



Craig Weatherhill (1951 – 2020) was an inspirational person with a range of skills and interests that brought him into the lives of a very wide spectrum of people. I first met him at a gig when he was very keen to immerse himself in the rhythm and noise of, I think, Gulval Mead. As with everything he did, Craig immersed himself in the music with vigour, and so our first meeting was a mingling of dripping sweat and twelve-bar elation!

During his early years in local government, at Carrick Council, Craig took on a senior colleague over the fate of an archaeological artefact. Whilst he enraged officialdom with his rhetoric, his assessment of the artefact, his knowledge of procedure, and his tenacity as a campaigner fired the imagination of many who read accounts of the saga in *Peninsula Voice*. He later served with distinction as Conservation Officer at Penwith District Council,

As a conservationist, an archaeologist, an historian, and a persistent defender of the Cornish cultural community, following up his childhood explorations, Craig

led and sustained the ongoing battle for the integrity and beauty of Penwith. There was not a stone or indentation that Craig had not studied and gazetted. His exceptional book, 'Cornovia' (preceded by 'Belerion'), is not only a central text in any Cornish library, and an immensely useful and deeply researched work, it also set out a now internationally accepted model, and is a textbook of Cornish heritage.

As a linguist Craig was immersed in place-names. His 'Place Names of Cornwall and Scilly' is a vital resource for any geographer, anthropologist, or explorer of Kernow. He took his position in the great debates about Kernewek and often found himself quite isolated. His rationality sustained him, even though, sometimes his passion had painted him into a tight corner. Nothing mattered so much, though, that it shattered the relationships which his innate charm, wit and inner repose had built up throughout the many layers of Cornish and British life. He served for many years on the Place-Names Panel of the Cornish Language Partnership and was Chairman of Agan Tavas.

Craig lived quietly in Newbridge, between Penzance and St Just. He kept a horse and together they roamed his beloved moors, observing, delighting, and patrolling. Many a landowner will testify that, whilst small (or large) reorganisations of things was being carried out, a large, bright-eyed and fierce Celtic chieftain would trot out of the low cloud to berate such disturbance of the scarred turf and its artefacts, and demanding restoration before a list of mellifluously quoted and referenced regulations unleashed their full force upon the hapless miscreant.

He was, I think, above all things, a storyteller, and a writer. He loved the Cornish story, and he told it in many forms, in many books, for many years. He told it to academics and to children with the force, passion and adherence to facts which were his central attributes. His last book, *The Promontory People*, was an historical polemic driven by his narrative style, detailed and incontrovertible – not just his swansong, but a bringing together of the many facets of his life's work in a work of seminal power and beauty.

We have fought together, and sat on opposite sides, and ruminated over past times and varied futures. I, and all who knew him, have lost a man of resonant knowledge and wisdom, of wit and compassion, whose research, thinking and imagination have enriched all our lives, and will continue to do so for as long as Cornish eyes are left to liberate Cornish literature from cold shelves, or to wander among the stones.

I was standing on Eagles' Nest, above Zennor, in a gathering mist, with the Parish of Towednack reaching out to the west and all of Kernow to the north, with Tremedda, Porthmeor, Foage and Wicca entering possibly their five thousandth year of cultivation and harvest. John Davey lay in the graveyard, and D H Lawrence jingled along from Tregarthen to discover the truth by the fire in the Tinnars'. On the air came some words of his old friend, Sidney Graham, lamenting the death of Peter Lanyon. I thought of Craig, unable to ride his horse, sitting quietly with his mellotron, conjuring echoes of little folk below the beams of his lair. I thought that, but for Craig, there would be red brick and dual carriageways, broken farms and unrecognisable stones.

The days are shortening over Little Park Owles.
The poet or painter steers his life to maim
Himself somehow for the job. His job is Love
Imagined into words or paint to make
An object that will stand and will not move.¹

Craig Weatherhill was a completer of projects, a draughtsman, thorough and intense in his method, modest and self-effacing in his achievement. His early experience in the RAF² gave him a work ethic which has driven him to produce, to perfect, and to make a lifework of lasting and statuesque value to his Nation, her people and the sum of human culture. I know he was anxious about where the next generation of fighters and thinkers for Cornwall was to be found – with its head buried in the books he wrote in his spare time I have no doubt!

Kernow bys vykken

Cllr Bert Biscoe, Cornish historian, bard of Gorsedh Kernow and Mayor of Truro - July 2020

¹ W S Graham – 'The Thermal Stair' from Malcolm Mooney's Land (1970)

² See Memoirs – Art Cornwall - http://www.artcornwall.org/features/Craig_Weatherhill_Memoirs.htm