

May – June 485 – mls Me - mls Methewen 2026

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Est. 1962  
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**Kowethas  
Kernewek Mordir  
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# N E W S L E T T E R

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

## St Ives & the Festival of Britain 1951

The 1951 Festival of Britain was a post-war state-sponsored exhibition. At the time, rationing continued and austerity gripped the nation. London was shabby, rundown and gloomy. The city was scarred with bombsites and buildings hadn't been painted for ten years. So, this bright and playful spectacle was a much-needed boost to promote the feeling of recovery – a brave new future for a brave new world.



While the main exhibition was in London, the Festival was designed as a national, grassroots event, showcasing British achievements in the arts, architecture, science and technology. During the time of the festival that ran from 3 May to 30 September, 8.5 million people visited the exhibition.

Several artists from the [St Ives](#) modernist circle were involved in the Festival of Britain. They contributed to both the main London exhibition and the local Penwith Society exhibition. Meanwhile, the St Ives Society of Artists also staged a successful show of their own.

It was a pivotal moment for the St Ives school of modernists, providing national and international exposure to artists who had congregated in the Cornish fishing town during and after World War II.

**Barbara Hepworth's** first public commissions were for the Festival of Britain for which she created two large scale sculptures – *Contrapuntal Forms* and *Turning Forms*.

*Contrapuntal Forms*, sculpted from Welsh blue stone, was originally placed on the South Bank of the Thames. It now stands in Harlow, Essex which was designed and built after WWII as a new town to relieve London's overcrowding. *Turning Forms* was made

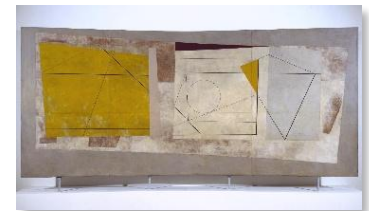


from concrete and stood on a rotating plinth. These days it is on static display in St Albans, Hertfordshire.



**Ben Nicholson** created a large mural, known as the *Festival of Britain Mural*, for the Riverside Restaurant at the South Bank Exhibition site in London. Its three panels

stand over 2m high and nearly 5m wide. It is now in the collection of the Tate Gallery but not on display.



### Peter Lanyon

produced a landmark painting, *Porthleven*, that was one of 60 paintings commissioned by the Arts Council for the festival's "60 Paintings for '51" exhibition. Lanyon's first version became too heavy because of overpainting and had to be destroyed. The second and final painting, created in only four hours, is now in the Tate Gallery in St Ives.



Towns and cities across the UK involved themselves in the Festival of Britain by hosting local festivals, exhibitions, and community events designed to lift morale and showcase local industry, science and culture.

St Ives got into the spirit of the festival. Preparations included local art exhibitions, hobbies and handicraft exhibitions, performances by local drama, operatic societies, carnival and sporting events. Furthermore, the St Ives Borough Council commissioned 6 commemorative plaques to be displayed on structures around the town of

historic interest. Each plaque typically carries an inscription identifying the landmark's historical significance.

- ■ The Baulking House – a hut from which watch was kept for shoals of pilchards
- ■ The Wesleyan Chapel – John Wesley first visited St Ives in 1743. The chapel is now a youth theatre.
- ■ The Hicks Court – marks an archway into an old manor house. The arch was built low to impede entry to anyone on horseback – especially customs officers.
- ■ The Oldest House – 5 Fish Street is believed to have been built in 1312
- ■ St Leonard's Chapel – a tiny building at on a pier once used by fishermen before setting out to sea. The friar received a portion of the catch when they returned safely.
- ■ Well of St Eia – “Venton Ia”, a holy well that was the main source of water for a large part of St Ives until 1843.

Seats were limited in St Paul's Cathedral for the official Festival of Britain service on 3 May. Over 400 county and non-county boroughs were entered in a lottery for 163 places. The Mayor of St Ives was lucky to win a seat along with five other Cornish mayors.

## Cornish alphabet **B**

The second instalment of the new series, working our way through the alphabet, features **B** Brass Bands.

Brass bands evolved from military bands that proliferated following the Napoleonic Wars. The difference is that military bands can include woodwind and other instruments. Brass bands are limited to a range of brass instruments and a percussion section. In the past, more affluent bands chose to use only instruments that were silver plated as a sign of superiority. These days, it is a matter of choice but some bands retain 'silver' in their title.

In the UK, bands were encouraged by employers in industrial areas to develop discipline and temperance among their staff. In the mid-1800s, Cornwall was at the peak of its mining industry, (both tin and china clay) and experiencing strong growth in Methodism. It became traditional for any community event to include a procession behind a marching band. As we will discuss in the upcoming online meeting, most towns and villages in Cornwall hold annual Sunday school tea treats, feasts and festivals making it almost a requirement to have a local band to lead the way.

A basic band, if it is to include the full range of instruments (cornets, trumpets, horns trombones, euphoniums and tubas plus percussion) has around 27 players. That is not always achievable in small communities. so players often perform in more



than one band or are co-opted as required.

The Cornwall Brass Band Association lists 38 member bands, a large number for a population of about 586,000. The picture shows the appropriately named Bugle Silver Band in action. [Bugle](#) is, in fact, a small village close to [St Austell](#). The area is the heart of the china clay industry and has been one of the centres of the Cornish band movement since the mid-1800s. The first band in Bugle was formed in 1868. It is now home to the annual West of England Bandsmen's Festival which itself has a long history and boasts HM King Charles III as patron. The outdoor contest attracts bands from all over the UK and is celebrating its centenary in June this year. All of the test pieces of music prescribed for the competing bands have been penned by Cornish composers.

Although brass bands can be seen as old-fashioned and traditional, the future of the genre seems secure. There are several youth bands in Cornwall. The St Austell Youth Brass Band won the British National Youth Band Championship in April this year. Their impressive performances can be heard on their Facebook page. The band's star player is a 13-year-old from [Liskeard](#). Neythen Powell-Jones also plays in the National Youth Brass Band and the Bodmin Town Band. He is considered a prodigy on the B-flat baritone, a type of tuba.

BBC Southwest recently reported on a heartwarming story. Neythen had known Brian Routledge since they played together in the [Saltash](#) Town band. Routledge, a retired policeman now 92 and no longer playing, admits to being moved to tears by Neythen's playing. Encouraged by his family after being diagnosed with terminal cancer,



Routledge decided to 'spend his money' and that it was 'better to give than to receive'. He bought Neythen a new £8,500 euphonium from a top-quality Dutch manufacturer. It is not lacquered or plated like traditional instruments but raw brass, a high-maintenance finish that

makes the most of the mellow tone of the euphonium. Neythen has his own website that includes a long list of his awards.

## HMS Scylla

The Chase TV show has provided a few topics for newsletters in the past. The latest question was about Europe's first artificial dive reef. The answer was that it was off the coast of [Whitsand Bay](#) in Cornwall.

The reef was created by the sinking of HMS Scylla. The ship was the first Leander-class frigate commissioned by the Royal Navy and was the last ship to be built in Devonport Royal Dockyard, Plymouth. It was a homecoming when HMS Scylla (the 5<sup>th</sup> vessel to be named after the sea monster) was towed to her final resting place a short distance south along the coast from Plymouth.

Designed for anti-submarine warfare she saw active service in the Icelandic cod wars of the 1970s and in the Persian Gulf during the 1980s. She had a 'bumpy' career. In 1975 she collided with an Icelandic gunboat. After a refit in 1980 she collided with the Torpoint Ferry during sea trials. By 1993 she was the last remaining Leander-Class vessel in service and was showing her age. Suffering steering problems, she collided with her support vessel in the South Atlantic. It was her last deployment.

Scylla was purchased for £200,000 by the National Marine Aquarium based in Plymouth and was moved to her home dockyard to be readied for her new post. After removal of some of her upper structures, equipment and all materials that might harm the environment, holes were cut into her sides to allow divers access. In March 2004 within view of crowds on the shore and a flotilla of small boats, explosives were detonated inside the ship and she settled onto an otherwise featureless sandy seabed.



It is not only a destination for recreational divers but of great scientific interest too. The wreck was quickly colonised by sea life. Within three months sea anemones, mussels and scallops had made it their home. After six months starfish and urchins were common and, by 2021, 250 different species were identified on the reef.

Its appeal to diverse sea life was a success but the ship continued to attract misfortune. Diving is a dangerous activity. Over the years, four divers have lost their lives in two separate incidents while exploring inside the wreck. Despite this, it remains

a popular dive site and is used for training divers over a range of depths.

Scylla is also close to the wreck of SS James Eagan Layne, a US Liberty Ship, that was torpedoed and badly damaged by a U-boat in 1945. She was able to be beached in Whitsand Bay and there were no casualties. She eventually sank and was declared a total loss. Liberty ships were a class of

British-designed ships that were mass-produced (2,710 were launched) in the US during WWII to assist in wartime cargo transportation.

## Newspapers

I get occasional packs of newspaper cuttings from my cousin in England. They come mainly from the Newquay Voice where a slightly more distant relative is a reporter. The latest delivery immediately resulted in two items for me to relate.

### Pasty News

The Global Pasty Championships have replaced the World Pasty Championships. The Worlds were held in the Eden Project whereas the Global competition has a different home – The Lost Gardens of [Heligan](#). The inaugural Global Pasty Championships were held in early March this year and had categories for individual, junior and commercial bakers with alternative as well as traditional pasty fillings. The winning entries came as shock and potential shame to Cornish bakers.



First place to an individual baker of a traditional Cornish pasty was awarded to Vanessa Farr from Bristol - over 190 kms north of the Cornwall border. She had come with a contingent from Bristol and had to rent a house in Cornwall; essential for her entry in the category to qualify as a Cornish pasty. A young competitor from Bristol also won one of the junior sections. The top commercial traditional pasty was baked by Phat Pasty Company which has kitchens near Falmouth and sells its products at all National Trust cafes and many other outlets. The winning alternative flavours included chicken in barbecue sauce, chicken fajita and a vegetarian feta cheese, butternut squash, spinach and red onion version.

One competitor had travelled from Japan specifically to enter the speed crimping contest

and is planning to return to enter the pasty challenge. The crimping winner was Michaela Dash, an employee of Rowe's Bakery in [Penryn](#), with a time of 5.38 seconds. That's quick!

### British stamp

In March 2025 (a while ago, I admit) Royal Mail unveiled a set of eight first class stamps featuring mythical creatures and fabled figures from UK folklore. Designed by London-based artist Adam Simpson, the illustrations include the Loch Ness Monster (Scotland), Beowulf and Grendel (England), Fionn mac Cumhall (Ireland), Blodeuwedd (Wales), Black Shuck (England) and Cornish piskies. The presentation pack gave the background story to each stamp. This is what it said about piskies:



*“These sprightly fairy folk are small creatures often wearing red pointed caps and clad in green rags, lichen or coats and brooches. Piskies love to play tricks on humans and tales abound of their mischief, from stealing and hiding household items to knotting horses’ manes into fairy stirrups. Their common pastime is leading travellers astray by luring them off the path into bogs and moorlands with their pisky lights. They are fond of revelry, especially singing and dancing in rings. Ever dualistic in nature, piskies are also known to help with chores around homes and farms, churning butter and stacking hay, especially if supper is left out for them overnight. It's sensible to turn your coat inside out to protect yourself from the piskies’ mischief.”*

### Meetings

There was a meeting in Christchurch on 11 April when members learned a new Cornish song, The Grenadier and the Fair Maid, practiced new phrases and discussed new recipes. Celia King gave a talk on the changes in spelling of place names using a 15<sup>th</sup> century map inherited from her father.

On 9 May, ten Christchurch members met for their AGM. The three officeholders were re-elected. Jeannette Beaumont remains as president, Mikki Michelsson

as treasurer and Sharron Hillier as secretary.

Heather related a creepy story from her early days in Cornwall. Her brother (the late Les Mitchell) and father had both had similar ghostly experiences. Mr Moon, a local from around [Port Isaac](#), and his horse had fallen over a cliff and perished. On foggy nights he can be seen looking for his horse. Les was walking home one dark evening when someone came up beside him. They talked briefly but when Les turned around to say something else there was no one there. He went home terrified.

There were Cornish songs to sing, Cornish phrases to learn, recipes to try out at home and a picture-based quiz.

### Online meeting

The next meeting will be at 7:30pm on **Wednesday 17 June**

May and June are festival season in Cornwall. The theme for the meeting will be feast days and celebrations.



This button links to the meeting. As usual, there will be a reminder emailed a week ahead to everyone who has provided an email address.

Meeting ID: 879 7658 1823  
Passcode: 586801

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, 29 members met for lunch at Jarks restaurant in Hastings. The meeting topic was rivers of Cornwall which, with the aid of maps, covered 10 rivers from the [Tamar](#) in the north to the [Helford](#) in the south. Katrina Barrett could trace her ancestors to [Calstock](#) on the banks of the Tamar. Sally Haynes recalled living near the Helford and Judith Bell spoke about the Fowey River.

The next Hawkes Bay lunch is coming up on 18 June at the Duke of Gloucester, Taradale.

Photos and more details are on the website.

### Places mentioned in this newsletter



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

*Nide*