could hear himself speak, then he might persuade himself to shut up.

ALL: Hear hear!

SPEAKER: Shut up!

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 1: Resign!

*THE OTHERS GLARE AT HIM.*

MP 1: Sorry.

SPEAKER: Gentlemen, much as it grieves me to curtail the sophisticated debate which is such an integral part of our freedom-loving and caring Democracy, if we don't speed up, we'll still be here when the bars open. After all, this is Wednesday: the weekend starts here!

ALL: Hear hear hear hear!

SPEAKER: Now the last piece of Business on the order paper for today, Gentlemen, is a Petition to the House on behalf of one Richard Trevithick of Cornwall, inventor and engineer.

MP 1: Move reject!

MP 2: Aye. Hang him as a deterrent to the others. What's he done?

*SPEAKER PRODUCES PIECE OF PAPER*

SPEAKER: He's invented the railway locomotive –

MP 1: Absurd! That was George Stephenson. Even I know that.

SPEAKER: Iron shipping, steam cranes, water-pump engines, high pressure mine engines that saved the deep mining industry—

MP 2: Nonsense! Surely that was James Watt.

SPEAKER: Mr Trevithick writes in support of his petition: 'Past services that this cun-tree have resevved from my invenentions sins 1815 are acknowlej to be savvings in the mines sins I left off above £500,000 and that the pressent esixtence if the deep mines is ow-wing to my invenentions'. So much for the education of the masses.

MP 2: He must be really thick! Wonder how many A Levels he's got.

*ALL LAUGH*

SPEAKER: Mr Trevithick goes on to complain that he has been cheated out of certain payments owed to him by one William Sims on the orders of Sir Archibald Cotten, the owner of the United Mines.

MP 1: Mr Speaker, I feel that we must not let such a smear be directed at the good name of Sir Archibald Cotten who is a well-known industrialist and entrepreneur and is to be complimented on his enterprise and initiative.

ALL: Hear hear hear hear...!

SPEAKER: I must thank the Right Honourable Sir Archibald Cotten for that contribution.

MP 2: Well said, Archie!

SPEAKER: He goes on, about illness and swindlers, bad luck, 'the base uses of fortune'—I think someone must have written that bit for him—... then he admits to being a bankrupt!

ALL: Oho!

SPEAKER: And to fighting with the liberation armies of Simon Bolivar!

ALL: Aha!

SPEAKER: And he asks us, in view of the major contribution made by high pressure steam to Britain's manufacturing capabilities to give him a grant of one hundred thousand pounds.

*LONG PAUSE.*

*ALL LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY, THEN STOP AND LOOK UNEASY.)*

MP 1: Does he have... friends?

MP 2: Does he have any... compromising knowledge?

MP 1: Does he own a newspaper?

MP 2: Don't be silly. We own all those.

MP 1: Oh yes. So we do.

SPEAKER: No.

MP 1: Well... fie to him then!

MP 2: Yes....fie. Hah!

*THEY SNAP THEIR FINGERS DEFIANTLY AND INEXPERTLY.*

MP 1: The man is poor.

MP 2: The man's a failure.

MP 1: This country cannot afford to reward failure.

MP 2: If we did, EVERYBODY would want to be a failure.

MP 1: Everybody would want to be poor.

MP 2: That's quite true! Why, I would go and work down the sewers tomorrow if I thought I might get rich by being poor.

MP 1: So would I!

MP 2: So would everyone. Who would want to sit here all day in the warm when one could be earning just as much wading in faeces?

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 1: Tell him to come back and ask for some money when he's rich. Remember every Englishman's birthright: the freedom to starve under the Law.

SPEAKER: He does point out that this house rewarded Cartwright for the invention of the power loom....

MP 1: Yes, but he's my uncle!

SPEAKER: And Compton for the Spinning Jenny.

MP 2: My father-in-law.

SPEAKER: And that in 1813 we gave £50,000 to John Palmer merely for improving the stagecoach, whereas Trevithick has actually invented the steam carriage.

MP 1: I resent that. Mr Palmer is a man of sound business principles.

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 1: We gave him £50,000: he gave us Directorships worth £5000 per year. What does Mr Trevithick have to compare with that in terms of entrepreneurial initiative?

SPEAKER: So what is our reply to Mr Trevithick?

*ALL BLOW RASPBERRIES.*

SPEAKER: The answer is No!

## SCENE: TO THE END

*VICAR, SIR J, LADY J SIT BEHIND TABLE.*

VICAR: These things do not change, do they? The paradox of a moral code based on sales figures: because he is poor, he deserves no reward: for if he had merit, he would not be poor, would he? And as

he deserves no reward, he must remain poor and thus will forever remain unrewarded.

Those with power, ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid will only judge others by criteria which make the powerful shine; and this is true from the very top of the social tree down to the local Arts Council denying a poor struggling theatre company a living.

SIR J: (POINTEDLY) Thank you, Vicar.

LADY J: Anyway, Richard Trevithick was by no means finished yet, was he? No, of course not. Onward Christian Soldiers, is that not true Vicar?

SIR J That's the spirit. Right: (READS) After the rejection of the petition to Parliament there came the ball and chain pump, commissioned to drain the Zuyder Zee in Holland. In a very highly regarded report, Trevithick detailed the straightening of the Rhine and the building of dykes from the spoil.

ALL: But!

SIR J: On the eve of the prototype ball-and-chain pump's departure for Holland, the Directors of the controlling company quarrelled at a meeting in London. The pump was consigned to the scrapheap.

LADY J: Trevithick's closed-circuit steam engine for marine use was a major advance on the steamships of the time, which drew seawater for the engines and so had to be equipped with sails for use while salt was cleaned from the boilers during the course of a voyage. The vertical multi-tube boiler was also a condenser and super-heater combined. Although this system forms the basis of all modern steam installations, the Admiralty told Trevithick that they were not interested in his silly invention.

VICAR: In 1830 Richard Trevithick invented the storage heater. It was a small fire-tube boiler on wheels with a detachable flue: when the water was warm and the flue taken off, the heater could be positioned wherever it was desired and the heat output during the day controlled by an adjustable skirt. Some of these heaters were made, ornamented with brass.

SIR J: He invented a mounting for muzzle-loading ships' guns which used the force of the recoil to elevate the gun to a loading position. No interest.

VICAR: He toyed with the idea of inventing the refrigerator but received no encouragement so didn't bother.

LADY J: He contented himself instead with jet propulsion for ships operated by an internal reciprocating pump. There was no interest in that either.

VICAR: And so we come to Trevithick's Tower. Now—

SIR J: Ah yes, now before the Vicar gets you all in tears over that ridiculous monstrosity of his, this overgrown phallic symbol of a tower, I want you to hear my point of view.

*VICAR HAS BEEN SHOUTED DOWN. HE IS ANNOYED.*

*SIR J ADVANCES TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE. HE IS ANIMATED.*

SIR J: Now, the reason for all this whining about the Fate of Richard Trevithick as far as I can see it is that he never achieved business success. Now, why not, eh? Well, as a rather successful businessman myself, I think I am in a position to tell you.

You see, Trevithick was not inventing these things for the marketplace: he was inventing them for Humanity. With a capital 'H'. Humanity. He was one of those people who believe that if they do all right by Humanity, Humanity will do all right by them. And what can be wrong with that? Well, I'll tell you: it's bloody stupid! What on earth is Humanity going to do with a machine? Has it any coal to heat the boilers? No. Has Humanity water to fill the tubes? Has Humanity a factory to put it in or a workforce to drive to serve the machine? No. No, it isn't Humanity that has these things. It is us businessmen that have these things, because they all cost money. Does Humanity have money? No, of course not. How can it? Look, I'll write Humanity a cheque: 'Pay Humanity the sum of one thousand pounds'. You see? No good at all. Humanity can't cash a cheque until Humanity gets

itself a bank account. It won't be any use working for the good of Humanity until it gets itself a little bit more organised.

Richard Trevithick should have forgotten about Humanity and worked for me, for the Entrepreneur! James Watt, he knew all about real Progress. Richard Trevithick, now why did he never think of getting off his backside and telling people that this London Road Locomotive is exactly what they need, I don't know, to give their wife on Mother's Day or something. You heard those whining workers, didn't you? Eh? Complaining that machinery should mean less work for everyone, a higher standard of living and so on; same old thing, heaven on Earth, tra-la. I mean, look at it this way: the inventor of the machine might want it that way, the people who work the machine might want it that way. You out there might want it that way for all I know. Most of you look drunk. But you are all forgetting about me. Yes, me! I mean, don't worry about me, I only paid for the thing, I bloody well own it! It's mine! I can do what I like with it. If one tenth the labour is required to make this new machine produce as much as the old one, then I sack the other nine and keep their wages for myself. Why not? It's my factory, so murr! Humanity: no money, no machines, no reward for Captain Dick; it's as simple as that. So as far as I'm concerned, you can take your Richard Trevithick and flush him down the toilet bowl of history. (HE SITS.)

*PAUSE. LADY J CLAPS HALF-HEARTEDLY*

LADY J: (AWKWARD) Well.... I am sure we are all most grateful to Sir John for his... interesting remarks. Do I take it that he is now actually opposed to the building of this remarkable memorial to Cap'n Dick?

SIR J: Yes I damn well am. Ridiculous waste of time and money.

LADY J: Ah, well... that is rather embarrassing. Still, I am sure that is something that Sir John and I will discuss at home. (ICY) At length....

However, we will continue with the next item on the Agenda, which calls on that most enthusiastic of supporters of the proposed construction of Trevithick's Tower on the City Hall site: the Reverend Gerald P. Green. (ATTEMPTS TO INITIATE A ROUND OF APPLAUSE.)

VICAR IS GLARING AT SIR JOHN AND HAS NOT HEARD.

LADY J: Ah...Vicar?

VICAR: What? Oh! Trevithick's Tower: I think it should be obvious to even the meanest intellect (DIRECTED POINTEDLY AT SIR J) that Richard Trevithick had already built a tower. He laid the foundations at school when he refused to allow his undoubted natural abilities to be channelled into the accepted way of doing things, and thereafter every year he built the tower higher, with stones of achievement: his youthful tenure on the post of mine engineer; his leadership of the Western mine captains in the war against Boulton & Watt; high pressure steam, the Road Carriages and Pen-y-daren. There was the tunnel scheme; the steam dredger; iron ships; the Cornish Engine and Cornish Boiler; and so on and so on: fighting with Simon Bolivar and all the strange late inventions that we've just been hearing about. That is a tower of achievement and a phenomenal one, you must agree.

*A SCALE MODEL OF THE TOWER IS UNVEILED.*

VICAR: (CONT'D) But no doubt, when it came to measuring his life as the shadows were drawing in, Richard Trevithick would mourn that there was no achievement in the material sense at all; not even a memorial in the minds of other people. He had no money. He lived now in Dartford in Kent, many miles from Cornwall, his home. When people saw a locomotive or an iron ship, or even a mine, did any think of him? No. And yet he knew that his was a greater life than that of Stephenson or James Watt, to both of whom, as years went by, would accrue glories that were rightfully Trevithick's.

So in spite of this tower of achievement, Old Cap'n Dick began to draw up plans for a physical Trevithick's Tower.

LADY J: (RECITES) This tower was designed by Trevithick in 1833, to commemorate the passing of the Reform Laws in 1832. It was to be one thousand feet high. Comparisons may be made with Nelson's Column at one hundred and eighty-five feet; and the Eiffel Tower, not built until 1887-89 and only nine hundred and eighty-five feet.

Trevithick's Tower features an ornamental building round the bottom and a forty-foot equestrian statue at the top.

SIR J: (READING) This remarkable imaginary edifice was to be built of fifteen hundred cast iron sections, each ten feet square and gilded. The weight of the tower, one hundred feet in diameter at the base and twelve feet at the top, would be six thousand tons. A steam engine at the top would raise the iron sections into place and, on the tower's completion, would supply power for compressed-air lifts; and I've never heard of anything so ludicrous in my entire life!

VICAR: Do you see it? Cast iron—the material that had shaped his life as surely as he had caused it to be shaped; and crowned with a steam engine, a high-pressure steam engine, as the tower that was Trevithick's life was crowned.

Sir John, his morality shaped solely by Market Forces, tells us that the whole idea was ludicrous; and perhaps it was. But more ludicrous is the undoubted fact that, had Trevithick's Tower been actually built, we would never have been here tonight.

SIR J: (Snorts.)

LADY J: Well, of course not Vicar. If it already existed, we would hardly need to collect money to build it, would we?

VICAR: If this ludicrous monstrosity had been built, Richard Trevithick would now be one of history's most famous men—but not for his real achievements, not for his real qualities, but for this vulgar Victorian display of them. That is the truth of history and society: the good book is wrong! The meek shall never inherit the earth as long as there are—architects.

On April the twenty second 1835, Trevithick died in his room at the Bull Inn, Dartford, at the age of sixty-two. The cause of death was pneumonia. His workmates at Hall's Steam Engine Works carried him to the burial ground of the Chapel of St Edmund, King and Martyr, and paid for a pauper's funeral. An attempt to raise money for a headstone failed and now the grave is lost.

And these ordinary manual workers, more aware of his worth than those making fortunes out of his inventions, did him one final service: they stood guard over his grave, to keep his corpse out of the hands of those ultimate practitioners of entrepreneurial initiative: the body-snatchers.

*LADY J AND SIR J HAVE TAKEN POSITIONS BEHIND THE VICAR. NOW THEY BECOME A HEAVENLY CHOIR TO ACCOMPANY THE CLOSING SPEECH.*

SIR J AND LADY J: (SING) Ooooooh .....

VICAR: In 1872, one of Richard's sons, Francis Trevithick, published a biography of his father in two volumes, intending that it should dispel the unjust ignorance of the Cornish Giant's work. In this, the book was highly successful: a tablet to Richard's memory was erected in Dartford Parish Church; a memorial at Merthyr, the site of the Pen-y-daren railway; a tablet in Gower Street near the route of the London locomotive; a wonderful statue at Camborne, gazing up Beacon Hill; and, greatest honour of all: a memorial window in Westminster Abbey.

How much easier it is to honour the dead than to value the living.

There is a poet of whom you will all have heard, an almost exact contemporary of Trevithick and in some ways like him: William Blake. At the time Trevithick was preparing to run his locomotive up the Beacon at Camborne, Blake was writing the words with which we shall close this evening's performance. I am sure you will agree that the second verse could have been written with Richard Trevithick himself in mind: Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you—Jerusalem:

LADY J: (SINGS) And did those Feet in Ancient time,  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?  
And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among those dark satanic mills?

ALL: (SING) Bring me my bow of burning gold;  
Bring me my arrows of desire;  
Bring me my spear—O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!  
I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem,  
In England's green and pleasant land.

LADY J: And so we come to the end of tonight's meeting. Please do not forget to lodge your voting slip on the way out, and don't forget to record any little comments that you might like to make. Goodnight to you all, and please....

ALL: (SING) Don't let it happen to us....  
Don't let it happen to us....  
Well, ashes to ashes and dust to dust,  
But don't let it happen to us.

*THEY TIDY UP THEIR PAPERS, ARGUING*

*THE END*

(Paul Farmer & Mark Kilburn 1986.)

