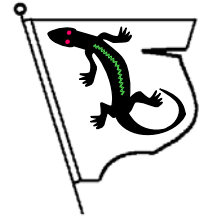


Lizard Peninsula Heritage Trust

Friends of the Lizard 1997-2006



Newsletter No 35 April 2008

Registered Charity No 1092934

Events for Members:

This year, for the first time, we have planned our events' timetable in co-ordination with a selection of events organised by the National Trust and the Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area group. Both organisations have agreed and welcomed the inclusion of their events in our programme. A full list of the events during the membership year (ie April 2008 – March 2009) is included with this Newsletter. Meanwhile, here are the headlines, only, of events for April, May and June. Full details are on the separate sheet:

Friday 4 April 2008, 10.30am-12.30pm:

Helford VMCA event – Seashore safari at Helford Passage.

Sunday 20 April 2008, 6.00am:

Helford VMCA event – Dawn Chorus beside the Helford River.

Friday 25 April 2008, 10am-1pm:

National Trust event - Chynalls Point & Black Head.

Saturday 26 April 2008, 7-9.30am:

National Trust event - Penrose Dawn Chorus Walk.

Sunday 11 May 2008, 10am-12noon:

National Trust event - Spring Flowers at Kynance.

Sunday 11 May 2008, 2.30-4.30pm:

Helford VMCA event – Springtime Flowers, Woods & Water.

Sunday 18 May 2008, 10am-12.30pm:

National Trust event - Springtime Birds on the Lizard.

Monday 26 May 2008, 11.30am:

LPHT event – Botanical walk with Dr Paul Gainey, Coverack to Lowland Point.

Sunday 1 June 2008, 10am-12.30pm:

National Trust event - Wildlife Walk featuring Cornish Choughs.

Friday 6 June 2008, 10.30am-3pm:

National Trust event - Pasties on the Quay.

Sunday 8 June 2008, 2-4.30pm:

National Trust event - Predannack Springtime Walk.

Tuesday 24 June 2008, 2.30pm:

LPHT event – Tours of the gardens, archaeological remains & museum at Poldowrian, Coverack.

Sunday 29 June 2008, 1.30-4.00pm:

Helford VMCA event – Helford Conservation Cruise.

Subscriptions are due now !!

Our membership year runs from April to the end of March and so annual subscriptions are now due for payment. Please send your cheque, together with the attached membership renewal form, to the Membership Secretary at the address shown. Alternatively please complete the Standing Order Form and return this in the same way.

Thank you to those members who have signed up for Gift Aid, which significantly increases our income, without any extra cost to our Members. We have been pleased with the response, but very many more could sign the form that will allow us to claim the extra from the Inland Revenue.

If anybody else wishes to do so, please contact the Treasurer Geoff Blackman on 01326 241722.

Our new promotional leaflet:

Enclosed with this Newsletter are two copies of our new promotional leaflet, with accompanying membership details. We hope that members will pass at least one of these copies to a friend or relative, not necessarily living on the Lizard, who might be interesting in joining us. Please contact a member of the Executive Committee (see back page) if you would like more copies, or if you can recommend appropriate sites for their display and to take away.

Merthen Manor Social:



Photo: John Grierson

Jamie Oliver, eat your heart out. Get back to your school dinners. And while you are about it, Gordon can go to his kitchen from the infernal regions, the hairy bikers can get on their bikes, and Nigella can ... go on a diet! None of the above celeb chefs could have bettered the feast that awaited the lucky fourteen guests who ate at Merthen Manor on Friday 25 January. We enjoyed the most delicious food that could be found in Cornwall, all cooked with love and care by Mary Vyvyan, and served with friendly aplomb by Tony Vyvyan and several staff - a.k.a. some of the guests.

Mary and Tony have a large family, including a growing number of grandchildren, so Mary says she is used to cooking for large numbers, but we still think she is brave to take on the entire winter social event for the Lizard Trust (I have permission from the Chair to call it that for short). Just to let you know what you were missing if you weren't there, we had a fantastic mushroom and asparagus au gratin, a pork and fruit casserole, and locally produced sausages with up-market mash. I mention the veggie dish first because such items usually end up, undeservedly, as also-rans; because it was to die for; and because I am a vegetarian. For the same latter reason, I might not have described the meat dishes exactly accurately - sorry!

Continued...

Merthen Manor Social - Continued...

The puddings we drooled over were a huge fruit pavlova, an intoxicating brandy pudding, and an extremely naughty chocolate refrigerator cake that I wasn't *quite* sure how much I liked. So I had to have a second piece to make certain. Oh yes; I liked it all right. For those who weren't already full, or even those who were, a cheese board tempted us, including an extremely ripe Stilton which nearly walked out of the pot on its own. Most of us, however, admitted defeat and saved what tiny spaces we had in our alimentary systems for an excellent brew of coffee and a Ferrero Rocher (are commercials allowed in these write-ups, ed?).

Whilst Mary was 'cheffing', Tony kept us supplied with liberal libations of wine, OJ and two kinds of water (no expense spared), and played the part of genial host to perfection. He and I had several interesting conversations, not least being a discussion on the age of the beautiful dining table at which we all sat. A family heirloom, of course, and quite possibly Victorian, but as neither Tony nor I were antique experts - or even experts on antiques - we decided he might get away with labelling it Georgian. It was a splendid sight, anyway, laid with sparkling crystal and a centrepiece of camellias from the garden, and if the photograph copies well, you might get an idea of the ambience at Merthen. Log fires also greeted us in every room, and the warmth of these and the congenial company was palpable.

Within what seemed like ten minutes from when we sat down, it was time to go. An assortment of abandoned dogs, early risings, and possibly an Alka Seltzer or two awaited us, so we rose from the table, elastic waistbands fully extended, and weaved our way to the cars. Even the drive was no problem this year, as the Vyvians had had it newly surfaced (which, I am sure, was nothing to do with last year's LPHT write-up!)

Our President, John Grierson, did make a heartfelt vote of thanks to Mary and Tony, but I would like to say again how much we all appreciated their hospitality. If there is another chance to dine at Merthen a year from now, perhaps this article will have whetted your appetite and you will join us there. Our Chairman, David Richardson, said that the date was already set, and I do hope he wasn't joking. John and I are keeping our diaries free for the whole of January 2009 just in case!

Jane Grierson

Browned Off:

When is a field not a field? The answer seems to be: when it is brown. Brownfield sites, where there used to be airfields, factories, quarries, railway lines, tower blocks and other unlovely examples of man's building mania, and where Nature has now taken over with an abundance of weeds and bugs, now seem to be fair game for developers and planners. This is hardly surprising, for even Green Belts are in danger of being built upon these days, if enough brown envelopes fall into the right (wrong?) hands. The demand for more and more housing, roads and shopping centres to satisfy human desires easily overcomes the needs of the weeds.

So? Why would anyone be worried? Well, if you are a nature lover, you probably already know that brownfield sites support a huge variety of wildlife - much more than parks and gardens - and I would be preaching to the converted. For the less enlightened, it is still a simple answer. Because what many might see as a weed is in fact a beautiful, unique plant; and if you don't think that a plant deserves to live in its own right, then how about the fact that it is capable of feeding the insects that feed the spiders that feed the birds and that it might contain a cure for anything from a headache to cancer?

Intensive farming, with millions of tons of chemicals poured onto the land, has resulted in the loss of many of our flower-rich grasslands from the countryside. This leaves 'brownfields' as the last refuge for many species that rely on these habitats; creatures with such lovely names as the Shril and the Brown-banded Carder Bees. With the frightening decrease in honey bee numbers, insects such as these might be all we have left to rely on for pollinating our crops.

The soil on brownfield sites is often low in nutrients, either because much of the topsoil has been removed, or because the growing medium is formed of broken down concrete or other un-natural material. This means that the faster-growing plants cannot take over, and species that can cope with low nutrients flourish, resulting in a rich mix of different plants. Also, the plants on these thin, dry soils are often stressed by lack of water, which means they put more effort into flowering. This in turn will attract more insects, such as the rare Dingy Skipper butterfly. Patches of bare ground, which warm up quickly in the sun, provide a wonderful place for insects and reptiles to sunbathe, a hunting area for predators like the Green Tiger Beetle. Undisturbed grass provides homes for Meadow Grasshoppers, Roesel's Bush Cricket and the scarce Bombardier Beetle.

You have never heard of many of these creatures, perhaps. Nor had I. They have never heard of you and me either, but their fragile lives are in our hands. They need us, but we should be aware that we too need them. We all expostulate about the decimation of the rain forests, but brownfields stand beside our woodlands, moors and countryside as *our* rain forests. We should guard our inheritance. One day it might be too late.

The King's England – Cornwall: Mawnan

In Newsletters over the past three years, we have continued a series of extracts from the 1937 Cornwall edition of those superb little handbooks, first published in the 1930s and entitled "The King's England". They aimed to be "A New Domesday Book of 10,000 Towns and Villages" and were published in County volumes under the general editorship of Arthur Mee, whose name became so closely associated with travellers' guides in that period. Mawnan now completes the parishes in our defined area of the Lizard Peninsula and the parishes immediately north of the Helford River:

One of the far-away places where we can lose ourselves to all the world, yet live in great comfort in a 20th-century inn, it lies where the River Helford widens out to Falmouth Bay, its church standing on the cliff like the northern warden of the gate. It is mainly 15th century. A long way for the village folk to come, it hides itself even when we reach the end of the lane.

The arches in the nave have granite pillars made of single stones, and the chancel is sadly dark save for the bright patch of colour in the east window which helps us to find it. It keeps part of its 15th-century screen, with carving of trailing foliage and painted panels of Peter, Andrew, James and John. The little font has been here all the time; the alms box on a pillar with an iron lid and two padlocks is 17th century. The tower was built about 1400 and looks down on a cross in the churchyard to a rector for 47 years last century, William Rogers.

David Richardson



Church of St Mawnan, a grade II Listed Building

Wanderings in the footsteps of the Reverend E G Harvey



Rev Harvey was vicar of Mullion, or Mullyon as it is spelt in his book written in 1875. Having moved to Mullion 2 years ago I discovered a facsimile of this book for sale – it makes fascinating reading and records eight variations of the village name found in the parish register. Within the book's many facets, he records some rambles through the area and it was here I found inspiration to follow in his footsteps.

Before he begins he records that he takes with him biscuits, a flask of schnaps (his spelling) and a compass which he found essential because of sudden fog on the downs – does that not bring memory of the sea mists which slowly drift in when conditions are right. Should not all walkers go prepared for all conditions, although I wonder what Reverend Harvey would make of today's GPS Systems?

He goes on to mention how paths are becoming obliterated and even the most frequented out to La Floudre and through Park Venton were not marked on the Parish map. When we look today, one can walk across the field and through a little copse and across Park Venton (marked by a stone commemorating John Wesley's visit in 1762) This is behind our house, and a few weeks ago the Mullion Methodists held their annual service in the field to remember this event.

Harvey's first ramble takes him up through Garrow farm (we seem to have lost the way today) and on to the heathland past Hal Kymbro pool. Today it is a beautiful walk beginning in woodland. It dips first down and then climbs upwards giving fabulous views of Mullion Cove and across to Goonhilly. The pool is no longer visible from the marked path – one has to wander onto the conserved nature area – the map at the entrance is no longer legible. Here we can see many varieties of bird and of course a wide variety of wild flowers including the Cornish heath mentioned by Rev Harvey. He talks about how usually winters were too mild to allow skating on the pool, except in February 1870.

From here he walks to Jolly Town and then to Gue Gaze where he describes the wonderful view he can see through a glass from Lamorna to Porthleven, Mullyon island and Gull Rock (gulls, puffins and cormorants – plenty of gulls, but alas I have not seen a puffin or cormorant there). What a lovely walk back to Porthmellin (Mullyon Cove) . At Mullyon Cove he describes the tunnel (*picture right*) as a chink in the rock to the sands of Porth Pyg – still used today by people at low tide – the cave on the beach (*picture above*) has hardly changed.

For me a trip to Mullion Cove on a quiet winters day makes me reminisce about what it was like in 1875. Smugglers? Fishermen? Boats?

Lynda Blackman



The tunnel at Mullion Cove

Businesses on the Lizard Peninsula – Cornish Kites:

We are starting, here, the first of a series of articles on businesses on the Lizard Peninsula, with particular reference to those that are unusual or have an interesting story to tell. We start with Cornish Kites, from Mullion:

Carolyn and I have always enjoyed kite flying as a hobby. We were founder members of the 'Cornwall Kiteflyers' group and attended events throughout the country with like-minded people and ran successful Kite Festivals over the Spring Bank Holiday weekends for several years in the late 1970s. It was as a direct result of one of these events, which were run to enable local charities to raise funds for themselves and for everyone to enjoy flying kites together, that 'Cornish Kites' came into being in 1979. One of the members of the public who attended the 'Westcountry Spring Kite Festival' on Goonhilly Downs approached us, to make kites for her to sell in her shop at Sennen.

At that time, not many businesses actually made kites, so we became one of only four manufacturers in the country. We purchased the spinnaker nylon from Sailmakers Lofts at Penryn. The only colours available were red, white or blue, so that is what the kites were. They were single line kites at this stage, as stunt/sport kites had not become popular. We made the kites in our home and Carolyn took over a small section of the builder's workshop at the entrance to Mullion village to sell them directly to the public herself. She has fond memories of winding the flying line onto the handles trying to keep up with demand!

At an event held in Truro, the kite designer Peter Powell came to Cornwall to demonstrate his two line kite and it was a massive hit. Since those early days in the late 1970s kite flying has changed beyond all recognition – the material is now woven especially for the industry in a wide variety of fabrics and colours and the designs are always evolving into bigger and better examples. The lines can now even be bought in ready wound!!

The hobby encompasses all ages and all requirements and, from the shop in Mullion, we supply a wide variety of what is currently available, from the small children's kite, suitable for two year olds upwards, to the large power kites that would drag an adult through the air with ease. The shop remains totally a family business and is open seven days a week in the high season. You are sure of a warm welcome and advice on which particular sort of kite best suits your needs. Our kites can be used to lift cameras for aerial photography, aerals for amateur radio transmission, lures for training birds of prey, to lifting a man and dragging him along a beach.

It is a hobby that the whole family can enjoy together and, here in Cornwall, we have a wealth of places in which to enjoy this activity. Happy flying!



Personalities – Mary Vyvyan



Mary Vyvyan, a very generous friend to the Lizard Trust

Continuing our series of 'Personalities' of the Trust, we are delighted that Tony and Mary Vyvyan have agreed to submit themselves to this potential indignity. However, having been supplied with some notes by each of them, it became clear that they warranted separate articles. Accordingly, following the principle of 'ladies first', we introduce Mary Vyvyan:

Mary was born in Coulsdon, Surrey, in 1937, with an elder and younger brother. Their father had fought in the First World War and in a volunteer force for the White Russians against the Bolsheviks. He was Chief Accountant to BOAC, who moved offices to Bristol during WW2. Mary has vivid memories of seeing Bristol docks on fire, a very red night sky, but also happier memories at the end of the War, when people thronged through Bristol banging dustbin lids and generally having noisy celebrations.

After the War, the family moved to Richmond in Surrey and her father created the IATA Clearing House for airlines. When 9, Mary went to Mayfield Convent, a boarding school in East Sussex, where she had many happy years – loving sport and hating needlework! Filling a year before training as a Speech Therapist, Mary did a secretarial course at Kingston Technical College. She admits that she was not very good at typing and shorthand, but enjoyed the law, economics and accounts topics of the course. The three year Speech Therapist training was at the Central School of Speech and Drama, situated at Palace Gate in London and the Albert Hall. Some classes were shared with drama students, including Judy Dench and Vanessa Redgrave. Her moment of triumph was winning a competition when all the students had to recite a poem, read a passage and

finally read an unseen passage of prose, beating all the drama and other students. Qualifying in 1959, Mary worked first for the LCC in clinics for children, followed by positions as locum at St Thomas', Barts, St George's and Willesden General Hospital.

Mary married Tony in 1960 and Richard, their first child, was born in 1961, the first of six children in eight years, followed by two more in the next seven years. There was no help with the children and, during a period when Tony was working in Northern Ireland and only came home at weekends, Mary was happy to collapse into bed as soon as the children were asleep. When they moved to the Witley area, Mary worked two mornings a week at a school for boys with special needs and one afternoon at a Stroke Club, taking whichever baby it was with her to work.

When they moved to Cornwall, Mary found the first nine months lonely, missing friends and children, with no school runs to do or rugby matches to watch. A lot of work was needed on the house, it always seemed to be raining and the builders could not start work. Her salvation came when Ferrers Vyvyan invited her to help in the Yard Bistro at Trelowarren. Somehow, this led to a friend of Ferrers introducing Mary into the world of fundraising and charity work – first for the British Red Cross in Truro, then as publicity officer for the Mermaid Appeal to build a One Stop Breast Care Unit at Treliske. Under the guidance of the chairman, Lady Galsworthy, this was the busiest two years of her life, and Mary was amazed how the people of Cornwall gave so generously to this project. Mary then became the Area Organiser for the British Heart Foundation but, after over five years, with grandchildren coming fast and furious, she retired, allowing more time for helping at various births and looking after grandchildren. Mary and Tony are now grandparents to twenty, eleven girls and nine boys.

Keeping Merthen Manor going is an expensive task but, while a B&B business helps to pay the bills, making endless beds and early morning full English breakfasts can become tiring chores. Despite this, however, Mary has many interests, plays tennis and bridge, while pursuing a recent hobby of tracing family history, particularly her family's Irish connection where her great-grandparents had a north/south marriage. She now says, "So much to do still and so much to learn about so many things and so little time."

David Richardson



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