

January/February 460 – mls Genver/ mls Hwevrer 2022

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■ ■ Est. 1962 ■ ■
Founder: Cliff Trevelyan
Trevelyan an Tynnoweth

**Kowethas Kernewek
Mordir Nowydh**

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 Nowydh Da!
Happy New Year

**Gorhemynadow a'n gwella rag dew vil
hag dew warn ugens**
Best wishes for two thousand and twenty-two

Guise dancers go from house to house, pub to pub, or process through streets and lanes bringing merriment during the twelve days of Christmas.

The twelfth day (5 January) is important in Cornish customs. All Christmas decorations should be taken down by the end of the day but on no account should any holly, mistletoe or other evergreens be burnt in a fire. I am not usually superstitious, but this is one tradition I

New Year Customs

In my collection of Cornish Magazines, the January 1960 issue has an article on Cornish New Year Customs. Many of them are familiar and one or two I still practice.

The first is a strong Celtic tradition and is well known as first-footing in Scotland and works on the basis that something should come into the house before anything leaves as a sign of continuing good fortune. The first person to cross the threshold of a house in the New Year should be a dark-haired man carrying symbols of good fortune – coal for warmth, money for wealth, cake for food. On a similar note but with a more Cornish flavour, is the tradition of 'sanding the step'. The main doorstep is swept clean of 'fleas' and a line of beach sand is sprinkled on the doorstep. The first person to cross that line is an indicator of the luck the household will receive in the coming year. Placing a piece of coal or a coin on the doorstep is also seen as being lucky.

I had not heard of Watch Night services where people await the New Year in church, but John Wesley reported in his journal that he officiated at the first such service at [St Ives](#) in 1790.

St Ives was also the centre for Guise Dancing, a rather more pagan custom than a Methodist church service. Participants completely disguise themselves (hence the term 'guise') and entertain people through music, dance, drama and games.



am always careful to follow. In some areas, the Monday after the twelfth day was known as Plough Monday and marked the end of New Year festivities. It was celebrated as a holiday for farm workers who would drag a plough from door-to-door collecting 'plough money' that they would use for refreshments at the local pub.

'Cornwall for Ever!', the book released to mark the millennium, records St Tibb's Eve as a New Year notion but it is one I had not heard of. The minute between 11:59 pm on New Year's Eve and midnight is known as "St Tibb's Eve" and is supposed to be a hidden day of magical celebration. The fact that one minute is not a full day has developed into a turn of phrase meaning that, if something is due to take place on St Tibb's Eve, it will never happen.

Jethro

Jethro, the Cornish stand-up comedian, died on 14 December 2021. On stage, he was the quintessential Cornish yarn-teller who was not afraid of testing the limits of political correctness or course language. Despite his risqué jokes he appeared on national TV in the UK and performed at a Royal Variety Show in 2001. He was versatile and would intersperse his comedy with songs, accompanying himself on guitar.



One of his most famous routines was about finding out that the train he was on did not stop at Camborne on Wednesdays and he needed to get off. You can re-hear the story on Facebook. Great Western Railways announced his passing on its signs on Camborne station.

Jethro was born in [St Buryan](#). His real name was Geoffrey Rowe (Geoff Rowe... Jefro... Jethro) and he sadly died at the age of 73 after contracting Covid 19. He had retired from touring in 2020 saying that he was having difficulty remembering his jokes while on stage and no longer enjoyed performing as much.

His funeral on 3 January was held in Truro cathedral which was full of mourners. The service was relayed to hundreds of others who had lined the streets for his cortege to give Jethro one last round of applause before gathering outside the cathedral. His wicker casket sat on Cornish tartan in a hearse with the registration plate J35TER. Many mourners wore tartan scarves or ties. Video of the service is available on You Tube

Lanyon Quoit

The cover of the Cornish Magazine above shows a picture of [Lanyon Quoit](#) which lies in [West Penwith](#) between Madron and Morvah. The name Penwith is derived from the Cornish words pen and wydh, which mean "headland" and "at the end" respectively which accurately describes the geographic region at the extreme south-west tip of Great Britain. The area was one of Cornwall's six administrative districts until they were abolished in 2009.

Lanyon Quoit is possibly the best known and most photographed of the many Neolithic stone structures around Cornwall. These structures range from large-scale quoits to wide circles of standing stones to small groups or even single upright stones. The Neolithic period spanned from 3,500 to 2,500 BC meaning that they were built at around the same time as Stonehenge in England and pre-date the pyramids of Egypt and metal tools.

The original purpose of quoits is uncertain. The most obvious explanation and easiest to envisage is that the massive stones formed the internal chamber of a burial mound, tumulus or barrow. Such tombs are known as dolmens and their function mirrors that of the pyramids. Other theories are varied and suggestions are that quoits were never completely covered, that they were

ceremonial sites aligned with cardinal points and the imposing 'tabletop' may have been used for ritual offerings or may even have held corpses to be eaten by carrion birds. Bones have been found near and around quoits but not so much inside them. Small stone burial chambers, known as cists, with longstones lie about 100 yards north-west of Lanyon Quoit and there is evidence that there were once a few neighbouring barrows reinforcing that the quoit itself was not used for burial but had a more central ceremonial focus.

Ironically, given its popularity, Lanyon Quoit is not authentically Neolithic. The quoit that stood on the site collapsed, possibly after a lightning strike, during a thunder storm in 1815. Its weakness was attributed to damage by treasure hunters and soil erosion. It originally had four upright stones and stood tall enough for a person on horseback to ride under. One of the uprights was broken and only the remaining three were squared off to make the structure more stable but lower when it was re-erected in

1824. The capstone weighs over 13 tonnes and measures 2.7m by 5.2m.

Under the authority of Captain Giddy of the Royal Navy, the equipment used to put the Lanyon Quoit capstone back in place had previously been

used to replace the [Logan Rock](#) at nearby Treen. The logan, believed to weigh over 80 tonnes, was naturally balanced and could be easily rocked or 'logged' until it was removed from its cliff-top perch in April 1824 by Lieutenant Hugh Goldsmith and crew members of HMS Nimble, in a misguided attempt to prove everything is possible when force and leverage are applied in the correct way.

Their vandalism didn't go down well with the locals, as the rock had been a major tourist attraction. Lieutenant Goldsmith was ordered to replace the rock. This feat of engineering was completed using a huge timber scaffold, 13 capstans, blocks and chains and around 60 men. They restored the Logan Rock to its previous location but it had lost its fine balance, requiring more force to move it.

In 1952 the then owner of the land around Lanyon Quoit, Edward Bolitho from Tregwainton, donated the plot of land with the monument to the National Trust. It remains under NT care.



Dark skies

Piece by piece, Cornwall is gaining official recognition of the value of its unique features. The UK government has designated 12 areas of Cornwall as a single area of outstanding natural beauty. Together they add up to almost 1,000 square kilometres mainly of coastline but also Bodmin Moor. A further 10 areas comprise the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site. West Penwith has land involved in both.

Now, 136 km², including the area around Lanyon Quoit, has been recognised as a Dark Sky Park by the international Dark Sky Association. It is the second such area in Cornwall, after Bodmin Moor, to achieve the status due to the lack of light pollution and clarity of the air that enhances viewing the night sky. In New Zealand, 4,300 square kilometres in the South Island were recognised as the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve in 2012.

Dark sky parks are publicly- or privately-owned spaces protected for natural conservation that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs for visitors. Dark sky reserves consist of a dark “core” zone surrounded by a populated periphery where policy controls are enacted to protect the darkness of the core. There are currently 19 Dark Sky reserves but dozens of Dark Sky Parks including one at Wait-Iti in the Tasman District of NZ.

Viewing the Milky Way at night from Lanyon Quoit with its remote location, antiquity and mysterious past would be a truly atmospheric and emotional experience.



Cornish tea

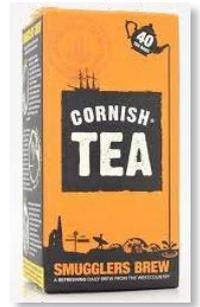
There is a shop on Jackson Street in Petone that sells ‘UK Goodies’. I don’t normally shop there but went in one day out of curiosity. To my surprise there was Cornish Tea on the shelf.

At first, I wondered if it was the tea grown on the Tregothnan Estate in Cornwall. Closer inspection of the packet (it pays to read the small print) showed that the tea was from ‘Kenya and around the world’ and was blended and packed in [Little Trethew](#) between Looe and Liskeard in Cornwall. I couldn’t resist buying a packet of ‘Smugglers Brew’ teabags to try it out.

The result was a strong and flavourful cuppa but has not turned me away from my usual Dilmah tea. It was nice for a change and the thought that it was supporting a Cornish business, even indirectly,

added to the experience.

The company was founded in 2012 with a bold ambition to take on the large tea producers in a country of tea drinkers. It now produces a wide range of teas and “ridiculously strong” coffee. Proud of its Cornish roots, short biographies of local heroes are printed on the box. Their products are available online but shipping is costly.



Ludgvan

On a recent road trip up the North Island I was able to call in to visit long-term member, Graham Harry, at Cambridge. This is a poem (author unknown) he shared with me. It is a concentrated celebration of Cornish place names. All of them are around [Ludgvan](#) Parish which is a stone’s throw from Lanyon Quoit.

Ludgvan Leaze and Cargease
Tregelland, Tregender
Whitecross and Hallantroan
Canon’s Town and Bowender

Bowgyheere and Treneere
Cockwells and Collurian
Rospeath and Blowing House Hill
Boskennal and Curcurrian

Polgrean and Tregender Vean
Long Rock and Tregarthen
Tregilliowe and Parc-an-Camps
Truthwall and Chyvellan

Chy-an-Gweal and Rose-in-Vale
Gitchell and Rosevidney
Veklanoweth and Castle Gate
Boswase and Polhidgey

Tolver Water and Lower Quarter
Tregadjick and Boswisnan
Ashton, Bowls and Newtown
Trevorrow and Nanceddan.

Georgia and Angwiniack
Gurnick, Chellew and Crowlas
Eglos, Bog and Varfell
Churchtown Hill and Bowglas

Tarnwidden and Manwidden
Treassowe and Botreva
Croft Hooper and Borea
Nencledra and Carvossa

Trewithen Dairy

Cornwall Live recently reported that a Cornish company had featured in a podcast focussed on family businesses called ‘It Runs in the Family’. Actually, two families with Cornish connections were involved. The podcast itself was produced

by a mother and daughter duo, Liz and Leila Willingham. Liz (nee Lean) was proud to point out that she was “a [Truro](#) girl”.

The subject of the podcast was Trewithen Dairy, a milk processing business now under the management of the fourth generation of the Clarke family. The business is based at Greymare Farm in the Glynn Valley near [Lostwithiel](#) and used to be a small dairy farm. It was handed down three generations to current owner, Bill Clarke, who was the youngest of 10 siblings. In 1994, he made the bold decision to process and sell his own milk rather than supply a large dairy conglomerate. He and his wife, Rachel, would bottle milk after their children were in bed and deliver it the following morning.

Since then, the business has developed. It has stopped producing milk and now contracts supply from local dairy farmers. It began under the name of Greymare Farm but changed its name to Trewithen Dairy to capitalise on a name that was more easily recognised as Cornish.

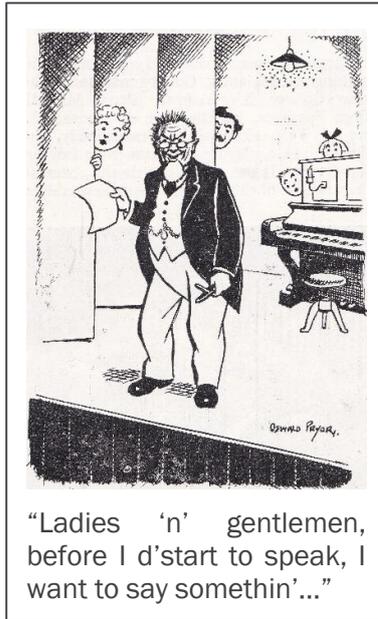
Two sons, now adults, Francis and George, are joint managing directors of a business that employs around 250 people. The product range has also widened to include clotted cream, butter and yoghurt.

In the podcast, Bill and Francis agree that it is a competitive industry but it is also necessary to trade with other companies that could be seen as competitors including Rodda’s, probably the best-known producer of Cornish clotted cream. The short shelf life of milk makes it important to be able to support each other by buying and selling tankers of milk.

The Clarkes emphasise the importance of looking after all aspects of the business and “do the right thing”. They build lasting relationships by sharing their plans with the wider ‘Trewithen Family’ - staff, customers and suppliers. Another of their key principles is to reduce their impact on the environment and they have established a network of customer-operated vending machines over a



Cornwall who want to continue the taste experience after they have returned home. Hampers can include pasties, sparkling wine and all the ingredients for clotted cream teas including Cornish Tea!



“Ladies ‘n’ gentlemen, before I d’start to speak, I want to say somethin’...”

Christchurch Branch

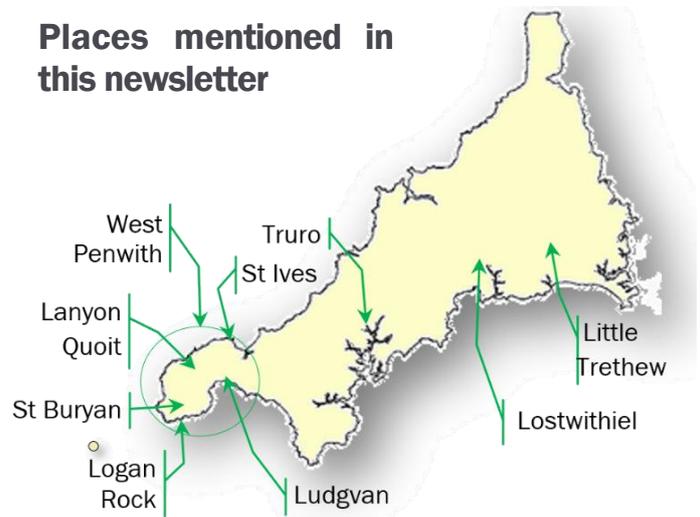
The Christchurch Branch held its Christmas meeting on 4 December with 19 members present. There was the usual range of entertainment including festive songs and music from Heather, Nadine and Doug. Everyone joined in with well-known carols.

Les related the gory details of the legend of ‘Devil’s arch bridge’ near [Tresillian](#). News from Cornwall was presented by Barbara and Jennie. Dorothy provided comedy with a number of jokes and then narrated the pantomime of Snow White as it was acted out by members of the committee.

Santa Claus delivered presents for everyone and the meeting was completed with a festive afternoon tea.



Places mentioned in this newsletter



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

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