



NEWSLETTER

November 2021

Our Place on the Internet
www.cornwalllocalhistorians.co.uk

Email us at
calhnewsletter@gmail.com

Letter from the Chair

Well, we finally made it. After more than 18-month CALH has had a 'Family Gathering'. 42 of us, including speakers, finally met at the Kilbirnie Hotel in Newquay on Saturday 30th October for a conference on the contrasts and similarities between Cornwall and Devon.



Dr.Todd Gray took the chair and did the morning session talking about such controversial subjects as slavery, Blackshirts and WW2 looters, as well as his more familiar look at the differences between church bench ends in the West Country. As usual his talk was full of humour as well as stimulating and well researched information. To keep the balance between Devon and Cornwall Keith Stevens sang two historic versions of 'Uncle Tom Cobby and All'. The afternoon session started with a talk by Dr.Oliver Padel on how place names not only vary between Devon and

SPRING CONFERENCE 2022

26 - 27 February, 2022

the Kilbirnie Hotel, Narrowcliffe Road,
Newquay TR7 2RS.

Please Note:

the date has changed to February to fit in with the Kilbirnie Hotel's branding as a year-round hotel.

Conference Theme:

Looking Back Looking Forward:
40 Years of CALC

Speakers include: Eric Berry,
Dr. Joanna Mattingly, Garry Tregidga,
Patrick Newberry, Angela Aylward.

There have been many changes in the approach to local history over the last four decades and this is clearly the trend for the future. Speakers have been chosen to bring members up to date with what is happening in a wide range of fields, under the umbrella of local history. In her opening address Carol Vivian will look back to the legacy of our founder, Veronica Cheshier and explore many strands of Cornish local history. Developments in internet resources have transformed the way we study, yet books like *'The Cornishman's House'* remain key references yet to be bettered. New techniques have allowed a re-evaluation of archaeological evidence with exciting recent developments.

*Ian & Marilyn Thompson,
Spring Conference. Organisers*

Letter from the Chair continued

Cornwall but also within Cornwall itself. He then went on to discuss some of the reasons for this, although he pointed out that there was still much research to be done. The day was rounded off by Pete Herring who talked about the historic changes in the county boundary. As a boy, living in North Petherwin, he remembered the day his village changed from being part of Devon to becoming part of Cornwall.

There will be a fuller report on the day in next year's journal but I must thank all three speakers for their stimulating talks. I must say it was lovely to hold this meeting although it was a nightmare to organise from a safety point of view with Covid numbers rising so rapidly. As a one off 'Stand-in' organiser for this conference I could not have coped without the help and support of Marilyn Thompson, our Spring Conference organiser. Being on the spot she did most of the liaising with the hotel and was also able to keep me updated about the Covid situation in Newquay. Unlike me, who has hardly gone out since the last CALH meeting (March 2020) that seems such a long time ago now, Marilyn had managed to keep more in touch with the wider world and has even been organising and singing with her local choir, who some of you will remember entertained us at a conference a few years ago. Her knowledge on safety measures has been invaluable and the whole society, as well as me, owe her a big thank you for holding my hand (metaphorically speaking) over the last few months.

Whilst on the subject of Conferences, you will see that our Spring meeting is being held in February next year. Because of this the next newsletter, plus the booking form for the conference, will be sent to you in January so you have time to fill it in before the closing date.

And that brings me to my first plea. If someone doesn't step forward and offer

to organise next year's Autumn Conference there will be no Autumn Conference 2022, Covid permitting or not. If you are worried about thinking up a theme or who to ask to speak, the committee can help you with suggestions and we would also help with any other problems you may have. When I did this 2021 conference, I simply followed Joan Webb's format and then got Marilyn to check if I had got it right and Ian Thompson even did a costing for the event which was a great help. So, come on members, step up and volunteer.

My second plea is for someone to take over the editing of the newsletter as Marion Stephens (Cockroft) will only be able to do the January newsletter before handing over to a new editor. Again, the committee will help in any way we can and Marion will hand over the present format of the newsletter etc. so the new editor will have something to work on. Short articles and notices are regularly sent to the editor and my 'Letter from the Chair' fills a good portion but if there are gaps let the committee know and it will soon be filled. There are only three newsletters a year so it's not as if you have to churn one out every month. We have several members who are happy to proof-read if you can't get someone you know to do it. Once the newsletter has been sent to the printer the editor's job is finished as the printer adds any booking forms etc. before it is handed over to Hazel Harridence for distribution.



Photo Carole Vivian: CALH Conference, 2021



Photo by Carole Vivian CALH
Conference 2004

My final plea is for some new faces on the CALH committee. Your committee is shrinking, and not just, as in my case, in height alone. Sadly, earlier this year John and Hilary Ballard had to resign, due to ill health, after many years serving this society. They are greatly missed by us all and we really need to get in some new blood, as those of us who remain on committee are not getting any younger and if we don't get some fresh faces the time will come when there are not enough of us left *compos-mentis* to organise things. I should hate to see CALH fold up as, personally, it has played such a big part in my life over the last 40 years as I am sure it has with many of you.

SO, what we need is a full-on recruitment drive. New members, new committee members, new editor and a new Autumn Conference secretary. IT'S UP TO YOU.

I will finish with an update on the happenings in my own life since August as has been the norm all through Covid, I have had more 4-legged visitors than 2. The feral cats are still swearing at each other but at least they have reached a truce at meal times. They seem to require several meals each day. The ducks went down to Looe for their summer break but have started to drift back the last week and are now in a 'Where's my breakfast' routine.

My other regular visitors, the 'Tiggywinkles' come most evenings just before dark and always leave a thank you poop on the door mat!!!



As for the feathered visitors, they are still throwing expensive bird food left right and centre but at least the ducks now pick it up off the ground so there is no waste.

I wish you all a lovely Christmas and hope to see you in the new year.

Your Chairperson, Carole Vivian

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2022 ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

**Your membership subscription of
CALH is due for payment on 1st
January**

The subscription rates are: £15
Ordinary members, £25 Joint
members, £25 Corp. members

Payment can be made directly into our
bank account **sort code 30-12-74,**
account number 07789383, or by
cheque sent to "CALH, c/o October Hill,
2b Lambley Road, Lowdham, Notts,
NG14 7AY".

Cheques must be made payable to
"Cornwall Association of Local
Historians".

Do please check to see whether you
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prevent duplicate payments.

Members' Snippets

The editor thanks members for their Newsletter contributions.

Please note: Submissions are printed as given. The editor is not responsible for content or accuracy.

Marion Stephens, CALC Newsletter Editor

Reporting the 1918 influenza epidemic

The way that the 1918 influenza epidemic was reported in the British and Irish press of the day reveals as much about the attitudes of the contemporary journalism as the epidemic itself.

Influenza generally was so commonplace that it was hardly news; and reportage was often tucked away in small paragraphs at the bottom of columns. Not every paper mentioned it; and those in the areas least affected tended to copy news from places with severe infection. It all became routine and repetitive. School closures were the staple fare, along with restrictions on theatre and cinema performances, the workload on doctors, nurses and hospitals - and undertakers. Its effects on the military were also noted. Attention was given to the reports and recommendations of local medical officers. Some of them collated weekly statistics, which can be tabulated; influenza was not an officially notifiable disease, although local authorities had powers to make it so within their areas. As many deaths resulted from pneumonia following influenza, that complicated the data. There was some editorial comment. Some leading articles wondered whether it was better to restrict the coverage, to avoid panic. Others thought it better to tell it like it was, to encourage good hygiene and social responsibility. All the reportage

was of course overshadowed by war news. After the Armistice, some papers felt the abrupt loss of material; but there was increased advertising for medical and hygiene products (disinfectants like Jeyes Fluid).

The Cornish papers were somewhat reticent on the issue, although the *Western Morning News* gave some coverage. Hayle seemed to be one place affected; but the Quarter Sessions in Bodmin were more worried about a case of rabies in Plymouth. The research continues; but more sources will be needed apart from newspapers.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Bodmin Town Museum in providing the image of the Shire Hall in Bodmin used to illustrate my article on page 59 of CALH Journal 73.'

John Durring

Truro Cathedral Choristers raise £8,434 for Unicef

The fund raising event took place as part of the 'Sing 2G7 Project', where choristers encouraged children to raise their voices in song to world leaders who were meeting in Cornwall for the G7 summit this past June. Over 27,000 children from 31 counties signed up to Sing 2G7, written for the project by Sir Tim Rice and Peter Hobbs.

Duncan Paul Matthews

HMS Cornwall (1927 - 1942)

On Mon 27 Sep 21, the Saltash Old Cornwall Society had a talk given by a 'John and Janine ADAMS, on the fifth Royal Navy Ship to carry the name 'HMS Cornwall', a County Class Heavy Cruiser, built at Devonport Dockyard in 1927, was over 650ft long with an eventual ship's company in excess of thirteen hundred men.

HMS Cornwall (No 56) spent most of her working life in the Far East and Indian Ocean as part of the China Fleet protecting and escorting British and Commonwealth Merchant Shipping. She was based at Simonstown, South Africa and crewed mostly by South Africans.

During one of her operations, she located and sank a Greek/Dutch, Armed and Camouflaged Man-of-War disguised as a Merchant Vessel that had been harassing British and Commonwealth Shipping in the region. Having engaged this Armed Merchantman, '**Pinquin**, the **Piquin** blew up a taking unexpectedly, many hundred Merchant Seamen Prisoners of war held in her holds to their death.

HMS Cornwall met her end in Apr 1942 when bombed by nine Japanese aircraft dropping unexpectantly out of the sun just South of the Seychelles and sank within thirteen minutes along with her Sister Ship HMS Dorsetshire in very calm and still waters. The few survivors having been harassed by marauding sharks!

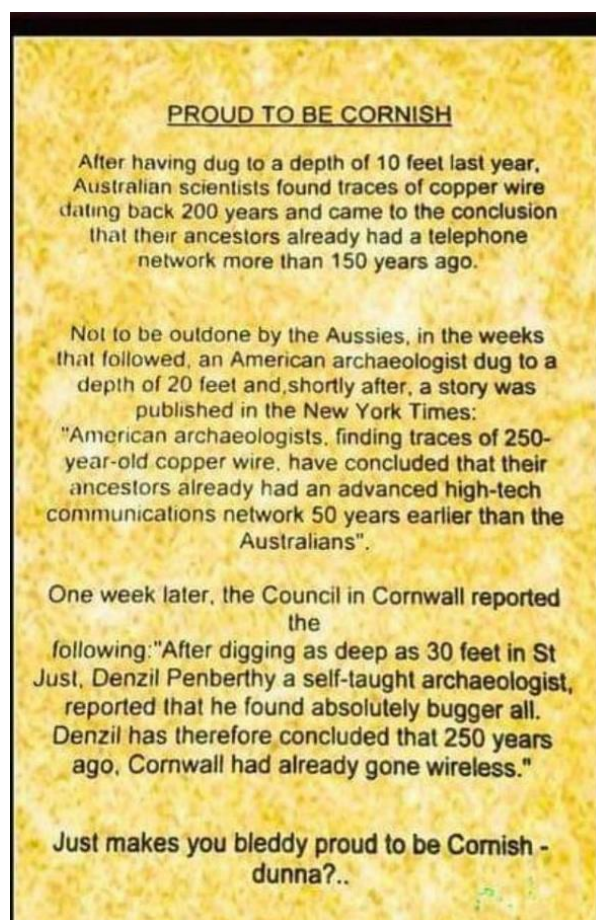
The first 'HMS Cornwall' won Battle Honours in the Falklands in 1692 and had 74 guns.



Photo: No. F 99, found on Wikipedia

The last and sixth 'HMS Cornwall' (No F 99) was nicknamed the 'Fleet's Ice-cream Warship'. after a popular ice cream cone with chocolate flake marketed as a No '99'. Her Ships Bell remains in Truro Cathedral. She was launched by HRH The Princess Diana, Duchess of Cornwall in 1985 who remained her Sponsor until her death and then that post was taken by the late, Lady Mary Harborough.

Duncan Paul Matthews



Submitted by Wendy Dowse

SUNDAY SICKNESS

Published in Talland Parish
Magazine December 1896.

The following is a description of the modern malady, Morbus Sabbaticus or Sunday Sickness.

That it only attacks members of the Church.

That it never troubles them any day but Sunday.

The symptoms vary, but the patient can always sleep well the night before, and can always eat a hearty dinner shortly after an acute attack.

No case was ever known where the sick man was not able to be at his business early on Monday.

It is generally the head of the family that is attacked.

When ladies are affected there will generally be found a complication with the dressmaker.

In this disease no physician is summoned.

It never hurts the body, only the soul.

I am sure Vicars would not be able to get away with this very pointed dig at non-attendance at church today.

Carole Vivian

News from the Saltash OCS

For their October Gathering the Saltash OCS had a most informative evening entertained by the Plymouth Re-Enactment Society. The first part of the evening was given by a Calligraphist who explained that the name comes from Calli *Colourful* and *Graphics*. Much was given to the creation and

provision of their inks, many of the substances quite toxic and poisonous resulting in much illness and an early death to writers, generally monks or nuns of various religious orders. Much ink taken from 'Oak Balls' (Oak Apples) then soaked and crushed to create an indelible substance then mixed with Gum-Arabic to have it stick to the parchments or vellum. (calf skins).

One red ink much used in the preparation of writings and illustrations was 'minimum' from where we get the word 'miniature', this used as minute red dots for the illustrator to guide his decorative work between.

Quills were trimmed, not as seen in paintings or theatre productions but the feather stem trimmed of scale like ridges and the top of the feather removed. The nib end would be hollowed to become a small ink reservoir and the nib constantly trimmed with a penknife. (Our word 'Pen' comes from the Latin 'Penna', a feather).

The second part of the Plymouth Re-Enactment Society talk was on the creation and development of Medieval Body Armour, often personalised and fashionable to allow the wearer to be noticed for his poses. Such armour built from the feet up like fish scales, each section over lapping the lower piece to protect the securing straps, for if an assailant was able to snip or cut a securing leather strap the armour would fall exposing a vulnerable piece of the knight!

Weight and mobility being important and protection against the weather, rust in the damp and cold and heat stroke for the wearer in the summer! A Knight would have to have had considerable wealth to own any body armour therefore too valuable to kill. His capture would offer the victors considerable bargaining power to gain a good ransom, monies,

News from Saltash OCS continued.

advantages, property or a daughter! The third part of the presentation was on the development of Bows and Arrows, their chosen wood, seasoned or not and most effective arrow heads with barbs to prevent their retraction, poisoned arrow heads or not, able to travel up to 200 mph. The Cornish were renowned during the Civil War for their strength and accuracy with their long bows.

Duncan Paul Matthews

News from the Toronto Cornish Association (TCA)

For our October meeting, Roger Radcliffe, a Cornish Bard and cousin to one of our members, gave a riveting presentation on Zoom from his home in St. Agnes. Roger neatly wove two stories into one. The second part had strong links to Toronto and the T.C.A!

The following are excerpts from an article on Roger's story, "*the Search for the Lady Agnes*" by TCA member, Jim Dagg.



The Search for the Lady Agnes is the title of a book written about her, authored by Roger Radcliffe.

The harbour at Trevaunance Cove, St Agnes is today sadly non-existent. When there was a working harbour in St Agnes, two-masted schooners carried coal from South Wales for the steam powered beam engines at the tin mines in the St Agnes area and copper mines at Porthtowan and Perranporth. The ships would often return to Wales with metal ore for smelting.

Roger described the working methods of the small harbour developed by Martin Tredinnick Hitchens at St Agnes. In the 1870s, harbours such as Padstow, Hayle and Fowey that built ships were too busy to take on any more orders, so MT Hitchens, wanting to enlarge his fleet, set up his own shipyard and built four vessels on St Agnes beach. An unfortunate beaching during a storm in 1896 occurred west of Llandudno, North Wales when the captain tried for a soft landing on a sandy beach in Conwy Bay, but ended on a rocky shore at Gogarth. The crew of four were rescued, and the ship, signed off from Hayle and not badly damaged, was bought from the insurers by a local businessman, Mr. Dunphy, who had her refitted at Beaumaris on Anglesey island.



Roger's next story begins in St Agnes when he saw, in an album belonging to a local postcard collector, a picture of the Lady Agnes figurehead as a **garden ornament**. Roger in 1989, knowing it must have survived to the present day, started a ten-year search for the figurehead.

The puzzle of the location of the garden ornament was solved when he saw a picture in an album owned by a person in Newquay and who told him it was in the front garden of a small house on Mount Wise, Newquay in the 1950s. The house belonged to the son of the man who was the skipper of the Lady Agnes when she was wrecked in North Wales in 1896 and Roger is unsure how the figurehead came into his possession. (It was not on the ship in 1931, nor until the ship's demise in 1948).

Another photo of the figurehead in about 1960 shows it mounted on the wall above the entrance to an antique shop in Fowey. Next, a figurehead historian in Sheffield showed Roger some more pictures of the focus of his search, and told him of a 1989 auction at Christie's in London that had happened a few months before Roger began his search. It was in the catalogue as an "Unknown Victorian Figurehead", but the auction house could not divulge details. Roger's historian friend did find out it sold for £9,000, and was secured in the purchaser's private residence. That's where the trail went cold.

UNTIL, years later when the figurehead historian in Sheffield told Roger that a colleague living near Cape Cod in the USA knew of a figurehead believed to be from the Lady Agnes was actually in CANADA.

Coincidence in 2001 finds Roger on a family holiday in the Cape Cod area where he was able to meet the maritime antique dealer in Yarmouthport, Massachusetts, who was acting on behalf of the figurehead owner who lived in TORONTO.

Roger contacted the Museums and Heritage Services, Culture Division in Toronto to seek verification of the item on offer. Elisabeth Joy from the Toronto Heritage Services went to see the owner and inspected the figurehead - it was the right one. The owner wanted a colossal price and because the people St Agnes really wanted to buy it, a fundraising drive was started. Success! Money raised, purchase made, but how to get it from Toronto to St Agnes?

At one of the coffee mornings in aid of the fund, Chance the Gardener plays a hand when Roger meets a former British Airways chap who had a discount on package transport and kindly BA allowed him to use it. Also, a local haulier donated transport for it from London to Cornwall.

Then a man named John Hitchens, the great-great-grandson of that Martin Tredinnick Hitchens who commissioned the ship and the figurehead, was given the honour to unveil the figurehead on the 23rd of March, 2002. By chance, Roger's grandfather x 2 had worked for John's grandfather x 2.

Ultimately, Roger has deduced that the figurehead of the Lady Agnes is a representation of St Agnes. She is depicted on a banner in St Agnes Church and is holding a lamb and a palm leaf.

Later, at a TCA meeting, Elisabeth Joy was presented with a framed photo of 'The Lady Agnes' which Liz Radcliffe brought back from Cornwall having met Roger Radcliffe. The photo of The Lady Agnes is a gift to the City of Toronto from the St Agnes Museum Trust. Elisabeth helped the Trust in its negotiations with the Toronto owner of the Lady Agnes figurehead. The TCA gave a donation to the Trust to be used towards the cost of purchasing the figurehead.



Photo of Elisabeth Joy & Robert Radcliffe

Submitted by Marion Stephens