

Jack Clemo's Braille Pocket Watch - Wheal Martyn China Clay Museum



This is Jack Clemo's first braille pocket watch that he used until his first marriage in 1968.

Jack Clemo was a Cornish poet and writer who slowly lost his hearing at 19 and was blind by 39. Although his world was retracting inwards around him, it didn't stop him from following his passion of writing. A lot of his writing focused on the clayscape of the time; how the natural world was making way for the progress of machinery upon it. Rather than mourn that change however, he celebrated it.

Why it's weird or wonderful? A Braille watch is something you simply may not realise exists in the modern world of digital watches and time pieces. But for someone who's life had become enveloped by darkness, having that familiar way of telling time would almost be a godsend. The wear on the watch also suggests it was something he used a lot, that it helped him keep in touch with the changing world around him.

The watch is also important in that it reminds us that having a disability doesn't have to stop you from doing great things. It also contrasts nicely with another object in our collection: his father's pocket watch that was returned to the Clemo family after his passing at sea during the first World War.