



November 2020 Newsletter

A letter from our President

Dear Member and Friends of ROCS,

At the time of writing we are a week into the 2nd Covid-19 lockdown which I know will be much more arduous for many of us due to the looming winter season with shorter days & more inclement weather enforcing further isolation.

I hope that you have all been keeping safe & looking after one another & not having too much difficulty coping with the dire situations we are having to endure just now.

2020 has dealt another blow with the death of Florrie Hosking in October after her continued illness. Redruth OCS will be the poorer for the loss of this most stalwart member & dear friend, who will be sorely missed by many. Our condolences were sent to her family.

Despite a lot of hard work & thoughtful preparation regarding the reorganisation of our joint Midsummer Bonfire & Crying the Neck ceremony we were thwarted at every turn due to the dreadful circumstances at the time. My grateful thanks go out to the many people involved in the attempt to hold the event & hope that 2021 will give us the opportunity to come together again & rekindle our enthusiasm for all things Cornish & that we are enabled to double our efforts with regards our societies & celebrate our achievements whilst still "Collecting the fragments that nothing be lost" It has proved nigh on impossible to do much of the constructive work our OCS have become renowned for over the years due to the pandemic & we have unfortunately missed most of our annual activities/events & meetings etc. & many things have had to be put on the back burner for happier times to come. It doesn't mean however that we have been completely inactive, hence our display at St. Andrews church & this newsletter (due largely to the research & hard work of Museum curator Linda).

Anne has collated the membership & Andrew ably managing the treasury so that as soon as we are safely able to make tentative steps to establishing " a new normal " we will be prepared to get back to work keeping up our ancient traditions, & marking & making history.

If all goes well we hope to produce a Christmas newsletter to add a little cheer so if you have anything you would like us to include or an item you wish to write up please feel free to contact us.

In the meantime, Kemmer with - Keep safe & keep smiling.

Vanessa

Vanessa Moyle,

President, Redruth Old Cornwall Society

A new donation to the Museum Collection

The Arthur Edward Permewan medal



***Awarded to
A.E.Permewan, third prize
in Physiology from
University College,
London, 1887-8.***

We were recently contacted by Colin Harris from St Agnes Museum. They had been given a medal, dug up from the garden at 'Sunnyside', St Agnes. On inspection (and cleaning!) they saw the name and investigated the background. Finding that he was a Redruth man with little connection to St Agnes, they offered the medal to the ROCS museum collection. We accepted gratefully and looked further into the history of Arthur Edward Permewan and his family in Redruth.

Dr Arthur Edward Permewan

A new donation has been received by the Redruth Old Cornwall Museum Collection. It is a medal, dated 1877, to Arthur Edward Permewan, a silver prize for taking third place in Physiology at University College, London.

The medal was dug up in the garden of Sunnyside, St Agnes, and handed into their museum, but they kindly donated it to us, regarding it as more appropriate for our collection as Dr Permewan was a Redruthian and lived most of his life in the town. His story is a remarkable tale of hardship and success.

Who was Arthur Edward Permewan and what is the significance of the medal?

Born in Redruth in 1859, to an able and much respected surgeon and general practitioner, John Permewan, Arthur Edward started life in a comfortable home in Chapel Terrace. The family consisted of two older sisters, and a younger brother, William. His father, John Permewan, had come to Redruth from West Penwith. Brought up in St Buryan and Lelant in a well established farming family, John, a second son of Nicholas Permewan, left to study medicine at Edinburgh University, qualifying as a surgeon in 1854. After his marriage to Jane Thomas at Redruth he settled in Redruth and built up a strong practice in the town.

However, the security of this family was not as it might have seemed and was publicly and humiliatingly shattered in 1865. Aged thirty three, with a successful medical practice, the young John Permewan was living a somewhat ostentatious life. As well as his medical practice he became interested in mine share ownership, working his way onto the boards of several local mines. Suspicions of forgery and fraud of mine shares emerged and investigations culminated in a hearing at the Central Criminal Court, the Old Bailey, in the spring of 1866. The case heard related to fraud at Hallanbeagle, but fourteen similar charges were also placed. These were not pursued once the guilty verdict for one crime had been passed.

John Permewan had worked his way onto the boards of several mines. In this case he had stolen the list of shareholders & their addresses after a meeting which he had chaired, had forged a letter from one shareholder in Bristol asking to cash in his shares and send the money to 'Henry Anstod' at '20, Tamar Terrace, Devonport'. He had set up a rented room at the Plymouth address under the false name and was due to receive the funds for the false sale there. This particular forgery came to light when the original shareholder responded to a call for cash and sent in the money, alerting the purser to question why he would do this when he had just sold his shares? In November 1865 police from London came to Plymouth and Redruth, investigated the addresses, searched John Permewan's home, where they found incriminating evidence, including a pad of the same writing paper and a list of shareholders, and the case was referred to the Old Bailey (the Central Criminal Court). Dr John Permewan pleaded his innocence and produced witnesses to say he was with them in Redruth on a day when he was seen in Plymouth. However, the witnesses were not reliable, had been asked and persuaded of the date of their visit from Dr Permewan several months after the event and their evidence was not believed by the jury. On his conviction he was sentenced to seven years penal servitude, to be served at Parkhurst, Isle of Wight. The severity of this sentence was given as a reason for the judge to waive the prosecution on the fourteen other similar cases prepared.

Young Arthur Edward, not yet seven years old, saw all household effects sold off, his father found guilty and committed to jail, and the total upheaval of his life. Report of the sale of the contents of the house included a 'pair of handsome cream coloured horses-a perfect match- valued at £150 guineas ... sold for £73.'¹ Sold in a hurry at well under the market value, to help pay for the court costs, the family lost both financially and emotionally. John Permewan's wife Jane, was left to cope with the disgrace, loss of her home and the responsibility of four young children, aged between one and seven years. Jane Permewan returned to her native St Just in Penwith, took up a job as schoolmistress and focussed on bringing up her young family.

John Permewan was released in 1873. Remarkably, on his release the family returned to Redruth and John Permewan set up practice as a surgeon once again. It was not legal for a committed felon to practice under the English system, but John Permewan had qualified in Edinburgh, so a loophole in the legislation allowed him to continue to work as a registered surgeon in England.

The boys Arthur Edward and William were aged 14 and 8 years respectively on his release. Both went to study medicine at University College, London and in 1877/8 Arthur Edward Permewan won the silver medal for physiology, representing the third highest place on the course. Completing his studies in 1880, in the first division in his finals, Arthur Edward, known as Edward, returned to Cornwall, practicing briefly at St Just and then at Redruth where he set up practice with his father. In time he married Mary Agnes Williams (a daughter of H.T.Williams) and moved to 'Belmont' in Green Lane, where he ran a successful medical practice and was in turn highly respected for his work. Taking a particular interest in the health of miners, frequently speaking and writing on the subject and improving understanding and treatment of miners' diseases, he was proud to show that the deaths from lung disease by about 1900 were at a similar rate in Redruth to the rest of the country. In 1890 he was elected the District Medical Officer (at £100 a year!) for the Redruth Board of Guardians. Dr A.E. Permewan was energetic and active in local affairs, becoming J.P., Chairman of the Urban Authority, President of the Redruth Literary Institution and playing a very active role in the Church of England. His dedication to the town resulted in several improvements in sanitary conditions and the health and life of the people of the town. His active role in politics (complicated by his devotion to the Church of England) was enhanced by his skilled public speaking. In personality he was described as sympathetic and kindly, unselfish and zealous in his profession, a true friend to the Cornish miner and a wise counsellor. His sudden death from a stroke in the spring of 1917 added another great loss to a town suffering from the wartime sacrifice and privation.

William, his younger brother, gained even higher recognition in his practice as a surgeon, becoming a leading expert in laryngology at Liverpool and attaining the rank of Captain for his service in the First World War. Another great speaker, debater and politician, he was said to have had such a beautiful voice that he might have gained a reputation as a singer had he wished to follow that course. Sadly he died in March 1926, a few weeks after the sudden death of his brilliant daughter from acute appendicitis.

None of the children of Dr Edward Permewan & his siblings had issue. His wife and daughter moved to St Agnes and lived at Sunnyside, where the medal was discovered, over a hundred years after his death.

That this family could overcome such complete dishonour and financial loss, and then return to build the respect, affection and gratitude of the people of Redruth is an extraordinary example of strength and forgiveness of the individuals and of the townspeople. Jane Permewan was clearly key to the family revival, working and raising up her children in a strongly Christian household, bearing her difficulties with grace and fortitude. She was a stalwart of the Wesley church, devout and generous with her time and her gifts to the needy, energetic as a class leader at Wesley and member of the Town Mission and Ladies Relief Committee. On the day of her funeral all the shops in town closed for a whole or a half day as a mark of respect. Dr. Edward Permewan's success and life of service is a tribute to both his effort and to his mother's great example. A brass memorial plaque was placed on the north wall of the north aisle of St Andrew's Church.

¹ Lake's Falmouth Packet & Cornwall Advertiser, Sat. 17th Feb., 1866

One of the most remembered occasions in Redruth was when Dr Permewan bought one of the first motor-cycles in town. Herbert Thomas recalls that he pluckily drove round the steep streets, but was surprised to find that he could not stop the novel machine, so went cheerily around the old mining town until he exhausted the supply of petrol "juice" and managed clumsily to push the "bike" homeward and study the mechanism at his leisure.²



This photograph from the Paddy Bradley collection is taken outside Belmont House. It is likely that this is Dr A.E.Permewan, his wife and daughter, with their car and chauffeur. Dr Permewan was one of the first people in Redruth to own a motor car.³

Can anyone add to this?

Linda Beskeen

Remembrance 2020: The War Effort in World War 11 & adoption of HMS Shikari.

We have once again linked with St Andrew's Redruth to put up a small exhibition for Remembrance 2020. Due to lockdown this is only open on Wednesdays and Sundays, 10.00am to 3.00pm. However, a link has been placed on the Old Cornwall website with a short video explaining the exhibition (found at: <https://kernowgoth.org/member-societies/redruth-old-cornwall-society/redruth-old-cornwall-society-heritage-events-projects/>)



The plaque of the symbol of HMS Shikari on a shield presented to Camborne-Redruth on behalf of the Admiralty in thanks for the exceptional contribution from the area toward the war work

² Herbert Thomas writing in the Cornishman, Thurs 8th April 1948, p.4.

³ Paddy Bradley Collection Ref: BRA_20_108

Here is more of the story of HMS Shikari, her links with Redruth and the War effort.

Second World War Savings Scheme

During World War Two the National Savings scheme, begun in World War 1, was revived as a War Savings Scheme to help pay for the necessary armaments and equipment.

Regional Savings Committees were organised and the War Savings Campaign launched. Savings stamps were issued from a value of six pence upward (2½p in today's decimal coinage). When you had saved 15shillings worth of stamps you could exchange the stamps for a savings certificate (75 pence value today). £5 of stamps would buy a Defence Bond, all of these with a guaranteed good rate of return once the war had ended.

Local Savings Weeks



Special focus weeks were held around the country to raise funds for specific projects. Spitfire Funds and Spitfire Week in 1940 had been a huge success. This was followed by the idea of raising funds to support the navy.

Plans were advanced in 1941 and in 1942 Warship Week was launched as the focus for fundraising. Towns and cities were encouraged to raise enough funds to 'adopt' a ship and its crew. Some projects would support a particular goal, others to give more general help.

Fundraising events would be held to raise contributions and increase savings

HMS Shikari is Adopted by Camborne-Redruth and Stithians

Camborne-Redruth was at that time a unitary urban area. Together with Stithians, the area worked to give their best toward the war effort.

In December 1941 The Admiralty offered the destroyer H.M.S, Shikari for adoption by Camborne-Redruth urban area, and a target of £210.000 was set for the forthcoming Warships Week fundraising. The target was to cover the cost of a new hull as she had suffered significant damage in October 1941 & was under repair.

Warship Week was a huge success, the target sum being hugely exceeded and much celebrated.

The Western Morning News, Mon. 9th March, 1942.

Camborne-Redruth Week Success

When Camborne-Redruth Warship Week closed on Saturday night the total contributed was £308,728, the target fixed having been £210,000, sufficient to meet the cost of the hull of H.M.S. Shikari. Saturday brought in £43.505. The previous highest total at any Warship Week effort organized in Cornwall was that of Penzance and district where approximately £240.000 was forthcoming. Mr. A. E. Old (chairman of the Publicity Committee) observed to a " Western Morning News representative: "The marvellous thing to me is the amount of 'small' money that has come in, in the form of War Savings Certificates and Post Office and

Savings Bank deposits The whole thing is a very marvellous achievement, and one of which everybody in the urban area can justly feel proud. " Camborne-Redruth set a lead in the county with its Spitfire Fund. We headed Cornwall in our War Weapons Week total, and now have again led the way with the result of our Warship Week." There are still a number of amounts to be collected from outlying areas, and it is estimated that the final figure will be approximately £310.000.

Presentation Plaque

In May 1942 the local Board decided to prepare a presentation plaque to give the HMS Shikari and commissioned Mr Hambley (Head of the School of Art in Clinton Road) to design a suitable plaque.

On 27th November 1942 a presentation of a replica of the ship's badge was presented by Admiral Sir Bertram S. Thesiger to Mr C. Batty, Chairman of the Board, on behalf of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in recognition of the part played by the residents of Camborne-Redruth Urban District and Stithians. A separate certificate was awarded to Stithians Parish Council.

At the same ceremony the plaque which was a gift from the area to the ship was handed to a naval officer who said it would be placed in a prominent position in the ship. In accepting it he said that it would be valued by every officer and man on board.



"It is remarkable to me that such a handsome response should come from a district which is so relatively limited in population", Admiral Thesiger.

Linda Beskeen

Cornish Buildings Group A Summary from Paul Holden's newsletter

A new three-year project led by the Cornish Buildings Group and supported by Historic England and the Cornwall Heritage Trust commenced in September 2020. The funding will support a case officer in order to help identify and monitor buildings at risk and seek solutions for neglected, redundant or derelict listed buildings, regardless of listing. Old Cornwall Societies have been invited to become involved.

How can you follow the project? Our main platforms to disseminate the project will be a Wordpress blog <https://buildingsatrisk.wordpress.com/> and our website <https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/home>

Updates and alerts will be shared via our Twitter feed: @CbgCornwall

To keep up-to-date on the project please follow our blog, when we have something to say you will receive an alert. Or you can follow us on Twitter.

It seems that some of our early focus should concentrate around building types. The main Building types we are identifying and listing are: Churches & Chapels, Mine Engine houses, High Streets.