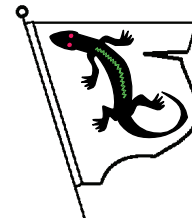


# Lizard Peninsula Heritage Trust

An environmental charity dedicated to the recognition, protection, enhancement and enjoyment of the Lizard Peninsula



Friends of the Lizard 1997-2006

Newsletter No 47 April 2011

Registered Charity No 1092934

## Events programme 2011-12

It is clear from our contacts with members that they value Newsletters and Events as the major benefits from membership. Accordingly, your Committee aims for a continuing year-on-year improvement in these facilities. Unfortunately, our extremely modest subscription levels (we must be the cheapest heritage/environmental charity in the country!?) prevents us from achieving major upgrades in the Newsletters; colour printing, for example, would be about 6-times more expensive, but we aim to overcome this by making Newsletters available in full colour on our website. However, modest subscription levels do not deter our ambitions for events and details of this year's programme are set out on the separate sheet included with this Newsletter.

We look forward to wide participation by our members at the events; if you wish, bring a friend or potential new member, for whom a notional voluntary charge of £1 per event would be welcome – credited if membership is subsequently taken. If you wish to notify the Trust of your intention to go, enabling us to contact you if there is any late changes of plan, please contact: Lynda Blackman 01326 241722, Gill Richardson 01326 280058, Ann Chapman 01326 221648 or Anne Roberts 01326 221243.

The events 'season' has already started (although strictly, it took place within the 2010-11 membership year), with the extremely successful lunch and garden visit to Trebah on 19 March – see Christine Chatfield's report. Events up to the next Newsletter are:

**Wednesday 4 May 2011, 11.30am**

**Botanical walk, Predannack Head to Soap Rock**

Botanical guided walk with Steve Townsend, Natural England Reserves Manager for Lizard National Nature Reserve, to see & identify wild plants in the Predannack, Vellan Head and Soap Rock areas.

Directions: Wollas Farm carpark, south of Mullion at OS ref SW 668 163. Cost: Free to LPHT members.

Bring: Picnic lunch, wild flower books & hand lenses.

**Saturday 16 July 2011, 2.30pm**

**Garden visit to Trenarth, High Cross, Constantine**

Lucie Nottingham will lead a tour of her lovely, 4-acre, prize-winning gardens surrounding a C17 farmhouse in a tranquil, pastoral setting. Directions: 2 miles east of Constantine at OS ref SW 757 288.

Cost: Voluntary contribution towards a charity of Lucie's choice.

Members should constantly bear in mind that all events have potential hazards and that they should take care and remain vigilant, to avoid accidents and incidents. Outdoor events, in particular, especially in the Lizard's natural and rugged landscapes, require not only vigilance and care, but also clothing and footwear appropriate to the weather, season and terrain.

## Subscriptions

Subscription renewals are due on 6 April and, as members have already been informed, they remain unchanged at £6 for an individual or £9 for two adults at the same address. Approximately 15% of our members have paid a 'Life' subscription and a further 50% by Standing Order, which is easier for both them and us. If you are neither a Life Member nor someone who pays by Standing Order, there should be a renewal slip with this Newsletter. The Gift Aid option significantly increases our income, without any extra cost to our Members, and without any intrusion into their tax affairs. We have been pleased with the response, but very many more could sign the form that would allow us to claim the extra from the Inland Revenue. You will notice that the renewals slip now includes a simple tick box for you to agree this facility.



Some of the members who were at Trebah Gardens

## Trebah lunch & garden visit

Twenty-two members, including our patron Mrs Jill Morison, attended the Spring Lunch on Saturday 19th March. The venue was Trebah Gardens at Mawnan Smith and the excellent Planters' Cafe, where we enjoyed a superb three-course lunch. The service was excellent, partly due to the attentive staff but also partly due to our own Geoff Blackman who directed proceedings with military precision and reminded us all of our previous menu choices! Conversation flowed freely and in no time at all the meal was completed and it was time to work off some of our excesses with a stroll around the gardens.

Trebah Gardens are interesting at any time of year but are magnificent in spring. The party split into small groups and set off in various directions to marvel at the stunning rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias and other horticultural delights, all resplendent in the bright spring sunshine.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable event, and the LPHT committee, together with the staff at Trebah are to be thanked for all the organisation which must have been involved. If you missed it, make a note not to do so next time!

*Christine Chatfield*

## Predannack Airfield

I recently discovered that Predannack Airfield (part of RNAS Culdrose) has a link with the famous scientist, engineer and inventor Sir Barnes Wallis (1887 – 1979). He was, of course, best known for designing the bouncing bomb used to attack German dams in May 1943. However, in the 1950s he spent time at Predannack developing his futuristic supersonic swing-wing Swallow and Goose aircraft projects. To assist in this, a long ramp was constructed with rails and was used to launch radio-controlled models, proving the concept of a swing-wing aeroplane. Although the projects were cancelled in the Defence Review of 1957 (shades of today), swing-wings are used on the F-111, F-14 and Tornado fighter planes, confirming Wallis's ability to be ahead of his time. Barnes Wallis's Liaison Officer at the time was Group Captain Leonard Cheshire who founded the Cheshire Homes. At one time Group Captain Cheshire established a temporary home for ill and disabled people in what is believed to be the old Sergeants Mess at Predannack.

*Geoff Blackman*

## The House in the Woods

*Members may recall that, in Newsletter 45, we reported on the archaeological walk led by James Gossip, when we discovered the abandoned settlement of Guilly, between St Keverne and Coverack. Subsequent research led to the local name of Polkinghorne, with several alternative spellings, and the start of an occasional series on traditional Cornish surnames:*

On 11 December 1858, the bells of St Keverne church rang out joyfully, while the landlord of the White Hart in the Square stood gleefully rubbing his hands in anticipation of some celebratory feasting from the wedding party. Henry Polkinghorne, 40 years old, and the sole surviving son of Henry and Mary, was getting wed at last! Could it be that the Polkinghorne line would survive after all? Would the cottage in the woods once more ring with youthful laughter, and the fields respond to the toil of strong, able-bodied men with generations of farming in their blood? Would Mary and Henry Senior be able to look forward to dandling some precious grandchildren on their knees? Possibly. Stranger things have happened. Unfortunately, “young” Henry’s bride, the lovely Peggy Coplin, was already 44 years old. So ... I don’t think so.

At this stage I should, perhaps, write a disclaimer. Although the people in this story were very real indeed, including the nameless landlord above, the few details that I know of their lives have been garnered from parish records which seem to contain some fairly large gaps. That did not stop my imagination from running riot. Anyone who has been bitten by the family history bug will be all too familiar with the hold that it takes, the delight, the frustration, the countless blank walls and the resulting suppositions (not to mention the neglect of one’s home and immediate family). The Polkinghorne bug bit me well and truly, and someone should turn it into a Poldark-type saga. It won’t be me, but here is some of the story.

Parish records take us back as far as 1606, when King James I was on the throne, and Margeryt and Tristram Polkinghorne celebrated the baptism of their son John. This was soon followed by that of William (who died tragically young), then Jane; after her came a replacement William and finally Margeryt the younger. Oh, and some time before replacement William appeared, Tristram did the decent thing and married Margeryt the mother.

Their firstborn, John, married Margaret George who, in 1636, produced Lovedye; this babe sadly died within a month, followed in 1637 by Mary who lived only a few weeks. Centuries later, my heart goes out to those unfortunate parents, losing two baby daughters in a little over a year, but perhaps they brought forth a third daughter who did survive: burial records show a “Margaret, daughter of John” who died in 1665 and could thus have been a child of John and Margaret.

A plethora of Polkinghorne baptisms sprinkles the archives right up to 1718. Then comes the first of several unaccountable gaps, with no further baptismal records until 1747. Was there a historical explanation, or is it simply a case of the parish records going missing for those three decades? Whatever the cause, those gaps, plus the repetitious use of first names – William, Henry (or Henery), John and James cropping up time after time, with Mary, Anne and Jane/Joan/Joane on the distaff side – make the tracing of any particular line difficult and frustrating.

However, once we reach the early nineteenth century, where more details are given, we see that the Polkinghornes were a thriving community of farmers and agricultural labourers at Coverack’s North Corner and Guilly, our house in the woods. In March 1806, Henry P married one Mary Webber, producing their firstborn, Mary, on 1 January 1809. Two years later they were blessed with a son James, but in a little over a year he died. Daughter Jane followed, and she at least survived into her twenties, marrying Thomas Sedgman, a labourer from North Corner, and bearing James Polkinghorne Sedgman in 1836. Two years after Jane’s birth, Mary had another James, but he, like his brother, was destined to die before his time, not even reaching his second birthday. How did these poor people bear such sorrow? We are told that folk in those days were better acquainted with death, and thus more stoical in dealing with such losses, than we are in present times, but I cannot believe that they did not suffer and grieve as we would do ourselves.

Henry and Mary finally produced a healthy boy, Henry Junior, in January 1817, their last child, and he continued to prosper. In spite of good health, however, he might have had other, less endearing traits. Perhaps he was ugly or bad tempered. Too shy? Over-devoted to his work? At any rate, Henry Junior was forty years old before he took a bride, the aforementioned Peggy Coplin, in her 45<sup>th</sup> year.

Writing this in my – ahem! never you mind which – decade, I can truthfully say that I remember my own forties with fondness. One is old enough to have learned a few of life’s lessons, but young enough to enjoy life; even to produce children if so inclined. In 1858, a woman would have had no choice, inclinations notwithstanding, but, if she had already spent forty years or more toiling from dawn to dusk, six days a week, and was quite possibly ill nourished, she would have been unlikely to bear children. So it would seem, anyway, for Peggy and Henry remained unblest in this way.

We can follow their lives, in a hazy sort of fashion, through the Census. In 1841 Henry Senior and Mary were farming at North Corner, with son Henry Jnr, while nearby Guilly was worked by John Polkinghorne - possibly a cousin? Ten years later, the set-up is much the same, although Henry Junior has temporarily gone missing. By 1861, John P has retired and moved to Church Village, leaving Guilly’s 15 acres to the care of the now returned Henry Jnr and his wife Peggy (also from Gilly, although I can find no previous Census reference to her there). Mary and Henry, now in their eighties, are still coping with their 4 acres at North Corner.

John P died, aged 80, in 1863; Henry Senior, aged 84, in 1864. There is no record of the death of his wife Mary, but she does not appear in the 1871 census. Another change by 1871 is that Henry Jnr is no longer listed under Guilly as “Farmer 15 Acres”, but under Coverack as Agricultural Labourer. Guilly has disappeared. Were its 15 acres too much for a couple in their mid-fifties to cope with? Was it at this point that the house in the woods was abandoned? It is impossible to say. The Polkinghorne saga dwindles rapidly from hereon in. No Polkinghorne appears in the 1881 census, and by 1891, Henry (Jnr), now a 74 year old widower, is living at a private house in Coverack and working as an agricultural labourer. This is the last record I could find of our Henry, the last of the Polkinghornes. What a sorry little ending.

Or is it? Hidden away among green fields and a tangle of country lanes, just west of Gulval, are some sturdy, Cornish dwellings, maybe 200 or 300 years old. They are Polkinghorne Farmhouse and Cottage. I wonder if there is a connection with our Guilly family? I shall wonder forever, because, after this diverting interlude, my own family history is calling me back and I must dive into a different set of archives.

## Heritage Assets Survey



As I reported at the Annual General Meeting last November, phase 1 of our Heritage Assets Survey (which includes items found along the Peninsula's highways) started at the end of last summer. So late in the 'season', however, we always knew that the serious effort would not commence until Easter 2011. We have volunteers from within our membership, augmented, I am pleased to report, by surveyors from the Meneage Archaeological Group (MAG). MAG had already decided to carry out its own survey of stiles in the 'Meneage' parishes, when liaison discovered our mutual interest, particularly as off-road stiles would have been included in the second phase of our survey. So, our surveyors in the Manaccan, Porthoustock and Porthallow areas have liaised with MAG, to avoid overlapping.

Nevertheless, we need more volunteers to cover other parts of our area. You would be provided with

site survey sheets, maps provided by Cornwall County's heritage section, guidance notes and any further informal advice and support required. You would need a camera and, ideally, a compass and some way of identifying exactly where you are; the Trust has one hand-held satellite navigator at present (Garmin GPS 60), but there are obvious difficulties in sharing it between several volunteers.

Different volunteers may have differing ways of tackling the task. Some may prefer to be offered an area, for example a Parish or part of a Parish; others may prefer to be offered a particular road ribbon. Then, within their allocated area, some may choose to record all item types as they see them, while others would record, say, all fingerposts, then milestones, then post-boxes and telephone kiosks etc.. It would be up to you. For anyone potentially interested, but who would like to know more before they commit, I could e-mail, or post, copies of the site survey sheet and the guidance notes. From these, you will see that the on-site requirements are mainly completing tick-boxes and taking photographs.



Please let me know, as soon as possible, if you would like to be involved.

*David Richardson*



### Contact by Email

With our subscription rates static and so modest, while postage costs constantly increase, we have to look for ways to economise. An idea that might appeal to some members would be to receive all communications by Email instead of by post. This would also have the advantage of speed and seeing the illustrations in our Newsletters far better in their full colour. We would like to encourage members to go for this option so, if you want to participate, just send your Email address to David Richardson (contact details on page 4)

## Gunwalloe Church Cove

At Gunwalloe - Church Cove you will find a beautiful church set amongst the sand dunes. This little 15th century church of St. Winwaloe, with its tower built into the cliff, separate from the main building, and usually half-buried in blown sand is said to contain woodwork from the wreck of the 300-ton Portuguese carrack *San Antonio* (St. Anthony). Captained by Antonio Pacheco, she was wrecked on Saturday, 19 January, 1527, on the way from Lisbon to Antwerp with a cargo which included copper and silver ingots.

At nearby Halzephron, which allows access to the southern end of Porthleven Sands, whose many wrecks throw up coins of all nations to the metal detectors, is the Halzephron Inn.

Cannons found near here are likely to be the last remains of the army transport *James and Rebecca*, homeward bound with a squadron of the 9th Light Dragoons, which was wrecked here with 41 dead on 6 November, 1807.

Treasure tales abound in the neighbourhood. One that persists is that the pirate John Avery, alias Long Ben, buried a fabulous treasure in the sand near Gunwalloe. Why he should have done that when he retired to Bideford, Devon, and died a pauper in 1697, is never made clear!

*With acknowledgements to [www.st-keverne.com](http://www.st-keverne.com)*



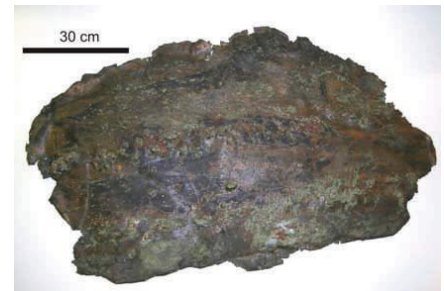
## Mining on the Lizard

In stark contrast to much of the west of Cornwall, mining on the Lizard Peninsula invariably proved financially unviable. There were however three mines which did at least produce some copper for their owners.

The smallest of these mines was *Wheal Downas*, located in the lower Downas valley, northwest of Beagles Point. Traces of a leat, a wheel pit and a small dump remained in the valley and could still be seen in 1950. At that time and further east, but still on the northwest side of Beagles Point, traces of copper could be found in dumps around old shafts and levels.

*Wheal Fenwick* at Mullion stood on the cliff on the north side of Pedn-y-ke Cove. An adit is located on the cliff-face there.

*Wheal Unity*, otherwise known as *Trenance Mine* and *Ghostcroft Mine* (after the Jack O' Lanterns which, by night, floated eerily over the moorland) operated from the early 18th century to 1919 and was the only serious mining venture on the Peninsula. It was situated near Mullion Cove and there are still several adits visible in the cliff face at Porth Pyg and also in the adjacent cove near Vro Rock. Its main claim to fame is the raising of a single piece of copper which was 2.3m in length and weighed about three tons and which nowadays is preserved in the Natural History Museum but additionally a sheet from the mine weighing over 700 kg, and measuring 9m x 1.4m was shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London.



Sheet of copper shown at the Great Exhibition 1851

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