



# An Kesskrifer

June 2026.

**TRIBUTE to CHRIS DUNKERLEY**

*by Lilian James OAM Bard of Cornwall*



*Lilian James with three of her former KDL students (Photo by Stephen Morley, May 2025)  
Left to Right: Stephen Morley, Peter Trevorah, Chris Dunkerley, Lilian James*

I have known Chris Dunkerley, his wife Joy, and their children Lowenna, Kerensa and Owen for many years. In fact, I first met Chris and family when they came to one of the early Copper Festivals held here in the Copper Triangle. My husband and I were asked to mind their young family in their caravan at Moonta Bay while they attended one of the special night functions. When they returned home, we were absolutely frozen as the top vent of the caravan was left open to elements in the wintery weather. Chris was most apologetic, but the warmth and sincerity of his concern warmed our hearts and bodies! This friendship continued throughout the years and Chris often referred to me as his self-adopted mother.

Chris continued to attend every Cornish Festival since (a long car drive from Sydney) and he was always keen to enjoy the Cornish culture and heritage of this area, which the Cornish migrants brought with them in the 1800s, especially Cornish miners and their families.

During the biannual Cornish Festival, Chris often presented a paper during the history seminar. These speeches were well researched and appreciated by the enthusiastic audience, as they related to the Cornish migration to various places in Australia and other Cornish-related topics. In 1991, I started a Cornish Language class for beginners during the Festival and Chris was always a regular assistant, helping the students with their lesson booklet, promoting the Cornish language and passing on his own personal knowledge of Cornwall, which he had visited several times. He was very proud of his Cornish heritage! For several years when I organised the Gathering of the Bards ceremony in Moonta, Chris always recited the Act of Loyalty and was willing to help in this ceremony whenever it was necessary.

Chris was actively involved with the Gathering of the Celts at the Standing Stones, Glen Innes (NSW), representing the Cornish in the street march, proudly wearing the Cornish National Tartan and waving St Piran's flag at the special Cornish site. There, bespoken in Cornish, he was indeed proud of his Celtic origins and spent many hours organising the Cornish event at Glen Innes. Chris had studied the Cornish language through KDL with me for a short time, but other commitments soon filled his life, so he needed to forego his studies. However, this did not deter his enthusiasm for the language and his love of all things Cornish. Vale Chris Dunkerley. A true, loyal and honest ambassador for Cornwall. And a very dear friend.

## **Chris Dunkerley (1950-2026)**

*by Robynne Sanderson.*

Chris Dunkerley, who died in February this year, used to learn Cornish with KDL many years ago. His teacher, Lilian James, has also written something about Chris for "An Kesskriffer". Chris was secretary and newsletter editor for the Cornish Association of New South Wales (CANSW) for more than 30 years.

I met Chris for the first time in 2017 at "Kernewek Lowender" in Moonta, South Australia. He and his wife Joy were helping Lilian James with a *Cornish Lesson for Beginners*. I was one of the beginners!

Chris and Joy would help with this lesson at every Cornish festival, with great enthusiasm. Chris loved all things Cornish. Often Chris used to be involved in other events as well, for example, the History Seminar.

For me, to Moonta by car from my town (Broken Hill) is five hours. This isn't considered far in Australia. However, if one lives on the east coast of Australia, like Chris and Joy, to Moonta by car is two or three days! This is an example of Chris's dedication to his Cornish heritage.

Chris had been a Bard of Cornwall for many years. He took part in several gorsedhs, including 2024 when I became a bard. It was special for me to see Chris and Joy in Cornwall for the Gorsedh. Chris was at lots of events during that week, enjoying it greatly. At the Gorsedh Seminar, he spoke about the Cornish Diaspora in Australia.

Articles written by Chris in the *CANSW Newsletter* showed his passion for Cornish history and culture. Also, he enjoyed writing a feature about the Cornish language in each newsletter. Although I didn't often see Chris face to face, I would enjoy "chatting" with him (by email)

about his articles and other things. After his last trip to Cornwall, Chris wrote an article, "Ancient Places of Cornwall" about some heritage sites, with photos from his trip as well. To visit and write about those special places was fitting for someone as dedicated as Chris to Cornish culture.

Vale Chris Dunkerley.



Chris (right) helping with the *Cornish Lesson for Beginners, in Moonta, 2025*. Can you spot Grand Bard, Jenefer Lowe? Photo by Robynne Sanderson.



*Bardic tea in Callington, 2024*. Chris and his wife Joy on the right. Also at the table are former Grand Bards, Liz Carne (recently deceased) and Merv Davey. Photo by Robynne Sanderson.

## Goodbye!

Many thanks to Lilian and Robynne for their lovely words about their friend and inspiration to us all, Chris Dunkerley. And before we go, good luck to everyone who took the Language Board examinations this year!

Remember to send us your thoughts and work to be published in the next edition!

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