

THE NEWS ON THE DUNES ★ EXCAVATION SPECIAL!

ORATORY TO BE UNCOVERED! *But as St Piran Trust Company Secretary IAN SALTERN explains, this is just the beginning, so please give generously!!!*

After fifteen long years of campaigning, the Oratory will finally be uncovered. Whilst this is a momentous development and one to be savoured, it grieves me to say that the real hard work starts now.

It has taken the St Piran Trust so long to reach this stage because of a particularly vicious circle – in order to secure funding to uncover the Oratory we needed to know how much it would cost to conserve it, yet in order to find that out, we needed to uncover it – ah, the impeccable logic of the English Civil Service and its ‘agencies’! And as the Oratory is located in one of the most ecologically sensitive sites in Europe, it is little wonder it has taken the Trust so long to get here.

But here we are, ready to embark upon the uncovering of the Oratory. This will be the first stage of a two stage project. We will assess the Oratory’s conservation needs and potential then prepare an application for funding for the second stage. Depending on what we find, that second stage will see the Oratory conserved in situ (if possible), and an exploration of the wider Oratory site – *Lanpiran* – the medieval monastic site which grew up around the Oratory. The second stage will also see the production of learning resources for schools and community activities, including an enhanced Perrantide play.

Some of the funding for stage one is already in place courtesy of Cornwall Council, Perranzabuloe Parish Council, English Heritage, Heritage Lottery, Cornwall Heritage Trust, HRH Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, the Trust’s own resources, and the generosity of private donors.

HOWEVER, further funds are needed to complete stage one and to deliver stage two – so the St Piran Trust is making a plea for donations. I know we have done this almost every year since 2000, but this time *we are really are going to excavate the Oratory!* It’s now or never: finally we have a fantastic opportunity to explore the Oratory; find out more about its history and the development of the wider site; analyse the bones of those buried there and compare DNA with the local population; develop bespoke learning resources for schools across Cornwall; hold exhibitions and a new play. We can finally return the Oratory to its rightful place as a key cultural icon for Cornwall and you can help us by making any donation – big or small – of pennies (or pounds) for Piran.

WE WELCOME ABOARD NEW TRUSTEES *and will be profiling our new movers and shakers in St Piran News, beginning with trustee, artist, and benefactor, Piran Strange, aka DAVID BARRIE...*

David Barrie came across St Piran at the age of 9, when he started at St Piran's Preparatory School, Gringer Hill, Maidenhead, Berkshire. During his time there David was fascinated by the story of St Piran the Cornish Saint having been thrown off the top of an Irish cliff with a millstone around his neck. On hitting the water the stone miraculously floated the Saint across the Irish Sea to Cornwall. The school had several paintings depicting Piran looking perplexed aboard his vessel. It struck a chord. In later life David embarked on a second career as an artist and decided that he would adopt a pseudonym, Piran Strange. It was then that he discovered the St Piran's Trust, and contacted the founder, Eileen Carter. “Eileen gave me all the background to the Trust and its ambitions and it just struck a chord. I loved St Piran's School and had enjoyed huge success through his name as Piran Strange. It was time to give something back. The Trust's sole aim to raise the Oratory from its burial place became my passion and I was happy to contribute.”



David Barrie: trustee, artist, benefactor

David enjoyed discussing this dream, the monument that would be created for Cornwall with Perran Penrose, former Chairman of the St Piran's Trust. After Perran's sudden and untimely death, he decided that it was more important than ever that the project succeed, and became a trustee, also providing considerable financial support. David feels privileged to see the project finally going ahead. “St. Piran provided me with the happiest times of my life and I owe him a lot. You have to be on the dunes at Perranporth to know that he is there, his presence all around you. It is mystical, magical and above all holy. We are creating a place of pilgrimage to the patron saint of Cornish Tinminers, at a place that represents one of the earliest places of Christian worship in the United Kingdom.” David has committed himself to support this cause until the monument is there, restored and secured for all future generations to enjoy.

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15 YEARS OF WAITING ARE OVER! THE UNCOVERING OF ST PIRAN'S ORATORY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN *Cornwall Archaeological Unit's JAMES GOSSIP outlines the big dig ...*

I am delighted that we finally have the go ahead to start excavation work at the Oratory and can't wait to help the St Piran Trust realise their goal. The official start of the excavation will be at 10.30am on **Monday 17th February**. The Trust's founder, Eileen Carter will cut the first turf in recognition of all her hard work and devotion to the project over the years. Sarah Newton MP will be there to lend her support; and we expect a media presence too.

The Oratory is currently covered by an artificial sand dune, with the ruins of the Oratory lying largely beneath ground level. I will be supervising volunteer excavators as we dig the dune down in spits using shovels (the long-handled Cornish variety is best) and spades. For those interested in archaeology and history this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to experience the excavation of a building of enormous iconic and symbolic significance. I will be sending out start date details to everyone who's expressed an interest and will maintain a calendar of who to expect on what day so I can programme the work schedule and of course, for Health and Safety purposes. All participants will be expected to read and adhere to a risk assessment too. Facilities will be few, but parking and portaloos will be available at Perran Sands Holiday Park.

The first week of the excavation will run from the 17th to the 23rd of February, including the weekend so more people can get involved in the project, and Monday 24th will be our day off. Working hours will be 9-4.30pm, with lunch and tea breaks. Work will progress over the following weeks, excavating the artificial covering mound until ground level is reached. Anyone who's been to the dunes recently will have noticed how much water there is, and once below ground level we may have to start pumping, but we'll be sure not to drain the adjacent pond – St Piran requires it for the Perrantide play and parade on March 2nd!

Once the remains of the Oratory are revealed, we hope to record them. This may involve digital scanning or photogrammetric recording, to be decided at a later date. It is hoped that all work will have been completed by March 14th, although this will depend on the weather and any other unforeseen circumstances.

Here's to a happy, successful, exciting and historic project! Contact jgossip@cornwall.gov.uk for more information on volunteering, or the dig itself.

THE CORNISH MARATHON: 26.2 MILES, 1600 FEET OF ASCENTS AND DESCENTS, £1000 RAISED FOR THE TRUST *The Reverend ANDREW PEARSON ran the gruelling course over Bodmin Moor, for St Piran and for Perran ...*



[Andrew on the approach to Golitha, and nearing Jamaica Inn](#)

Andrew, who is the brother of Trust Chair, Angela Penrose, was one of only 300 who completed the course on 17th November 2013, the first anniversary of Angela's husband – and former Trust Chair – Perran Penrose's funeral. The marathon starts and finishes at Pensilva, a mile from Perran's home. It was the toughest of the five marathons that Andrew's run, but he still clocked in at a respectable 4 hours, 47 minutes, 5 seconds. Andrew is Priest in Charge of the Church of the Venerable Bede at Wyther, in Leeds. The Trust extends its thanks to him and his parishioners for their heroic contribution. From May, athletes and other Piraners will be able to use Believe.in – an online sponsorship page – to raise money for St Piran Trust.

MIRACLE THEATRE TO PERFORM 'THE STUFF OF DREAMS' AT PERRAN ROUND *this August – the venue of its first play 35 years ago ...*

On **Sunday 24th August** the Miracle Theatre Company will be performing Bill Scott's freely adapted version of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Perran Round will see Miracle celebrate with another engaging, inventive and enjoyable production – a fresh musical adaption of the timeless play that will delight audiences of all ages. Take a trip into uncharted waters. Find yourself wrecked on a treacherous shore beset by mooncalves and puppy-headed monsters. Hell is empty and all the devils are here. A brave new world? The stuff of dreams? Or just a shabby conjuring trick? Contact Emma Gibson, emma@miracletheatre.co.uk to book. A percentage of proceeds will support the St Piran Trust.