

The Cornish are Coming!

The first week in September sees two major events in Looe, Dehwelans, which means the homecoming in Cornish and the Gorseth.

Dehwelans is a weeklong celebration from 1st – 7th September of all things Cornish, with performances, walks, talks, lectures, trips out, dancing, music, local history and heritage. There will be events all around the town from a packed programme including; award winning Cornish films in the Masonic Hall sponsored by Barclay House Hotel to local produce tasting and musical drama performances in a large marquee on the Millpool. The town will welcome visitors from the worldwide Cornish diaspora keen to immerse themselves in Cornish culture and heritage and a chance to retrace their family ancestry. Many of the visitors from the USA, Australia and Canada are descendent of the Cornish miners who left their homeland at the end of the 1800's following the collapse of tin prices. These miners' skills were highly sought after around the World. The phrase goes, 'Find a hole in the ground and you'll find a Cornish man in it!'

Polperro Smuggling & Fishing Tour

Crumplehorn

One of the day trips out is to Polperro on Monday 1st September with a short coach journey along the coast to Polperro. The tour starts at Crumplehorn Mill and continues down into the village to the harbour. Once a corn mill and in use until the 1950s, the old wooden wheel collapsed with age, but a similar wheel was brought from Tregonjohn Farm, near Grampond in Cornwall and carefully restored to working condition.

The Inn used to be a counting house during Elizabethan times when privateering was a legal occupation. Ships' captains could plunder Spanish and French ships legally and split the proceeds with the Crown. The Crown's part went to fund the Navy in further attacks against the French. The Queen's Treasury officer Lord Burleigh came to Polperro to 'count' the ship's cargo and take away the Crown's share.

Zephaniah Job

The Crumplehorn Mill was also home to Zephaniah Job, who was known as the Smugglers Banker and even issued his own banknotes, one of which is displayed at Truro Museum. Zephaniah Job changed the life of the village, for he was to become the greatest single benefactor in its long history. Over the years, Job managed the smuggling trade. He acted as advisor, accountant and banker to many of the inhabitants as well as the local gentry. He even hired lawyers when the Polperro smugglers appeared in court. Zephaniah Job's bank continued in Polperro until his death in 1822, and he was able to rebuild the harbour after it was destroyed by a violent storm in 1817.

Smuggling

When Britain was at war with its neighbours in the 18th century, duty on many goods was increased considerably, encouraging the Polperro fishermen to smuggle goods such as tea, gin, brandy and tobacco across from Guernsey. Even the Methodist preacher John Wesley remarked after visiting Polperro in 1762: "An accursed thing among them: wellnigh one and all bought or sold uncustomed goods."

To be successful, smuggling had to be properly organised. Ships had to be loaded and unloaded, often in winter or at night without lights, and to land a cargo in Talland Bay in foul weather would have been no easy task.

Privateering

Polperro boats were licenced by the Admiralty to attack and capture enemy ships which brought great wealth to many Polperro families during the latter half of the 18th century. The privateers often combined official business with smuggling, returning with cargoes of contraband to sell ashore.

In 1798 a Polperro boat called the Lottery was involved in an incident in which a Customs Officer was killed. One of the crew, Tom Potter, was later tried for murder at the Old Bailey and executed. As a result, the smuggling trade that had once thrived in Polperro began to diminish as Revenue officials determined to put a stop to it.

Fishing

Polperro has depended on fishing for generations. In the 19th century, when pilchards were landed in large quantities, the fish were processed and packed in three factories near the harbour. The fishing industry employed many men at sea and many more, with women and children, ashore in salting, pressing, cleaning and washing the fish. The pilchards were salted and cured before the oil was pressed from them using large screw presses and they were packed in barrels.

Large gaff-rigged boats known as Polperro gaffers were used for fishing. At one time there were some 40 drifters working out of Polperro harbour, today there are just a handful, but fish are still landed on the market.

Heritage Museum

The Heritage Museum now occupies a former fish packing factory, formerly owned by the Teglio family from Italy.

Located in The Warren overlooking the harbour, the Polperro Heritage Museum of Smuggling and Fishing houses a remarkable collection of exhibits and 19th century photographs as well as many items of memorabilia dating from the 18th century when both smuggling and fishing thrived in Polperro. It vividly brings to life the story of this Cornish fishing village's extraordinary history and many of the people who featured in it.

Polperro Knitfrocks

This is the name given to the guernsey sweaters knitted in one of the traditional patterns used by Polperro families. The name 'Guernsey' reflects the close links with the Channel Island. Distinctive patterns used by Polperro fishermen's wives can be seen in the museum.

Couch's Great House Restaurant

Lunch will be provided by of Richard McGeown (Executive Head Chef) who has past experience of working with the country's most famous names under Gordon Ramsay, Marco Pierre White and Raymond Blanc. The restaurant itself is an amalgam of Cornish old world charm with sophisticated Macintosh influenced modern furniture with wood burning style stoves.

Lunch menu

Choice

Slow Roast Belly Pork with Cornish new potatoes and mustard sauce

Locally caught Hake with Cornish new potatoes and a beure blanc sauce

Mushroom Risotto

Panna Cotta

Ebeneza Gallery

On the walk back to the coach, visitors can visit the building that was originally opened as a Bible Christian Chapel in 1877. By the early 1970s it was no longer a chapel but a builder's store. Founder members of the East Cornwall Society of Artists with great foresight managed to buy it in 1972 through donations and loans, and it was later converted into a gallery to display members' work. The Society, formed in 1946 now has over 120 members who exhibit their work. Paintings in all media, including, oil, pastels and watercolours are displayed alongside ceramics, woodturning and sculpture on the two floors of the old chapel.

Half Day tour Departs Looe 9.15am Returns 2.30pm
£15 including transport, lunch and museum admission
Weekly ticket holders free of charge

The full programme is available on a comprehensive website at **www.dehwelanskernow.com** or contact the co-ordinator Edwina Arkell on 01503 264160 email dehwelanslooe@btconnect.com

Gorseth Kernow

The open Gorseth is an annual event when the Cornish Bards gather to invite new Bards to join and to celebrate Cornish culture and identity. Particular regard is given to excellence in artistic endeavour, promotion of the Cornish language and people who have generally worked hard on behalf of Cornwall.

This year the gathering will be on Saturday 6th September, weather permitting, in the open, on Barbican Sports Field, East Looe at 12 noon or if the weather is inclement in Looe Community School.

Bards, following robing, will process to the Gorseth site and form a large circle, at the North-eastern point of which is a platform (The Rock) on which stand the Grand Bard, the Deputy Grand Bard, the Gorseth Secretary and delegates from the Welsh and Breton Gorseths.

The ceremony includes a symbolic call to the four corners of the Nation, made by the Horner and the ceremony of peace.

A dance by local children from Sheila's School of Dancing precedes the "Lady of Cornwall", Christie Phillips, who is escorted by the Sword Bearer across the circle, presenting a sheaf of flowers and corn to the Grand Bard, symbolising God's gifts to Mankind.

After the ceremony of the Sword the Grand Bard asks all to swear their loyalty to Cornwall. All the Bards then sing "Land of Our Fathers". The Cry of Peace, which preceded the opening of the Gorseth, is repeated before the Gorseth is declared closed.

For more information on Gorseth Kernow go to www.gorsethkernow.org.uk