

# Gold discovered in old Cornish tin mine

**'Commercial levels' of precious metal found**

**Company plans to expand exploration to other areas**

**Steven Morris**

It may not lead to a Klondike-style rush, but a mining company revealed yesterday that it had come across "commercial levels" of gold in a tin and copper mine in Cornwall.

Western United Mines (WUM) said it had discovered gold in samples taken from South Crofty, near Camborne. The company plans to expand the exploration to other areas of Cornwall.

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

But he played down the idea that it had



**Advances in detection methods and the soaring price of gold have encouraged greater effort in finding the precious metal**

been a gold "strike", describing it as "more of an analysis than a strike".

"It is very encouraging," Webster said. "What we now know is that gold is definitely on the menu here. We can't say we are a gold exploration company at the moment, but gold exists in Cornwall for sure."

South Crofty was closed in 1998 after being hit hard by falling tin prices. WUM was launched in 2007 to explore South Crofty with a view to extracting tin, copper and zinc. The company also looked for gold in about 15 samples and found traces in more than one-third of them.



**The South Crofty mine closed in 1998, but exploratory drilling for tin, copper and zinc began in 2007 Photograph: Apex**

Webster said: "Since we started mining again here it has become obvious that there is much more here than just tin. We are now looking at ways to make mining gold a commercial reality."

Tin once made Cornwall famous around the world, and mining has been carried out at South Crofty since the 16th century. There was some scepticism locally about the moves to reopen the mine, but WUM now employs 55 people at the site.

The company is still at the exploration

and development stage but believes that it will begin to extract at least copper and tin by 2011.

The highest grade of gold found so far is 1.2g a tonne of ore. Webster said mining companies became "interested" if they found 0.6g in a tonne. He said he hoped higher grades would be found.

WUM is also expanding its areas of operations further across Cornwall. The company has rights to about 150 sq km (37,070 acres) of land, and in the next few weeks

hopes to double this. It is also investing in new machinery, more staff and plans to build its own laboratory.

Webster said he believed that gold had been found partly because of advances in equipment but also because the company approached it with "fresh eyes". The soaring price of gold had also encouraged experts to put more effort into finding the precious metal.

He added: "Where there is metal in a big hole in the ground, we will go get it."