

YESTERYEAR

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# Davy a 'perfect illustration' of what made Britain great

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IF YOU were to take a stroll up Market Jew Street in Penzance there would be no mistaking in what high regard the town holds one of its most famous sons.

A statue of Sir Humphry Davy stands proudly in front of Market House, just a stone's throw away from a plaque commemorating the site of his birth.

Less than a mile away a secondary school and a pub are both named in his honour.

His achievements in chemistry, which include the discovery of chlorine, left an indelible mark upon the development of science as we know it today.

Now a national history project launched this month is aiming to highlight the disproportionate impact Davy and other British men and women like him had on the history of the world.

The National CV for Britain catalogues our history in a format which its proponents believe is a revolutionary way in understanding it.

Rupert Willoughby, who was one of the historians who pieced together the project, said west Corn-

wall played no small part in contributing – and added that Davy was rated as one of the most influential islanders of all time.

"Although the National CV focuses on the achievements of Britain as a whole, lots of elements can be connected to west Cornwall," he said.

"European tin mining is believed to have started in Cornwall and perhaps also on Dartmoor in Devon; tin was one of the rarest metals used in ancient Europe and only occurred in significant quantities in south-west Britain.

### Legacy

"Among the numerous achievements of the British, our scientists have discovered one quarter of the elements of the periodic table, more than the scientists of any other nation.

"Davy alone discovered sodium, potassium, magnesium, calcium, barium and boron. Part of Davy's historical significance is that he encouraged manufacturers to take a scientific approach to production.

"His story is a perfect illustration of the astonishing, world-changing spread of ideas from all corners of our islands, even from out-of-the-



Sir Humphry Davy's statue overlooks Market Jew Street in Penzance.

way places like Penzance – which has been out of all proportion to our size and population.

"We want this to be a source of pride and inspiration for everyone living here. If our forebears could do all these things, why can't we?"

The National CV has so far been prototyped with success as the basis

of a schools presentation to hundreds of children in 12 UK schools. Sponsorship is currently being sought for the National CV Schools History Project, for a national roll-out to state schools. For more information on the project, or to arrange a local visit, go to [www.thenationalcv.org.uk](http://www.thenationalcv.org.uk)

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### 100 YEARS AGO

A MAN whose body was found floating in the sea near Penzance received two blows to the head before drowning, an inquest revealed.

William Whittingham was found dead on January 11 at Chyandour beach.

A medical post mortem revealed he had received two puncture wounds on either side of the head before drowning.

However, the coroner, Edward Bosse, delivered a verdict of 'found drowned' presuming the injuries were received accidentally when falling.

### 50 YEARS AGO

THE SCHEME for completely redeveloping the two markets in Penzance – the pig market at St Clare Street and the cattle market on St Clarence Street – which cost about £8,000 was about to start.

The scheme to bring the markets up-to-date and to put them on to a more competitive base, was expected to have been completed by the end of May.

### 10 YEARS AGO

THE CASUALTY and high dependency units at West Cornwall Hospital were almost certainly set to be axed whatever recommendation from the hospital services review followed.

Since work on the review began there were criticisms of both the process and the information it was being based on.

Penwith Council attempted several times to get it stopped, including a telephone helpline and The Cornishman received petition forms back from thousands of readers. St Ives MP Andrew George said the gauntlet had clearly been thrown down to those who wished to fight a further downgrading of the hospital.

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