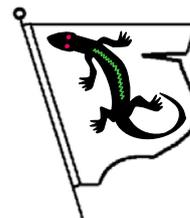


# Lizard Peninsula Heritage Trust

Friends of the Lizard 1997-2006

Newsletter No 34 January 2008

Registered Charity No 1092934



## Events Diary

### Annual Social – Merthen Manor

Friday 25 January 2008 7.30pm

£12 per person all inclusive – booking and payment in advance essential.

Following last year's very enjoyable event, Mary & Tony Vyvyan have kindly offered to host another Annual Social at their Grade II\* Listed Building home, Merthen Manor near Constantine, with a varied hot buffet and all drinks included in an unchanged set price. This promises to be a particularly successful occasion again, but numbers have to be restricted to 30, with advance booking essential.

#### Directions:

Merthen Manor is in the parish of Constantine at Ordnance Survey reference SW 727 264. Travel just over 1 mile from Gweek towards Constantine, then turn right. After about half a mile, Merthen is signposted as a right turn onto a lane that terminates after another mile at the house.

#### History:

Merthen is known to date from at least 1575 and has remained within the Vyvyan family since its purchase by Sir Francis Vyvyan of Trelowarren in 1629. Its Grade II\* Listed Building status confirms the house to be of particularly high architectural importance.

#### Booking:

Please send your names and cheque (made to Lizard Peninsula Heritage Trust) to our Treasurer:

Geoff Blackman, 'Chy-an-Mordhu', 5 Park Enskellaw, Mullion TR12 7JG tel: 01326 241722

## Membership subscriptions.

At November's Annual General Meeting, once again it was decided not to increase subscriptions from next April. However, at this time next year we may have to revise the rates, perhaps at the same time reviewing the membership options, to encourage more couples and families to join. The main advantage of infrequent changes, of course, is that we do not need our Members to amend their Standing Orders. However, keeping the rates unchanged for several years inevitably will result in a significant increase when the time comes.

The Gift Aid option 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. Please contact Geoff Blackman, our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, if you require another form.

*Membership Secretary*



*Merthen Manor, Constantine*

## Annual General Meeting.

Tuesday 20 November was an auspicious occasion, not least because it was my sister's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, but, that aside, it was also the occasion of our association's tenth AGM. The evening was marked by the sad news of our Chairman, Jeremy Dart's, retirement after seven years, but in the spirit of *vive le roi*, we welcomed David Richardson as he moved one step up the ladder from Vice to Chair - a much more comfortable sedentary position.

David has been Jeremy's right hand man for several years now, and we are sure that he will continue to devote as much enthusiasm and energy to the cause as he has always done. He is also hoping to increase the number of events such as walks and visits with an archaeological or bucolic theme. His wife, Gill, and the new Vice Chairman's wife, Ann Chapman, were co-opted onto the Committee for the specific purpose of arranging the increased events programme. We hope to see a few more of our members at these events, but don't worry if you can't make it - we enjoy our small and select exclusive audiences with experts from around the County!

The AGM also bore the sad news of the death of our Patron, General Sir Richard Trant. We are considering various options for a replacement, but 'Dick' Trant will be a particularly difficult act to follow. We will, of course, keep you updated.

John Grierson proposed a vote of thanks to Jeremy for all his work during his chairmanship, and generously offered the presidency to him, but Jeremy politely demurred. Rumour has it that he is going to grow chickens and keep asparagus, whilst maintaining his LPHT membership and appearing, we trust, at all the important occasions.

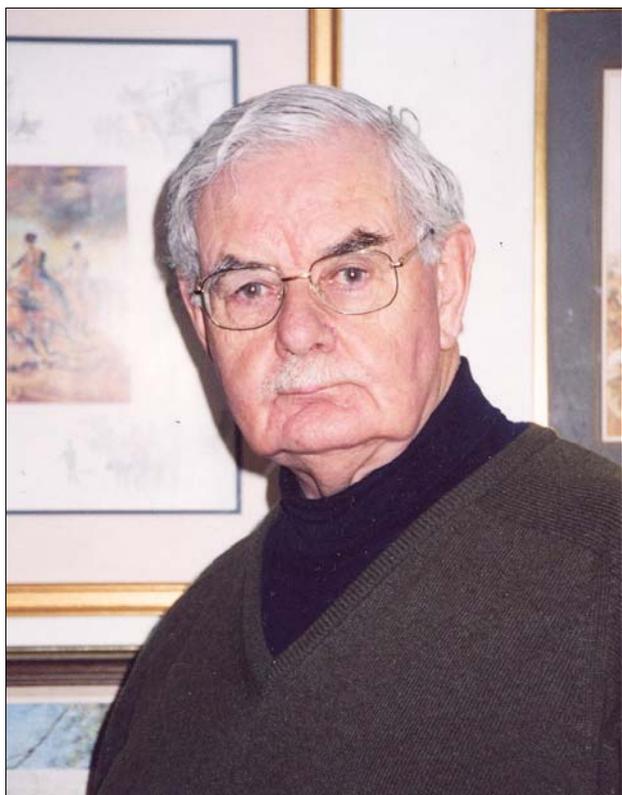
This meeting was rounded off by a talk from Ray Lawman and Jeremy Clitherow from Natural England who, you will remember (if you have been paying attention), have already proved

*Continued...*

## Annual General Meeting - continued...

their worth as field guides this year. They did an equally splendid job of describing to us the organisation and day-to-day work that Natural England carries out. This developed into a very lively discussion on the fencing of the main road at Goonhilly and Main Dale near St Keverne but, fortunately, the meeting drew to a close before the discussion became too heated! To be honest, I think we should all applaud the work that Natural England does on behalf of us all; they have the interest of the County and the countryside at heart, and their mixture of diplomacy and energy results in great achievements.

Jane Grierson



'Dick Trant' 1928-2007

## General Sir Richard Trant, KCB DSc DL

It is with much sadness that we report the death, on 3 October, of General Sir Richard Trant, who has been a good friend to the Trust since his appointment as our Patron in 2002. We have sent our condolences to his widow, Lady Diana Trant, at her home in Lostwithiel. Sir Richard, who always asked us to call him 'Dick Trant' and Diana 'Tink', was born of a Cornish family at Thurlestone, south Devon, in 1928 and educated at Newquay Grammar School. He was sent to Bangalore Officer Training School in 1947, given an emergency commission in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and transferred later into the Royal Horse Artillery. He served in the Korean War, South Arabia and Northern Ireland on active service and many other places worldwide, including a vital role in directing the Falklands campaign. He retired in the rank of General as Quarter Master General in 1986. There followed twelve years in industry including Chairman Hunting Defence Division of Hunting plc.

Dick was Chairman of the Cornwall Heritage Trust for fourteen years and was involved in many other heritage activities in Cornwall. We will miss not only his many years experience of management, industry and Cornwall's heritage, but also his charming, good-humoured and helpful presence at our Annual General Meetings.

David Richardson

## The King's England – Cornwall: Constantine and Gweek

In recent Newsletters, 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. We have now completed all of the settlements on the Lizard Peninsula itself but, as our defined area includes the parishes immediately north of the Helford River, I will complete the series with Constantine and Gweek, finally with Mawnan in the next Newsletter:

*The road climbs steeply up the hill to lose itself among winding byways of cottages with gay gardens and a church that has been for 500 years looking out on a glorious landscape at the head of a creek of Helford River. On the hill and in the hollow lies Constantine. The fine tower of the 15<sup>th</sup> century church is a landmark from far around, looking over the richly-wooded valley and away to the sea. Its massive walls, like all the rest of the church, a structure of great strength, are all of granite from the quarries behind the woods. In this light and spacious place are many witnesses to its ancient past. The roodstairs are still here. On the wall the mitred head of a bishop is fading away. There is an old desk wearing out after 500 years, and in the south aisle when we called were four panels of the richly carved old chancel screen.*

*But the treasure of Constantine is the remarkable brass of Richard Gerveys and his wife, a little older than the Spanish Armada. They were both buried on the same day in 1574, and their brass is one of the palimpsest brasses that have been used for two families, having first been engraved in Flanders with the head and shoulders of a knight in armour. The knight's head (unseen as the brass is set in the floor) is backed by a shield supported by angels, and for 200 years this knight of Flanders in his heraldic tunic was evidently one of the glories of his own church. Then his brass was cut up and used for the brass of Richard Gerveys with their eight sons and eight daughters in two demure and reverent groups. The figures are exquisite in detail, even to the finger tips. Richard and his wife stand under elaborate canopies with their hands closed in prayer, both with ruffs at the neck and the wrists, both with richly embroidered mantles, his showing a tunic inside, hers covering a long gown. He has a beard, a moustache, and short hair; she has a neat headdress and a chain hanging to her feet with a pendant at the end. What seemed unusual to us was that the fingers of her hands are crossed.*

*There is a charming small brass in the Bosahan Chapel with the portrait of John Pendarves, who died in the same year as Shakespeare, and his wife who died a little before him; they are kneeling at a desk with their two children. He has a beard and is bareheaded, with a long mantle and knee breeches, she has a pointed bodice and a hooped skirt. They are all lifelike figures, the children looking very happy.*

*Very impressive are the 20 granite monoliths of the arches here; it is the feeling of a very light and massive place that we bring away. The sun falls on a dial in an image niche over the old porch, inside which is a fine stoup carved with quatrefoils. A band of trailing leaves runs round the west doorway, on which there are three small heads.*

*From this interesting hilltop we come down to a charming spot ringed in by wooded hills; it is called Gweek, at the head of Helford River, where the tide ebbs and flows under two ancient stone bridges. Charles Kingsley knew this place and chose it for the scene of Hereward's Cornish adventures; there are some ruins of a building which may have been a chapel.*

Continued.....

## The King's England - continued...

At Mertherveny is a huge block of granite called the Tolwan, about five yards long, half as wide, and with a hole in the middle. We noticed that the ground below it is still hollowed out as in the days when Cornish mothers would pass their ailing children through the hole, thinking it would cure them. Close by at Bosahan is a smuggler's passage about ten yards long with rough granite walls, and the children must love it, for it is called Pixies Hall.

David Richardson

Church of St Constantine, a Grade I Listed Building.



### 'A Week at the Lizard'

The Rev C.A. Johns wrote this book in the 1850s, detailing his week's holiday touring the Lizard peninsula. His description of the Lizard village is worth reprinting, as follows:

*From the Lizard Cove, the steep road leads up a valley to the church-town, or the buildings, many or few, situated near the church. A part of the churchyard, which was formerly railed off and planted, contains the graves of persons who died of the plague and, for 100 years, has never been opened for fear of the reappearance of that dreadful disease.*

*The collection of cottages, which is dignified with the name of Lizard Town, contains little worthy of note. The inhabitants are in general quiet, industrious and orderly, fishing or working as day-labourers in the fields. The Cornish language is now extinct as a spoken language. As might be expected, it lingered longest in the remote districts and where the inhabitants had little communication with more civilised society. After the restoration, the Cornish language survived in the more western parts, where the Rev F. Robinson, Rector of Landewednack who, just before 1678, preached a sermon in the Cornish Language.*

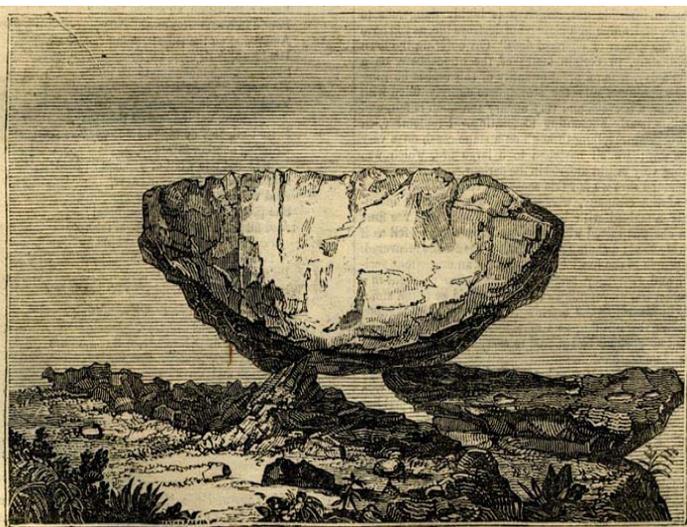
*The inhabitants often attained a great age. The Rev Thomas Cole, minister of Landewednack who died in 1683, was reputed to be 120 years old, while Michael George, sexton, died the same year and was reputed to be 100 years old. There is an old custom on Shrove Tuesday when poor children, aged between 6-12, perambulate the parish for eatables or halfpence. Tradition also asserts that the Lizard was at some very remote period colonised by Spanish immigrants. The village would be made far more attractive to strangers, as well as more healthy to the inhabitants, if an improved system of drainage were established.*

The Rev C.A. John's book is available second-hand at a reasonable price; best go to [www.Abebooks.co.uk](http://www.Abebooks.co.uk) to see if any copies are for sale.

Tony Hilton

## The Tolmen Stone at Constantine

Situated about five miles south of Penryn on a granite merchant's estate, The Tolmen (known locally as the Maen Rock or Maen Toll) was a massive egg-shaped rock which dominated the countryside and coast for miles around. It was inspected and enjoyed by tourists and was a popular destination for excursions from Falmouth – and revered as the pride of the parish. On Constantine Feast Day, Tuesday March 9, 1869, explosives toppled the stone some 40 feet into the quarry below.



William Borlase's illustration of The Tolmen Stone

Between Thursday March 4, 1869 and the following Monday morning as many as five blasts had been applied to the stone which was 33 feet long, 18 feet wide and 14ft 6in high and weighed some 750 tons, but it had held fast. A fresh borehole was prepared for firing on the Monday evening, but by this time a large crowd of indignant local sympathisers had gathered. In view of the emotions aroused, action was delayed until the following morning when an even greater assemblage had formed. Finally, another hole was bored and the last charge was blasted. A week later the 'West Briton' gave this moving report: "This ancient colossal monument slowly swerved and majestically slid to the bottom of the quarry. A deep feeling of grief and regret, as for the loss of an old friend, pervades the district, a sentiment that, to their credit, appeared to be shared by the workmen employed in carrying on the work of destruction. A great national heirloom, its presence among us was like a still yet mighty voice reaching down from distant ages – a voice now hushed by an act of sacrilege".

The loss of the stone stirred the nation; as a result The Ancient Monuments Act was passed and The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was formed.

Colin Chapman

## Personalities - Colin Chapman:



Coverack Carnival c1952  
Colin (left) with his cousin and sister  
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize (half-a-crown) as 'Night of the Bath'

Continuing our series of 'Personalities' of the Trust, in this issue we introduce our newly-elected Vice Chairman, Colin Chapman. Colin, as he writes below, has enjoyed the Lizard Peninsula for all his life and is now delighted to be living here.

My introduction to the Lizard Peninsula and in particular to Coverack came almost before I can remember, indeed a present member of the LPHT claims that she pushed me in my wheelchair to the Meres! My memories are of fleeing from Essex on the first day of the holidays (our luggage had earlier been ferried down to the station, probably in that same pushchair, to be sent Passengers' Luggage in Advance) and returning, parodying Shakespeare's schoolboy, within a few days of the start of a new term. My sister and I spent long, wonderful summer days going down the lane in the morning to Mrs Daw's cool bakery to buy 'slates', feeding that very fat rabbit outside Mr White's greengrocery shed, playing on the sands and exploring the rock pools at the Meres and going for long walks along the cliffs and through the beautiful countryside and deep lanes around Coverack. Just occasionally, we would venture by bus to The Lizard and then on to Kynance, which we reached by walking along the wall, and which was almost invariably deserted! The larks sang incessantly, there were regattas not only at Coverack but also at Porthallow and Mullion (both of which we reached in, I think, Mr Carey's boat – and very wet and cold those trips were), the horse show up in the field near Dolly's Corner, the carnival in the field next to the Bay Hotel, the *Three Sisters* was replaced by *William Taylor of Oldham*, Len Hutton regained the Ashes – and all was very right with the world.

The terrible time came when Auntie Win had to leave Coverack and our idyllic holidays there at her home had to cease, but I never forgot. I went to school as a boarder in London and, being thoroughly obstinate, refused to UCCA (mine was that first guinea-pig year) and so lost my chance to go immediately to University. By then the siren-call of the mountains had lured me, so I sought and was given a job as a teacher of science at a prep. school in North Wales, conveniently near the crags. Within a term, my subject had become French, the mountains had begun to lose their fascination and my future career was almost set. When I left that first school, I spent three years running an agricultural estate, but academia beckoned and I spent the next twenty-five years at Oswestry School in Shropshire, once again teaching French to prep. school children – although that does not begin to describe all the extra bits and pieces I was able to do there.

Three things in particular please me most from those years: firstly, the number of young men and women I have taught who have earned their living in France and secondly, the achievements, under my care, of an even greater number of twelve and thirteen year olds who have walked the breadth of England and the length of Wales along the Coast-to-Coast and Offa's Dyke long distance footpaths respectively – an experience they will surely never forget. The third, but arguably the most important thing, was my marriage to Ann and my subsequent acceptance into her family.

When the prep. school at Oswestry merged with the senior school in 1997, I was made redundant, which came, as it does to everyone in a similar position, as a bitter pill. I ran a temping agency in Oswestry for a few years, but those few hurried visits to Coverack and the Lizard Peninsula which, during the course of our marriage, we had managed to fit into a busy schedule, had proved that this was where we wanted to be.

The rest, as they say, is history. We moved to Mawgan in February 2002 and, since then, I have found gainful and interesting employment as Parish Clerk at Germoe, Wendron, Landewednack and Constantine – and considerably less gainful, but equally interesting employment, as a member of your Committee!

Colin Chapman



Chairman	David Richardson	Bodlowen, Coverack, Helston	TR12 6TP	01326 280058
Vice Chairman	Colin Chapman	Chy Lean, Mawgan, Helston	TR12 6AY	01326 221648
Secretary	David Richardson	Bodlowen, Coverack, Helston	TR12 6TP	01326 280058
Treasurer	Geoff Blackman	'Chy-an-Mordhu', 5 Park Enskellaw, Mullion	TR12 7JG	01326 241722
Committee	Avril Evens	Tresaddern House, Ruan Minor, Helston	TR12 7NA	01326 290629
- ditto -	Mark Bayliss	Halliggye Lodge, Newtown in St Martin	TR12 6DW	01326 231634
Co-opted	Ann Chapman	Chy Lean, Mawgan, Helston	TR12 6AY	01326 221648
- ditto -	Gill Richardson	Bodlowen, Coverack, Helston	TR12 6TP	01326 280058
Assistant Secretary	Prue Towner	Cracklewood, 10 Doctors Hill, St Keverne	TR12 6UX	01326 281230