

## President

Judy Wright  
12 Beaumaris Street  
Outram  
Dunedin 9019  
Ph: 027 534 7197  
E-mail: judywright13@hotmail.com

Web Site: [www.nzcornish.nz](http://www.nzcornish.nz)

## Secretary & Treasurer

Nick Bartle  
49 Lohia Street  
Khandallah  
Wellington 6035  
Ph: 04 280 7501 or 027 578 8568  
E-mail: nzcornishassociation@gmail.com

Facebook: NZCornish



Est. 1962  
Founder: Cliff Trevelyan  
Trevelyan an Tyrnoweth

**Kowethas  
Kernewek Mordir  
Nowydh**

# N E W S L E T T E R

L y t h e r - n o w o d h o w

## Les Mitchell

It is with great sadness that I have to report that Les Mitchell passed away on 16 March at the age of 91. He had had failing health with a number of stays in hospital over recent months. Les' life ended quietly in hospital. He left his wife, Lynda, two children, four grandchildren and his sister, Heather, who plays a leading role in Christchurch Cornish.



Les was one of the longest-standing members of the Cornish Association. He was born in [Port Gaverne](#) near Port Isaac and arrived in New Zealand in 1958. In our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet Les is quoted saying,

"My sister and I were sent by mum to the inaugural meeting of the Christchurch branch of the Cornish Association... From memory, there were about a dozen people who attended and we were the youngest at that time."

Les trained as a master plumber around the time of his two years' national service and worked in many of the largest buildings in Christchurch. He also volunteered for scouts, camps sites and football teams. He loved sport and small seagoing craft.

Like many native Cornish people, Les had a strong bond with his homeland. He continued to go to Cornish meetings and became branch secretary in May 1970 just 3 years after the Christchurch branch was established. In October 2002 he was still secretary and his long service was recognised with a gift from the branch. He received more recognition in 2023 when he retired from the position after 53 years. He continued to entertain and educate members at meetings by telling Cornish yarns and legends.

He was made a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedh in 2009 for promoting Cornwall in New Zealand. The

picture shows him in bardic robes.

Each bard choses a name in Kernewek that reflects something personal. Les chose MYGHAL PORTHYSAK which translates to 'Mitchell of Port Isaac'



## Cornish alphabet

This is the beginning of a new feature in these newsletters. Each issue will explore something about Cornwall based on a single letter starting with A and ending in Z. Suggestions for any letter will be gratefully received.

We begin the series with the A30 road.

The A30 is one of the UK's longest A-roads, running 284 miles (457 km) from the western fringe of London to [Land's End](#). Its true home is in Cornwall and it has been called 'The Road to Paradise'. Obviously!



The road has been a principal axis in Britain for centuries as a coaching route and post road. It was established long before it was first documented by Brian Tuke, Master of the King's Posts, in 1512. It was an important means of communication between the crown and distant representatives especially during times of conflict such as threat of Spanish invasion in 1580s. The road appeared on a 1675 map of Britain as "The Road from London to The Land's End in Cornwall. The Post-Office making this one of their Principal Roads". Acts of parliament were passed in the 1800s to create toll-bearing turnpikes to ease the transport of tin and copper ore to the port at [Hayle](#). The A30 was one of the first roads to be classified by the Ministry of Transport for funding in 1921.

The idea of a spine road into the southwest might seem obvious but it is only recently that it the A30 has formed anything like a continuous route. It begins at Henlys Roundabout on the boundary of Heathrow airport and, after crossing the border with Devon, used to wind its

way through most of Cornwall's major towns and many villages. It was one bottleneck after another. The A30 was notorious for making the drive take the best part of a day to go from the Devon border to far south Cornwall in summer holiday traffic.

In 1978 vital bypasses at [Redruth](#) and [Launceston](#) were opened. More bypasses to bottleneck towns came for Hayle in 1985 and [Bodmin](#) in 2007. The latest new stretch opened in 2024. Now the dual carriageway continues almost uninterrupted along the centre of Cornwall to Hayle. After that, it returns to the original route that passes through several villages. Once past [Penzance](#), it remains a rural road before terminating in the tourist car park at Land's End.

The A30 is one of two main routes into and out of Cornwall. The A38 alternative route, charges tolls when leaving Cornwall via the Tamar Bridge. It is a dramatic landmark at the border near [Saltash](#). However the A30 has its own border crossing landmark – the ‘nearly home trees’ perched on a quiet hill near Lifton (picture courtesy of Google maps) about 6km north of the



iconic ‘Welcome to Cornwall’ sign. The trees were planted at the top of the hill nearly 120 years ago but there are several theories as to why. One of the most romantic is that a farmer planted them in the

shape of a heart in memory of his late wife.

## John Grigg

There is a statue in the centre of Ashburton to John Grigg who was a respected Canterbury farmer and pioneer of the frozen meat industry in New Zealand. It was unveiled on Canterbury Anniversary Day in 1905.

John was the eldest son of John and Christiana Grigg, born in May 1828 near [Duloe](#) in Cornwall. His mother died while he was small and he lived with his pious, evangelical grandmother in Bodmin. He was weakened by a serious accident as a child and his family thought farming would be too strenuous for the boy. After completing his education in Bodmin grammar school and then a private school in Plymouth, he was destined to enter the clergy. However, John was determined not to let his limitations prevent him from becoming a farmer. When his father died, he inherited Bodbrane Farm at the age of 16 or 17 and became responsible for providing for his



stepmother and three siblings.

He met and fell in love with a local girl, Martha Maria Vercoe, but, before they could marry, she emigrated to New Zealand with her family. After two years of negotiations, Bodbrane Farm was sold and John followed his love to NZ in 1854. They were married in Otahuhu the following year and settled on a farm there where he bred Leicester sheep and experimented in cross-breeding them with merinos. He imported various types of modern farming technology.

In late 1863 Grigg persuaded his brother-in-law, Auckland financier and businessman, Thomas Russell, to join him in a partnership. They bought Longbeach, an area between the Rangitata and Ashburton rivers in Canterbury. Much of the land was swamp, but Grigg diverted the Hinds River to drain it. The Grigg family left Auckland in 1866 to live in Christchurch until a house at Longbeach could be extended to accommodate them all. John and Martha eventually had 10 children. Grigg initially capitalised on the demand from gold miners on the West Coast. When that declined, he ran a mixed farm raising a range of animals and cropping thousands of acres. He continued to develop the land and his farming techniques.

He was the founder and a long-serving director of the Canterbury Frozen Meat and Dairy Produce Export Company. Carcasses from Longbeach formed part of the first refrigerated cargo sent to London in February 1882. The farm had grown to about 30,000 acres and included a self-contained village that was home to up to 200 staff. Financial problems followed the end of the land boom of the 1870s. The property was heavily mortgaged and Grigg was forced to downsize, selling some of the land and stock to his employees. At the same time he moved to dairying, importing Dutch Friesian cattle in 1863.

Grigg was active as a lay reader in the local church and in public life. He was elected to parliament in a by-election in Wakanui in 1884 but resigned his seat less than a year later after realising he was not suited to party politics. He served on the Ashburton Roads Board, the Ashburton County Council and various other bodies.

He remained on the board of the Canterbury Freezing Co. until shortly before he died at Longbeach in 1901. His eldest son, also John, inherited the farm and, in 1926, it passed to yet another John Grigg who owned it until 1973. In 2014 the 150th anniversary of John Grigg's first purchase of the land was marked by the fifth generation to run Longbeach. Many of the

original buildings remain standing and are listed with Heritage NZ together with an architecturally significant homestead built in 1937.

## Tresco Abbey Gardens

The February edition of Gardens Illustrated magazine featured the Abbey Gardens on Tresco the second largest of the Isles of Scilly that lie 28 miles off the Cornish coast. The islands enjoy a tropical sub-climate thanks to the warming waters of the Gulf Stream.

The island was home to a priory dedicated to St Nicholas founded in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by Benedictine monks from Tavistock Abbey in modern-day Devon. Now it is part of the Duchy of Cornwall Estate but the entire island of 297 hectares has been leased to a single family since 1864. There is a permanent population of around 175.

Augustus Smith, a Hertfordshire squire, leased the island and became its first Lord Protector, a title that existed until the 1920s. He made his home in Tresco Abbey, a grand house beside the old abbey. He then started planting gardens among the ruins. It is now a haven for over 2,000 species from Brazil to New Zealand, Myanmar to South Africa. It is protected from Atlantic storms by a shelter belt of *pinus radiata* and Californian macrocarpa. Another species in the collection that we would recognise is *cordyline australis* – cabbage trees.



The range of plants is constantly enriched using links to similar botanical collections around the world including the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, near London which came to the rescue by providing replacement plants for specimens lost during snow in 1987 and a hurricane in 1990.

The gardens are not only home to exotic and rare plants, they are also home to red squirrels which have largely been displaced by grey squirrels on the British mainland. In September 2013 twenty were helicoptered to Tresco and released in Abbey Woods, near the Abbey Gardens. Tresco is a "safe haven" as it is free from predators such as foxes, and from grey squirrels. Baby squirrels have been pictured in the Abbey Gardens, proving the squirrels are now successfully breeding.

## AI pasties

The last newsletter contained a picture of tinned pasty that was fake but almost convincing. This time, the image is more palatable but less credible

(or edible!). AI has been used to imagine a Lego pasty.

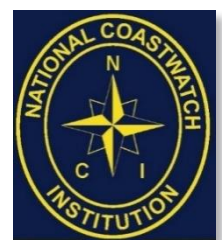


Warrens makes a bold claim to being the world's oldest makers of genuine Cornish pasties. The business was established in [St Just in Penwith](#) in the 1800s. The claim was challenged by the UK's Advertising Standards Authority in 2014 but the final ruling was in favour of Warrens. Although the business could not prove for certain that William Harvey had set up the bakery in 1860, it was proven that a shop had existed on the site since 1873.

More recent times have been financially trying for Warrens. In 2012 the privately-owned business was incorporated to attract outside investment because competition was taking its toll. After closing several of its stores and taking on debt, the company continued to incur losses. It entered a voluntary arrangement (a type of insolvency) in December 2019. But today, it is a large chain of bakeries owned by Provenance Brands Limited. Two other companies in the Provenance Brands Group have been featured in past newsletters. As mentioned in May/June 2023 Cornish flake sea salt is available in Woolworths supermarkets and other places in NZ. The Cornish Seaweed Company featured in a newsletter later that year.

## National Coastwatch Institution

In the last newsletter, I reported on the damage caused in Cornwall by storm Goretta. A wind gust of 198 kph (123 mph) was recorded by NCI [Padstow](#). I incorrectly called it National Coastguard Institution. Retired Captain Gordon Grey, a member who now lives in Merseyside in the UK, pointed out my mistake. I had confused the Coastwatch service with HM Coastguard, a government-run service that was reduced over the years and many of its lookouts closed.



In 1994 a fishing boat sank in [Cadgwith Bay](#) with the loss of its two crew. The tragedy might have been avoided if the local Coastguard station had not closed just months earlier. Such was the depth of local feeling that the local community decided to establish a volunteer watch over that section of the coastline. Thus the National Coastwatch Institution was established with its first station at [Bass Point](#) on the Lizard. Its national office is in [Liskeard](#) and

NCI has gone on to set up 60 lookout stations around the coast of England and Wales. Eleven are in Cornwall.

Gordon also commented on the picture of the aurora over [Wheal Coates](#) because he had volunteered at the NCI station on [St Agnes Head](#) (just along the coast from the engine house) for over eight years.

In 1926 HM Coastguard constructed a permanent building to replace St Agnes Beacon, which had been in use since 1914. The building was extended in 1940 to encompass an Observer Corps lookout complete with shelters and sleeping quarters. Coastguard watches continued after the war until 1951 when the watches were reduced to bad weather watches. The station permanently closed in 1990. The building was then handed to Carrick District Council, who gifted it to the National Trust in 2006. Later that year a lease was granted to NCI and, after some restoration work, NCI St Agnes Head commenced watches in April 2007. The National Trust had agreed to refurbish the building later that year but discovered the building was unsafe and NCI had to leave while they demolished the old building, replacing it with a new purpose-built station. NCI was able to resume watchkeeping in early 2009.



This year, St Agnes Head watch successfully completed the training of its first cadet, an 18-year-old, who is studying marine engineering and aims to get a job in the merchant navy.

## Meetings

There were 15 people online for a Zoom meeting on St Piran's Day, 5 March, including Brian Rollason, of the Cornish Association of Victoria, Australia.

Judy Wright gave a presentation on St Piran's Day. From early apathy and resistance, celebrations have changed and are now marked enthusiastically world-wide. Tauranga member, Mark Thomas, provided a fascinating history of [Dolcoath](#) tin and copper mine and the role it played in developing deep mining technology. The shafts went so deep that the increased heat of the earth combined with insanitary conditions to create a breeding ground for miners' anaemia or ancylostomiasis (hookworm). The evening rounded off with music themed on tin mining, some 'show and tell' of memorabilia

made of Cornish tin and pictures of Cornwall. There was also a lot of cooze time (Cornish dialect for chatting).

In Christchurch, members had an informal get together at a local café on St Valentine's Day to plan the year ahead.

A dozen Christchurch members celebrated St Piran's Day a little late on 14 March. Heather and Nadine lead the singing. Heather then read about the legend of St Piran and got the group practising three phrases in Kernewek. Celia held a quiz based on St Piran before everyone tucked into an afternoon tea that included pasties and scones (with the cream on top, of course).



Twenty-one Hawkes Bay members met at the Puketapu pub for lunch on 12 February. After the meal, they had Cornish maps to identify the locations of three major commercial fishing ports at [Newlyn](#), [Mevagissey](#) and Padstow as well as 8 other smaller ports where fishing is primarily through potting (crab and lobster) and hand-lining.

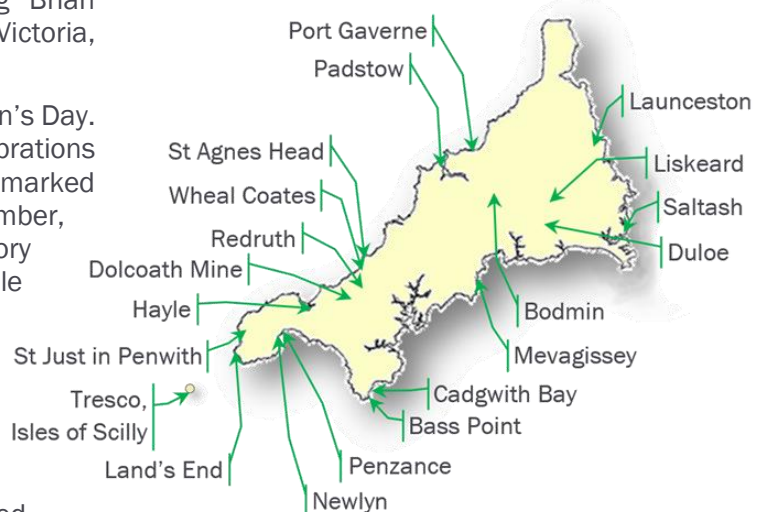
As always, photos and more details of our meetings can be found on our website.

<https://www.nzcornish.nz/files/meetings>

## Correction

The eagle-eyed among you may have noticed that there was an issue number missing from the sequence. The Christmas issue was number 482 and the New Year issue was 484. Oops! This is now issue 483 to fill the gap.

## Places mentioned in this newsletter



That's it for this newsletter my 'ansomes. See 'ee again dreckly!

*Nide*