

## **Presentations at the Toronto Cornish Association 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

### **Welcome Address**

*Bard Rosalie Eastlake.*

I feel very honoured to have been asked to say a few words in celebration of Toronto Cornish Association's twentieth anniversary. John Tyacke is to be particularly congratulated on giving birth to TCA in the Royal York Hotel in 1993 and for all the work he has put into it since. He was following in the footsteps of earlier immigrants who founded the Toronto Cornish Association in 1904 which survived until 1961.

It is such an honour to be connected with what I believe to be, the most lively, effective and maybe largest grouping of Cornish in North America. The Cornish American Heritage Society is the umbrella organisation for those of Cornish descent and those interested in Cornwall, past and present. We are all a gathering of 'Cousin Jacks' who, if we do it right will ensure that the role of the Cornish in Canadian history will not be forgotten.

When Ann Crichton-Harris asked me last summer to say a few words I had just moved to the Cobourg area where so much of Ontario's Cornish history is rooted. I was really excited to be there and drank in the Cornish names and connections as I came across them.

I live in Montreal now and a little while ago as I looked across the flat, white, frozen acres of Lac Saint Louis, in the arctic cold we have just endured, I wondered how the early Cornish settlers, at the beginning of the nineteenth century must have felt.

You know from your researches of your families that many or most were happy to leave the rough, stony acres of North Cornwall, its soaking rain and angry cliffs. That was not all that drove them away. Rather it was the English social system and its need to pay for the Napoleonic Wars; the Corn Laws which protected wheat grown in the newly occupied lands of others in the fledgling British Empire; the Tithes for the Church of England while most ordinary folk were Methodists; and above all the impossibility of acquiring land – land to buy, land to farm, land to own.

By contrast arriving in Upper Canada, ancestors such as Peter Davey wrote in 1830 that “we live in great harmony here so much that we care little about locking our doors at night, in truth I would not return to England, (even) if I could have the land of the estate I rented in St. Neot, given to me.”

Religion played a large role in community life then. In Cornwall, those about to leave had gathered for a last Sunday service to sing “God be with us till we meet again”. I always find the thought of that very moving sentence: “Lord bless we Cousin Jacks, and since we are Methodists, bless us twice.” (*I have lost the reference, but I love this sentence.*)

Ontario was particularly ‘blessed’, not only with Methodism, but with the branch known as the Bible Christians. In a time when few were literate, the organising, albeit evangelizing skills, which they practiced in Cornwall and on the outward bound voyages, they have left us with a rich legacy of names, from a time when little was written down, with which to fill our data bases. “What a friend we have in Jesus”, a favourite Methodist hymn was composed near the shores of Rice Lake, just north of Cobourg by Joseph Scrivener. He was Irish but allied himself in marriage to the family of Captain Robert Pengelly, who early in the 19th century was a renowned steamboat captain, on Rice Lake.

However, these are different times. The Church no longer commands our lives so how do we forge ahead to be able to celebrate future anniversaries. Along with so many organisations which see themselves with an ageing population; the ethnic organisations must engage with the future to capture the next generations. In Montreal last week was a meeting of all the six Celtic nations. Anne and Barbara, and I attended. This is the issue which provokes them too.

I am not a practitioner of Social Media but this is obviously the major tool we can use to contact young folk. We will need to engage with them, on their terms, and be accessible for their offerings to us. As a geographer, boots on the land is what appeals to me. Projects can be set up using the Cornish artefacts and memories in Toronto and beyond. The team had experience of this in organising the 12<sup>th</sup> Gathering of the Cornish American Heritage Society in 2003. The opportunity to work with schools would be here. My grand daughter wrote a very sweet story, set in Camborne, Ontario cemetery, and won a Gorseth prize for it. Photographs would record these new Cornish stories. Then of course there is video.

But this is another huge topic. Now is the time to celebrate achievements to which you have all contributed, each in your own way, from your own passions. A

very dear contact in Cobourg having read: Cornish Emigrants to Ontario” wrote this for me: “Richard Tinney and his family from Redmoor, Cornwall settled in Hamilton township. I knew the descendants of this family. The stone house they refer to, which they rented is on Dale Road and still in use. For a number of years, it was owned by a Davey family. The Tinney (Harry) family bought a farm with a fine red brick house on Theatre Road between Dale and Telephone Roads.” Even from my short sojourn in Northumberland County I knew all these roads. Southern Ontario is littered with Cornish farms, Cornish chapels, Cornish place names, Cornish families, and Cornish memories. This is history as it should be remembered.

Myrgh Langoroc.

## **The Looe Buccaneer and St. Piran's Flag**

*David Hutcheon*

For those who don't know me, I'm a Looe boy. I went to Looe Primary School with the sons of generations of fishermen. My Dad was a sailor and many of his family were fishermen in Aberdeen (Yorston).

As a boy I left Looe to become like many of you, a missionary to the colonies. First stop New Jersey, USA- fuhgeddaboudit! Then I came to Toronto -- for a rugby game. I missed the bus back and stayed.

In my Looe days I had a hard-won reputation as a "right little Heller". Then John Tyacke went to Looe and I became the 'Looe Buccaneer'. I know I had the reputation of being 'a little Heller' because one very hot summer, I was back in Looe, doing my missionary refresher course, while being forced to devour, pasty's and chips, strawberries and clotted cream, all washed down with Scrumpy and Mead. My school friend Ian Uglow and I lined-up for the best Cornish ice cream in Cornwall: Martins Dairy Cornish Ice Cream. Their factory was in Looe.

This Mecca in East Looe was at the foot of the bridge which joins the two ancient towns of East Looe and West Looe. The queue stretched up East Looe River past the police station and beyond the Looe Railway station to Morval. After some days of waiting, Ian and I finally got to the head of the line. And in a slight American accent I placed my order with the two ladies serving behind the counter: The Dreckly Sisters.

"Ello me `andsome, what be having then?"

"Two Ninety-Niners please."

"Dreckly me `andsom, dreckly, proper job."

The line for ice cream by this time had reached Liskeard. Day trippers were coming down on weekend excursions by train to reserve their order. The first Dreckly sister turns to the other Dreckly sister and says,

"eere I knows ee, ees Renees boy".

Then the second Dreckly Sister responded:

"en' a-right little Heller `ee were too!"

Ah those were halcyon days. Being a right little heller was a hard-earned title. I'll have ee know. And I didn't even have to pay for me Ninety-Niners.

Now for those who missed the historic Turbot War of 1995, let me briefly take you back to those times of European intrigue and skullduggery when Canada once again had to come to the aide of the mother country. And the role the Toronto Cornish played in the fight to save the Cornish way of life.

Spanish factory ships were illegally overfishing the halibut on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland. The West Country fishermen and Irish fishermen understood this problem well, having seen their fisheries devastated by the Spanish and other European Union fishermen.

It was even claimed by the British Press, in particular, The Sunday Express, that the Spanish fishermen were also transporting drugs for the Columbian drug cartel families. These pirates were hoovering up Dogger Bank. The Cornish fishermen asked the British government for help. The British government initially was slow to respond. Then into the breach stepped Canada. In March 1995 the Canadian Government sent the navy out to apprehend the Spanish. Shots were fired over the bow of a Spanish Trawler and the Estai was seized and its crew apprehended. Its illegal nets were recovered.

The Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Brian Tobin took our case to the international press. In New York City on a barge in the East River in front of the United Nations Headquarters the Estai's illegal net was put on display for all the world to see. Tobin denounced such practices and declared that the fishery would soon be reduced to "the last, lonely, unloved, unattractive little turbot clinging by its fingernails to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland." Tobin shamed the Spanish and the European Union who were supporting them.

The Spanish government asked the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, for leave to hear a case claiming that Canada had no right to arrest the Estai. However, the court later refused to hear the case. On the same day that Tobin was in New York, the United Kingdom blocked an EU proposal to impose sanctions on Canada.

At sea the Spanish and Canadian Navies faced-off against each other. Prime Minister Jean Chretien ordered our navy to fire on Spanish vessels that exposed their guns. A Cornish fisherman down Penzance-Newlyn way, got frustrated waiting for the British Government to act and raised the Maple Leaf on his boat,

the Newlyn, in praise of Canada's actions. A French ship that believing the Newlyn to be Canadian arrested it. This dragged Britain from its position of passive backing into full support of the fishermen. Overnight, Canadian flags began to fly from all manner of British and Irish vessels and upset the Spanish once more.

It was a time when more Maple Leaf Flags flew off British and Irish fishing boats than in Ontario. Every Cornish and West Country port you visited flew the Maple Leaf flag in honour of Canada's position on the Spanish and shamed the British government into supporting them. A very successful appeal was launched in The Toronto Sun for more Maple Leaf flags, which were duly shipped over by The Sun and Toronto citizens.

During this time, I had recently been elected as Toronto City councilor for what was then City of Toronto's Ward One. I understood the fishermen's plight and supported the Canadian Government's actions. So, I resolved to fly St. Piran's flag high above City Hall. My motion in honour of the fishermen who were flying the Maple Leaf was adopted unanimously by Toronto Council at its meeting of March 27th and 31st, 1995.

The Toronto Sun had been covering the Turbot Wars and my good friend, journalist Rob Benzie, flew over to Britain to cover the story. The Cornish fishermen gave him St. Piran's flag which he carried back for me to fly over City Hall.

The St. Piran's flag which I present to you tonight first flew over Toronto City Hall on Friday, April 7th. Mayor Barbara Hall assisted in hoisting it up the flagpole. The flag was then flown over Etobicoke City Hall on April 24, 1995. It is the same flag that the Toronto-Cornish Association now fly over City Hall every March to welcome St. Piran's Day.

So tonight, in honour of the Toronto-Cornish Association's 20th Anniversary; the efforts of John Tyacke and Brian Waters, and the Toronto-Cornish Association's continued effort to recognise our saint, I present this flag to your Association for your good keeping, St. Piran's flag. May you always be here to fly the flag over the City of Toronto on St Piran's Day.

Thank you for inviting me and my wife Cathy Hutcheon to this august event.