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NEWSLETTER

Lyther-nowodhow

November – December 482 – mis Du - mis Kevardhu 2025

Nadelik Lowen!

Merry Christmas

One Starry Night

Harbours in Cornwall celebrate Christmas with public light displays. Possibly the best-known and first harbour lights were in Mousehole. They were started in 1963 by Joan Gilchrist, a local artist, who paid for two strings of coloured bulbs on each side of the small harbour to brighten it up during the dark winter nights around Christmas. The idea and its popularity grew. These days, several harbours compete to have the most spectacular displays of lights not only around the harbour but on the water. On a calm evening reflections in the water add a touch a magic.

Port Isaac, famous for being home to The Fisherman's Friends and the location for filming the Doc Martin TV series, has built a tradition of lights and carols. That vibe is being transported to Truro Cathedral this Christmas in a free carol service titled "One Starry Night". It will feature choral groups from Port Isaac. The event is being organised by the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies and is going to be live streamed. The time difference between Cornwall and NZ is 13 hours so that, although it is an evening service in Cornwall, it will be broadcast on 11 December at 8 am NZDT. A recording will be available afterwards. Either search on Google or check our Facebook page for a link closer to the date.

Harry Potter filming in Cornwall

As followers of our Facebook page will already know, HBO television has been filming a new series in Cornwall based on the Harry Potter children's books. The series is not due to be screened until 2027.

Two locations have been used – Cadgwith Cove and Kynance Cove, both on the Lizard Peninsula. From memory, there are no coastal scenes in the books by J K Rowling. The TV producers may be taking some artistic licence at Kynance Cover where Professor Dumbledore, played by American actor John Lythgow (pictured), has been seen at work on the beach. Cadgwith is more built-up with many thatched cottages and a very quaint pub, all of which fit the general style of the wizarding world.

Piskies, based on an integral part of Cornwall's folklore, are just one of the mystical creatures in the Harry Potter books. In the movies based on the books, artistic license has turned them blue and let them fly. Traditionally they are described as small, impish creatures that love to play tricks on people, causing chaos wherever they go. They are thought to dwell in the natural landscapes of Cornwall and dance around 'fairy rings', which are naturally occurring circles of mushrooms.

Redruth mining & pasty festival

I grew up a stone's throw from Redruth, went to school there and even worked in the town for a while. So, it is embarrassing to admit that I had not heard of the Redruth International Pasty and Mining Festival until a friend, living in Cornwall, posted about it on our Facebook page. It has been running for 16 years without registering on my radar. In my defence, I left the area over 40 years ago.

Cornwall specialises in festivals for all sorts of pretexts. Redruth Town Council stages four festivals each year. The first marks St Piran's Day in March. The second, in June, celebrates Richard Murdoch who is credited with inventing gas lighting whilst living in Redruth. The pasty and mining festival runs over three days in September and the final event of the year starts in November including Christmas lights and festivities.

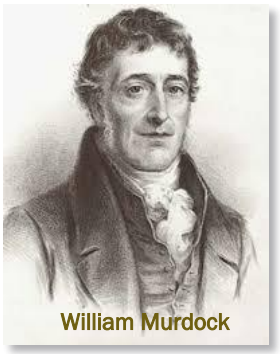
The pasty & mining festival kicks off with a story-telling guided walk from the centre of town to Wheal Uny to watch the 'Smoking of the Stacks'. The engine houses of Wheal Uny are brought back to life when the chimney stacks belch forth smoke, recreating what they would have looked like in the heyday of Cornish mining.

Wheal Uny Mine was worked from 1800 to 1893 and is on the northern edge of the Great Flat Lode, a rich source of tin and copper ore. It closed due to the dropping price of tin and the increasing cost of pumping out water. Even so, it was relatively shallow at 244 fathoms when it closed so possibly never reached its full potential by tapping into the lode at deeper levels. The evocative photo was taken by another Facebooker – Cornwall on Camera.

The festival gets its grand 'International' theme because Redruth is twinned with three towns - Plumergat et Meriadec in Brittany, Mineral Point, Wisconsin, USA and Real Del Monte, Hidalgo, Mexico where Cornish folk played prominent roles in mining. The smoke was produced in red, white and blue colours reflecting the foreign connections. Later that evening there was a gala concert by the Camborne Town Band fresh from their 2025 Royal Trophy win at the West of England Bandsmen's Festival.

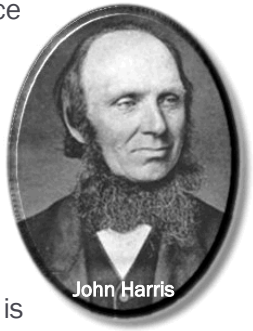
Other activities on the following days include a pasty crimping competition and a contest for the finished products. There was a craft fair and various informative talks and exhibitions about William Murdoch, John Harris and geothermal engineering to name a few.

William Murdoch was a Scottish engineer who worked with James Watt on the steam engines used in Cornish mines. While living in Cornwall he made a working high pressure steam carriage in 1784 with an innovative multiple crank shaft which was the forerunner of crank shafts in modern car engines. As a child, he had seen coal gas lighting on a Scottish estate. By 1792 he was using coal gas to light his Redruth home and developed a larger system to light offices and factories.



William Murdock

John Harris (1820 – 1884) was a miner with a limited education. He attended school from the age of seven until he was nine when he went to work, first on a farm then at the mines. At 13 he went underground. Despite his lack of schooling Harris had a love of reading and writing. He borrowed books from the Sunday School and local benefactors. Stationery was in short supply so he would scratch his writing on slate with a nail or use blackberry juice instead of ink. He published 15 books of poetry and won the Shakespeare Tercentenary Prize. His best-known poem is 'A Story of Carn Brea' (the hill in the background of the photo at the start of this article) written in 1863. This is an extract from his poem 'The Mine' which captures the scene.



John Harris

A mine spread out its vast machinery.
Here engines with their huts and smoky stacks,
Cranks, wheels, and rods, boilers and hissing steam,
Pressed up the water from the depths below.

Repair Shop links to Cornwall

The Repair Shop TV programme is filmed at the Weald and Downland Living museum in Singleton, West Sussex. Even if, like me, you are an avid fan, you may not realise that the artisans are brought in from far and wide to take part, bringing the tools of their trade with them. At least two of the talented craftspeople have links to Cornwall.

While researching the article in the last newsletter about the charity auction in Penzance of the last ingot of Cornish tin to be produced, I noticed that Domonic Chinea, the expert metal worker, was in the audience. It did

not take much more research to discover that he has left The Repair Shop and has bought part of a dairy farm in West Cornwall that was being broken up. He made the move from his previous base in London's Hackney Wick with his wife, Maria, and dog, Wendy. I haven't been able to find the exact location of his new home but in one of his You Tube videos he takes Wendy for a run on St Gothian Sands with Godrevy Lighthouse in the background.


Spot the NZ flax!

He is making a solo TV series recording his renovation of the farmhouse, transformation of a bare paddock into a productive garden and revamping outbuildings including the milking shed where he plans to create a new workshop.

The TV series won't be available in NZ (unless a local channel buys it) but Dominic is also recording his experiences on You Tube. He introduces his new home as his "Biggest Project Yet" and it certainly looks like he has taken on a lot of work. To watch his programmes search for his name.

The second Repair Shop expert to have a link with Cornwall is luthier, Julyan Wallis. He has lived and worked in Heamoor (pronounced hay-more) near Penzance for 30 years repairing guitars and similar fretted string instruments. Past clients include guitarists who have played with stars such as Divid Bowie, Eric Clapton and Pink Floyd.

He started his career teaching guitar in local primary schools, YMCA and adult education programmes but began to repair the instruments in 1991. In 2019 he got an unexpected call from the producers of The Repair Shop. Julyan believes there's magic in The Repair Shop barn, where everything he does seems to work. He says "I'm sure little elves creep in and help me. It definitely raises your game, being surrounded by all these talented experts in their fields."

More than just a game

By Judy Wright

My husband and I recently attended the NPC rugby grand final between Otago and Canterbury. 16,000 fans, with Cantabrians in their red and black mixed with the blue and gold of the travelling Otago supporters, were full of anticipation for what was to come at this sold- out game.

Coming from a proud rugby county like Cornwall where rugby is the most popular spectator sport, the similarity was evident on this day. The passion and cultural roots, the celebration of community, a strong sense of identity, its fierce local derbies and its very vocal supporters.

The rugby rivalry between Otago and Canterbury is the oldest in New Zealand provincial rugby and, on this occasion, Canterbury came out winners 36-28. It compares to Cornish rugby's biggest historic and intensive derby matches between Redruth and Camborne. The rivalry is deeply rooted in local pride between the two industrial towns.

The oldest team in Cornwall is Penryn RFC, which was formed in 1872. The club was founded by John Marshall Thomas, a watchmaker, who brought the team colours - black and red hoops - back to Cornwall after playing for Blackheath.

In 1905 the All Black "Originals" tour played Cornwall on September 21, at the Recreation Ground in Camborne. New Zealand won the match 41-0. This was a significant event in Cornish rugby history. Museums and archives, such as Truro Museum, Cardiff's Rugby Museum and the NZ Rugby Museum, hold programmes and related artifacts from the tour.

Cornwall has a history of hosting other international touring teams over the years, including other NZ sides, the New Zealand Māori, and provincial teams, like Canterbury, who they played in 1994.

The fan base from this shared rugby culture can be described as passionate, enthusiastic and loyal. Unlike in some other sports, rugby fans are often seated next to opposing supporters, encouraging friendly good-natured banter. A good sense of humour is considered a key part of Cornish identity, alongside other cultural aspects like a love for pasties!!

Just like Canterbury and Otago, Cornwall also has a dedicated fan base known as "Trelawny's Army" referring to the story of Jonathon Trelawney, a Cornish bishop who was imprisoned by Parliament in 1688 and supported by his fellow royalist in Cornwall, urging the people to march on London to secure his release.

On April 20, 1991 Cornish fans did just that. 40,000 of them, dressed in black and gold,

travelled to Twickenham, London, for the county championship final against Yorkshire. They went in hope that Cornwall would end an 83-year wait for a county title since their first (and at that time only) win in 1908 against Durham. The Cornish supporters dominated the 56,000 strong crowd - 49,000 more than the previous final between Lancashire and Middlesex - and they were rewarded with an historic 29-20 victory.

There's one big difference. The NPC championship is a professional competition involving high-level players, many of whom play Super Rugby, whereas the English County Rugby Championship is an amateur or semi-professional competition, primarily from lower-tier clubs. However, that makes no difference to the level of passion and the commitment from the players and their loyal fan base.

In summary, rugby was introduced to New Zealand by early British settlers, who brought the same cultural background that cemented the sport's importance in Cornwall. The sport is deeply ingrained in the local culture of NZ and Cornwall, making it more than just a game, but a significant part of their identity.

Meetings

Nine members turned up for the meeting on 11 October in Christchurch. The programme began with a new song to add to their repertoire - The tale of the Grenadier and the Fair Maid.

Les's 'Legend' was the story of the very real Reverend Robert Stephen Hawker. He was born in December 1884 and died in 1945. By all accounts he was an extremely eccentric character. Among his peculiarities is an account of him sitting on a rock at Bude stark naked impersonating a mermaid singing and screaming to attract attention. I bet his Sunday sermons were entertaining. He also wrote the words to the Song of the Western Men (Trelawny - the same Trelawny as in rugby's Trelawny's Army).

Marlene Smith, an excellent speaker, shared part two of her family genealogy. The group have recently watched Michael Portillo's travels in Cornwall and Devon. This meeting, followed up with the sequel of his hike in The Pyrenees.

Members in Hawkes Bay enjoy their lunches together. At the end of October, 22 went to 'Off the Track', a restaurant in Havelock North. The topic of discussion, with the aid of a map to identify locations, was some of Cornwall's picturesque towns and villages. Ian McGregor showed the group where many generations of his ancestors had lived.

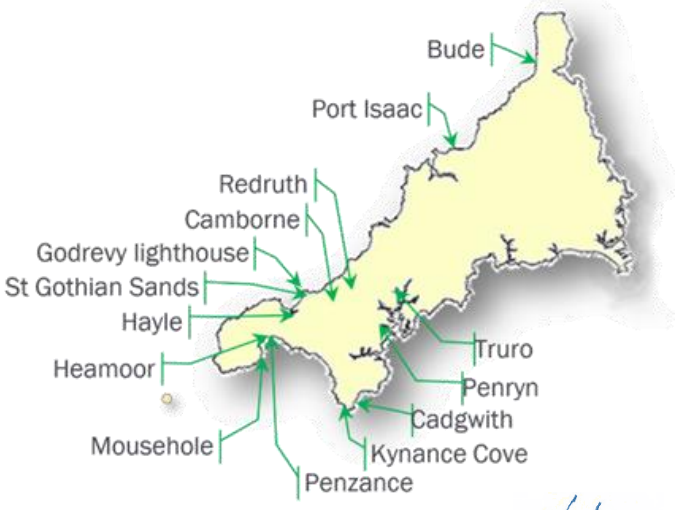
At their meeting on 8 November, Christchurch members heard about Frankie the Flamingo, that had escaped from a wildlife park near Hayle in Cornwall and had flown to northern France despite having some feathers clipped. There were two quizzes, one musical, the other general knowledge, and plenty of songs.

Eleven people took part in the online meeting on 19 November which had a pasty theme. There was a mix of music, humour and recipes. The next meeting will be in February with details in the newsletter early that month.

As always, more details of past meetings, photos and dates of upcoming meetings can be found on our website.

www.nzcornish.nz/files/meetings

Places mentioned in this newsletter



That's it for this newsletter my 'ansomes. 'Ave a proper Christmas. See 'ee again dreckly!

Nick