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NEWSLETTER

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



Nadelik lowen

Merry Christmas

Christmas pasties

I'm used to be traditional in my tastes, especially when it came to pasties. There are two ways to make a proper Cornish pasty: the right way or the wrong way! Being black and white about such things is simply being true to the Cornish flag.

However, I have had to soften my outlook and adopt a more liberal approach. Having a vegetarian partner means I have had to come up with substitutes for the steak and kidney. I have been forced to consider marinated tofu (soy bean curd) and I have to admit that with some judicious seasoning you can hardly tell it's not meat. Even in the meaty version a generous shower of white pepper works well with the taities and swede.

Commercial pasty makers have pushed the envelope for some time, coming up with all sorts of "gourmet" creations. In my new broad-minded outlook I am willing to consider adopting a pasty format to use up Christmas leftovers. Why not get the best of both worlds and fill your usual shortcrust circle with cooked Brussel sprouts, some stuffing and turkey as well as the traditional potato, onion and swede? A dollop of cranberry sauce would add some moisture. Fold up, crimp as usual and bake - Christmas dinner in a pasty! You could even make a cheese and cranberry version for the vegetarians in your life.

Why stop at the contents? My Mum had a trick to keep track of whose pasty was whose. They were all made to personal specifications; some people don't like parsley, for instance. She would prick steam holes in the pastry in the shape of their initial. The more artistic amongst us could create a star shape or do what Philps (pasty makers from Hayle) do - stick a pasty shape on the outside.



Cornish wrestling

Cornish wrestling - or wrasslin' - has a long history that can be traced back to the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 when the Cornish fighting men carried banners depicting wrestlers. Today it is a fully recognised sport managed by the Cornish Wrestling Association (CWA) affiliated to the British Wrestling Association. The motto of the CWA is "Gwary whek yu gwary tek": good play is fair play.

Cornish wrestling is mainly an outdoor summer sport. Bouts of 10 minutes are held on grass in 6 metre circular rings. The object is to score a "back" by throwing your opponent from a standing position onto his back so that at least 3 of the four pins hit the ground at the same time. The "pins" are the shoulders and hips.



The competitors wear shorts and a strong but loose canvas jacket. Generally they are barefoot or wear socks. A bout begins with a gentlemanly handshake and the opponents grasp each other's jackets by collar, lapel or sleeves in what is called a 'hitch'. They are not allowed to grip any part of the body. Fair play and adherence to the rules is enforced by three 'sticklers' who are often retired wrestlers. They carry walking sticks to enforce the rules.

There are many different techniques and throws used. Crooks and heaves are among the most popular, crooks being variations of trip to catch your adversary unawares, while heaves are often used by heavier, more powerful wrestlers to lift the opposition up in the air and fling him down on his back. This conjures images of dangerous spear tackle style manoeuvres that would definitely not meet today's rugby tackle rules! If any part of the body except the feet touches the ground, the hitch ends and the bout must restart.



The bout ends if one of the competitors scores a back. If the time for the bout is up without either player achieving a 'back' the sticklers decide the winner based on points (points are scored for throws that result in less than three pins touching ground - one point per pin) or on their assessment of the players' performance. There is the traditional courtesy of the handshake prior to each hitch and at the end of the contest.

In hard times at home Cornish miners emigrated around the world taking their distinctive style of wrestling with them. Te Ara, the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, has an entry showing two Cornish men engaged in a hitch watched over by a rather dour old stickler during the 1902 New Year Caledonian Games in Dunedin.



In 1923 the Cornish Wrestling Association was formed at Bodmin to provide a uniform set of rules under which all could compete. Wrestlers became registered and an annual championship was held. Many Cornish towns and villages held tournaments, and hundreds would turn out to watch the contests. The sport became a tradition and spanned generations with grandfathers, fathers and sons taking part. The most famous competitor of his day was heavyweight champion Francis Gregory of St Wenn.

Gregory had his first match at the age of 13 and was youngest of the Cornishmen who showed their skills at London's Palladium theatre in 1927. Seven times from 1928 he represented Cornwall at the official Cornu-Breton Championships: seven times he won, on four occasions in Brittany. Later he moved north, changing his sport to play rugby league for Wigan and Warrington, and was capped for England. Taking up professional wrestling he became known as Francis St Clair Gregory and during November 1955 appeared in the first wrestling match shown on British television.

Wreckers

Cornwall is famous for its smugglers and wreckers. Smuggling has a romance about it for taking brave risks to avoid the authorities and beat the system: a victimless crime. Wrecking has a less attractive reputation. The term can be applied to range of activities from scavenging flotsam from a wreck which was regarded as common property (an element of legitimate salvage and "finders keepers") to deliberately misleading a ship into danger for financial gain. The latter extreme would have been tantamount to murder as passengers and crew could drown or even worse be killed if they



tried to protect their cargo. The law in those days made it illegal to claim salvage from a wrecked ship if anyone on board was alive so survivors were all but condemned.

The way it was supposed to work was for locals to set lights on the Cornish clifftops. Large beacons would have been required to be seen from any distance out to sea on dark and stormy nights. The intention was to make unsuspecting passing sailing ships think that they were in a different position from their actual one and lure them ashore to their doom. It then was a matter of time for the tide to deliver to shore the cargo and materials of the ship itself. Passing vessels carrying attractive treasures and products of distant, exotic places must have looked like easy targets for the folk living on the Cornish coast.

Wrecking reached its peak in the 18th century as the volume of seaborne trade increased. The authorities, Customs officers and militia tried hard to combat the illegal activity but were always too slow to prevent groups of locals (sometimes in their hundreds) from stripping a ship. News of an impending wreck would spread like wild fire through the community and the men would mobilise quickly. There was also the complication that many people in authority were not averse to profiting from the spoils.

Occasionally even the clergy were caught in the act. In December 1739 the Lady Lucy of Bordeaux, carrying a cargo of wine, brandy, coffee and indigo, was wrecked at Gunwalloe. Charles Vyvyan, from one of Cornwall's principal families, was still looking for the contraband the following February and found four casks of the wine in the possession of the Rev. Thomas Whitford of the parish of Cury.

There was a further apocryphal story that another member of the clergy, having his Sunday service disrupted by news of a wreck, urged the congregation to stay seated until he had removed his cassock "so that we can all start fair". The advent of Methodism is credited with improving the level of ethics and conscience. If ever it took place, and there is no real proof that it is anything other than legend, deliberate wrecking stopped and the people caught up in wrecks were rescued before thought was given to the salvage.

We may think that in the present day wrecking



has ceased but has it? Many of the pieces of Lego in 1997 and bottles of household cleaner in 2016 that washed up on Cornish beaches will have made their way into local homes and is surely a modern day version of the wrecker. Old habits die-hard!!

Tintagel controversy continues

At the end of October Cornwall Council's strategic planning committee approved English Heritage's plan to build a £4 million bridge joining the medieval castle ruins to the mainland at Tintagel. The decision has divided the community.



Several organisations, mostly in the tourism sector but including the Cornwall Archaeological Society, have publicly supported construction of the dramatic steel and oak bridge. But a similarly long list of community bodies, of which Gorsedh Kernow was one, have objected on the grounds that the bridge will have a negative visual impact on the historic site. The issue has been referred to the secretary of state for communities and local government who it was hoped could intervene and overrule Cornwall Council's decision. It appears unlikely that the government would interfere with a legitimate pronouncement by a local authority.

Now there is talk of challenging the decision in court. It appears the case against Disneyfication of Tintagel could turn into a production bigger than Ben Hur!

Cornish connection

The Suter Gallery in Nelson is holding an exhibition until 11 March 2018 entitled The Cornish Connection. The Suter's collection includes a number of art works with links to Cornwall.

The gallery introduces the exhibition like this: "The picturesque Cornish coastal villages of St Ives and Newlyn began to attract artists towards the latter part of the nineteenth century. Coinciding with the developing vogue for en-plein-air painting [painting outdoors], travellers could make the journey by rail from London to Penzance from 1876.



"Artist colonies and painting schools arose and in St Ives studios became available, some right on the waterfront. New Zealand's Frances Hodgkins became but one of many artist / teachers there.

"After the First World War St Ives became less associated with progressive painters but then in 1920 it became the home of the potter Bernard Leach, whose philosophies and Anglo-Japanese approach to ceramics were to have a substantial

influence on New Zealand potters. The intrinsic aesthetic pleasure to be gained from using well-made hand potted ceramics was transported to New Zealand via Harry and May Davis. Their Cornish Crowan pottery transformed into Crewenna in Nelson.

"Around the time of the Second World War, St Ives once again provided shelter for a group of progressive painters and sculptors including Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Patrick Heron, Bryan Wynter and Peter Lanyon. Mollie Steven (nee Davies), a Suter Art Gallery supporter and artist clearly interested in British Modernism, acquired a number of works, gifting them to the gallery in the late 1950s, at about the same time as Rita Angus ventured down to St Ives to take lessons with Peter Lanyon."

The artwork the gallery is using to promote the exhibition (shown here) is by Bryan Wynter (1915-1965) called Blue Landscape or Cornish landscape 1951 oil on canvas 1220 x 2415mm. It is bound to be easier to appreciate at its full size in the gallery but it is easy to see shapes and colours evocative of Cornwall – the engine house, craggy hills on the horizon, a whitewashed cottage and lots of small hedged fields.

Wynter was not Cornish, having been born in London and educated "up country". He settled in Zennor in 1945 after the Second World War and became active in the St. Ives art community and is now considered one of the more important members of the St Ives School. Wynter continued to live in Cornwall drawing his inspiration from nature and the surrounding countryside. He tended towards abstract paintings as his style developed. Due to ill health he moved to St Buryan in 1964 and died in Penzance in 1975.

Many galleries across the UK have his work in their collections including (as you would expect) the Tate Gallery in St Ives. But clearly he is also collected internationally. The record price for one of his works was £131,000 achieved at auction in 2016 another oil on canvas from 1958 titled 'In the Stream's Path'. It was being sold by the estate of pop star David Bowie who had owned the picture since 1995.

Kernewes Ilowek

As reported in the December newsletter a year ago, founding Christchurch member, Heather

Gladstone, was accepted into Gorsedh Kernow in 2016. This year she was able to attend the Gorsedh Kernow Esedhvos Festival of Cornish Culture held in Launceston. In Cornwall it's pronounced "lawns-on". In Tasmania, where there is another Launceston, they speak all the separate syllables making it "lawn-cess-ton".

The main bardic ceremony was held on 2 September in the grounds of the 13th century castle built by Richard, Earl of Cornwall just after the Norman conquest of Britain.

The sunny day made for a spectacular parade of 400 Cornish Bards all dressed in their ceremonial sky blue robes through the town and into the castle grounds. The procession was led by flag bearers carrying the banners of Celtic groups, including the nations of Brittany and Wales.

Pictured here with Grand Bard, Merv Davey, Telynyor an Weryn, Heather has taken the bardic name Kernewes llovek meaning 'musical Cornish woman' which is totally fitting as Heather has dedicated herself to promoting Cornwall through its music.



Heather reported on her experience by saying, "At the ceremony we were a party of nine; six from New Zealand and the rest friends who live in other parts of England. A couple of my old school friends from Port Isaac came. One is a bard and walked with me so that was really special."

Christchurch branch

The branch meeting on Saturday, 14 October 2017 was held in conjunction with the St. Albans community choir in a celebration of Christchurch Heritage Week. Songs from many countries around the world were introduced by the conductor, Heather Gladstone.

The Cornish items Hail to the Homeland, Song for Cornwall and a spirited visit from the Padstow Obby Oss with the choir singing the Morning Song were much enjoyed.

Following the concert all present,

the Choir, Cornish Association and members of the public, some 120 in total, enjoyed afternoon tea.

The Vice-President Les Mitchell opened the next branch meeting on Saturday, 11 November 2017, welcoming 19 members and two guest speakers.

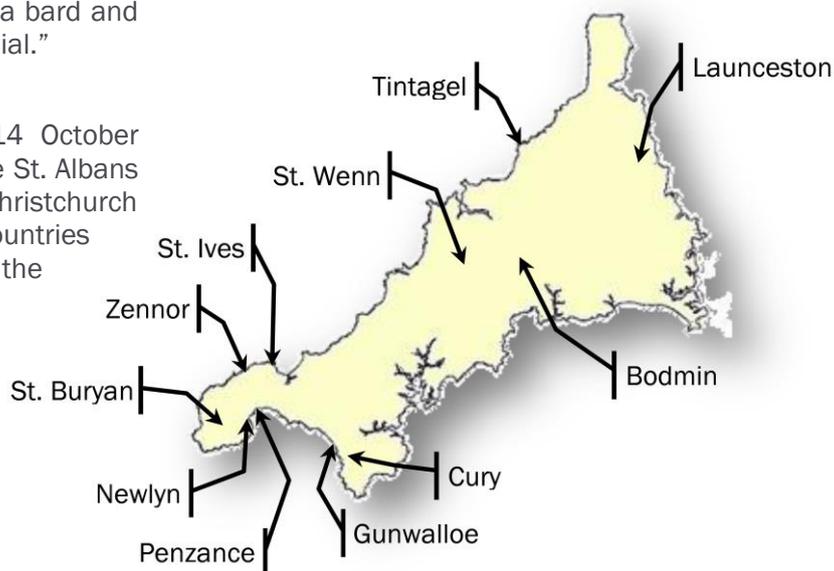
Judy presented two months' worth of pictorial news of events and happenings from the homeland.

Heather brought along her Bardic robe from this year's Gorsedh where she was admitted to the inner circle. Two friends from New Zealand, Jenny and Barbara, had many photos of the procession of the Bards and supporters through the narrow streets of Launceston to the old castle where the ceremony took place. A fine summer day helped with what they described as a moving and atmospheric event held in ideal surroundings.

In the days following the Gorsedh Heather and Mikki showed off Cornwall to their friends visiting many places which they recognised from Poldark, Doc Martin and other TV programs. Heather thanked her friends for their contributions to the meeting and support during the Gorsedh.

Afternoon tea was served and a raffle drawn.

Places mentioned in this newsletter



Nadelik lowen ha Bledhen Nowyth Da!



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