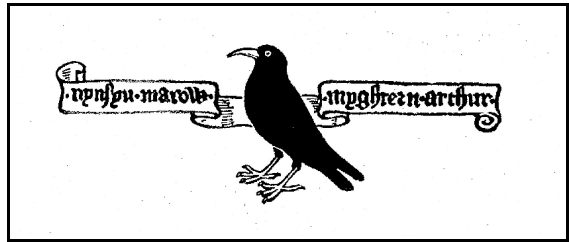


FEDERATION OF OLD CORNWALL SOCIETIES

President's Annual Report for October 2010-October 2011



It is the time of the year in which to recall the activities and hopes of the last twelve months, and my continuing pride in occupying the position of the Federation's Presidency.

Visits & events

As I mentioned in my last annual report I have hopes of visiting every Society during my term of office. For a number of personal circumstances I have not been able to stay on course, but during the year Anne and I have contrived to muscle in on a number of Societies' meetings and events.

So, in October last year we dropped in on Goonhavern and District OCS's monthly meeting. November saw us enjoying a superb Christmas lunch with Bodmin's members. In December we were invited by St Austell to be with them in Charlestown at their excellent Christmas dinner and entertainment. In January this year we were pleased to join in St Denys & District's 25th anniversary with entertainment by Proper Job. We also went to Chacewater for their AGM evening, and by invitation I provided a few words about the Federation's activities, and Anne took a selection of goodies from the bookstall. In March we were at Callington for their annual St Piran's Week luncheon. April saw us visiting Kea for their AGM, again with the mini-bookstall. Then mid-month we and Ivor Corkell were delighted to attend the official 'unveiling' of the re-created ridge-top horsemen of Padstow. Launceston invited us to attend with my verbosity and Anne's bookstall in June. In July at the invitation of Camborne OCS we were proud to attend the unveiling of the re-erected Crowan Cross (not to mention the cream tea!)

Without exception we have been made so very welcome at each Society, and it is one of the real pleasures of the Presidency to be able to meet officers and members on their 'home patch'. So, a sincere thank you to each and every one.

Once again, my continuing role as Honorary Editor and general helpmate to the Publications Officer has required considerable time and effort. Her report of the events we attended during the last year will give a good idea of that and so I will not repeat them here.

Old Cornwall's achievements

To repeat firstly what I said last year, namely, individual Societies continue the work of the movement throughout the year and rarely seek glory for their work, frequently not even local media attention, or indeed our own journal or newsletter. So I cannot record here all that has been done, of course, only those things which have come to my notice through the Federation's part in it, or reports in the Newsletter or "Old Cornwall".

I mentioned then that continuing traditions for which Old Cornwall can claim credit are the Midsummer Bonfires and the Crying the Neck ceremonies, regretting the gradual loss of some of them. However, it is a year for good news in that Liskeard OCS contrived to revive their Midsummer Bonfire for the first time since 1947, setting an example perhaps to other Societies. I know, too, that St Agnes and Truro OCSs are in discussions about reviving the customary fire on St Agnes Beacon. At the time of writing this, Truro plan to hold a Crying the Neck ceremony on Saturday 9th September in conjunction with the Farmers' Market - on the Piazza (Lemon Quay!). This is imaginative and unusual, not being in a field, and by the time of the AGM, we shall know more of how successful it has been in drawing the public's notice to one of our Cornish customs.

Camborne OCS successfully rescued and arranged the re-erection of Crowan Cross, as mentioned above. St Ladoca OCS is involved with the cleaning and repairs of its local holy well. A less successful project - to date - is the removal of the deteriorating lantern cross from the exterior to the interior of St Mary Magdalene Church at Launceston. To the three projects the Federation was able to offer some financial support.

Publications produced this year have included the "Old Cornwall" journal, of course, now in its 86th year, but also the Newsletters with which Bill Roberts does such a good job of work. I urge members to keep sending him the news items.

I worked for some months, on and off, with Revd Barry Kinsmen to revise his charming account of growing up in Padstow in the middle of the last century, "Good Fellowship of Padstow". Newly published by the Federation, with a number of additional photographs, and larger font for easier reading, it is now available from the Publications Officer at £8.50.

The "Do you love Cornwall?" publicity leaflet designed by David Stark, Chairman of St Austell OCS, has proved to be a welcome and successful innovation, providing in a pocket-able format basic information for non-members about the nature of the Old Cornwall movement. However, I believe that such publicity materials have a limited 'shelf life', and so I designed a replacement which, at the time of writing, is with the printers.

Thanks substantially to the efforts of the Publications Officer's selling techniques, our income continues to improve, providing the chance to meet our stated aims all the more effectively.

Old Cornwall Festivals

For the 2011 Winter Festival in November I was keen that the Federation should begin to revert to the style of those festivals of earlier years which celebrated the activities and achievements of Old Cornwall, and that were, in essence, festivals rather than simply an occasion to meet and hear a lecture, much as Society monthly meetings are.

To that end, I was able to persuade (without much difficulty, it has to be said) Merv Davey, our Music and Folksongs Recorder, to show us some of the traditional Cornish dances which they have researched, often using "Old Cornwall" as a source. His wife Alison kindly arranged for the young troupe known as Tan ha Dowr to give us a splendidly lively reintroduction to our heritage. The singing group, Proper Job, are known for performing some of the favourites Cornish songs, interspersed with one or two dialect stories by the late Herbert Lean of Camborne OCS. A further touch of Cornish humour was injected by the yarns of John Bennallick of St Columb OCS. The programme's content and its participants were enthusiastically received, and encouraged us to consider something similar for 2011. The main difference this year will be that, as we have found a larger venue at Liskeard Public Rooms, we can expand the Festival into a whole day. It is intended that there will be more stalls and displays, and to open it to non-members in the morning.

The Summer Festival organised by Bude Stratton & District OCS in its 50th anniversary year drew an estimated 270 members to the far north of Cornwall on a wonderfully sunny day to enjoy visits to a fascinating selection of historic and scenic locations in the area. It was a truly splendid occasion, very well planned, and my congratulations go to them, on their birthday and on the success of the day.

Changing Times

It has been a busy year for our Secretary, Ivor Corkell, and our Meetings Secretary, Pauline Hope, and we owe them an immense debt of gratitude for accomplishing all that they do.

I reported last year that our former Treasurer, Dr Libby Joyce, wished to stand down at the AGM. In fact she kindly held the reins until the New Year, and I am extremely grateful for her doing so. It was reassuring to know that our finances were maintained in a fashion befitting our organisation. Our new Treasurer, Barbara Seed of Par OCS, took office in a acting capacity, and immediately engrossed herself in getting to know the accounts and the particular foibles of Old Cornwall. As a part of that she has had a number of discussions with the Publications Officer, and has to some degree re-structured our accounts for simplification and greater clarity. Her enthusiasm and ready assistance is to be greatly valued.

After the regret with which I received Andrew Langdon's resignation as Deputy President of the Federation, it was with considerable relief that I was able to entice Robert Evans, President of Pentewan OCS, to accept nomination for the role at the last AGM. Bob is always a pleasure to work with and his experience of OC matters and sheer common sense is a great asset to us.

Finally, my thanks go yet again to all the Officers and Members of the Executive Committee who have given me their support; to the Recorders who do such fundamental work continually; and to all members of Old Cornwall, a wonderful collection of people. Is there a friendlier organisation of which to be a member? I think not.

Terry Knight, August 2011