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■ ■ Est. 1962 ■ ■
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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

Bledhen Nowyth Da!

Happy New Year and best wishes for all of 2018.



The year started well with the chance spotting on 1 January of a yacht anchored off Seatoun Beach in Wellington flying the flag of St Piran. If anyone knows the captain perhaps they could invite them to join the Association if

they're not already a member. If you are a member, I'd be quite happy to crew on your next harbour cruise!

Plastic storm

Plastic waste is currently kicking up a storm in more ways than one. The NZ government has announced that it intends to do something about the large amount of plastic discarded as rubbish by people in this country. Then there are the reports of a huge 'continent' of plastic pollution floating in the middle of the Pacific causing untold injury to sea life.

The issue was brought home to Cornwall by Storm Eleanor which struck on 3 January. The combination of gale force winds and high tides caused widespread damage in Cornwall (see below) but, according to the Telegraph news service, the storm also left a 'tidal wave of plastic' on the beaches along the north coast from Perranporth to Newquay and Bude. The debris includes broken fishing nets and everything from plastic straws, toys, pieces of Lego to bottles, shredded shopping bags, industrial pellets and polystyrene

Apparently, during a storm unseen plastics on the seabed are stirred up and then deposited onto the shore, demonstrating the waste that is out of sight in our seas.

"We haven't seen such plastic devastation since Storm Hercules in 2014," said Hugo Tagholm, chief executive of Surfers Against Sewage, speaking from the beach at Perranporth. "It's a plastic war zone. This has happened all around the South West. We have had thousands of our volunteers out tackling the plastic tide, but we

need to cut the flow of plastic at source. This pollution causes harm and ruins the beautiful beaches the South West relies on."

Locals have rallied to clean up the beaches and many dog walkers and beachcombers return home with bags of plastic collected from the sand, rocks and rock pools.

The issue of pollution from industrial plastic pellets has been known for some time. One of the main suspect contributors is South West Water which uses small pellets, bio-beads or 'nurdles' in the filtration of contaminants from sewage. Although the utility company denies that any of the beads are being released into the marine environment there have been



Tiny bio-beads found on Cornish beaches

incidents recorded since 2010 when a net in a filter split releasing enormous quantities of the bio-beads into the Truro River. Efforts were made to retrieve the beads from the river but there was no way

of knowing how complete the recovery had been.

Industrial pellets and small bits of plastic such as Bio-Beads are mistaken for food by birds, fish, and other marine animals. These particles can kill animals, not only by causing digestive blockages, but also as a result of the high concentrations of pollutants, such as DDT and PCBs, which adhere to them in seawater and, of course, in their use in sewage filtration.

Storm Eleanor

Storm Eleanor swept in from the Atlantic Ocean over Cornwall bringing 160+ kph winds, waves of up to 8.5 metres and causing extensive physical damage especially along the north coast.

Worst hit was Portreath where a section of its sea wall collapsed exposing a row of houses and a pub. As a precaution, some of the residents were advised to evacuate. None of

the buildings were damaged and temporary repairs have already been made to the harbour wall.



At Perranporth the wave action scoured away millions of tons of sand leaving The Watering Hole pub,

Britain's only bar based directly on a beach, perched on its own private island at high tide. Two bridges over a fresh water stream on the beach were wiped out. Most dramatic was a 6 metre high sheer cliff drop in the sand in the middle of the beach. The risk of its collapse prompted the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to issue warnings for the public to stay clear. Similar erosion occurred at Crantock and Bude.

Plastic Free Penzance

It was almost as if the people of Penzance had foreseen the plastic storm stirred up by Eleanor. In December it was granted Plastic Free Coastline status by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS).

SAS is an international organisation with roots in the surfing community that campaigns for cleaner beaches and coastlines. It was active in the campaign to replace Wellington's Moa Point raw sewage outlet that caused very unpleasant waste to accumulate in Lyall Bay, a popular surf beach on the south coast.

There are five criteria for the qualification:

Strategic: Approaching bodies like Penzance Town Council in order to tackle single use plastics at a strategic level

Business: Lobbying and encouraging local businesses to ban single use plastics or switch to sustainable alternatives. Many local shops are already promoting themselves based on their plastic reduction techniques.

Communities: Engaging with and encouraging other communities, groups and organisations to take action on single use plastics

Education: Rolling out 'Plastic Free Schools' across Penzance

Positive Action: Holding beach cleans, fundraisers and other awareness raising events.

The SAS regional representative, Rachael Yates made a presentation to Penzance Town Council which was so impressed that it voted unanimously in favour and became Britain's first town to achieve the



status. The fact that the story featured on the evening news on TVNZ shows how powerful the move has been in promoting Penzance as a forward-looking and responsible community. It is expected to promote the town as a holiday destination as well as setting an example for other similar coastal resorts.

The voluntary team had first assembled in August 2017 to spend five hours in the sun during Penzance's Pirates World Record Attempt, making sure thousands of plastic cups and containers did not blow straight into the sea.

From then they started welcoming Plastic Free Champions; businesses that make an effort to cut out plastic use. An autumn beach clean also brought further success, with queues lining up to sign and subscribe to the project.

It is understood that, as people are more aware of the issues, consumers are looking to support places that are environmentally conscious. In doing so they will visit the town and spend money, supporting and improving Penzance while doing so.

Rachael Yates is quoted as saying that getting Plastic Free Coastline status is where the work really starts. The group has the obligatory Facebook page and will be holding quarterly meetings to keep up momentum.

Being a bit of a 'greenie' myself, this makes the attempts of some NZ supermarkets to reduce the number of single-use plastic shopping bags seem pretty feeble to me.

Pirates of Penzance

I have to include some explanation for the comments about Penzance's pirates world record attempt. Making the most of the theme established by Gilbert and Sullivan, Penzance made an attempt to amass the world's largest gathering of pirates in one place last August.

The record, held by Hastings (East Sussex, England, not Hawkes Bay, NZ) was 14,231 pirates on Pelham Beach.

The Penzance attempt was fraught by administrative failures. Each pirate had to be assessed, given a printed wrist band and then scanned into the controlled area. The official total on the day (27 August) of 10,574 was well short of the record.

Cloam ovens

While browsing through an old WI recipe book from the Association's library I was reminded of an old means of baking traditional Cornish fare.



Cloam (or clome) ovens pre-dated the better-known cast iron Cornish ranges. They were a type of masonry oven built into the wall of the large fireplace that was typical of Cornish stone cottages. The cloam oven had a removable door made

either of clay or cast iron and was used in a similar way to a pizza oven.

The oven was heated by burning turf, furze (gorse) or blackthorn chosen for their 'clean' heat. A fire was lit inside the oven until its clay lining was no longer blackened but white. The ashes could then be raked out and the heat stored in the brickwork used for the baking of bread, pasties, pies or tarts. Alternatively the food could be placed in a camp oven style pot and the ashes piled around.

The photograph shows Mrs C Tamblyn of Botelet Farm, Herodsfoot, Liskeard removing her pasties from her cloam oven in 1951. It would take around an hour to heat the oven and another hour to bake a loaf of bread. With no other means of temperature control beyond assessing whether the interior was white enough, it would have required a lot of experience to be able to use a cloam oven reliably. And, due to the work and preparation required, it was only undertaken for a 'big bake' perhaps once a week.

In more recent times many Cornish cottages were renovated and the huge old fireplaces were often enclosed or converted into cupboards. I can remember when some close family friends decided to open up the fireplace in their home and were delighted to find an intact cloam oven complete with its cast iron door. They restored the fireplace into a rustic 'design feature' but never plucked up the courage to actually bake something in it!

Extreme cakes

Staying with the subject of food (my stomach is close to my heart) my network of eagle-eyed scouts jumped into action on the evening of 3 January and I got a phone call to stop what I was doing immediately and watch the Extreme Cake Makers programme screening on TVNZ.

It is very easy to be over-exposed to cooking shows but this particular episode featured Cornish cake makers, Peboryon, based in Penzance and run by cake artists, Phil and

Christine Jenson.

Ruth Huxley, owner of the Great Cornish Food Store in Truro wanted to celebrate the first six months of opening and commissioned a spectacular celebration cake, Peboryon's speciality. The cake, christened 'Gary the Gurnard' presented a fantastic challenge to Peboryon. It needed to be dynamic, colourful and have a big personality, to reflect the vision of the store and its connection with the land and the sea. It was also going to be 1.4 metres long and suspended 70cm in the air to make it look as if was floating (or swimming). The cake is pictured here and, yes, it really is an edible cake!

The cake took 3 days' work and was built from layers of lemon sponge and elderflower butter cream. The sponge mixture included 1.5 kg each of butter, flour and sugar with over 4 dozen eggs. It was covered in 7.7 kg of sugar paste and modelling chocolate before being spray-painted.

Peboryon was approached by British TV Channel 4 to take part in 'Extreme Cake Makers'. They sent a film crew to Penzance to follow the creation of the fish, from first drawings, to baking, decorating and construction with painstaking attention to realistic detail, its transport and installation at the customer event in-store in Truro and finally to being cut and eaten.



It turns out that Peboryon are regulars on the show so, if you get the chance, watch out for the next breath-taking extreme Cornish cake or view episodes on demand.

335 year war

Would you believe that a part of Cornwall was at war with the Netherlands for 335 years and peace was declared only in 1986? It seems too ridiculous and extreme to be true but it inspired a question on the popular British quiz show, The Chase, on TVNZ on Monday, 29 January. Graham Harry promptly phoned me with the news.

Some research revealed that it is somewhat questionable that anyone could declare war on a territory that is not a sovereign nation. In 1651 the Isles of Scilly were completely owned by John Granville but were part of Britain and not a separate country. However, whether it is legitimate or unfounded, the story goes as follows...

Back in the days when Oliver Cromwell was taking over Britain and fighting people loyal to

the Crown, his army had beaten the Royalists to the outer reaches of the kingdom. Their final stronghold was the small group of islands lying 45 kms off Land's End known as the Isles of Scilly. The Royalist fleet had also retreated there to the relative safety of its remoteness.

The navy of the United Provinces of the Netherlands was allied with the Parliamentarians and had suffered at the hands of the Royalists, accusing its vessels of piracy. The Dutch fleet pursued them and, arriving at Pendennis near Falmouth in April 1651 the Admiral, Maarten Harpertzoon Tromp, reported that he had "been to Scilly to demand reparation for the Dutch ships and goods taken by them; and receiving no satisfactory answer, he had, according to his Commission, declared war on them." It appears that Admiral Tromp (pictured) had been given the authority (his 'commission') to declare such a war.

It was a "Clayton's" war because no shots were fired, no injuries sustained and no battles fought. More to the point, peace was not declared so, technically, the war continued until one local man decided to do something about it.



Roy Duncan was elected to the Council of the Isles of Scilly in 1970 at the age of 21. He became Chairman in 1985, a position he held until 1993. A keen amateur historian, he was aware of the local legend so in 1985 approached the then Dutch ambassador, Jonkheer Huydecoper. The Ambassador grasped the opportunity to put an end to a long-standing administrative oversight that could have escalated into a major diplomatic embarrassment. In April 1986 he made the journey to St. Mary's, the main island of the Scillies, with a formal Declaration of Peace which he duly signed and put an official end to what had become a 335 year war.

Whether Admiral Tromp could declare war effectively on such a small part of a country is not really significant but it does bare some similarities to a modern-day leader with a very similar surname who also disregards international rules and conventions.

Christchurch branch

This report of the branch Christmas meeting just missed the cut-off for

publication of the last newsletter but deserves publication now (albeit a bit late) because everyone seemed to have had so much fun. To top it off, with the temperature at 33°C, anything less like a traditional Christmas would be hard to imagine.

The President welcomed a group of 32 including some guests and accepted several apologies.

Judy started proceedings with her pictorial news of Cornish events over the past month. Val's language lesson had everyone learning to sing "Silent Night" in Kernewek, no easy task.

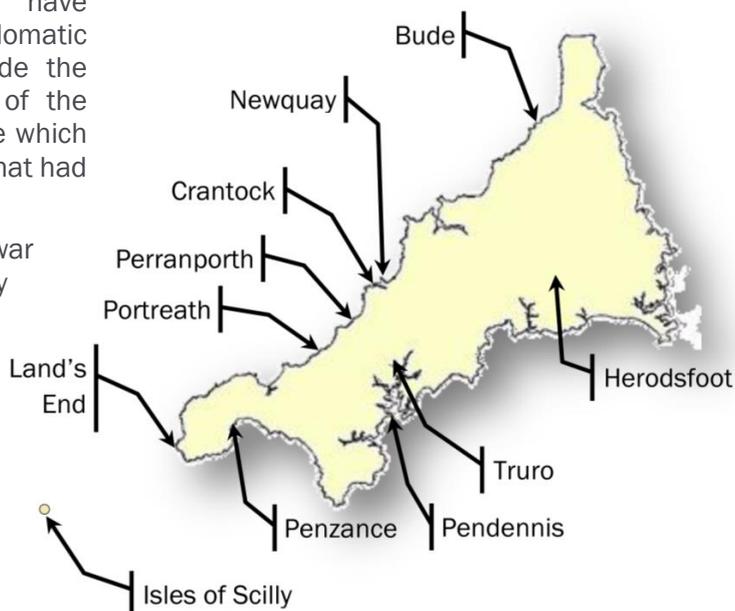
St. Albans choir and Heather provided festive musical items and members produced their traditional home-spun entertainment.

Double-act Dorothy & Jeanette presented an hilarious "Question & Answer" item. Nadine & Doug sang of the discovery of someone's underpants in Mrs Treleavan's Eggnog. Dorothy, Jeanette & Bruce did a skit "Going on a blind date". Judy returned putting a Christmas quiz on screen which had us all thinking.

The annual Panto in which the committee members show their lack of acting ability was as usual the highlight of the afternoon. Outstanding acting performances from the six actors and the story telling by Dorothy brought a very loud round of applause.

A singsong of popular carols brought the meeting to an end, with the President wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and inviting us all to have afternoon tea from a table laden with food.

Places mentioned in this newsletter



That's it for this newsletter. All the best, my 'ansomes!

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