

St.Piran's Day Speech 2014

Truro Cathedral

Pur lowen ov-vy dhe vos omma y'n tyller arbennik-ma Dy'Goel Sen Piran. Da yw genev gweles meur a dus omma, ow solempnya bywnans agan tasek meur gerys, an fleghesow yn arbennik. Avel Kernowyon, yma whans dhyn-ni oll titel an dy'goel soedhogel hedhyw, rag solempnya y dhy'goel-ma. Ny a wayt y dhe gampoesa seulvegyns.

I am very happy to be here today in this special place on St.Piran's Feast Day. It is good to see so many people here, celebrating the life of our much-loved patron saint, especially the children. As Cornish people, we should have the right to an official holiday today, in order to celebrate his feast day. We hope this will happen as soon as possible.

Each year we hear once more about the life of St. Piran, how in the 5th century he arrived from Ireland on a millstone at Rose and began a holy life amongst the dunes. One day he discovered metal, when his hearthstone grew too hot and turned into a silver river of tin. He built an oratory or small church, in which to pray and the local people came there to hear the word of God. **What** did this old building look like? The walls consisted of uncut, uncemented stones, placed one on top of the other, without trying to arrange them in courses or layers. The walls were not built perpendicularly, but leant inwards which was the ancient way of supporting a roof. All this evidence suggests that it is very old, older than any other building on the mainland of Great Britain. Most of its life this church has been buried in the sand, which has saved it from being robbed of its stones for other buildings. In 1835, the sands shifted again and the church was revealed and it was found. Nothing happened for many years until in 1910 its remains were encased in a concrete shell to guard it against the wind, the sand and the rain. In 1980, the oratory was covered in a mound of sand and has been hidden from view for over 30 years.

This year is a special year because the Oratory is going to be excavated and we all will be able to see this iconic building again. On the 17th February, Eileen Carter of St.Piran's Trust, dug into the sand dune covering the church and started the excavation to find the remains of Piran's church. Volunteers are needed to help dig out this old church and its cemetery, one of the oldest Christian churches in the land. When it is uncovered, it will be assessed and conserved. Hopefully it will stay on show for all to see.

The archaeologists will also evaluate the surrounding cemetery to find a range of dates for the graves and complete a DNA analysis, enabling a comparison with the modern Cornish population. Interpretation boards will be at the site for people to learn about the Oratory's importance to the history of Cornwall and to Christianity in Britain. A fully researched term length unit will be produced, linked to the National Curriculum, which explains the story of St.Piran and will be available to all schools for children to study his life.

St.Piran is part of the distinctiveness of Cornwall and his life is the basis of our flag, which will be proudly flying all over the world today, in Australasia, the Americas and everywhere the Cornish sought work and settled. But there are many other things for Cornish children to learn about, in our national history. In Cornish schools now, we learn about the history of our villages and local saints, about our customs and if we are very lucky our Cornish language and special dances. But Cornish children should learn about things that happened to Cornish people, what caused them to leave and go to live on the other side of the world, never seeing Cornwall again. They should learn about how the Cornish were living when various invaders came to our land, **not** the history of the invader, but the reaction of the Cornish people. History informs the lives we are living today, it shapes us and makes us who we are. We need to know **what** went on in the lives of our ancestors and **who** the inventors and famous people were and their contribution to the **World**, not just Cornwall. So my message to everyone is get on the internet and start googling! **What** was the Prayer Book Rebellion in 1549 all about? **Who** are the famous Cornish people and **why** are they famous? Look up Trevithick, Humphry Davy, John Couch Adams who discovered the planet Neptune, and in modern times the Cornish Rugby Team who in 1908 represented GB in the London Olympics, the whole rugby team and they only lost in the final to Australia. And Donald Healey from Perranporth who won the Monte Carlo Rally and built sports cars, making the name Austin Healey famous. Learn about your heritage and understand Cornwall and the Cornish and their impact on the world.

I wish you all a very Happy St.Pirantide, enjoy all these events happening throughout Kernow and in the Diaspora, in memory of our much loved saint. Make sure our children know about St.Piran and how we celebrate his life every year and that Kernow is a unique and special place, one that we cherish and must keep safe for future generations, the inheritors of our Earth.

Dy'Goel Sen Peran Da dhywgh-hwi oll arta, Kernow bys vykken.

Bardh Meur