Uncovering Men's Mental Health Deep in Abandoned Cornish Mines: New Adventure Documentary Finds Community in the Most Unexpected of Places

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BY DAN SIMPKINS & ANGUS BRETON WITH SUPPORT FROM ROLL NINE PRODUCTIONS AND MANUP? MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY

Uncovering Men's Mental Health Deep in Abandoned Cornish Mines: New Adventure Documentary Finds Community in the Most Unexpected of Places

Filmmaker Dan Simpkins brings underground adventurers to light in a powerful new film.

A new documentary rooted in the heart of Cornwall will screen at the renowned Kendal Mountain Festival later this year. The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay, directed by Dan Simpkins, captures the unseen world of Cornish underground explorers – a tight-knit group of men whose shared passion for mine exploration becomes a lifeline, an escape, and a reflection of identity while confronting one of today's biggest challenges: men's mental health.

Shot over two years, The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay is a deeply personal and visually stunning project about a group of explorers called the Carbis Bay Crew, that has been submitted to over 20 film festivals. Simpkins, whose filmmaking is deeply inspired by Cornwall's people and landscape, spent weekends travelling from London to film the group—eventually moving back to Cornwall for three months to embed himself in their world.

"Cornwall is where I've always felt most creatively connected," the Director says. "This documentary is about more than a hobby—it's about the complexities of masculinity, the search for purpose, and the importance of community. Focusing on the extraordinary lives of everyday people."

The film's subjects are far from the stereotypical thrill-seekers. Instead, they are working-class men, full of humour and character, who find in the mines a rare space for reflection and camaraderie. In a society where men's mental health remains a quiet crisis, the film offers a raw look at how shared risk and time underground become a powerful form of therapy and connection.

"They deflect with banter, but being underground demands presence," says Simpkins. "With their life literally depending on it as they abseil, climb and crawl through the perilous mines, they are forced into the moment, away from the pressures of daily life."

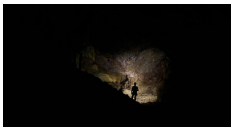
The Director admits he was deeply nervous about showing The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay to the men at the heart of the story - The Carbis Bay Crew. He felt a huge responsibility to portray their world with honesty and respect. At the cast screening, their reaction was overwhelmingly positive as they laughed, connected, and saw themselves reflected with dignity and depth. For many, it was the first time their families truly understood why they spent hours underground. The screening opened up conversations within the group and beyond, reinforcing the film's central message: behind the banter and bravado lies a powerful story of connection, strength, and unspoken support. Pat from the explorers' group says;

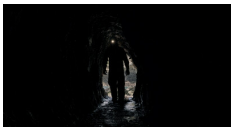
"I'd like people to take away that the reasons for these strange pastimes might be far more complex than you originally might imagine.The documentary is now like a time capsule; we'll all be able to look back on a snapshot in time. None of us are getting any younger and we'll have this beautiful record."

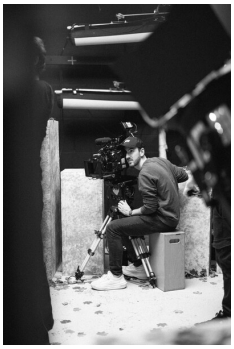
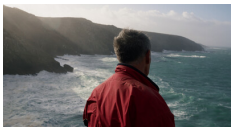
The motivation for creating The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay stems from Dan's personal experiences with

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mental health challenges. Witnessing firsthand the silent struggles many men endure and these subterranean expeditions, led by a group of local men, became more than just adventures—they served as therapeutic escapes.

Recognising the profound impact of shared experiences on mental well-being, Simpkins partnered with MANUP? an organisation that challenges stigma and encourages men to speak openly about mental health. Together, the film and partnership aim to spark deeper conversations around masculinity, vulnerability, and the power of community. CEO and Founder Dan Somers says;

“The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay captures what we see at MANUP? That real connection doesn’t always happen in a therapy room. It happens in the quiet, the risk, the humour between men who feel unseen. Projects like this don’t just raise awareness, they show men they’re not broken - they just haven’t been heard yet.”

Producer Kirsty Malcolm joined The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay to support production and to expand its reach, bringing with her a background in storytelling from her work at Roll Nine Productions. Kirsty has a talent for drawing out emotion and meaning from real-life stories. The themes of the film strike a deeply personal chord for her and reflect exactly the kind of story she’s passionate about telling—raw, human, and quietly heroic.

"This story is full of heart, humour, and humanity, and I know it will resonate with many people. As someone who lost their father to mental health struggles, I know just how crucial it is that we speak openly, honestly, and without shame. I hope this film encourages more men to share their fears, hopes, and dreams—and reminds them that their ordinary lives are often extraordinary, especially in the eyes of those who love them, even when they can’t see it themselves."

Editor Angus Breton, a fellow Cornish filmmaker and close friend since university, helped shape the story with deep understanding of the region’s culture and pride. The two met at Falmouth University and had always dreamed of making films together. Angus also offered unwavering personal support, while editing for brands like Red Bull and Nike he was also —housing Dan, feeding him, and even acting as a sounding board during the film’s most emotionally challenging moments. Dan often says the film simply wouldn’t have been possible without Angus’s generosity, insight, and creative partnership.

“Loneliness and disconnection are huge issues in the UK right now, and I think it’s really powerful to see a group finding real connection through something they love. Having lived in the South West all my life, and in Cornwall for over 10 years, I’m also always looking to tell stories that are connected to the area, especially that show the more true to life side of Cornwall that you may not see on a classic holiday postcard.”

The project was also developed with vital support from Simpkins’s Falmouth University network, including technicians like Richard Butler, who offered professional-grade sound mixing and mentorship.

“I love to hear how students succeed, but also, they keep their ties with us. With challenges facing our industry like large-scale post-production companies closing down and the introduction of AI it’s the independent and “filmmakers of tomorrow” that need to ride these changes and build upon them and Dan and Angus’ drive is second to none.”

The team is now actively seeking new projects that celebrate rich, underrepresented communities doing remarkable things. They invite anyone who feels their world deserves to be seen on screen to reach out and share their story.

The production is also calling on festivals, broadcasters and distributors who connect with the spirit of The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay to get in touch. The film is ready to find its home, and the team is eager to collaborate with partners who believe in amplifying authentic voices and building bold, emotionally resonant slates.

This year’s Kendal Mountain Festival celebrates its 45th anniversary with over 300 speakers, 150 films and 25,000 outdoor enthusiasts. The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay, resonates with the Festival’s 2025 theme of ‘Hope’ and will sit in the programme alongside appearances by world famous adventurers, including Sir Chris Bonington who led the first British team to summit Everest. Catch the film and say hello to the cast and crew at the The Underground Session – presented by Petzl on Friday, November 21, 2025 7:30 PM GMT at the Kendal Town Hall Assembly Room.

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