



# BOSCASTLE BLOWHOLE

No 62 Summer 2008

£1



## *TORRENT RETURNS TO THE HARBOUR*

*After a long absence, Torrent is again launched from Boscastle harbour to the delight of the gig club. See page 34 for more gig club news.*

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## Editorial

The editorial in the Spring edition boldly stated that "by the time the Summer edition of the Blowhole is out, the work should finally be completed and the village will have been 'formally handed back' to its residents". This turns out to have been a somewhat optimistic notion as work continues both above and below the bridge. The toilet block is completed and open, but the 'riverside walk' is not finished and Carillion still have their headquarters at the end of the carpark, though the site area has been reduced.

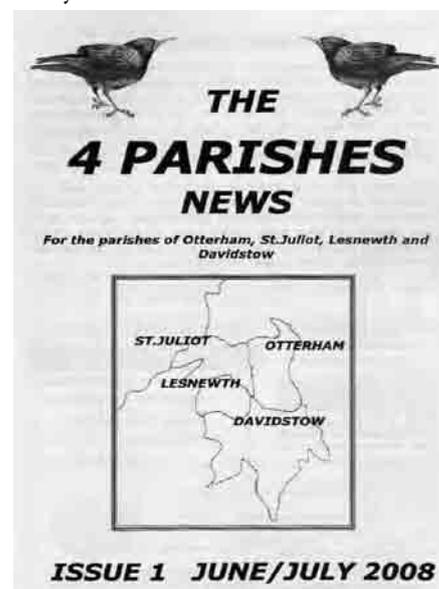
Let's hope that by the Autumn edition all that will be left to complete is the National Trust's refurbishment of the former Cornish Goodies shop,

and, of course, the sewerage scheme. South West Water have lodged an appeal against the County Council's planning decision to reject the scheme at Tresuck. There will be an Appeal Inquiry but the date & venue have not yet been announced.

As mentioned in the last edition of the Blowhole, the WEA is keen for Boscastle to run courses or events and we are looking out for feasible ideas. Phone 250483 or email the Blowhole (address below) with any suggestions.

The 1<sup>st</sup> issue of a new bi-monthly newsletter has recently been published. It is aimed at the residents of the parishes of Otterham, St Juliot, Lesnewth and Davidstow.

Congratulations to the editorial team of The 4 Parishes News. The Blowhole team wish the publication every success.



## Boscastle Blowhole Team

The editorial team reserves the right to edit, accept, or reject any material submitted for publication in the Blowhole. The views expressed in the magazine are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the team.

The editorial team are: Philippa Arthan, Arthur Bannister, Joan Cork, Gloria Quinlan, Daphne Rogers, Ann and Chris Rodda, Mary Shepherd.

The next Blowhole will be published in September. The deadline for copy is 23rd August. Please ensure that your copy reaches us by then or we may be unable to include it, and the publication date may be delayed. Thank you.

*For advertising queries, contact Daphne Rogers 01840 250244*

Copies of the Blowhole are available by post at a cost of £2 per issue.

Please either email the Blowhole or phone 01840 250483 for subscription enquiries.

Communications to the Blowhole can be sent c/o Boscastle Post Office, Dunn Street, Boscastle, PL35 0AA or by email: [boscastleblowhole@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:boscastleblowhole@yahoo.co.uk)

The Blowhole is published 4 times a year and printed by Easyprint of Red Post, Nr Bude.



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# DIAMOND WEDDING



*Bob & Vi Biddick*

An Open House for family and friends was held at 5 Potters Lane, on 5th June, to celebrate 60 years of marriage for Bob & Vi Biddick.

This was continued on Saturday 7th June with a large gathering from both families. A congratulatory telegram, was received from Her Majesty The Queen and is proudly displayed on the sideboard.

Bob was born at the harbour in Honeymoon Cottage (now known as Harbour Cottage), the eldest of four sons to Cyril and Ethel Biddick. His next home was at 5 Valency Row and this

remained his home until he married.

Vi was born in Camelford, one of five children, to Horace & Mary Hicks. The family moved to Boscastle, when she was 8 years old, living at Hillside (now known as Linhay & Kiddlywinks), again her home until she married.

They both attended Boscastle school, where they first met.

They married at Minster Church on 5th June 1948, the Rev. William James officiated. Best man was Arthur Biddick, Bob's brother and chief bridesmaid was Vi's sister Francis. A guard



*the Happy Couple with their Guard of Honour*

of honour led by Boscastle Band members met them as they came out of the church.

The reception was held at the Mission Room (now The Village Hall), where Bob played his accordion to entertain the guests and for dancing in the afternoon.

The honeymoon was spent at Vi's aunt and uncle at Bude.

Their first home was at Pentargon (now The Old Coach House) until 1954, when they moved to 5 Potters Lane and have been there ever since.

They brought up three children, Malcolm, Beryl and Keith, have seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren and

are still keen to baby sit whenever needed.

Carolyn, one of their grandchildren, shares the same wedding date and will celebrate 15 years of marriage this year.

Music has played a great part in their lives and Bob still entertains on his accordion.

They are both keen gardeners, but are finding it more difficult now. No doubt though there will again be an abundance of colour in their garden this year and there are 2 rows of runner beans already planted.

No presents were requested but donations were split between the Air Ambulance and The Precious Lives Appeal.

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# Sculpture, Stars and More

## Summer Solstice Sculptures

Sat 21st June  
Meet at 10am top of Boscastle car park, 5 minutes level walk to site in valley.

£2.00 per person  
Join in and help create sculptures to replace the willow figures that were in the Valency Valley, using a mixture of natural & recycled materials. Bring something along to include to make it your own! Materials and tools supplied. Booking is essential, phone **01288331372** or email **mike.simmonds@nationaltrust.org.uk**

## Stargazing Stroll

This is a chance to go out with an expert and discover the magic of the night sky. Astronomer Brian Sheen from the Roseland Observatory will give an introductory talk about what we are likely to see - not only the stars but the bats, moths and other creatures of the night. As it gets dark we will walk up to Forrabury Common and have a chance to gaze at the stars. The leader will have several pairs of binoculars which can be used by the group.

There are two possible dates so that the leader can select the best. The actual date will be confirmed at the beginning of the week.

Wed 30<sup>th</sup> or Thurs 31<sup>st</sup> July  
Wed 27<sup>th</sup> or Thurs 28<sup>th</sup> Aug  
Meet at Visitor Centre 9pm  
Cost: adults £5, children £3.50.

## Boat Trips

The landscape always looks different from the sea, the cliffs much larger and the land much emptier. There is geology, history and possibly wildlife to explore from here so why not book as soon as possible so you can ensure a place on a unique seascape exploration.

17<sup>th</sup> July 4pm  
18<sup>th</sup> August 7pm  
10<sup>th</sup> September 2pm  
Cost £8 per person, places limited to 11.  
Booking is essential for both these activities. Book via the Visitor Centre on **250010** or email **boscastlevc@btconnect.com**

## Harp Music

Harper's Bizarre, playing traditional, classic & contemporary pieces will play outside the Visitor Centre at 11.30am & 1.30pm on 15<sup>th</sup> July & 5<sup>th</sup> August



# Doctor's Corner

We would like to alert you to changes that may impact on this community.

The government has recently published a 'White Paper' on the future of pharmacy services. As well as plans to incorporate Pharmacists further into the Community team, the Government is proposing changes to the rules allowing GPs to dispense medicines to patients who live more than a mile from a pharmacy.

About 140,500 patients in Cornwall have their medicines directly dispensed by their GP surgery, and the proposed changes might leave 80,000 of them losing this choice. The payments made to dispensing doctors go some way to deferring the costs of rural branch surgeries, without this income, they may not be viable.

Only about 25% of chemists in Cornwall are independent, the rest being owned by major multinational companies who are unlikely to respond to the needs of scattered rural populations.

The Department of Health says it wants to put the patient and the patient's choice at the heart of the NHS

Don't let your surgeries go the way of rural Post Offices.

- Write to your M.P.
  - Write to the Minister of Health
  - And PLEASE sign the petition in our surgery
- Drs Jarvis Garrod & Abbott*

Contact addresses:  
Dan Rogerson MP,  
Church Stile,  
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Launceston,, PL15 8AT  
Dawn Primarolo MP,  
Minister for Health  
House of Commons,  
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## Parish Council News

*Forrabury and Minster Parish Council meet in the Village Hall on the second Thursday of each month. Members of the public are invited to attend and public participation is permitted before the start of the meeting at 7 pm.*

### **Public Participation: Parish Precept**

A member of the public asked the Parish Council at the March meeting why it had been necessary for the Council to raise the precept by 13.1%. The overall increase for council tax having been just 5.3%. The chairman said that the accounts were available for scrutiny by contacting the Parish Clerk. It was agreed that the accounts should be published in the Blowhole. A copy of these can be found on the facing page.

### **Football Field Pavilion**

It was suggested that money from the flood fund could be used towards building a new pavilion in the football field. It was pointed out that this would not only benefit the football club, but would also be used by the school and would be a valuable village amenity.

### **Parking Valency Row**

A complaint was made about parking at the entrance to Valency Row. This was making access for the residents difficult. Concerns were also expressed that emergency vehicles might have difficulties in reaching homes in that area.

### **Noise in the Jordan Valley**

A local resident complained about the level of noise occurring at certain times in the Jordan Valley. He

was told that this was a matter for the District Council and should be reported to them. He further complained about the speed of some vehicles on New Road. A 30mph speed limit exists and the Chairman said he regretted that it is unlikely that Highways would agree to a further reduction of speed on a B class road.

### **Unitary Authority**

On March 13<sup>th</sup> Janey Comber gave a progress report on OneCornwall. This will take over from the County and District Councils on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Many decisions on boundary changes and numbers of councillors have yet to be made, but it is expected that there will be more local centres to provide services and advice. She said that great efforts were being made to ensure a smooth transition.

### **South West Water**

The County Council refused the application from SWW to site the sewage works for Boscastle at Tresuck Farm. However, SWW have lodged an appeal on that

decision and the outcome of that appeal is awaited. In the meantime, the result of the Tintagel/Bossiney appeal has been published. The Secretary of State has upheld the refusal for all three outfalls and has also said that these areas should not be treated as separate locations. Together they have a population equivalent of over 2,000 and Secondary treatment will be a minimum requirement.

### **Flood Fund**

Discussions continue on how best to spend the remaining money in the flood fund. There are now six items open for consideration. A Village clock, Notice Board, Bus shelter, Trees, Church Path and Playing field hut. There have been no suggestions received from members of the public in response to the appeal in the last issue of the Blowhole.

*Inserted in delivered copies of the Blowhole is a questionnaire that the Parish Council would like local residents to complete to indicate their preference for the projects mentioned.*

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<b>Forrabury &amp; Minster Parish Council Precept</b>			
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
<b>INCOME</b>			
Precept	£18,000	£22,000	£25,000
Agency	£1500	£1500	£1500
Interest	£260	£260	£260
Other/NTrust	£0	£1600	£0
Donations			
VAT			
<b>Total</b>	<b>£19,760</b>	<b>£25,510</b>	<b>£26,760</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Admin	£15,500	£16,800	£17,350
Section 137	£250	£325	£345
Parks/Open spaces	£2400	£2900	£3050
Capital	0	0	0
Churchyard	£1000	£1500	£1500
Loan repayments	£1880	£1880	£1880
Other			
Agency	£900	£735	£775
<b>Total</b>	<b>£21,930</b>	<b>£24,140</b>	<b>£24,900</b>
Change on year	+£2170	+£1370	+£1860
Opening balance	£15,076	£12,906	£14,276
Closing balance	£12,906	£14,276	£16,136
No of Band D properties	420	440	443
Approx precept (for a band D property)	£52	£50	£56

<b>Statement of Accounts</b>		
<b>year ending</b>	<b>31/03/2007</b>	<b>31/03/2008</b>
Balances brought forward	£14,137	£12,047
+ annual precept	£18,000	£22,000
+ total other receipts	£1749	£3171
- staff costs	£12,279	£12,440
- loan interest/repayments	£1881	£1881
- total other payments	£7680	£7943
= balances carried forward	£12,047	£14,953
total cash & short term investments	£34,963*	£15,201*
total fixed assets & long term assets	£3195	£2906
total borrowings	£21,246	£20,578
<i>*includes Regeneration/Partnership &amp; Objective One</i>		
The accounts books and other Parish Council documentation is available for inspection. Contact FMPC's clerk, Bob Smith on 01840 250440		

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# Report from the PCC



Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held on 14 April in Boscastle Village Hall. It was well attended this year, with as many members of the public as members of the PCC, which is very encouraging, and a trend that we would like to see continued! Father Rob Yeomans, who has helped us so much during the interregnum, kindly agreed to be Acting

Chairman for the evening. Following the election of the Churchwardens, cheese and wine was served while the meeting continued with the election of the officers of the PCC.

The Annual Report document had been printed and circulated as widely as possible before the meeting, contents included full reports from the Treasurer, Churchwardens, Secretary, Deanery Synod Representative, Electoral Roll Officer, Flowers & Cleaning Co-ordinator, Lunch Club

Representative, Health & Safety Officer, and Children's Activities Representative.

One question that was asked during the public part of the meeting was whether the Minutes of PCC meetings could be made public in future. We are only too pleased to let all parishioners know about our tasks, our different roles, current issues, work in progress and the decisions that are being made. We thought perhaps a good way to start would be to send a report of the meetings of the PCC to each edition of the Blowhole, outlining our achievements and future needs, and we would welcome comments. Hopefully, this will benefit every parishioner, and help us all to understand the work of the church within the broader spectrum of the parish. It was also agreed that a printed copy of the full minutes of each PCC meeting would be placed in church once they have been approved. If anyone

would like a copy by email, please apply to bosgrpoff@hotmail.co.uk however we regret that we cannot offer individual printed copies.

The church has also been allocated a section of the new notice board in the car park, and we will be deciding the most appropriate use of that space. We always welcome any opportunity to let all local people know what is happening in the churches in the parish, as they are an integral part of our community.

We had our first meeting with our new Priest-in-Charge Father Robert Thewsey, on 14 May at The Rectory and are all looking forward very much to working with him.

*Sue Stickney*  
Secretary to the PCC



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**28 July - 29 August**

**Paint on Canvas**

*by Jane Swan*

**1 Sept - 30 Sept**

**Clouds and Trees**

*by Bridget Holden*

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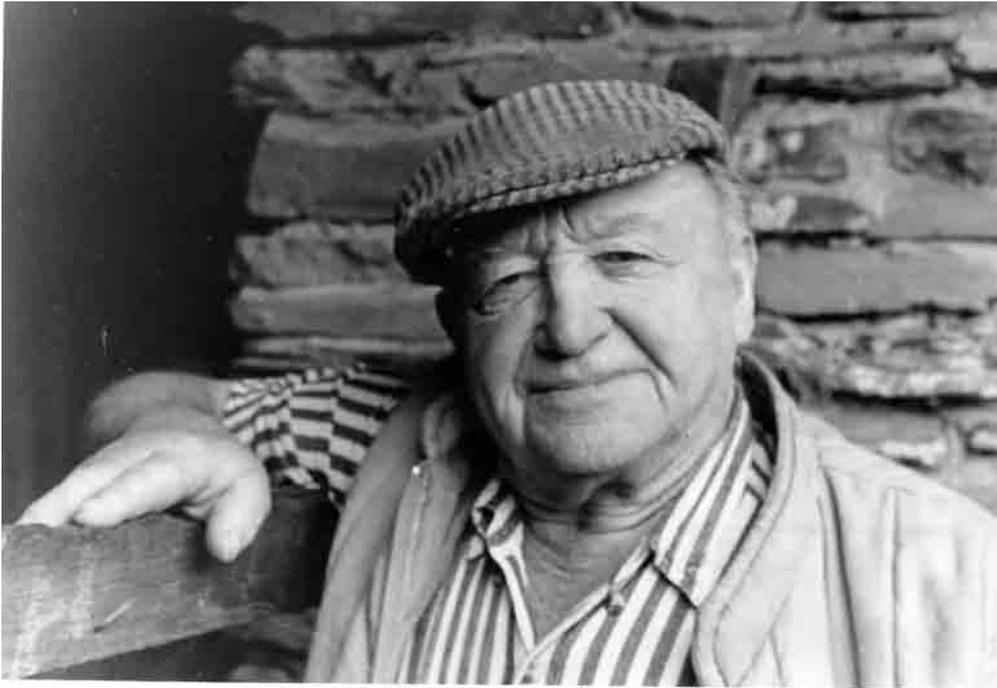
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# SAM HANCOCK 1917 - 2008



The funeral service and celebration for the life of Sam Hancock took place at Boscastle Methodist Church. The chapel was full for a memorable service conducted by Glenton Brown, with Richard Uglow, preacher. Maria Nicholls, organist, led the rousing singing of Sam's favourite Sankey hymns with a moving, and sometimes amusing, eulogy by Martin Pethick. Interment followed at Forrabury Churchyard with prayers and committal by Mr. Michael Parsons. His special day ended fittingly at the Cobweb Inn with friends, fellowship and singing.

Sam was one of a family of seven children born to Mary and William Hancock at Trevilla Cottage, Tresparrett. Charles, who now lives in Hayle, is now the last remaining sibling.

Throughout his long life Sam's main pleasure has undoubtedly been the outdoors and farming. Until very recently he still farmed land at Minster and the stitches on Forrabury Common – Sam being the longest serving tenant of the National Trust.

As a young man much of the work carried out on the farm was done using horse power but this was replaced latterly by his famous red Massey Fergusson. This was his only form of transport as Sam never acquired a full driving licence. Even after his amputation last summer the tractor played its part in allowing him to pursue his favourite pastimes. His friends would take him in his wheelchair in the link box, behind the tractor, to follow the North Cornwall Hunt and to the pubs to enjoy a game of Spoof!

Sam was a people person, a 'proper' Cornish character, who enjoyed life to the full – one of the last of a dying breed. His presence in Boscastle, sense of humour, tales of the past and gift for telling a 'yarn' will surely be remembered.

We will miss you Sam.

## Thank you.

Delia, Iris, Sarah and all the family would like express their sincere thanks for all the cards, sympathy and support of friends and neighbours and all who attended Sam's funeral and made it such a special day.

Thanks also for the generous donations which went to the Precious Lives Appeal, Boscastle Methodist Church and Forrabury and Minster Churches.

## News from the Lookout

After the extremes of weather we've seen up at the Lookout in the last few months, from storm force winds to heat wave conditions, we hope that our visitors find a more settled summer. But, while the weather may have let us down from time to time, our volunteers have not. During the last 12 months we've welcomed 14 new fully qualified watchkeepers and still have 7 in training, so we are hoping to manage more early evening shifts at Bank Holiday weekends.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May Boscastle lookout was involved in an incident when one of teams was able to keep track of a ketch that had engine failure and was drifting off Bude. Reporting the sighting to Falmouth Coastguard they were tasked to maintain a watch until Padstow Lifeboat took the vessel in tow. The extra eyes on the coast proving useful once again!

Here's wishing everyone in Boscastle a good summer and, as always, if you, or anyone you know, would be interested in joining the team, John Davis can arrange for you to visit the lookout and spend some time with an experienced watchkeeper to see what is involved. You can contact him on 07791761502

MW



# THE NATIONAL TRUST

## Access on Forrabury Stitches

It has been 7 years since the creation of the permissive paths that were provided for increased access to and enjoyment of Forrabury Stitches. Through consultation with the Parish Council and local community the conflicts between leisure use and the farming and wildlife of the site were addressed back in 2001 and a way forward was found. We are pleased that the paths have always been well used and we have strived to maintain them to a high standard.

However it has been noticed that some walkers and regular visitors are no longer so aware of the previously agreed access on the Stitches. With some unofficial paths developing, damage to crops and stock worrying by dogs is becoming

evident. It now seems prudent to re-visit the issue via the pages of the Blowhole. As the summer season gets into full swing, it is also important that the right message is given to visitors unfamiliar with the area as regards where it is OK to walk.

Walkers should stick to the way-marked footpaths, which are a mixture of dedicated public rights of way (YELLOW ARROWS including the

Coast Path National Trail) & permissive paths created by the National Trust (WHITE ARROWS).

Dogs should be kept on leads or under close control.

The paths are all footpaths only and, as such, vehicles, cycles and horses are not allowed.

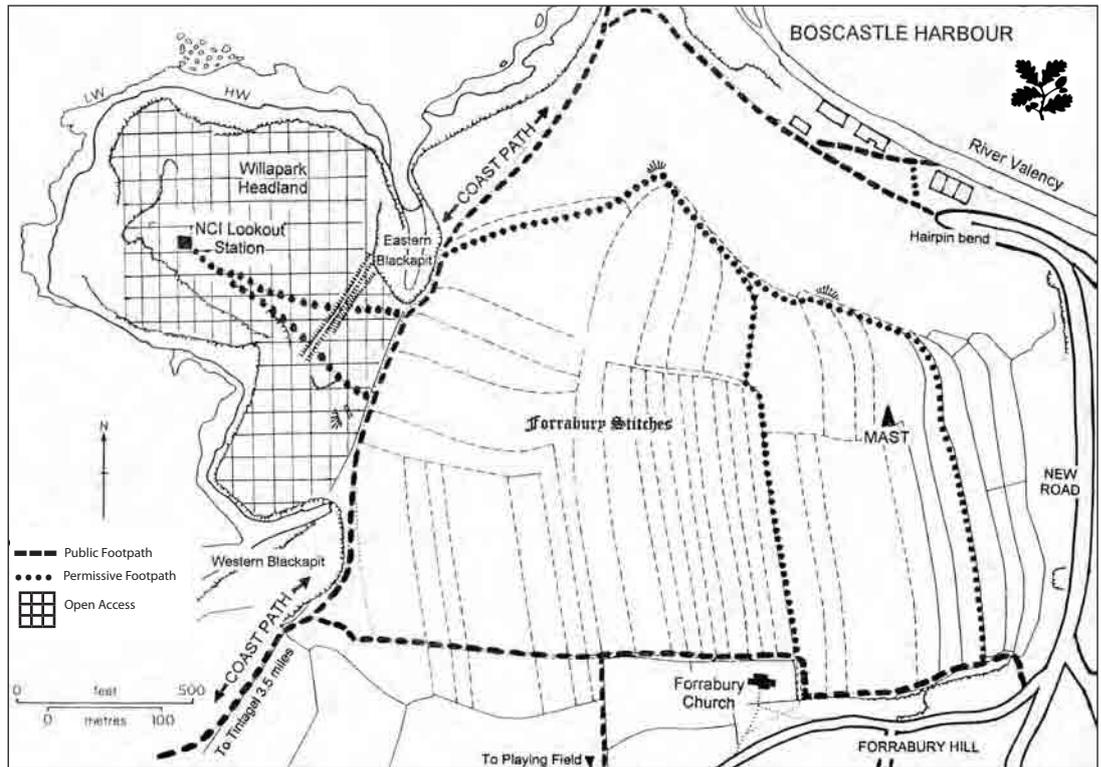
The recent CROW (Countryside and Rights of Way) Act mapped only the Willapark headland as

“Open Access” (freedom to roam land).

Thanking you in anticipation for your help in managing the access on Forrabury Stitches

For your interest, on the following page is an edited version of an article previously printed in The Blowhole, which gives some history and information on the stitches.

MS 



map of Forrabury Stitches showing the footpaths and Open Access land

## Urchins The Bear Shop

### The Old Mill Boscastle



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# Forrabury Stitches or When is a Common not a Common?

## History of the common

Forrabury Common is a site of great historic, landscape and wildlife value.

The strip fields are a rare survivor of the stitchmeal system once widespread in the county.

These stitches are unusual in that they show an open field farming system. Over the last few centuries there was a flurry of enclosing agricultural land with hedges and walls. So much so that by Victorian times places such as Forrabury were regarded as curiosities.

The stitches at Forrabury is one of the best three examples of open field farming in the country. The other examples are at Braunton in North Devon and Laxton near Nottingham.

The stitches were farmed under common ownership until at least the seventeenth century. In 1694 the 'Lanhydrock

Atlas' shows that the shift towards individual ownership had already begun. By the time of the Tithe Survey in 1844, Forrabury Common was no longer in common ownership and 14 separate owners were recorded.

The National Trust was sold the majority of the stitches by Mr Thomas Percy Fulford in 1955 and then in 2000 bought the final three stitches so that today there is one owner of the whole Common. So perhaps it is a bit of misnomer to call the area 'a common' when it hasn't been for almost two centuries.

## Wildlife of the common

As well as the history the stitches are home to some important wildlife as recognised by the area being a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



*Forrabury stitches from the air*

There are stitches which are managed as hay meadows and these contain a wide variety of plants including orchids, hay rattle, bird's foot trefoil and sawwort.

The ploughing of the stitches allows plants such as the 'arable weeds' to exist. These are wild flowers occurring within an arable crop, which rely on ploughing to survive. Most of the species are common eg Speedwell, Bindweed, Fat hen – but some, Lesser Snapdragon and Corn Marigold, are nationally rare.

In winter the stubble on the arable stitches provide cover for overwintering birds such as finches and buntings.

## Today's use

The land is farmed by tenants of the National Trust and an essential part of the management is that each stitch is ploughed at least once every four years. The crops grown are usually oats, barley and grass. The latter being cut for winter-feed for stock.

*Mike Simmonds  
Area Warden*

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# Church and Chapel

## From the Methodist Minister

*Dear Friends,*

It is possible to be in the right place at the wrong time as I experienced on a Sunday morning last year whilst making my way from a 9.30a.m. Service at St. Breward to an 11 a.m. Service at St. Tudy. I was on my usual route but was following the low loader which was taking the 'Seed' sculpture from De Lank quarries to the Eden Project.

I have since seen the sculpture in its display area at Eden. One can only marvel at the skill of the sculptor and his team who started with a large block of Cornish granite and shaped it patiently into the finished product. They were working toward the achievement of a vision.

I thought of the 'Seed' and its creation as I began thinking about the fact that each of us are a part of a team which is shaping our present society, and of course the future of our society. The big question is, 'What is the vision toward which we are working?'

The reality is that there are several visions of how our society should be espoused by different groupings in our present era. Some of these visions are developed from motives of personal gain, power, wealth creation, and short-term easy-living whilst others take a long term view and incorporate motives of the well-being of all people.

As a part of the shaping team of our society it is not only what we do that has an impact, either positively or negatively, but what we permit to happen.

This latter point is illustrated for me for instance in the ITV programme 'Golden Balls' which is

on just before the 6p.m. News on some evenings. At the conclusion of that programme the two remaining contestants deliberate together how to share the prize money and then select either a Split or Steal ball. Often contestants agree to split the prize money and the 'con-artist' selects the 'steal' ball and wins the prize. The underlying messages for those watching the programme are disturbing for me especially bearing in mind that many families will be tuned in at that time. It raises questions about trust, winning at all costs, being truthful etc.

Our media - television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet all play their part in shaping society, perhaps so much so that we feel powerless to affect any change. Consequently the current negative tides of thinking and action shape our society.

When we face up to the question of what vision should we be working toward for our society the Bible becomes extremely relevant. Two of its themes are firstly that we are a people created to live in harmony with the Creator God and his way for life and living, and secondly that we are invited to start on that path each time that we recognise we have strayed from it - a new beginning is always possible.

The 'how it is' and 'how it ought to be' voices need to be heard in our society from all of us who share in the God-vision. Jesus reminded his followers that they needed faith as big as a mustard seed - the smallest known but it could grow into a tree - to bring about the Kingdom of God. (See Matthew 17 verse 20 and Mark 4 verse 32.)

The challenge is to ask ourselves what role are we fulfilling in the shaping of our society. It demands our serious thought.

*Every Blessing,  
Bryan Ede*

## From the Church Minister:

May I first say a huge thank you to the people in the various Parishes for making Margaret, Matthew, Rebecca and I feel so welcome. It has really been a delight and pleasure to be here. I will admit that we did feel a small sense of trepidation when I accepted the offer of becoming the Priest in Charge of Boscastle with Davidstow, as the Parishes are very different from the single Parish in which I was serving in Manchester, but the welcome, the warmth of the people meeting us, and the sheer beauty of the area has made us feel at home straight away.

I thought that in this article it might be nice for you to find out a little bit about myself and where I come from, as quite a few people have already asked this very question, so.....

I was born in Stretford, Manchester, I have an elder sister, Angela and a younger brother, Andrew. I was educated at the local Grammar School then worked at National Westminster Bank. I worked for the bank for 14 ½ years, and took voluntary redundancy, when Margaret was expecting our first child Matthew, I was then unemployed for 6 months as I needed to decide what I should do.

I eventually took the post of 'Administration and Finance Officer' at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens in Runcorn, Cheshire. This is a small independent museum which looks after the remains of a 12th century Augustinian Monastery, a museum, a 2 ½ acre Georgian Walled Garden, and 62 acres of Woodland walks.



Margaret, Rebecca, Robert and Matthre Thewsey

copyright photo courtesy David Flower

I loved working there, I dealt with all the front of house, ran the gift shop, coffee shop, managed the reception staff...the list goes on.

But I still felt that I needed to do something more with my life. I have been involved with church really all my life as I joined the choir when I was 6 ½ years old, and it was through singing in one of the Cathedral Choirs that I met my lovely Margaret. Needless to say we had a huge joint choir for our wedding, and the music was superb.

I started looking at my vocation to ministry in about 1997 and was accepted for training at Cuddesdon, Oxford, in the Autumn of 1999, and it was in Oxford in 2000 that Rebecca arrived on the scene. I was ordained

Deacon in Manchester Cathedral in 2000, and then served my title at St Clement's, Chorlton cum Hardy in Manchester. I was then offered the living at All Saints' in Stretford - the parish next to where I was brought up as a child.

I am sure you can gather living here in Cornwall is very different from Manchester, but we are loving being here and I really hope that I can journey with as many of you as possible over the coming years.

Finally can I wish you all God's blessing and please, please bear with Margaret and I as we will probably take quite a while to get to know all of your names.

*Yours in Christ,  
Fr Robert Thewsey*

## BRIAN (TACKER) WICKETT 1938 - 2008

Brian, known as Tacker to all his family and friends was born in March 1938, near Dizzard at St Gennys. Aged four he moved with his parents and brother Gordon to Churchtown Farm, Trevalga. Tacker farmed for many years with his family until his father retired. He chose not to take on the farm and worked for Tintagel Dairies for many years until the death of Les Uglow.

He then bought the Boscastle side of the business which he enjoyed running for several years. After selling he took a more laid-back approach to life. As long as he had a spare pound in his pocket and diesel in his car he was happy, and became a maintenance man ready to help anyone at any time.

He helped his cousins at Bossiney Holiday Farm where he will be remembered as quite a character with the tourists. There-in lies a lasting memorial to Tacker in the beautiful stone hedging which he did. He also became part of the Stephens and Harris team as the sexton for some years. Tacker played with Boscastle and St Genny's bands for years and also sang with the Tintagel Orpheus Male Voice Choir for a short time. He was a keen supporter of Boscastle Football Club, where a seat will be donated in his memory, and also very big fan of Manchester United.

He died peacefully at Treiske Hospital and was buried next to his parents at Tremayna Methodist Church. Fittingly, the floral tribute was in the shape of a football. Tacker will be sadly missed but not forgotten.

### AD.'JOHN' LEWIS 1924 - 2008

Bernice and family wish to thank all those who have offered and given help or sent messages of sympathy following John's death on February 21st.

The kindness and support I have received has been very much appreciated especially from my 'doggie' friends who have kept me going.

The amount raised for the Cornwall Air Ambulance instead of flowers was £451, for which we thank all who donated.

### REG PRIVETT

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been so kind and supportive following the death of my dear husband, Reg.

I was deeply moved to receive so many cards and expressions of sympathy.

May I also say a big thank you to all those who made donations to the children's Hospice Precious Lives appeal in lieu of flowers.

*Sincerely,  
Marianne Privett*

# Postie's Corner



The creation of the North Cornwall delivery office for all us Postmen and Postwomen of North Cornwall has still yet to happen. Finding a suitable property for all us posties and our equipment is very difficult. So for the time being Tracey and I continue to work from the Post Office as normal.

I thought I would write about an issue that affects us all in some way or another. Yes Junk mail seems to be the biggest problem that people have with the post I deliver. This type of post within the

postal sector is generally referred to as direct marketing mail. This is the post that you receive for which you were not expecting and didn't ask for. This marketing mail is from various businesses, financial institutions and anyone else who has products and services that they want to promote. Marketing mail can come as leaflets and addressed mail. All us posties do get an extra payment for the leaflets that we deliver with your mail once a week, it's not a lot but as the saying goes it all helps. Since the growing popularity of mobile phones and the Internet fewer and fewer people are using the post to communicate or pay bills. Of the millions of items of mail processed everyday the percentage of mail which the likes of you and I would send is very, very small, so all postal operators, including

the Royal Mail, depend on marketing mail to stay in business. It has been reported that more companies and businesses are now spending less on postal services and are using the Internet more. This is putting more and more pressure on the type of service that the Royal Mail provides. I really enjoy my job as a postman even when it is pouring with rain and blowing a gale but without the junk mail my job and the type of service we

take for granted from the Royal Mail would be very different.

So my only advice with the junk mail is read it if you want and if it's offering something you like then good, if not recycle it.

By the time you read this in the Blowhole I will be on holiday for 2 weeks. Mike Sleep will be covering for me whilst I am away.

*Darius and my four legged assistant, Tilly.*

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**One Cornwall**

The work of the Implementation Executive is gathering pace now, with decisions starting to be made about the shape of the new Council. It has been decided that services will be delivered in three areas, East, Mid and West Cornwall. It looks like there will be a planning committee for each of these three, and that all other services will be along the same lines. The Boundary Committee has not yet decided how many

Councillors there will be for the new Council, I personally hope it will be much fewer than 130, as I think this number is unmanageable for making decisions. However we shall be told what their recommendation is in July and everyone will have the opportunity to put their views forward.

The customer contact centres are being developed, and there will be one in Camelford. I am trying to ensure that the current NCDC out



and about service will continue, and increase its role to visit even more villages than it presently covers. This will provide information and advice about all the Council services. The Community Networks are starting to look quite exciting, and I hope will offer opportunities for local priorities to be addressed. I am working with the officers of the One Cornwall Team to develop these networks, and I want them to have a reasonable budget to spend in the area.

As an Executive we are committed to making sure that the services provided by the new authority are at least as good, or even better,

than those offered now. We also have to ensure that they continue to work over the change-over period. At North Cornwall we are trying to keep all the staff informed about the changes, as it is a very difficult time for them, especially with developments happening all the time.

On a more local note it is lovely to see the harbour area gradually losing all its machinery and workers, and moving forward. I know it has been a difficult time and would like to thank all those who have been so patient in the last few years. There have been many problems to overcome but they have mostly been dealt with without too many harsh words, and I hope all the work done serves its purpose.

*Janey Comber  
NCDC Councillor*

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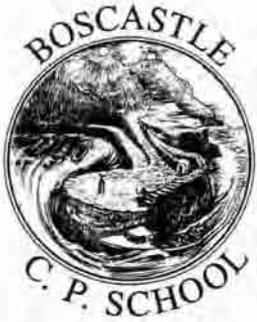
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**Boscastle Champions!**  
 Congratulations to our 17 cross county runners who entered the Deli farm run and to our first five finishers who made up our team;  
 Ben Nicholls – 5th  
 Jade Bowker – 2nd girl and 6th overall  
 Holly Fanshawe – 3rd girl and 8th overall  
 Tom Showell – 17th  
 Finn Larratt- 19th

The course was 2.5 miles of tracks, mud, puddles, fields, puddles, hills, valleys and more puddles and yes we jumped in most of them! Thanks to our coach Janet Lathom - all of our children were fit for the race and crossed the finish line smiling having had great fun!



*The Deli Farm runners with their certificates and medals*

As always the Summer Term seems to be flashing past! Class 2 have just returned from a very exciting trip to Cotehele where they dressed as Tudors and entertained the tourists with their dance on the lawn and then had a puncture in the mini bus on the way home! (Probably the most exciting part of the day!) Class 1 have discovered that being a pirate is not all it's cracked up to be

..... a very cold, wet and bedraggle bunch trooped back to school having had to cut their beach visit short due to inclement weather. They all looked like they had been made to walk the plank! However dry clothes and a good film to watch in the afternoon revived spirits! Class 3 have been studying Ancient Egyptians this term and Mrs Haden and I decided to mummify our class! The children made mummy masks of each other's faces using Mod Roc (similar to plaster of paris). The process

involved covering their faces with cling film and then laying strips of mod roc on top, smoothing it to copy the contours of their faces. And (the best bit from our point of view)lying still for 15 minutes to let it set! Finally we painted them – they looked fantastic!

Each week on a Friday we have a special assembly. It is organised and run by the children and is a time when children celebrate their achievements, share their home news and discuss 'school issues'! A few weeks ago Jess, Sophie,



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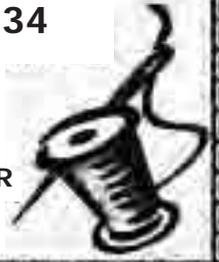
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*sponsored skippers, Jess, Sophie, Ella and Holly*

Ella and Holly announced that they wanted to organise a sponsored skip in aid of the Precious Lives appeal and to raise money for playtime games equipment. The girls wrote a letter to inform the parents of the event, designed a sponsor form and ran the event on the day. Ella even managed to skip and talk to Radio Cornwall at the same time! The skip lasted 1 hour with children organised into groups of three skipping in turn for one minute at a time (the staff were in a group of 9, but we did skip for the whole hour!) Since the skip the girls have been busy sorting and counting the money and taking it to the Post Office with Janet. So far they have raised over £500. Well done girls!

Finally Lauren Henderson and Holly Fanshawe read us some writing describing their favourite places. We enjoyed it and thought we'd share it with you.

*Sarah Duffy Headteacher*

### **The Guinea Pig Shed by Lauren Henderson**

As I enter the guinea pig shed, the familiar sound of squeaking awaits me. Sizing up the occupants of the hutches, I decide to start from the top down today. Messy hay is soon replaced by clean, white sawdust.

After emptying the food tub into the last hutch, I straighten up and listen with pleasure as they scoff their lot. My mind begins to wander and I stare around taking in my surroundings.

To start with, in front of me is my tower of hutches, with all the guinea pigs could ever want slipping down the sides. Leaning on the luxurious window with its thick, white painted wood, my attention averts further afield. Tom's run is to my right, with the door on my left, the cool evening air on my cheek.

Peering through the gloom from the outside of the window (by now I am outside) I spot

Terry looking - as usual - like a fluffball with beady eyes, indignant at being shut in his hutch. I walk carefully down the wooden steps, the usual scuttles and scrapes floating to my ears. Entering the house, the aroma of tea wafts towards me.



### **My Favourite Place by Holly Fanshawe**

I step through the loose and ragged gate to the pony yard and all my feelings are released, I get a little whinny from Kezzy and Cassie, as they are hoping for some more grass. I just can't resist it I wander, merrily through to the field, I can just feel the happiness returning to my body, the ponies come trotting over when they realise is happening. I move electric fence just an inch so mum won't realise, their heads are straight down, I won't be hearing anymore from them for a while.

When I return to the yard I get a waft of the fresh and strange smell of a dung heap, swiftly the sweet

and nourishing smell of a bale of hay steps in. A day that was really getting at my feelings has just turned into an extraordinarily pleasing one. All around me I can see a paradise of green except to the north which in the far distance I can see the auburn, red sky catching the glittering and pure blue sea.

I can just hear the vague squealing like a pig in pain I wander to the source of the sound and see both of the ponies with their heads on each other's backs, they must have nibbled each other. When they come towards me I give them both a pat it gives me the soft and fluffy feeling of pony hair. Out of the corner of my eye I can see an inquisitive cow wanting to join in the fun. I shut my eyes to feel the full glory but suddenly the ponies get all excited. What is it I ask them they look back at me with those beady eyes, trying to say Jess has arrived, when I see her I suddenly remember I haven't tacked up, but I'm sure Jess won't mind.

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# Pickwick Papers

I suppose we never see ourselves as others see us and if we need proof of that remark it can surely be found by looking at a recent photograph and then hear ourselves exclaim "do I really look like that?" So when we are described as abdominally obese, as I was recently, we are somewhat affronted, to say the very least! Once over the shock of being told we are fat, albeit that it is politely described in medical terms as obese, we really feel that we have to do something about it. So what to do; a club like Slimmers' World seemed the answer but they do like you to go and be weighed in every week, not always convenient, can be embarrassing since it attracts mainly women who, it seems, don't mind discussing such personal things as

abdominal obesity and my abdominal obesity was not something that I was quite ready to throw out for general discussion just yet and of course we do have to pay to belong to the club. Next stop the internet, the answer to all of life's many problems, where frankly I found too much information, lots of

**my abdominal obesity was not something that I was quite ready to throw out for general discussion**

sites, and I mean millions, all telling you how to lose weight and the more one read the more confusing it became - low sugar, low salt, low fat, and hundreds of low everything else followed by the dreaded word "exercise" and for someone whose main form of exercise is getting up in the morning "exercise"

is something of a dirty word - haven't I reached the age when we take life easy - isn't exercise at my age some form of Russian roulette?

The sensible answer seemed to be to experiment a little by simply altering ones current eating habits which had, after all, been the culprit in the first place - too much of the wrong stuff in the weekly shop and at the local eatery. A trawl of the supermarket shelves, coupled with the knowledge that we all need to take less fat, less salt, less sugar, and one might say less food seemed central to my new eating regime! Oh! I forgot to mention the five-a-day that we are constantly being told about and which, by the way, refers to fruit and vegetables and not fags or glasses of el vino! Food producers do go to a lot of time and trouble to label their products with a list of ingredients and nutrition information - makes

shopping scientifically interesting, not to say challenging - and armed with a magnifying glass I scan the typical values for 100 grams of the product trying to look as if I understand what

**I really do think there should be night school classes in understanding nutrition values on packaged products because thus far it's all Greek to me.**

it is all about; I really do think there should be night school classes in understanding nutrition values on packaged products because thus far it's all Greek to me. Well I am down to skimmed milk, two eggs a week( I cheat and buy extra large ones as they make a bigger omelette) brown bread, whole wheat breakfast cereal, low fat spread.....

*continued on next page*

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## Pickwick

### Papers

*continued*

Yes I do know what you are thinking - boring, boring, boring and where on earth are the Mars bars!! The latter, two left from a pack of six, are still in the cupboard and have been sitting there for at least a month, which is something of a record in our house. After all has been said and done I am actually getting used to what I suppose is eating sensibly and the weight loss so far is over a stone in five weeks, and that actually has made me feel good about myself - if only because I can now get into my dinner jacket and trousers without the feeling that I am being crucified - whether it is has done anything for my blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels will all be revealed in the next blood test - exciting isn't it?

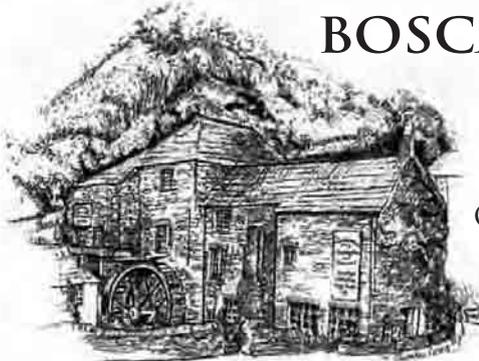
If nothing else I have part cracked the national obesity problem and the answer seems to lie in the price of goods today. I have found that "healthy"

**"healthy" products ... like good quality fruit, wholegrain breads, lean meat, fish and things marked "low fat" are all more expensive**

products which includes things like good quality fruit, wholegrain breads, lean meat, fish and things marked "low fat" are all more expensive than their counterparts - and so if we are having to make a little money go a long way then pie and chips is infinitely cheaper than poached salmon and a green salad, just as satisfying but not so healthy in the long run.

*Bon Appétit!*

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# The Switchover to Digital (part 2)

Following on from my article in the last issue - *Switchover to Digital* - one of our eagle-eyed (though I should say 'eared') editorial team heard a programme on her car radio dealing with the *Digital Switchover*. The information they provided was to do with *Freesat*, an alternative to *Sky* but with a similar arrangement of satellite dish and box. Don't confuse this with *Freeview* which is a digital terrestrial television service (TV through your aerial).

The name *Freesat* is confusing since it is not entirely 'Free'... what is!! It is a one-off payment arrangement, offering - 'over 80 digital TV and radio channels; subscription free; no contract, no subscription, just a one-off payment; available to almost every home in the UK'. The 'almost everywhere' may arouse doubts in your mind, but as long as the installers can position your dish with 'a clear line of site to the sky in the South East' your will receive the satellite signal.

The service is provided 'by the nation's two most popular broadcasters' who form a 'not-for-profit company'. However, standard installation costs are around £80 and one of *Freesat's* web pages quote

the cost of the digital box as around £50 or £120 for the HD digital box. You can only purchase an 'Integrated Digital TV' after the 'launch' since they are not yet available. The box and dish can be purchased at leading retailers such as Argos, Comet, Curry's and John Lewis as well as some independent retailers, eg Woolacotts, who can arrange installation. If you already have a 'dish' you may be able to use it but 'should check in-store for details' and if you have more than one television you will need a box for each television set.

The May 'update' on *Freesat's* web page states that 'due to the very high demand there is a shortage of *Freesat* HD boxes in the shops at the moment. Some retailers will allow you to reserve HD boxes'.

So you pays your money and you takes your choice, as the saying goes!! And please, if you hear of any other way of *Switching to Digital*, don't ring me, I'll ring you!!!

GQ

See also:

[www.freesat.co.uk/](http://www.freesat.co.uk/)  
[www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/technology/2008/05/freesat\\_will\\_it\\_fly\\_or\\_flop.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/technology/2008/05/freesat_will_it_fly_or_flop.html)

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# If you ever go across the sea to Ireland....

I have recently returned from a visit to Ireland to see my latest grand-daughter, Martha, who will soon be five months old. Martha has, fittingly, a good head of red hair, and eyebrows which look like ginger Velcro in the sunshine: quite delicious. The Irish people that I met were, without exception, friendly, hospitable and charming. It did, however, take me a little time to get used to some of the expressions they use in their day to day talking. Naïvely, I assumed that whenever someone said: 'I'm after doing such and such a thing,' such as, 'I'm after visiting my uncle,' that they were on the point of doing whatever it was, by analogy, I suppose with the idea of a dog going after a bone, that is chasing it and hoping to acquire it shortly. No such thing! Quite sensibly, 'I'm after visiting my uncle' means 'I have just been to see my uncle and have, in fact, finished visiting him.' Makes sense, I suppose. If you're after doing something, then the something has got to be before you are, hasn't it? Come on, wake up at the back.

I found some of the road signs most endearing. At the start of a long one way street, as you might expect, is a sign saying 'No Entry'. So far, so good. Never underestimate the powers of anticipation and prediction of your Irish sign providers. About thirty yards down the same one way street is a second sign with the legend, 'Wrong Way. Turn Back'. You see, they just knew you would

fail to notice the first sign and so, out of the kindness of their hearts, have had the foresight to jog the old memory.

As luck would have it, pretty well all the signs are written in the two languages, both English and Gaelic. If you though for a moment that English spelling was in any way tricky, think again and spare a moment's sympathetic thought for any passing student of Gaelic who may have a touch of dyslexia. Taoiseach! Prime Minister seems a doddle by comparison. Although now I come to think of it, 'Wrong Way. Turn Back' was only in English. What are they trying to say? Do they think you would not bother to obey the sign if it was in Gaelic? Along one residential street where the house numbers are displayed, the sign reads rather enigmatically '27 to 1, and 54'. Presumably poor old 54 got separated from his numerical mates and had to get added on at a randomly convenient point, next to number 1. This must make a rookie postman's first day on the job a trying time indeed.

I was staying on Great Island in Cork Harbour just outside the town of Cobh, pronounced Cove. All right, all right. Cobh, in Queen Victoria's day, was called Queenstown and had the honour to be the last port from which the Titanic set sail. It has a massive natural harbour and frequently welcomes gigantic cruise liners carrying, it seems, countless friendly

Americans who are on their way Lisbon, Portugal, or Barcelona, Spain and Venice, Italy. The centre of the town itself is dominated by a fine cathedral of almost fairytale proportions with lofty towers, and inside filled with the finest carvings and stained glass windows. Martha was christened here during my last visit, wearing, for the occasion, my grandfather's christening robe, a beautiful garment about 120 old, which consisted of a robe in fine cotton and a cotton overdress covered in dainty pintucks, both dresses about 3 feet long, so, for a small child she took up a lot of room. Five children were being baptised at the time, four boys and Martha. 'Ladies first!' declared the priest, so Martha was the first one to receive the sacrament. I have never heard such a courteous offer in all the christenings I have attended in this country. The christening tea, with 'just a few friends and relatives', between 70 and 80 people, was riotous! It took 4 hours to clear away the debris the following morning! The hangover took a little longer. Just for clarity, I should add the party took place at home, and not in the cathedral itself.

Mind you, the Irish do not necessarily have the last word on splendid notices and signs. On a ferry not too far from here only today, I saw a wide open door bearing the legend 'Keep Closed at all Times'. This does remind me of the injunction on some cupboard doors to 'Keep Locked at all Times'. How on earth can you get anything out of the cupboard if the door is . . . ., you know what I mean. The same ferry had a notice about emergency procedures. Quite right, too. In case the phrase 'Emergency Instructions will be broadcast' is too terse for you, the notice read 'Instructions of 'what to do' in the emergency will be broadcast'. The finest notice on the same ferry, however, read 'Safety Clothing Donning Instructions'. So, get your clothing donned, you landlubbers! I must say I can recommend the use of this particular verb when getting the children ready for school of a morning. 'Come along, children! Don your garments hastily! Is this not so much more effective than a plaintive, 'Will you get dressed?'

AR

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In the WI calendar April marks the beginning of a new, varied and interesting programme of events. This year's programme, like many before, has got underway with the Cornwall Federation's "Spring Countdown", where representatives from all WI's in Cornwall meet, at the Hall for Cornwall, to discuss vitally important issues. This year the speaker, the Rt. Hon. Ann Widdicombe MP, talked about her life as a politician, author and broadcaster. It was said that she is exactly as you expect her to be, knowledgeable, witty and very down to earth.

Gardens, a favourite topic for many of the Boscastle members, featured early in this year's programme. Margaret Shillaber a member of Camelford WI gave an amusing and evocative account of a visit to Highgrove House, in Gloucestershire, the family home of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, which left



*Sue Viner and Jil Clark at Caerhays*

everyone with a strong desire to make a visit of their own.

Members also enjoyed a super spring outing to Caerhays Gardens. The mature gardens are amassed with colourful, magnolias, camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas, including magnificent specimen trees and a picturesque view from the castle out to sea. Speaking of which, some intrepid members, including the president, thought it would be a good idea to take a paddle.

County House, Chy Noweth an Conteth, was the venue for "a day with spring in mind". An event where George Kestell gave an excellent, idiot's

guide to pruning and Edna Trudgeon's floral demonstration using spring flowers was enjoyed by all.

Moving from flora to forna, Tintagel WI were the hosts of the spring group meeting. The speaker, Wendy Winstanly of Parfell Animal Sanctuary, talked about a rather unusual animal, the sloth. As is the custom, the ladies of Tintagel WI concluded the evening with some light-hearted entertainment.

With summer holidays fast approaching, have you ever wondered who to turn to in the event of a holiday illness or accident? At the May meeting, Boscastle WI were given an enlightening and amusing insight into the life of a Thompson Holiday's Hospital Representative, Miss Penny Praille, who had worked on the Greek islands as an interpreter to assist English-speaking holidaymaker's who required medical assistance. Her work included sitting in on operations and examinations, in order to

translate and liaise between doctors and patients and also assisting and supporting concerned relatives.

Also at the May meeting, members were required to discuss, digest and vote on the National Federation of Women's Institute's resolution

shortlist for 2008. The first resolution "urges HM Government to urge the EU to ban bottom trawling which causes catastrophic loss of marine life". It's hard to imagine open nets the size of a rugby field scraping the bottom of the ocean, destroying sponges, coral and all manner of fish species in their path, this sadly, is a global issue. The call for a bottom ban on trawling is deeply controversial. There is an inherent tension between those environmental organisations which believe that bottom trawling should be banned and is completely unsustainable, those environmental organisations which feel that an outright ban is unnecessary but very careful management is crucial and industry, which does not support a ban and believes that it is doing enough to achieve sustainability. A lot to digest!

The second resolution: "In view of the adverse effect on families of the imprisonment of people

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*continued*

with severe mental health problems, this meeting urges HM Government to provide treatment and therapy in a more appropriate and secure residential environment”, was an equally difficult subject to discuss. Many prisoners are suffering from mental disorders such as depression and schizophrenia and some older prisoners suffer dementia. It is therefore felt that in being isolated from families prison can exacerbate their problems. Prisons are often bleak and overcrowded and can cause confusion to some. It is suggested that prison actually leads to an acute worsening of mental health problems. After hearing the case study of a WI member’s son, who had gained a first degree in physics and at the age of 22, whilst studying for a PhD in astrophysics, suffered a nervous breakdown. Thirteen years later he died by suicide in prison. The case study suggests there were no systems in place to give him the appropriate care.

With two very emotive subjects member’s felt neither situation could be resolved overnight, but the vote was almost unanimous in favour of supporting both resolutions.

Fund-raising is very much part of village life and the recent coffee morning was again a great success. Many thanks go to Janice and John Dunning for the use of their home.

Some will know that a few members of Boscastle WI rather enjoy a tasty meal out and the early summer luncheon this year was held at The Bossiney House Hotel, Tintagel. Need I say that the WI food tasters were again in attendance!

In the hope that this summer will be warm and sunny, the members are looking forward to pleasant afternoons visiting gardens, enjoying a relaxing chat with a good cup of tea and of course sampling some delicious cake.

If you are interested in becoming a member, or would like to come along as a visitor, meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Village Hall, 7.30 pm March to September and 2.00 pm October to February. You will be made very welcome. MS

### **WI Recipe**

#### **Chocolate Crunch**

##### **Ingredients:**

- 1 small packet biscuits (digestive or rich tea)
- 4 ozs of butter
- 1 dsp sugar
- 4 dsp drinking chocolate powder
- 1 tbsp golden syrup
- 4 ozs cooking chocolate

##### **Method:**

Place biscuits in a plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin. Melt butter, sugar, chocolate powder and syrup in a pan. Add biscuit crumbs and mix well. Press mixture into 8” square greased tin. Put into fridge to cool. Melt cooking chocolate and spread on top. When cold mark into squares and dust with icing sugar.



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# NOEL ERSKINE WARD

## FEB 9<sup>TH</sup> 1925 - MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup> 2008



Noel was born in Shillong, Assam, N.W. India. His grandfather had been governor of the Province, and his father was a successful tea planter and breeder of race horses, greatly interested in horticulture. His mother was a fine pianist often persuaded to give concerts. Noel would sit close to her piano listening, fascinated: the sounds resonated all his life, seeding his abiding love of good music. At the spacious house, Red Gables, built for his parents, he enjoyed the freedom of its huge garden and orchards, fringed by jungle, against the magnificent backdrop of the distant Himalayan snow peaks. An only child, he was much pampered by the house staff whose language he spoke fluently before English, who and introduced him to another

abiding favourite, Indian food, along with a life-long empathy with India. He accompanied his parents in their energetic social life, but at the age of nine the idyll ended and like so many 'colonial' children Noel was taken 'home' to start his education in England. Characteristically, he adapted well. Excellent teaching at his prep school in Horsham strengthened his interest in music, encouraged his delight in mathematics and offered a new love, - cricket! He became captain of the school team! Furthermore, he started learning to dance, fortunately for his later years in Cornwall!

Because of the lengthy voyage to India, most of the holidays had to be spent with friends or family, including sailing and joining the musical family of his

large, warm Aunty Flo and Uncle Claude. They loved visiting the local theatres in Harrogate, often retrieving a performing celebrity to join in an impromptu musical 'eat, drink and be merry till the small hours'. He had one memorable holiday back to India, his mother having had a very strong premonition that war was imminent. During this visit, Noel was taken up river on a fishing trip by family friends, one of whom was Jim Corbett, well-known author and exponent of jungle craft, who made a considerable impact on the young Noel.

It was on this trip he had his first spiritual encounter, with a sadhu, a holy man, who told Noel that there was going to be a great war. 'And, I hope,' said the sadhu, 'you will not have to kill anyone. You will probably forget our conversation, but after the war you will remember the things of which we have spoken.' An absolutely accurate prediction! Back to school and an exciting journey by sea lasting five weeks, but he was not to

see his parents again for five years!

Then Marlborough where, to the horror of his music teacher, he started a jazz band. Noel played sax or drums, whichever was required. It was during this time, rationing being in force, that he earned the soubriquet 'Prune', as he finished off all the prunes all the other boys wouldn't eat, - 46, I was told! One wonders if their lasting effect on his visage much later lead Ivor Bright of the Cobweb to dub him 'Auld Wrinkly'! However, they must have done him some good as he matriculated with five credits and a distinction in Mathematics!

The war beckoned, offering the opportunity to train as officers in the Indian Army. Noel's original choice had been the Navy, but he realized the Indian Army would provide him with the best chance to see his parents again before the war ended. He was accepted on an Officer Training Course, drilled by a fearsome ex RSM of the Welsh Guards: 'That's not a Piccadilly tart

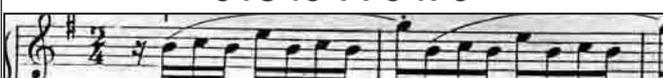


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you're holding, that's a RIFLE! Smack it hard!

Back to India in May 1943 after three months vigorous training, he was allowed to visit his parents on compassionate leave, as his mother was ill. After a three week stay his father drove him down to the foothills and he witnessed unforgettably the appalling Bengal famine of 1943, station platforms littered with the emaciated bodies of the dead and dying. Sadly, when he bade farewell to his father it turned out to be the last time they spent together.

One of only eight candidates selected for the demanding role of an officer in the Gurkhas and training in desert warfare, with typical Army logic, after fourteen months training, he was posted off to train in jungle warfare because Jim Corbett had mentioned to General Lentaigne that Noel was a natural jungli! He ended his war in the Burma front, bidding a sad farewell to his beloved Gurkhas, but feeling a deep desire to remain in India. By chance he met an old family friend in Calcutta who suggested he followed his father's footsteps and join the Tea Estates in Assam. Problem solved! Noel enjoyed his successful career as a manager 'in tea', inheriting his father's love of horticulture, and accumulated a lot of practical know-how, making many Indian friends, both as colleagues and within the workforce. 'The Planters' lifestyle often led to rather unsettled relationships and Noel decided to return to England permanently in



*Noel in his power boat racing days*

1964, a decision he deeply regretted later. After an unhappy start in Kent, still 'in tea', through his interest in power boat racing, Noel came ultimately to Rock in 1972, making many friends, joining Westerly Boats full time as a marine engineer.

Noel married, firstly, Jane, in India, with whom he had two sons, John and Graeme. They divorced after their return to England. He married secondly, Jacqui, and was step father to her two children, Bruce and Susie, coming to the South West with them in 1972.

Noel was first introduced to me by our mutual friend, Lyn Maton. We started socializing shortly before he set off to fulfil a long-nurtured ambition, to go back to his beloved Himalayas and walk to Annapurna base camp. In 1987 he went alone with his Nepali guide, Teki, spending more time with the

Nepalis, eating their food and enjoying their cheery company. For him, the trip had all the significance of a pilgrimage, a release, amidst the great mountains he had gazed on in his childhood. Afterwards, he put together his slides, with appropriate music, to make a delightful travelogue. Soon after his great adventure, he moved into Penrowan with me and soon became part of

Boscastle. When he retired he very much enjoyed his work as treasurer of the Village Hall and the Blowhole, helping with events at Playgroup and School, particularly when his camera could be at the ready.

We shared great times together with family and friends, and enjoyed many interests in common, above all dancing to good jazz! Give us a good rhythm and we'd be away to the floor, where I frequently had to steer his more expansive moves away from our fellow dancers! Noel liked to have LOTS OF SPACE! We were lucky to have been able to indulge ourselves on the dance floor for so long!

*Joan Cork*

The family thank all their kind friends who sent cards and helped in so many ways and especially for their very generous donations to the Gurhka Welfare Trust in his memory. Over £700 was raised - enough to maintain a Gurhka pensioner for 3 years.

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# Distinguished Trees of the Parish

Mike Simmonds introduces us to another of the broad leaved trees that grow locally

In our Parish we are blessed with having considerable areas of broadleaved woodland compared with much of North Cornwall. In celebration of the fact I hope to highlight certain trees that I find remarkable during my wanderings and look into their ecology, history and value to us in the landscape.

## The Horse Chestnut -

### *Aesculus hippocastanum*

Like many a countryside and wildlife lover, each spring and early summer, I keenly look out for what flora and fauna is amongst the first to emerge. In terms of local trees it is hard not to notice that one of the earliest to come into full leaf in the Parish is the horse chestnut. Whilst the other common broadleaves of the parish – oak, ash, lime, beech, hazel and sycamore – lag behind with budding out, there are horse chestnut trees which all of a sudden seem to have huge and full crowns of those familiar large hand-shaped leaves and tall white flower candles.

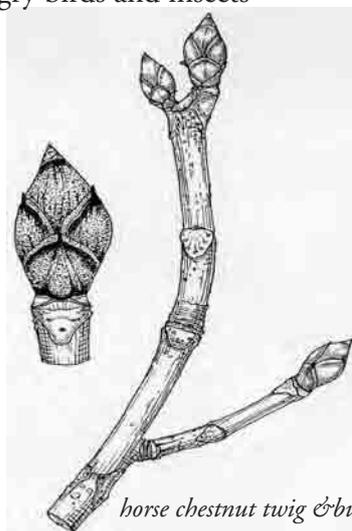
### The distinguishing features:

**Leaves:** large, compound leaves, each of the 5 – 7 leaflets resembling that of the sweet chestnut. This accounts for it being classed in the same family. In winter the dropping leaves leave a horse-shoe shaped scar on the twigs complete with small swellings which look like nail heads, this may account for the trees name



horse chestnut leaf

**Buds:** unmistakable in winter/early spring with large, brown, sticky buds on very stout twigs. The sticky covering being a deterrent to hungry birds and insects



horse chestnut twig & buds

**Flowers:** tall white spiked flowers, in April and May amassed like candles on a Christmas tree. The flowers are asymmetric in design and have downward curving stamens acting as landing points for nectar-seeking bees. Orange patches on each flower darken once fertilised thus telling the bee to look elsewhere for a fresh flower. The flowers also have an insect-attracting pattern visible in ultra-violet light

**Fruits:** After the petals have fallen the ovary at the base expands rapidly to form the familiar spiky green husk that houses the horse chestnuts or 'conkers'. Another reason for its name may be that in its native Turkey the nuts were given to horses for food and medicine

**Bark:** reddish brown to dark grey brown, breaking into long plates with rising scaly ends

**Shape:** huge tall dome, branching at narrow angles. Weak timber combined with heavy branches in full leaf often lead to collapsing and shedding of limbs

**Uses:** The tree has been to date grown solely for ornament, the timber having little commercial value. However it is light, works easily and does not splinter and has had some history of being used for toy-making and for artificial limbs. Its absorbent properties also caused it to be used for making fruit racks and storage trays as this kept fruit dry and fresh.



candle-like flowers

### Growing from seed

Collect the 'conkers' in the autumn and float in water and use the ones that sink; you can sow immediately in a pot or seedbed of moist, sandy soil protecting from predators and frost through the winter

### Champion tree

The largest specimen of *hippocastanum* in the UK is in Screens Wood, West Sussex and stands at 39 metres tall but relatively slender at 144cms trunk thickness

### History, culture & folklore

The horse chestnut tree is an introduced species to our islands being brought from the Balkans in southern Europe in 1616. It was

# Distinguished Trees of the Parish

*continued*

first raised in northern Europe by botanist Charles de l'Ecluse in 1576 using seed from Constantinople. Thirty-six years on there are records of it being part of collections in London.

Now, of course, the tree is common across the UK countryside, naturalised in our woodlands and hedgerows – a symbol of village peacefulness and a superb shade tree – it has had considerable impact on our culture.

However it was slow to escape from cultivation and were originally regarded as mysteriously romantic and powerful trees.

An early record refers to a group of three planted near Wribbenhall Church near Kidderminster which were reputed to be on the site of a burial ground for black plague victims (c. 1660's)

The majority were planted as ornamentals in private estates at first, and later in public parks, streets of spa towns, churchyards, Oxford colleges on village greens and the like. The word 'Chestnut' appears no less than 56 times in the London A-Z of street names.



*row of horse chestnut trees*

Famously, Capability Brown planted 4800 in the Tottenham Park estate and Sir Christopher Wren created a mile long carriage avenue for William III at Bushy Park, Hampton Court in 1699. After Queen Victoria opened Hampton Court to the public in 1838, a tradition began of vast numbers of people, of all classes, gathering to admire the trees in flower one Sunday in mid-May. It was known as 'Chestnut Sunday', and despite the custom diminishing in the 1920's and through the war period, a group of enthusiasts revived it in Jubilee Year, 1977.

## Conkers

The nuts of the tree – its autumn fruits – are perhaps its most well known feature. They provide the raw material for what is still the most widely played childrens game using plants.

Remarkably the first record of playing 'conkers' is from the Isle of Wight in 1848. This date seems strangely late given that references to similar games appear from earlier records e.g. cobnut fights in the seventeenth century (using hazel nuts); 'conquerors' – an eighteenth century boys game doing battle with snail shells. However it seems likely

*continued on page 28*

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# Distinguished Trees of the Parish

continued from page 27



Horse chestnut on New Road

that children at that time did not have easy access to chestnut trees that were mostly planted on private estates where there was massive landscape rearrangement ongoing and draconian game-keeping in place! Later on, as planting took place in public, urban areas, there was much more opportunity for conker collecting.

There are some regional differences in how the game developed but the basic rules remain the same and the array of techniques used to increase your chances of honing a 'champion' are well known amongst school children.

Baking, pickling, deep-freezing and microwaving – all methods of artificial hardening – will be familiar to almost all of us!

### Some terminology!

**Cheggies; Obbylonkers** –

alternative names for conkers

**Cheeser or Cheese-cutter** – flat conker one of a pair from a single case

**Water baby** – an under-ripe, softer conker

**Yearsie** – a shrivelled and toughened conker stored in the dark for a year

**A One-er** – a game winning conker

**A two-er** – a conker that goes on to win again against a first timer

**A three-er** – you get the picture!

**A twelver** – e.g if a twoer overcomes a tenner!

In 1952 the BBC staged a conker contest where the winner emerged as a 7,351-er!!

Ashton in Northhants has hosted a World Conker Championship since the mid 60's on the second Sunday of October. Now a major event it can attract crowds of over 4000 and as such is typically eccentric England!

**Some uses of conkers:** - moth deterrent, shampoos and shower gels, a Victorian recipe for flour, their starch was turned to acetone for use in the World Wars, a natural remedy for sprains and bruising (which was why the Turks historically fed them to horses). The Forestry Commission plan to grow plantations of horse chestnut to supplement this use for the pharmaceutical industry

### Police Authority Liaison Meeting

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See also [www.dcpa.police.uk](http://www.dcpa.police.uk)

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# “TALES FROM THE POTTING SHED”

“It’s been a funny old day”. The words of Ronnie Barker from the sitcom *Open all Hours*. So often I have found myself quoting those same words. Probably caused by either, the inability to work as hard and as long as I once did, or by what seems to be the nations favourite topic of conversation, “the Weather”!

Certainly there have been a few strange hiccoughs weatherise in recent months. In early March the barometer plummeted to 950mb and Storm force winds of up to 80mph created havoc. Our own garden fared pretty well, the main casualty, “*acacia longifolia*” being bent virtually horizontal. The constant rocking almost uprooted it, so prompt action to securely stake, lash and heel into the ground was needed. (So far, so good). Many other local gardens did not fair so well, some suffered considerable damage, including spring flowers being completely flattened, tree braches down and damage to sheds and greenhouses.

One expects April showers, but most people were a bit put out to say the least with snow showers on 6th April. Should we expect pack ice in the harbour next year? The poor plants, no wonder they get confused.

## **Spring flowers**

However, I have been lucky enough to visit two special spring events this year, which, in spite of Mother Nature’s somewhat fickle behaviour, tested the dedication and skill of the growers. One was the Bocconoc spring show, which plays host to local growers and some from further a field, displaying stunning prize-winning camellias and bright cheery daffodils. Flowers you most definitely associate with Cornwall. The other was a trip to the Keukenhof gardens in Holland, being the largest bulb flower park in the world, covering 32 hectares. Each of the 7 million bulbs, supplied by a group

of bulb growers, is planted by hand. The theme of the gardens is changed every year and this year the theme was “China – the Olympic Games 2008”. I have always had a hankering to visit the gardens and even though the early daffodils were over, the vast displays of tulip and heavily perfumed hyacinth presented a kaleidoscope of colour which more than made up. Set in mature parkland, with spectacular fountains and calming ponds I definitely recommend a visit. Suffice to say I was not disappointed.

The first May bank holiday was a bit of a shock, extremely warm temperatures in the 20’s had me reaching for the sun block and shorts, (not a pretty sight), to spend 3 days in the hot sun stitching together netting for the fruit cage. No way are the birds going to get their sharp little beaks into my lovely soft fruit.

## **Airing cupboard**

In the potting shed and greenhouse the spells of cold weather has played havoc with germination of peas and runner beans. In desperation I resorted to “the airing cupboard”, sowing beans and peas in 3” pots of damp compost under a polythene bag. It did the trick, germination within 3 days. I think even “the head gardener” was impressed.

The flower garden has done pretty well considering the changeable weather conditions. Most of the flowering shrubs, viburnum, wigeila, lilac etc., have been a mass of flower. As I write this azaleas and magnolia are in bloom. Luckily, due to the orientation of the garden, we enjoy the flowers later than most, when the fear of frosts has all but gone. The colours range from the fragrant varieties of white, yellow and orange, to deeper pinks and purples. One other variety of plant doing particularly well so far this year has been the hostas, ranging from the little bright three-inch leaved variety, through to the strapping foot

long leaved varieties. So far there has been very little slug and snail damage. (Fingers are firmly crossed). The first of the roses, a fragrant white hybrid tea known as Pascal is also in bloom, with other varieties budding up well. In order to avoid “checking” from the cold wind and rain the decision to delay putting out hanging baskets and tubs was made. Hopefully this action will be rewarded with plenty of bloom later.

## **Visitors**

Wild life in the garden continues to surprise. On the recent warm sunny days one or two slow worms have been seen basking on the paths. The badger continues to visit his favourite area of the garden, to leave rather a big hole, unlike a cat it is not filled in after use though, if you know what I mean. Our friendly mole is leaving fresh evidence of his whereabouts, with mounds of soil wherever the mood takes him. There was one somewhat unwelcome visitor to the summerhouse that needed to be evicted, a rather big hornet looking for a home.

Despite all, everything seems to be greening up and looking good, I hope your garden is too.

*MS*

## **POP-IN**

The Pop-In is open every Monday morning from 9.30 am - 11 am

Call in to the Boscastle Community Centre for a cup of tea or coffee, a chat, to meet friends old and new and to catch up on news.

Everyone is welcome. The more the merrier!

# Correspondence

Dear All

As a long term resident of Boscastle, I write as a villager who wishes to support local business. If I wish to purchase a newspaper or another item from any shop, is it reasonable to expect me to pay 90p for parking my car as has happened today? I wanted to purchase a card for someone very sick in hospital. To shop before 8.30 am is a reprehensible & inconvenient, restriction.

Can a scheme not be devised enabling residents to display a pass on their cars for 30 minutes? Anyone abusing this scheme could and should be heavily penalised.

This concession would aid local shops and allow residents the privilege that any well managed community should be afforded.

Yours in anticipation  
*Arthur Bradley*

*Editor's comment: The Parish Council has been asking for something similar for at least ten years. Every request has met with stubborn resistance*

*from NCDC and no good reason has ever been given. Earlier this year the excuse given was that it would set a precedence in spite of the fact that this system has been operating in Tintagel since the regeneration scheme was carried out there.*

Dear Blowhole.

So Mr. Pickwick is 65 and seems to think the end is nigh. At 85 I can assure him, that barring accidents which can happen to anyone, he hasn't started yet. I would agree that things change.

There comes a time when you find you are somehow discounted, later you even become invisible. Attempts to contribute are ignored, which leaves you wondering if you have spoken out of turn or said something insulting. Your memories go so far back that young people don't know what you are talking about. Values become totally different. Even war takes on a new aspect. Casualties come one at a time now not in hundreds - that is unless you are a foreign civilian.

As far as pensions go, Mr. Pickwick can hang on a while, when he is 80 he will receive an extra 25p a week! How they can send a letter telling you about it I cannot imagine. It must cost them many times as much just to send it. I suppose it is a reminder of the days when 25p, or five bob (shillings in old money) as it was when introduced, would actually buy several pints of beer or a packet of fags. I can only assume it has been going on so long the various governments who have handed it out haven't the nerve to either stop it or increase it in line with inflation over the years in case they draw attention to their meanness. Even so there is something rather insulting about it, perhaps they believe we are so gaga that we think it is still worth its original value, or, perhaps, are unable to work out the decimal difference. I have news for them - I'm not. On the other hand, the Basic Pension is so low adding 25p isn't out of line. Whatever, it's a farce.

If it will cheer him up a little I can tell him that at his age my wife and I travelled Western Europe for several years with a car and caravan. Also, we had a two month trip to visit our son who was working in the South Pacific during which time at the age of 70 I was invited to fly the Twin Otter aircraft

we were flying in on a trip between islands, much to the alarm of the other passengers and the rest of my family. Something I did with relish even though it was 46 years since I had flown with the RAF. I landed it too! Bragging again I'm afraid. Health and Safety in this country would have had a fit.

So gather ye rose buds while ye may. Life goes on until it stops. Let's hope it is suddenly.

To close, perhaps I can quote a short poem written by the American poet the late Ogden Nash. It is called 'Old Men'.

People expect old men to die.

They do not really mourn old men.

Old men are different. People look

With eyes that wonder when...

People watch with unshocked eyes;

But old men know when an old man dies.

*Take care*

*Richard Swale*

*Mr Pickwick would like to say that in his article, he was trying to highlight was the plight of the pensioner in a declining economy, amongst other things - not just the fact that he was to be 65. That occasion had merely brought home to him the problems of an aging community.*

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## Can you help?

To whoever borrowed my shopping bags from the Methodist Schoolroom, would they kindly return them to the Schoolroom.

One bag was new, made of jute and had 'OCEAN' written right across with a few little fishes; the other bag was a Marks and Spencers bag, navy blue.

I would like them back, please. I filled the bags full of goods for the Chapel coffee morning and the empty bags were put in the Schoolroom for me to collect, but when I went to get them they were not there.

*Lillian Marshall,  
01840 250811*

I was a visitor to Boscastle on 3rd May 2008. We travelled down from Norfolk & toured all around Somerset, Devon and then Cornwall, staying at Trewethett Farm, in our caravan.

This was a moment in time I had waited for, to pay my respects to a village which had risen from the carnage of the 2004 flood. We walked from Trewethett, a very nice walk along the coastal path, and the village came into view. What a picture, in the sunshine.

I took several photographs, as I had during our tour, including pictures at Dawlish, Cockington, Brixham (where we were lucky enough to run

into Katie Humble, from Springwatch); we also visited The Lizard.

We first visited Cornwall in 1964 as teenagers (44 years ago); this was to be a nostalgic trip back, revisiting, we would never be able to return again.

We arrived in the village about 12.45. I took some photographs of the village shops, the last photograph I took was of my husband looking at the river by the bridge. We purchased a Cornish Pasty, sat on the wall outside the Witchcraft Museum for a while, and realised the camera had gone!!! We had been in Boscastle for less than an hour!

I reported this situation to all the shops we had walked by, the visitor centre, newsagent, Camelford police. What do I do now?

The point I am getting to is, I lost a £250 camera, more importantly it had some very cherished photographs on the memory card. I am devastated this camera/memory card has gone missing/been stolen; I would pay a substantial reward for the return of the memory card, never mind the camera.

*Thank you  
Betty Prior*

*If you can help with the recovery, the Blowhole can put you in contact with Mrs Prior.*

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# Boscastle Discovered

*Gloria Quinlan describes her impressions on first visiting Boscastle*

Caught in a fish trap. I was caught and bound to Boscastle as we turned the bend in the road and drove into a woven fish trap - made from a green tree tunnel. From both sides of the road the canopy of branches reached out to each other and, as it funnelled down into the village, there was no escape for me. This was a holiday chosen at random, though there are some souls who may deny it was 'random' choice. Could a guiding hand have directed us to Boscastle?

It was a time of year when the countryside lay before us enamelled with spring flowers, like some Fabergé jewelled objet d'art. The weather too, hid nothing from us - brilliant sunshine one day, stormy wind and rain another. It didn't matter; you accept all aspects of mood in one you love. My bold admission in the cottage's 'visitors book' was not lightly given - 'I am in love'.

Our holiday cottage looked down onto the harbour, with its wheeling kaleidoscope of mewling gulls. Our well-loved dog (gone now) sat on the wide window sill watching the moving picture below: - boats going out fishing; visitors with ice creams donning pixie hats to have their picture taken in an upturned boat; a May Day fete with busy stalls along both sides of the grassy river bank with a 'try your steadiness of hand' competition whose bell pinged cheerily all day; ducks 'heads down, tails up, Dabbling free'.

There were the walks; all crammed into our short week. Valency valley with its bluebell haze and crozier ferns keeping pace with the stream which, like a shy child peeping from her mother's skirt, kept appearing and disappearing amongst the trees; the pungent, starchy, wild garlic - overwhelming more subtle scents; a plaintive Robin's song following us

up to St Julliot's church then - no time to waste - the climb up to Minster church; 'everywhere birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting'. There was the rugged coastal path to Penally Hill and Pentargon - the distant, daunting height of Beeny cliffs left for some other time. Tintagel by breath-snatching scenic route where linnets in the blackthorn bushes sang 'Can't see me' then back by tedious tarmac road. The sea was one day Mediterranean blue, another dark bottle green.

The weather smiled its sunny smile on our walks and on the butter yellow gorse with its tantalisingly familiar scent (was it vanilla or something else?) which mingled with the salty sea breeze. Snippets of azure and violet sky were scattered amongst the grass, like gems, company for the pale lemon primroses, bright pink campion and polished buttercups.

Every sight was new

and exciting. There was the Blowhole - an ancient water cannon to be watched and watched as we tried to judge which wave would be *the one*; fresh home grown lettuce and beans for sale outside a village cottage - the 'honesty' jam jar proving a trust in humanity which was surprising, though reassuring. The pastoral patchwork spoke of a slower pace of life than that which we had left behind. Here was a feeling of peace and contentment, a sense of home coming. Here was a haven which left me yearning to return - and reader- I did.

Footnote: The quotations used are from *Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame. This year is the 100 celebration of the publication of 'Wind in the Willows'. The magazine for the 'Wild Life Trust for Cornwall' states that 'the first drafts of the story of *Wind in the Willows* were written in Cornwall'. Perhaps he visited Valency Valley. GQ



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# To The Pure, All Things Are Pure.....?

*Peter Steege muses on a landfill waste that was a useful commodity in earlier times:*

From my house, with its unrivalled view of the “overflow car park”, I am now able to query things which I have never thought about before.

Recently, I spotted an NCDC official busily emptying the dog dung container, and I wondered what happened to it. I discovered that all this is taken away and dumped in a landfill site.

What a waste!!

In 19th century London, this ‘commodity’ would have been eagerly sought after by the ‘Pure’-finders and as a consequence the streets of the capital were notable for the near total absence of this hazard.

The ‘Pure’-finders were just one of the numerous street trades of London which existed in the 19th century and which were so carefully described by Henry Mayhew

and published in 1851 as ‘Mayhew’s London – being selections from London’s labour and the London poor’.

The Pure-finders originated in about the 1820/30’s and at that time the trade was carried on solely by women who were called ‘bunters’ (‘bunting’ takes on a whole new meaning doesn’t it?) However the bunters also collected rags and bones and it wasn’t until the middle of the century that ‘pure-finding’ became lucrative enough to attract men and to become a street trade in its own right.

The price per bucket of ‘pure’ varied from about 8d to 10d (3p to 4p) to 1s to 1s 2d (5p – 6p) – depending on the quality!! ( I won’t go into what distinguished the differing grades of ‘pure’). It meant that the average ‘pure-finder’ was able to earn about 7s 6d (35p) per week which in those days was a reasonable weekly



*Henry Mayhew*

wage Some, who had a contract with a kennels, might earn as much as 10-15s (50-75p) per week. There were about 200 to 300 people engaged solely in this trade

So why was this trade able to flourish? It certainly had nothing to do with keeping the streets clean. The reason was that ‘pure’ had become a vital part of the leather tanning process. (I won’t go into

that either!) Apparently there were at that time about 30 tanneries in the East End – employing 300 to 500 tanners. The smell must have been appalling and I can remember as a child, Kingston-on-Thames used to smell dreadful because of the tannery.

They couldn’t still have been using ‘pure’ in the 1930’s could they?

*PS*



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**Boscastle  
&  
Crackington  
Gig Club**

**Torrent Returns**

Almost a year to the day from her last outing from Boscastle we are pleased to report that Torrent returned home on the evening of Wednesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2008.

It has been a long year, and our return has been eagerly awaited by everyone in the club, particularly by our newer members, many of whom have not yet had the marvellous experience of rowing out from the harbour. Now, with the slipway nearing completion and thus quicker and easier launching, we will be regularly rowing from the harbour (weather & tides permitting) on training nights and Friday's 'club night'. So, if you are interested in joining the club, why not come along on a Friday and give it a try. You will find lots of

familiar faces eager to show you the ropes, as there are now over 20 club members from the immediate Boscastle area.

**Solid progress at the World Championships 2008**

A record number of 40 members and supporters made the trip to the Isles of Scilly. We were rewarded with glorious weather and high quality performances by all our main teams, clearly establishing Boscastle and Crackington as a serious 'contender' for future honours. Our Men's A team recorded a highly competitive 49<sup>th</sup> place

out of 111 teams, missing out on silverware by the narrowest of margins in the final heat, the Ladies' A stormed into 55<sup>th</sup> place from 106 (compared with 81<sup>st</sup> last year) and the Ladies' Vets, a highly commendable 25<sup>th</sup> out of 38.

Our 'B' teams fared less well, mainly due to the fact that Rival sprung a leak, with the additional gallons of water creating a serious handicap. Nevertheless everyone enjoyed it, especially our racing 'debutants', including Boscastle residents John Maughan, Katie Horton and Fay Foster.

As always, the social programmewas equal to the rowing with one highlight

being the club visit to The Old Town Inn, now under the management of Sue and Alan Champion. An enjoyable evening of singing and drinking followed, with Sue and Alan sending their regards to all their friends in the village.

The Boscastle & Crackington Gig Club continues to look for new members and supporters, so if you are interested visit the website at [www.boscastleclub.org.uk](http://www.boscastleclub.org.uk) for further information.

Gig Club Membership fees for 2008 are::  
Rowing £40  
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*the Ladies A team at the World Championships*

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# Harbourmasters News

Fred Siford retired as harbourmaster January of this year following many years of service. Fred continues as a member of the Fisherman's Association. The records show that Fred was appointed as Treasurer to the Association back in 1982 and he was elected as Harbourmaster in April 1990. The Chairman and all members of the Association have warmly thanked Fred for his care and attention and all his time and effort put in over the years in administering the harbour and we wish him well.

I was elected in Fred's place in January. After a difficult and at times stormy winter we are now all looking forward to the 2008 season. This year saw the construction of the new lower bridge and by the time this article appears both slipways will be again in action and boats in the water. At Boscastle the lobster season gets started in April and continues right through until the autumn. We have a number of commercial licensed vessels and several other part timers who use the harbour mainly for pleasure. I have been contacted by the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Authority & been given an information card as to the minimum fish and shell fish sizes permitted and details have been displayed at the harbour.

The latter part of last season saw some good bass fishing with Doctor Garrod recording some spectacular results and Graham King even mentioned to me that he caught a sizeable bass towing a trace from his canoe when paddling at Blackapits. Mackerel were plentiful and sighting of basking shark and dolphin frequent. I had a bottle nose dolphin follow my boat all one afternoon to the great pleasure of the children on board. I was also lucky to see puffins early in the year and the usual array of other seabirds and seals. The seal colony up at Beeny continues to be very strong in numbers.

The storms in March caused some damage to the outer breakwater and to the quay road but such is life on the North Coast. We now look forward to a calmer spell and so that all the harbour users can enjoy and make use of the facilities. The waiting list for permits to moor boats remains very long and the process is extremely slow as existing members only very rarely give up their moorings. Use of the slipways for launching is however open to everybody on payment of either a small daily or monthly fee and there is a limited amount of space for some small trailer launched boats on the harbourside. Arrangements are in hand so that payment can be made at the visitor centre.

*Chris Key, Harbourmaster*

# Ask Auntie Ann

Dear Auntie Ann  
I became distressed. I was distraught. When I told a friend that I was beside myself, he thought I'd become schizophrenic. He said, 'Surely you should get some help?' I told him not to call me Surely.  
He said, 'You should see a doctor.'  
I said, 'What? Both of us?'

A Nonymous  
*Dear A Nonymous, Be comforted by a tale of a friend of mine who visited the doctor and said, 'I keep thinking I'm a moth'. The doctor said, 'You don't need to see me, you need to see a psychiatrist.'*  
*The friend replied, 'I know, but I was passing and your light was on.'*  
Auntie Sigmund.

Dear Auntie Ann  
Over the last few weeks, I and several of the usual suspects in Toptown, have spotted Humpty Dumpty sitting on the new wall by the post office, the fat idiot balancing precariously on the shiny new, yet cunningly antique, brickwork. I know I shouldn't have pushed him off and caused such a Great Fall and now I've got all the King's horses, all of the them, after me. And all of the King's men. They tried to put him together again, but they couldn't, and now they're after me. Please help!  
Another Nonymous  
*Dear Another*  
*Don't worry. Haven't you read about all the cuts the poor military are forced to undergo so we can have some new Quangos to Develop Blue Sky Thinking?. There won't be enough King's horses or King's men to spare to come after you; You're safe!*  
Love AA



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# La pequeña Inglaterra or La P'tite Angleterre part 2

*In a short break from duties as parish councillor and Blowhole contributor Chris Rodda spent a few weeks wandering around a group of small mountain villages in Andalusia.*

The Finance Director of the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao was recently sacked for appropriating half a billion euros from the Museum's funds. He has promised to repay the debt, and his former employers are *considering* legal action. Spaniards seem remarkably tolerant of financial shenanigans by high officials, After all was not Spain, until recently, a favourite hideaway for criminals? "A sunny place for shady characters, "as Graham Greene (I think) once described the place. (And AA Insurance report that more Rolex Oysters, at £1000-plus, get lost on the Costas than were ever manufactured!)

Given the laid-back demeanour of its citizens it is easy to forget Spain's

troubled history. It was only in 1975 that Franco died (of a stroke, after falling through a deck chair.), and for the two months he lingered in a coma his deputies were paralysed, terrified of making decisions in case he recovered. In 1936, Spain's most famous poet and playwright, Federico Garcia Lorca, was shot without trial for opposing his regime. A recent book, *Between Two Fires*, by David Baird, has revived bitter memories of the struggle in Andalusia between communist guerilla forces and the government that continued until the 1950s and included the murders of young insurgents. Their families still live in the region.

Even Spain's two premier football teams, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, supported opposing factions in the civil war. The recent victory by the Barcelona side was rewarded by the sound of gunfire and



*an Andalusian village*

explosions in the streets, an echo of recent enmity.

Within the past weeks local newspapers have reported two stories. One, of a widow in remote village who was stoned by neighbors, outraged that she had taken up with another man in less than a year's approved period of mourning. Another mentions a community where a mob of several hundred tried to lynch members of a family, who must have been a particular nuisance, as three people were shot with rifles before police broke up the riot.

About a million Brits have taken up permanent residence in Spain, attracted by sunshine and cheap living. Over the years they have penetrated ten or fifteen miles inland, the pioneers buying small farms or fincas in the mountains without water or electricity.

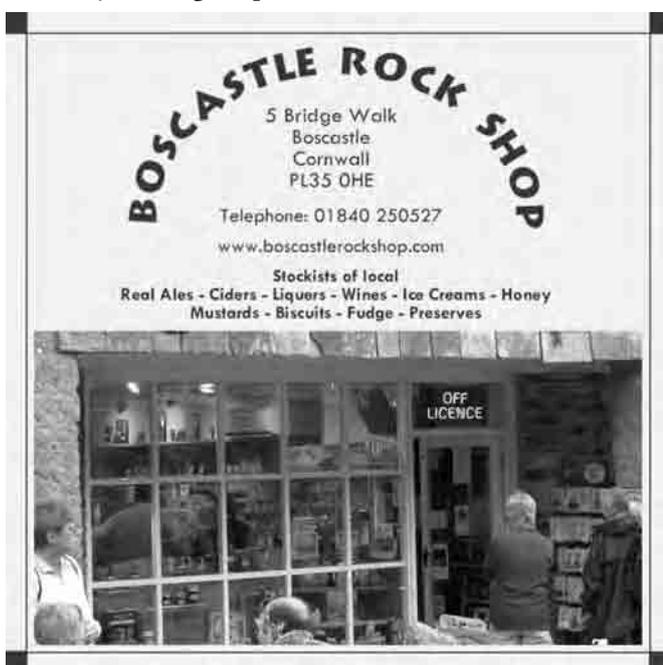
Few seem to regret the decision to settle, and now there are plenty of shops selling marmite and pot noodles. The animal charities and boot markets are exclusively Brit, as

are a number of local newspapers. These are more like parish magazines really, but along with second hand cars and plumbers, advertise a startling variety of discreet escort services. A couple of milder ones: Abbie, who is "willing to pleasure you" (80 euros, 45



minutes) contrasted with a "sweet Latin lady, no hurry, 100 euros."

The mountain villages are whitewashed, with disconcertingly narrow streets so steep they should provide rope ladders. Narrow tall houses, one room on each floor, roof terraces. Most Spanish retain a finca, so town gardens are rare.



# La pequeña Inglaterra...continued

Businesses open at ten, close at two, re-open between five and eight. Social life is public, families eating late at night in the town square. In the clubs traditional Spanish music starts in the early hours. Here one sees much older men, retaining their skill and brio, respond

The church bells toll a single note for a quarter of an hour, each time mourning the passing of one of its congregation. At midnight a hearse arrives and the pall bearers struggle to carry the coffin up precipitous streets, and manouvre it through a low front door. It rests in the



*wasting a precious commodity*

to the passion of sweet young women, instinctively matching steps through intricate flamenco rhythms. Returning home at dawn the youngsters still appear as pretty and as fresh as flowers on a Sunday morning.

The month of May is when children celebrate the Roman Catholic rite of Confirmation. Seven year old girls appear in white frilly dresses, small boys in white sailor suits or as miniature naval officers. Their proud fathers favour black shirts, colorful ties and tan suits. Country relatives ride in on horseback. Mighty explosions rock the town as rockets explode high above, and the band bravely fights its way through a Sousa march. The mountain villages have cyber cafes and Mercedes taxis, but still revel in the older traditions of noise and colour.

entrance parlour where relatives can pay their respects.

The mountains are still shrouded in low cloud but in a couple of months the temperature will hit the high 30s. The threat of drought has already caused the mayor to post warning notices, an 800 euro fine for anyone wasting water. Southern Spain, traditionally dry and arid, is now densely populated with golf courses and swimming pools, and is diverting rivers away from central farming areas to meet tourist demands.

The slump in the building industry has put pressure on the government to increase taxes and reign back on social security costs and there are other signs that

Spain is coming to terms with the end of "the nice decade" (as Mervyn King puts it). The local mayor has been replaced by a former parish priest, renowned for his integrity. The Brits are slightly less comfortably off, many being forced to take part time jobs to eke out pensions reduced by the euro's strength. It is helping to reduce their little Englander attitude,

forever cut off from neighbours. Most I spoke to were very conscious of the unhesitating goodwill of their Spanish and have begun, at last, to respond in kind.

And yes, I know I go on about it ...but it is a relief to be able to light up in a restaurant. The majority of Brits seem to smoke. One reason they emigrated?

CR

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*County Councillor  
Glenton Brown writes:*  
**Cornwall's Waste**

I attended a meeting recently at County Hall to have an update on the developments and present situation and forecast for the future, regards Cornwall's waste.

I share the following points with you, which may prove to be of interest to you.

There is something like 179,000 tonnes of household waste collected each year in Cornwall which works out something like 577 kilos per person per annum, or 1250 kilos per household per annum!! This figure is actually increasing by 1.7% per annum. The good news on recycling is that that is increasing around 2% and so we are now recycling and composting 31%, and 69% going to land fill. It is difficult to imagine that 4 of the 6 district authorities hand out something like 4,000,000 plastic bags per annum for the use of its Council Tax payers. This no doubt highlights how seriously we should take this subject and even as an authority there is an in house issue to be considered.

Many of you already know that SITA, a French Company, won the contract to build the

new incinerator in the St. Dennis area. The County Council were open to any form of technology which had a proven record, and in the case of SITA there were sites which could have been visited and studied and to learn how it has been operating in recent years, which should be to the benefit to the residents of Cornwall. The new incinerator plant is capable of putting through something like 240,000 tonnes per annum and will provide heat for 2 of Imerys' plants and produce energy into the National Grid. There will be something like 11,000 tonnes of ash etc which is carefully graded so that metals are taken out and any poisonous elements go up country to a sealed site and some ash is treated for road work construction.

There are many improvements being carried out and some new sites developed for recycling or transferring of waste and there is in strategic positions some Refuse Transfer Stations (RTS) in large buildings dotted around the County to be loaded and transported in bigger loads to the incinerator or land fill as the case may be, and this should save on average 400 miles per day in the overall operations.

A recent survey showed 88% of people were satisfied on the recycling programme in Cornwall and once the new plant is up and running there could be staff somewhere in the region of 248.

Regards recycling efforts, this is resulting in £1,250,000 being saved per annum. Landfill tax is a massive burden on the County and runs at £32 per tonne going up £8 per tonne next year. This is costing County £9,000,000 a year, and will be more if it weren't for a good voucher deal Cornwall County Council had with Hampshire County Council. The moral must surely be the quicker the incinerator plant is up and running

the less Council Tax money will have to be spent in this direction.

The issue of emissions is one which is of great concern and the figure reported to us that this would be less than 1% per annum, and one big plant with a high stack is to be preferred to smaller ones.

Once the plant is up and running the general public will be able to visit this site and have conducted tours around it!!

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## MP Dan Rogerson writes:



There has been good progress on getting better sewage treatment for the outfalls at Bossiney and Tintagel, since the Planning Inspectorate has found in favour of residents' contention that the two settlements should be treated as one and accorded a more sophisticated sewage treatment system. South West Water sought three separate low-level treatment systems – not much more than glorified sieves – for Boscastle, Bosinney and Tintagel which is not acceptable. I've written to Chris Loughlin, the Chief Executive at South West Water to request that he now takes account of the clear view expressed by local people that a single, high quality sewage treatment system for all three villages would make sense. I'll keep you informed on his response.

After our strong campaign to have the village phonebox reinstated, I now find that 54 callboxes across North Cornwall are on a BT hitlist for removal. I'm pleased to say the Boscastle box is safe (perhaps BT

executives know not to cross this village again!). However, I expect strength of feeling expressed here last year to be reflected elsewhere. I'll be seeking to build on the successful campaign we mounted for Boscastle and use the same methods (petitions etc) and contacts for other villages. To name a few, call boxes are under threat at Otterham, Trewassa, Tremail and Bossiney; we will have to make a case for each of them if they are to be saved – on the basis of rurality, mobile phone signal quality and usage. As I have made clear to BT, though, a rural call box can hardly cost much to keep going; presumably they don't pay line rental to themselves, and maintenance costs must be very low, particularly as many of them don't even take cash nowadays. The whole programme seems to constitute pointless penny pinching – but we will fight on!

Dan Rogerson MP  
Church Stile, Market Street, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 8AT  
contact@danrogerson.org  
01566 777123

# Boscastle's Lime Kilns

Anne Knight describes an almost forgotten part of Boscastle's industrial history:

Limekilns are some of the most common industrial remains found in Britain and possibly because of this they have not always been given the protection they deserve. They have been taken for granted until often it is too late to save them. Dotted around the coast of Cornwall are their remains in various stages of decay. Large, solid structures that were so important to us in the past. Limekilns were needed to produce the lime that was used for improving the fertility of land, for mortar in the construction of buildings, for disinfectant, as a plaster both inside and outside buildings, as a lime wash for the house, privvy, pigsty and shippen. In a more dramatic way lime was used to dispose of bodies, especially when disease and contagion were rife. This way of disposing of bodies was also used in



*drawing showing the Limekiln that formerly stood on the western side of the harbour*

prisons and, in the Royal Dockyard at Devonport, there was a lime pit for this purpose beside the gallows when I worked there in the 1960s.

Boscastle had its own limekilns. One has stood in Boscastle for more than 200 years. There were, at one time, two both situated in Quaytown. One on either side of the river. One remains today beside the Visitor Centre. It is positioned close to both the landing point

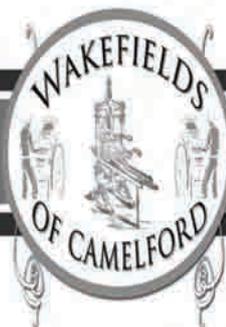
for its raw materials, lime and culm, and to the roads leading inland where it was to be used. The Forrabury Tithe map of 1842 shows it as disused. Although it has had some recent alterations to its top, it is otherwise in original condition. It has the protection of a Grade II listed structure and was built in the late 1700s of slatestone rubble and sparstone. It is of square plan and built into the steeply sloping bank. There are round arched openings on the eastern and western sides and the top was accessed by a sloping ramp to the rear to enable it to be loaded from the top.

The raw material for the limekiln was limestone in its various forms. In order to get lime from limestone it needed to be burnt. Now for the science lesson. The chemical formula for limestone or calcium carbonate is  $\text{CaCO}_3$ . 56% of limestone is calcium oxide,  $\text{CaO}$ , and the rest is carbon dioxide gas,  $\text{CaO}$ . If you heat the limestone you can drive off the carbon dioxide and you are left with the calcium oxide/quicklime.

$\text{CaCO}_3$  [limestone] + heat =  $\text{CO}_2$  [carbon dioxide] +  $\text{CaO}$  [quicklime]

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# Boscastle's Lime Kilns

*continues*

In order to burn the limestone a variety of different fuels could be used wood, coal, turf, faggots and peat but records show that large amounts of culm, a type of anthracite, were imported through the harbour. This was the standard fuel for many Cornish limekilns. To light the kiln from cold the limeburner would use an easily combustible starter like timber or faggots. He would follow this with a layer of culm, much as you would in your Rayburn or Aga. Then would follow a layer of limestone, a layer of culm, a layer of limestone and so on until the kiln was full. The ratio of lime to culm would depend on the efficiency of the kiln, the skill of the limeburner and the prevailing wind which gave the draught. About five times the weight of limestone to culm was used. When the kiln was filled it was said the 'pot was charged'. The wood at the bottom of the kiln was lit and when it was fully alight the doors were closed and sealed to allow a controlled burn throughout the kiln. The kiln was emptied from

the bottom and the process started again at the top as it was topped up to replace what had been removed at the bottom.

Two kilns in Quaytown, the second where the control room for the sewage pumping station is now located, meant much smoke and fumes in the valley bottom. The fumes were noxious and although the top of the kiln was a warm place to socialise and sometimes to sleep it could prove fatal. The burning limestone gave off non-toxic carbon dioxide but the burning culm would give off poisonous carbon monoxide, known today as the silent killer.

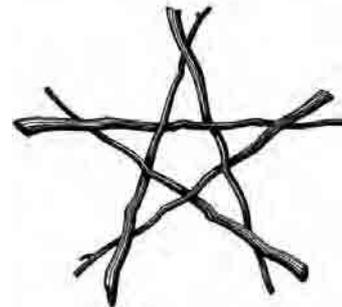
The Manor brought in families with limeburning skills and carters to carry the burnt lime to its destinations. Members of the Pickard family came to Boscastle to operate the limekiln and Henry Hockin and his wife Elizabeth came to Boscastle in the 1870s to dry lime with a horse and cart for the merchant Hawker. Lime was also exported through the harbour and

it was stored in Vivian's Manure Store where the current National Trust shop is. To my mind it is important to try to remember this part of Boscastle's industrial past. It is so difficult to see it now in the manicured, tidy, unrepresentative area in which it now sits. You can no longer look and envisage the past or see what made the people of Boscastle what they are today.



*Simon Mills at the Old Lime Kiln*

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# Martin's Sporting Briefs



• We start this edition with the sad news of the loss of two of Boscastle's more loyal supporters. Sam Hancock and Brian 'Tacker' Wickett were regular supporters at many of Boscastle's home matches and will both be sadly missed.

Tacker had for many years been an active committee member, doing many jobs around the football field and he even had a few seasons as 2<sup>nd</sup> team linesman.

Sam and his tractor were also a familiar sight at the football field which until recently was one he rented to the club so that football could continue in Boscastle.

• Dave Ferrett scooped many awards in the Camelford & District Billiards league. He

defeated Rob Cook and Mike Bolt to win the 'Scratch Individual' and 'Handicapped Individual' Championships.

To cap a wonderful season, Dave, along with his long-time partner, Mike Burnard, won the 'Scratch League' team event.

• Both Boscastle 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> teams, under the leadership of Richard Pethick and Guy Lane de Courtin respectively, managed to do enough in their last few games to avoid the threat of relegation. Although both teams struggled throughout the season, the good thing is that a lot of budding youngsters are now coming to fruition so the future looks a lot more promising.

• One of Boscastle's more loyal players, Graham Heal, who is approaching the twilight of his career, was a proud man the other day when he was able to play in the same team as his two sons, now that the youngest has reached the

age of 16, which is now a legal requirement.

• Hedley Venning was lucky enough to be in Russia to watch the Champions League final between Manchester United and Chelsea. The following day, not only did he take in some of the sights but also he found the time to do an interview dot Radio Cornwall from the middle of Red Square.

• Boscastle & Crackington Gig Club enjoyed another successful trip to the Isles of Scilly for the World Gig Championships. Now that she has passed 50, Hazel now qualifies for the Veteran's race and her team came 25 out of 38.

• Boscastle's pool players enjoyed some success in the Longcross League, mainly due to the talents of Johnny Brewer. He helped his team to second in the league and then managed to reach 3 finals, sadly finishing runner-up in all of them.

In the Tuesday night Tintagel league, it was a good season for Sharon Pethick who won the Ladies singles title and was runner-up in the mixed pairs with ... you've guessed it ... Johnny Brewer.

• In the snooker league, Boscastle 'A' finished in mid-table in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division with Johnny

Brewer and Antony Biscoombe winning the men's pairs title.

After a good start to the season, the 'B' team were in with a chance of winning some silverware but a poor run of results towards the end of the season saw them fall out of contention, of both the league and cup. Robin Haddy, Roger Perry and Stephen Wickett were the mainstays of the team, winning most of their matches but the other squad members, Anthony Brewer, Gavin Jones, Sam Abbott and 'Camelot' Kenny only managed 3 wins between them. Perhaps Councillor Brewer's time would be better used putting up more shelves for all his son's trophies.

In the next edition there will be reports on:

• How Emma's face lit up when 20 male footballers entered the Cobweb the other night.

• How Martin & James Seldon took the wrong turning when leaving Launceston and ended up near Bideford.

• Why Bisco likes dancing with a 'Pole'.

• Why Vanessa Seldon bought a 51" fireplace to fit in a 48" gap.

• And why, despite his Christian upbringing, Boscastle football club's Geoff Uglow saw red for the first time in his career.

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# Pete's Peeps at the Past



## 21 Mar 1851 Padstow in 1851

The town is without sewerage, very damp & at times ill-supplied with water, a large number of houses are without conveniences, and there are pig styes in the most crowded back premises. Some of the houses are built under a steep hillside or cliff, others are in reach of occasional flood tides, and others are built upon the margin of a mill leat, the waters being contaminated with sewage. (From the report from the Board of Health.)

## 27 Jan 1854 The new coastguard

Capt. Sheringham of the Royal Navy, assembled the fishermen & pilots on St. Mawes Quay & addressed them on the advantages & necessity of their

joining the new coast-guard force, proposed by the government to raise 10,000 men to be drilled in gunnery, 28 days a year. The government had considered urgent measures to protect our shore during the impending contest (against Russia). [All able-bodied coastguards in Cornwall were due to be drafted into the R.N. & this new force was intended to provide replacements. 6 of the regular coastguards at Mevagissey joined the Baltic Fleet.]

## 19 Dec 1851 Spaniards at Mousehole

Colonies of Spaniards have settled in Mounts' Bay & Tor Bay and have intermingled with the surrounding population. A colony in Mousehole is said to have been there for 300 years, another account

is that they were from the defeated Spanish Armada & remained ever since.

## 2 Sept 1853 Spanning Saltash Passage

The preparatory work for the Railway Bridge across the Tamar at Saltash has begun under Mr. C.J. Mare of Blackwall. The once quiet spot is now a hive of activity with smithies and workshops erected & steam machinery of every description. A slip has been built for the construction of cylinders to be sunk in the river for raising the centre pieces of the bridge. The work is of great interest and when completed will be a big attraction to the area.

## 29 July 1853 A boy's wicked act

James Hart, a little boy was found guilty of placing stones on the railway line. The judge said it was a wicked act & he could have killed 20 people or more, if there had been he could have been transported for

life or tried for murder. He sentenced the boy to 6 months & hard labour.

## 7 July 1854 A Cornishman in the Baltic

A letter was received from John Short of Camelford on the H.M.S. Nile, fighting the Russians in the Baltic. There was good feeling between the British & French, but severe cold weather & perpetual day light. They were 18 miles from a Russian fort near some islands desolate & uninhabited, a woodland area covered with small fir trees.

## 8 Sept 1854 Home from Australia

A very heavy mail from Melbourne, Geelong & Port Philip of 54 bags of letters, newspapers etc was landed at Penzance from the ship "Essex" 114 days out of Melbourne. 20 passengers to the area were landed all well supplied with the needful, one lucky man having 1 cwt. of pure gold in his possession.

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19 <sup>th</sup> July: Cyrus	13 <sup>th</sup> Sept: Festive Road
26 <sup>th</sup> July: Billy Mac	20 <sup>th</sup> Sept: Atlantic Highway

# Post Office Closures

What is the collective noun for a group of people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing? In case you're stuck - I'll provide the answer at the end.

I was in Paris recently on holiday and while there made a visit to the French National Postal Museum. As you'd expect it's well laid out, highly instructive and displays a strong sense of pride in the national institution - La Poste. Among the earliest of the displays in the many rooms there is a large cabinet devoted to early Great Britain. You're probably aware that the first postage stamps were a British invention masterminded by Rowland Hill in 1840. His monumental reform of the postal service enabled virtually everyone to afford the one penny cost of sending a letter to friends anywhere in the United Kingdom.

The French were generous in acknowledging the debt of the world to the British for their pioneering work. It was a strange coincidence that later that day in my hotel room I caught a piece on Sky news dealing with the proposed rationalisation - to you or me closure - of multiple British Post Offices. For those old enough to remember the destruction of our rail service - Alistair Darling

has been described as 'The Beeching of the Post Office Network'. We live in an era where the innate value of some of our institutions seems totally lost on those elected to govern us. Let's briefly compare British activities with those of the French administration. The latter have stated that French Post Offices have an important explicit social function and greatly assist in connecting the people to the government. They thus feel an obligation to maintain a presence in all areas- particularly disadvantaged and rural ones. This philosophy has driven them in the opposite direction to the UK - namely diversification of the facilities available in French Post Offices.

You could be forgiven if you thought that the dismemberment of our Post Office network has been due to an unfortunate accident or by oversight - nothing is further from the truth. Over a period of years progressive governments, Conservative and Labour, have made them increasingly unprofitable by moving key activities - payment of pensions, TV licences etcetera - to banks or elsewhere. The end result has been "progressive unsustainability". It seems to have taken so little time to achieve these ends. The Post Office was separated

from Royal Mail some 20 years ago and further key functions were displaced 5 years ago. Rural poverty is an increasing reality and the recommendation that country dwellers get on a bus to access an office is rarely a possibility. Given the escalating cost of fuel for private transport the problem looms ever larger.

Many elderly people came to rely on Post Offices not just for their counter services but for the social networking and support they provided. They will be left isolated and in limbo. It was not unusual for the absence of a familiar face in the shop to trigger concerns for their welfare and on occasion led to the discovery of a senior citizen unwell and unable to summon assistance. To advise this very group of people that they should now go online is a non-starter since the vast

majority neither own, have access to or knowledge of computers. What a pity that plans for the future of our rural Post Offices did not include internet availability for the clients and a friendly post master or mistress who could enable them to access it.

It seems to me a grave disservice that many of these people spent the years 1939 to 1945 defending the liberty of this country and are now rewarded with services that fail to take their needs and circumstances into account. Exasperating when you consider that those implementing the changes come from a generation whose greatest discomfiture has been that of getting an essay in on time while on a Political Science degree course .....

Oh yes, I nearly forgot, the answer to the question. The Government.

*Dr Chris Jarvis*

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