

PNCS celebrates St. Piran's Day at March Meeting



Picture Yowann Byghan, our resident Cornish bard, as a game show host. That's the role he played as members of the Pacific Northwest Cornish Society stretched their brains at the annual St. Piran's Day celebration May 7 in Chehalis.

Yowann used a quiz format to teach the group about the life of St. Piran. This was followed by singing and Yowann's reading of his original poetry. Our resident bard is hoping to move to England or, better yet, Cornwall, so times may be limited when he shares his breadth of knowledge of Cornish language and culture with PNCS.

Bill and Jan Marshall, who had found PNCS on the Web, came for the first time. Pat and Rob Harper, guests of Fran Anderson, and Dewey Hunt, son of Fern Hunt, also

were first-timers.

President Dick Colenso, Fran Anderson, and Alene Reaugh agreed to form the nominating committee and present a slate of officers at the July 23 meeting. Alene spread the Cornish Country Store over two tables, with brand new editions of the Pasty Book a swift seller.

Laura Wolford, daughter of member Doug Wolford, has agreed to create a banner using symbols from the PNCS logo.

Cornwall celebrates St. Piran's Day

The Cornish anthem 'Trelawny' rang out over the dunes of Perranporth this month, as thousands of people showed their Cornish pride on St. Piran's Day. Wearing the Cornish tartan and carrying the black and white flag, they made their way across the sands to the accompaniment of pipes and drums. Dancers used ribbons to create a blaze of colour as they passed through a string of important landmarks, including the St Piran's oratory and the 1000 yr. old St Piran's cross, which the children decorated with daffodils. The event was just one of many which marked the weekend, but the choppy sea and freezing temperatures prevented members of Perranporth Surf Life Saving Club from bringing in the model of St Piran from the waves. A faith supper with singing and dancing was held in the evening. Thirty Breton dancers performed to music played on ancient instruments, wearing traditional Celtic costumes. Volunteers are now being sought to help excavate St Piran's old church in September. Funding has been obtained and will involve shifting 250 tons of sand. For more information visit www.st-piran.com

The President's Corner, *By Dick Colenso* (A Reflection)

Tonight I sit to write my last Newsletter article as President, since the Bylaws stipulate maximum Officer terms to be two single-year elections. I've been blessed with three other Officers who served alongside for both years. Bob, Bonnie, and Ann were wise and helpful support folk. I appreciate them, even more now after having gotten to know them better. Otherwise, with only scattered meetings none of us tend to get well enough acquainted. In preparation for the coming Annual Meeting our Nominations Committee Ladies have been working hard seeking the next slate of leaders.

I've learned some things about our Society that my role as President demands I share. First, our Cornishness is enhanced by the relationships we form. In itself that Cornish Heritage is great but has little value outside of others who understand and appreciate it. (We have all had someone ask the derivation of our name and upon saying "it's Cornish" been asked, "what's that?") Whether learning or sharing we will only be as strong as our togetherness demonstrates. Next, our Society must be a joint venture. Everyone has something to give and something to receive. To take a negative position regarding our personal involvement in either giving or receiving is a nail in the collective coffin. As we approach the end of our seventh year we need a revival of the same zeal that brought us into being. Finally, while electronics make some things easier they also make some things deadly. For us as an organization, "face time" with Cousins is critical. The span of the Pacific Northwest is large so until we successfully develop smaller area meetings we will suffer and be under some threat in the future. Being busy people, the real question is whether we Cornish Cousins will decide to include our Society with some level of priority or not. The recent search for Officer Nominee names brought an avalanche of "too busy" reasons. So who will serve? I believe every member should anticipate serving the Society in some capacity at some point in his or her membership.

On another note... I'm greatly intrigued by the subject of Cornish spirituality. Did you ever wonder why... 1] The Bible was never translated into Cornish until 2004? 2] This small ethnic nation celebrated or recognized some 21 saints? 3] What made the Cornish so unusually receptive to the ministry and message of John Wesley and Methodism compared with the rest of the Celtic peoples? 4] The Prayer Book Rebellion of the 1540's cost thousands of Cornish lives, in percentage higher than other areas and peoples? 5] Since about 2003 the Cornish movement to disestablish the Church of England has become surprisingly strong? Religion, from the Druids and Celtic Cross onward, seems to have a significant role in forming who we are today. It's part of a heritage that is larger than any single-family branch or tree.

So ends my term as President. I value the PNCS more than before because it forced me deeper into a relationship with you, the membership, and with my culture and heritage. In less than 2 months we will elect a new company of leaders. Give them the support they deserve and help make their time of leadership a success by placing and even higher priority on your participation. You will be richer for it and when your time to lead comes we will follow you.

Thanks for the honor of serving you. I'm richer for it and I hope you are as well.

GOLD! A Kelsey old-timer's story

The WES SPARGO in this story is Shirley's uncle (now deceased). The article appeared in THE MOUNTAIN DEMOCRAT TIMES - PLACERVILLE, CA., Nov. 2, 1979. Contributed by Robert Bruce.

--just started 'em up and they was standin' there -- and down comes the rocks right on top of 'em!

"So, I had t' come there that night, and the coroner come over from Auburn -- he had t' come there. A host of miners went underground and had t' dig out the ore and had t' get in t' get these two bodies outa there. They were just mashed so that they got 'em out in pieces and stuck 'em all up in sacks y'know, and tied the sacks like you would tie ore sacks and put 'em in a mine car and took 'em outta there. "So that was the first accident in that mine that I ever saw. Otherwise, it was a very rich mine. It was one of the best gold bearin' mines in the United States.

FOUR DOLLARS A DAY was what'y got. That's what I was getting. Machine miners mighta got \$4.50. I don't remember just how much ore they was pullin' out. I guess they was pullin' out 15 or 16 tons of ore a day up in the hoppers.

"The mill runned night an' day, o' course. It was continuously working'. The ore would go through the crusher and then through the stamp mill and then through the ball mill and then out across the table

into the flotation cells -- and that's where they cleaned out the gold.

"That was a wonderful mine. I can remember when I was jes a youngster, there was a croppin' of rock right there at this shaft and we used to get up on that rock and wait for deer. Bucks would come through there and I never thought -- I was just a younger 'bout 14 years old --I never thought.

"Well 'bout 20 years later I was up helping' take out that rock, and they ran it through the mill. It was rich rock, rich ore.

"They was down 2200 feet, last I heard. I went to the second world war and I came back and went over to the mine t' see the man who was in charge of it there --the government had shut it down, but he was the carekeeper there --and he said the last five levels of the 2200 feet was just blocked out and the ore was never took out. It was awful rich ore -- I don't know just how rich it was -- but it was awful rich ore.

"So that's the Sliner mine, and it's still there yet. I don't think it ever will start up again. I tried to tell a fellow, I said, 'Well, if they wanted mines, you'd think that some company would take over that mine and get all that ore. It's ready to go.' But there's nobody doin' it. It don't seem like the government wants any gold, anyway."

"Aroun' here in Kelsey there's some good mines. But I think the best mine's a li'l mine over here at Garden Valley that's owned by Dick Eberhard and his partner Butch Wylie. They come and asked me about the mine and I says, 'yes, that's a good mine. A darned good mine.' And so they bought the mine on my say so. That really is -- it's the best mine aroun' here. I know lots of em, but somebody owns the ground an o'course you can't do nothin; with it.

"ONE AMUSIN' INCIDENT I think about recently: I was at a place where they were buildin' a new house. They had it graded out with an engine -- pushed the dirt out, y'know -- and was getting' ready to put down the form for the foundation. I was watchin' that for a while and I noticed that the ground was very good lookin' ground. I looked over the bank where they had pushed the dirt and I saw some rock down there. I said to m'self, 'Y'know, that looks like that rock's got gold in it!' So when there weren't nobody aroun' I went down over the bank --it weren't very far, only a couple a three feet -- and I picked up some of this rock aroun' there. Pert' near all of it had gold in it! (continued next issue).

Was Your Great Grandmother a Balmaiden at the Clay Pits?

By Lynne Mayers

In addition to women and girls working at the mines in Cornwall there were also balmaidens employed at the clay works (which produced kaolin for the porcelain, paper and textile industries). Their tasks were significantly different, however, from those who dressed copper, tin or lead ore. They were involved in the drying, cleaning and packing processes of the china clay or china stone blocks.

The history of employing women and girls at the clay works is a much shorter one than at the mines. It is not clear when the very first balmaidens were employed there, but it was probably from the early 1820's when commercial production of china clay was becoming established. Certainly women and girls were being employed by 1828. These balmaidens were responsible for the very last processes of preparing the product for market.

Once the clay matrix was brought to the surface of the pit it was sequentially separated from the sand and mica impurities in settling pits, and the pure clay eventually poured into large open-air drying pans. There it was left to dry naturally - which could take a very long time! Clay that was collected early in the year and dried over the summer months was known as the 'summer leaving', and the clay that was collected in late summer and autumn and left to dry over the winter was known as the 'winter leaving'.

Eventually, when the clay was dry enough to lift (at 15-20% water content) two men would cut it into twelve-inch blocks, which would then be hauled out onto boards laid at the side of the pan. Balmaidens, working in pairs, would then carry the blocks away to the dressing yards. Alternatively, if good weather was anticipated, they would carry them out onto the hillside to dry. Here, the women and girls placed the blocks out in rows, and payment was made by the number of yards laid out. At Goonvean from 1833-36, it seems that contractors employing groups of women to 'take out clay' were paid 1d per yard. These women mostly worked in groups of four to eight, and in some cases the subcontractors also appear to be women, as in the case of Ann Brook and Kittey Grigg. When the clay was dry, the blocks all had to be brought back in to be stacked in the dressing yards. In 1852 a visitor described the scene when the sun pans were being emptied:

'The scene was animated by the constant passage of women with white bonnets, aprons and sleeves carrying cubes of clay for placing beneath reeders, in sheds or in their hundreds on drying grounds on the surrounding hills, by the comings and goings of heavy sand wagons, the creak of pump and horse whim and the sound and motion of countless water-engines about their endless tasks' (Stoker 1852/Barton 1966 p. 95)

In poorer weather the clay was carried straight to the yards by the women and girls, to be stacked into towers about six feet high and with the blocks laid in such a way to allow good air circulation. They then covered the tops of the towers with thatched hurdles (called reeders) for protection from the rain.

Eventually, when the blocks were completely dry and ready to be sold, they were cleaned and packed by the balmaidens. Cleaning took place in the open air at a slatted trestle table, and presumably only in dry weather (unlike the ore dressing at the mines). The women would work standing and in pairs at each table, cleaning the china clay blocks with a triangular shaped iron or steel scraper. They had to remove any algae, staining or sand grains adhering to the blocks. One writer describes them cleaning blocks by placing them on a board braced between themselves and the table, and scraping them with something that sounds similar to a spoke-shave (but no photographs or illustrations of these have been found). Balmaidens who cleaned the blocks were paid by the day (8d

at Ninestones Pit in 1828) or by the number of tons cleaned (4 or 5d at Goonvean in 1835). Finally, some balmaidens were employed to pack the cleaned blocks into wooden casks ready for transporting. At Goonvean in 1835 they were paid 6d per ton. By the end of the 19th century the daily wage had risen in line with the amount the balmaidens were paid at the mines. **Mary Ann Bray** and **Elizabeth Fisher** were paid one shilling per day for scraping clay at Wheal Henry Clay Works in the early 1880's.

In some areas, the granite was less weathered, so that the clays had not become as soft. It was here that the kaolin was extracted in the form of china stone (or white granite). These blocks were quarried (rather than the clay being washed out in a suspension) and then stored until ready for sale. It would be at this point that the balmaidens were required to clean the china stone blocks (which they did in much the same way as the china clay). Most china clay works also quarried small quantities of china stone, such as at Trethosa, Goonvaen and Gonnemorris. Only one or two works in the north of area quarried china stone as their main product, such as at Carloggas.

The greatest number of balmaidens employed at any one time at the clay works was probably between about 1830 and 1840. After then, many of the works began to install indoor 'pan dries' heated by coal-fired furnaces, which dried the clay much more quickly and effectively, and enabled clay to be dried all the year round. The clay also dried clean, so that as it was dug out it could be packed directly into casks or waggons ready for transport. Females, then, were no longer required to either lay out or stack the blocks for final drying, nor for scraping. From about 1850 the total number of balmaidens employed decreased, although some smaller works (such as Carloggas) continued to use the 'sun dry' method, until they closed in the early 20th century.

From a few surviving photographs of balmaidens at the clay works, we can see that they wore much the same as their counterparts at the mine dressing floors. As it seems that they did not work in the real extremes of weather or bad conditions their clothing is modified accordingly. In summer they wore long cotton skirts, long sleeved cotton blouses (sometimes with protective over-sleeves) and the cotton gook. In cooler weather, they wore woollen skirts, shawls and warmer padded hats. They appear to wear rather lighter shoes than the balmaidens, but presumably they only worked when it was relatively dry underfoot, and they were not required to clamber over or between heaps of ore and rubble in the course of their work. They are always shown working bare handed.

In the first half of the 19th century the balmaidens' working day was shorter than the ore dressers, being from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. (but sometimes working into the night). After about 1850 their hours were increased to be the same, i.e. starting at 7 a.m. They were also paid at roughly the same rates. However, it seems that this employment, unlike most women and girls at the mines, was not full time, but was both seasonal and weather dependant. With little or nothing to do over the winter months, they would be needed during the first reliably warm dry spells of the year, to move the blocks out for drying onto the hills or into the dressing yards. They would be needed again to bring the blocks in when they were dry, and then to clean the blocks when they were ready for sale. In this way they must have been taken on and laid off at very short notice. Surviving Cost Books (account books) indicate the irregular nature of their employment, with months when no balmaidens were employed at all (especially November to February). The clay and china stone works employed comparatively few balmaidens compared with the metalliferous mines of the same period. The largest numbers employed seem to be for the laying out of the clay, but probably no more than twenty to thirty at one time. The scraping and packing appears to have been done by much smaller numbers, not usually more than about six or eight at a time.

Because of their part-time working, it may be that the clay balmaidens are even more under-recorded in the census material than their counterparts at the mines, however there were probably never more than a few hundred employed in Cornwall at any one time. Bernard Deacon found 1.5% of females in Roche, St. Stephens and St. Dennis were recorded as working at the clay pits in 1871, and that this number had dropped to 0.1% by 1881. From this limited information, and from old photographs, it seems that it was not the custom to employ very young girls, the youngest being about sixteen years old. However, most were much older; being between twenty and fifty years old, and many being widowed. This was in line with Victorian philanthropy (bearing in mind that many of these Clay Works were Quaker concerns).

The following names of balmaidens appear in the cost book for Lower Nine-stones Pit between 1828 and 1833: **Ann(e) and Honor Nicholls, Elizabeth Hooper, Anne Warrick, Ann, Mary and Nancy Handcock, Elizabeth, Isabella and Mary Martyn, Mary Ninniate, Elizabeth Grose, July Symons, Mary Allen, Nancy Hoare, Alice Coombe, Louisa Roberts, Mary Matthews, Mary Nickell, Nancy Osborne, and Ann and Serena Hamley.**

Some of the girls or women working at the clay works in 1881 (with their ages) were:

Caroline Williams (41), Emily Dyer (20), Catherine Ann Reely (21), Ann Kellow (29), Mary Ann Hooper (43), Jane Champion (47), Mary Jane Varcoc (36), and Lily Sincock (16).

It is not clear when the last clay balmaidens were laid off. Less than a dozen appear in the 1891 census for St. Austell, and St. Stephen, but certainly none appear to have been employed after the end of World War 1. A few women were brought back into the clay works to take over some of the men's jobs during World War 1, when there was a shortage of labour, but that subject will probably wait for another article!

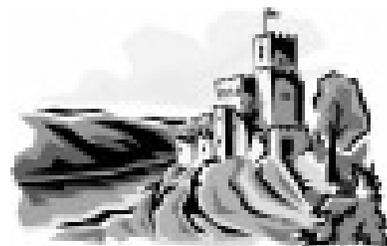
Lynne Mayers wishes to thank Brian Strathen and John Tonkin of Wheal Martyn Museum for their help and assistance in researching this subject.. She is currently researching the women and girls who worked at the mines, clay pits and quarries of Cornwall and West Devon. If you have any information at all or stories about these balmaidens (including census entries) she would be very glad to hear from you.

When I Set Out For Lyonesse by Thomas Hardy for his Cornish Wife, Emma Gifford.

When I set out for Lyonesse,
 A hundred miles away,
 The rime was on the spray,
 And starlight lit my lonesomeness
 When I set out for Lyonesse
 A hundred miles away.

When I came back from Lyonesse
 With magic in my eyes,
 All marked with mute surmise
 My radiance rare and fathomless,
 When I came back from Lyonesse
 With magic in my eyes!

What would bechance at Lyonesse
 While I should sojourn there
 No prophet durst declare,
 Nor did the wisest wizard guess
 What would bechance at Lyonesse
 While I should sojourn there.



BALMAIDENS

by

Lynne Mayers

The story of the women and girls who worked at the mines of South West England

It is estimated that between 1720 and 1920 about 60,000 women and girls worked at the mines, quarries and clay works of Cornwall and Devon. They carried out hard, highly skilful and specialised labour, and were an essential part of the operation.

Lynne Mayers has researched their working lives and their homelife, their characteristics and the occupational hazards they endured. How were they essential to the industry? What were their working conditions? Where did they live? What did they earn? What did they eat? What did they wear? And what did they do with the very little spare time and money they had?

As the mines closed, where did they go and what happened to them? This is the record of a group of remarkable women and the individual stories of the few who are traceable.



The Cornwall and West Devon metal mines and smelters of the 18th and 19th century formed a unique and quite separate part of the mining heritage of these islands. It was here that much of our nations mineral wealth was created, based in no small part on the labour of these girls (from the age of eight or nine years old) and young or widowed women. No other metal mining district was so extensive, nor used women and girls in such abundance.



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MORE MAIDENS UPSTANDING

One of Cornwall's most famous standing stone circles may have to be re-named following the repositioning of two fallen stones.

The Nine Maidens, at Ding Dong, now has 11 stones standing upright after archaeologists re-erected fallen stones that had been uncovered in undergrowth.

The circle originally had 22 stones and 19 of these stones were surviving in the mid-18th century. Until the recent renovation, only six were standing upright, three were leaning heavily and two were completely fallen.

However, Cornwall Council archaeological unit said that they did not have to change the name as many circles in Cornwall were called Nine Maidens, as the number nine was always considered magical and mystical.



This picture is of the Merry Maidens by Lamorna Cove. Taken on May 8, 2002 by Joan Tregarthen Huston.

MAY DAY SUPERSTITIONS

The townspeople of Launceston believed that a swelling of the neck could be cured by going to the grave of the latest young person of the opposite sex before sunrise on Beltane (May 1), and applying the dew, gathered by passing the hand three times from the head to the foot of the face, to the neck.

It is also said that one can improve the complexion by washing the face with the early dew from the fields gathered May first. A child with a weak back may be cured by drawing him over grass wet with morning dew on the mornings of May first, second and third.

The robin, was believed blessed among birds because a robin plucked a thorn from the crown of thorns on Christ's head. However, it was thought that if a robin came into a house someone in the household would soon die. (*from Cousin Jack and Jenny Newsletter Southwest Wisconsin Cornish Society*).

BE MY GUEST

Cornwall is known for its charming cottage-like shops. While visiting the area, my friend peered in through one window to see shelf upon shelf of interesting-looking stuff. So she went inside.

A woman appeared through a beaded curtain and asked, "Can I help you?"

"No, just browsing," said my friend.

"Fine," came the reply. "But just so you know, around here most people knock before entering someone's home."

From the June 2005 Reader's Digest.

This is a re-creation of a dish I had at a restaurant on St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly. I call it:

SCILLY COD

Fillet of Cod (as many pieces as you need)

Lemon herbs Small shrimp

Onion flakes Breadcrumbs

Cheese-grated

Roll cod in breadcrumbs, onion flakes, lemon herbs, and put on cookie sheet, top with small shrimp and cheese (grated cheddar). Bake 350 for 20 minutes. Serve with rice pilaf.

RICE PILAF

1 cup white rice

1 pkg. of onion soup mix

1 cube butter

2 cups boiling water

Put cube of butter and rice in cold frying pan, sauté until butter is melted and rice turns white. Turn heat off, add onion soup mix and mix thoroughly. Pour into a casserole with lid (2 qt.) and add boiling water, stir, cover, and bake at 350 for 25 minutes.

NEXT MEETING WILL BE AT

FT. BORST STATE PARK IN

CHENTRALIA FOR OUR ANNUAL

PNC'S PICNIC AND ELECTION.

PLEASE BRING A DISH TO SHARE.

DATE: JULY 23RD

TIME 11 A.M.-3 P.M.

Harrison St. Exit off I-5.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CORNISH SOCIETY MEMBERS PAGE

Hi PNCS Members,

Yesterday I put out the request over the Cornish-L chat list for favorite traditional Cornish recipes (with stories) that I could bring to our Annual Meeting in July.

Now I send the request to you. It would be great if we could produce an informal booklet of our favorite Cornish eats. If you send me your recipe I will assemble them into some kind of booklet and make them available at our Annual Meeting.

Please do this NOW. I will need time to assemble and this time of the year there are many voices calling - especially the garden and outside projects.

Let's go for it!

Dick Colenso,
President

Here's an easy Cornish recipe that my family loves (besides Pasties!) I use Kielbasa instead of the "impossible to get here" Cornish sausages.

Potato-stuffed Sausage

1 lb. fully cooked kielbasa or other large sausage
2 cups mashed potatoes
2 TBS. sliced green onions
1 tsp. prepared mustard
1/2 ucp shredded cheddar cheese

Cut sausage into four pieces; cut each piece lengthwise to within 1/2 in. of opposite side. Open sausage pieces so they are flat; place in a greased 11x7x2 in. baking dish. In a bowl, combine the potatoes, onion and mustard; spoon in mounds over sausage. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350 for 20-25 minutes or until heated through. Yield: 4 servings.

Submitted by Joan Huston

CORNISH COUNTRY STORE IS OPEN

WE HAVE A GOOD VARIETY OF ITEMS THAT YOUR CORNISH COUSINS WILL LOVE.

Please check the website to see pictures of all of these items www.nwcornish.org You can place an order by emailing me at softwalk2@yahoo.com .

PNCS LIBRARY

The PNCS Library exists, as of today, March 2004, in cardboard boxes at the home of one of our founding members, Joan Tregarthen Huston. The PNCS Library will always welcome donated books about the Cornish. If you have a Cornish book you would like to donate to the PNCS library you can bring it to one of the meetings or contact Joan Huston at 360-613-1718 or at joan@tregarthen.com .

HISTORY OF CORNWALL on CD

We have copies of the Parochial History of the County of Cornwall, a four volume set of books with lots and lots of information on old Cornish families. This set of books was donated to us from our Cornish member, Ron Lake, and we had them put on CD, so that all our members could enjoy them! They are available to borrow or purchase. Contact Joan Huston if interested in obtaining a copy! Joan@Tregarthen.com or phone 360-613-1718. Or go to www.archivecdbooks.com and check out all their CDs.

PNCS WEB SITE

<http://www.nwcornishsociety.org/>
Webmaster: Mickey Sieracki
Contact the Society rcolenso@bigfoot.com

PNCS ANNUAL MEETINGS

Members unanimously voted to conduct three meetings each year. The normal schedule will be for a meeting in March (St Piran's Day recognition); July (Annual meeting for election of officers); and October. For planning purposes, the July meeting will normally be at Ft Borst Park and the March and October meetings will be divided between a location in the Olympic Peninsula area for members located in the northwestern parts of the state and the Puyallup-Olympia area for those in the southern locations.

OUR NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

**Second week in January
Second week in May
Second week in August
Second week in November**

Send articles, pictures, ads, notices, whatever, to: mjrothman@comcast.net
Or mail to: **Marcia Rothman, 5345 April Dr, Langley, WA 98260** Make sure they get to us prior to the above deadlines to be included in the next newsletter.

Pacific Northwest Cornish Society Application for Membership

Name:

Address:

City:

State/Province:

Zip:

Phone:

Email address:

Webpage:

\$10 Individual member \$15 Dual Membership

List Cornish names and areas or Parishes interested in?

Send form filled out to:

Pacific Northwest Cornish Society
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The purpose of this society, organized as a non-profit Corporation, shall be educational. It shall be devoted to furthering Cornish heritage genealogical research in the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

MEMBERSHIP: Individual Membership: \$10.00
Dual Membership: \$15.00
Lifetime Membership: a one-time payment equal to fifteen (15) times the current annual dues.
Annual dues are payable as of 1 July.
Send dues payable to: Pacific Northwest Cornish Society
Address: Pacific Northwest Cornish Society, 4335 NE 69th Ave. Portland, OR 97218

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