

Cornwall's sitting on a gold mine

By **Luke Salkeld**

THE Pirates of Penzance would no doubt have been delighted.

For Cornish prospectors digging for tin have discovered 'commercial levels' of gold.

The South Crofty mine, near Camborne, in the west of the county, is thought to be more gold-rich than some of the major mining sites in California.

The mine was once the heart of Cornwall's tin industry before plummeting prices forced it to shut. It remained closed for nearly a decade until Western United Mines was granted permission to search for tin, copper, zinc and other trace metals in 2006.

The firm was astonished when it carried out tests on the extracted material and found hidden gold particles.

Chief operating officer John Webster said: 'We have found traces of gold while we carried out exploratory drilling and are now identifying gold targets.

'We have only just started looking for gold but we have already found it at a commercial level grade. It is very encouraging.'

South Crofty has 300 miles of tunnels - which is estimated to be enough to keep miners busy there for 80 years.

Gold prices hit record highs this week when investors flocked to the precious metal as a safe investment amid Greece's financial crisis.