



# Kenderwi Kernewek

(Cornish Cousins)

Newsletter of the California Cornish Cousins

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SPRING (GWENTON) 2012

## Lowen Gwenton, One and All

**Not much of a Winter**, more like a *very* long Fall, but we welcome the Spring none the less. I love to see the sunny faces of the daffs, the blossoming fruit trees and the old flowering quince that are common here in the foothills in the gardens of many of the older houses. The settlers brought their touches of home with them to their new country and those touches linger still.

**Many thanks on behalf of all of us** to Jan Davis, Judy Powell and Tom and Robyn Houts for spending the day in our booth at the Escondido Family History Fair on March 3rd. They educated, communicated and handed out our new brochures, spreading the word. Thanks also to member Ron Bowman for getting us a booth there to begin with.

**We spent a beautiful day** over in Grass Valley for the St. Piran's Day celebration on March 10th. There was a good turn out this year - it gets bigger every time as word spreads - and a great time was had by all. Afterwards, my daughter Emily, my sisters Rosemary and Ann and I went in search of our Great-great Uncle Joseph Harry's family home on Chester Street, as noted in my mother's family history files, and with the excellent help of the researchers at the Doris Foley Library in Nevada City, I now knew the exact address. Sadly, we found that the home had burned down in 1940 and an uninspired post-war building now stood in its stead.

**Needing cheering up**, we went over to the old Odd Fellows Cemetery to leave some daffs on the family graves and have a pasty picnic, leaving a crust there should there be any knockers about. The headstones in that graveyard read like a *Who's Who* of Cornish surnames. It's been awhile since some of them have seen a pasty.

**I've had some emails from concerned members** regarding the lodging situation in Bridgeport for the upcoming Gathering, asking if there will be a shortage of

rooms available due to another group rumored to be coming into town that same week-end. I have called both the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce and the Mono County Government Office and neither are aware of another group coming in. Anyway, it seems like there are plenty of rooms to go around, but to be on the safe side, members may want to consider making their reservations sooner rather than later. See "Bridgeport Lodging" on page 7.

**Given the fact that we have the privilege** of having Mike Kiernan as our speaker in Bridgeport, it seemed only natural to make "Our Migration" the theme for the weekend. I will create an area in the Hall for displaying any family photos, documents or artifacts that any members should wish to share about any aspect of their family's migration, from bibles to Cornish picks. Dick Chamberlain has generously agreed to bring his large, framed map of Cornwall so we can all stick Post-It flags to it marking our family's area of origin. I will be in possession of the key to the Hall, so security will not be an issue.

You are also encouraged to bring your records to assist any searches you might want to make in Mike's gigantic data base.

**I hope to see you all in Bridgeport**, surrounded by the stunning Sierras. As John Muir said,

*"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn."*

**Nowadays, we can gain a portion of that altitude** by automobile, which is more suited to some of us than going by foot given the state of the knees, but the good tidings, the peace, the freshness and the energy are all there for the taking. Come take some.

Oll an gwella,

*Kitty*



## St. Piran's Day: Pasties Go to the Dogs

by Tom Kellar

It seems a rite of passage for every flatlander like me who moves to this great area to first, ponder what the heck is being served up at one of our local pasty shops, and secondly, how the word "pasty" should be pronounced. I've heard folks say PAW-sty, PAAH-sty and even heard a guy in a local coffeehouse refer to them as PAY-sties.

"There's nothing better than a hot PAY-sty on a cold day," the man said.

I was at first confused as to why someone in a public place would wax so enthusiastically about the small adhesive patches used to cover the nipples of burlesque and striptease performers.

Couldn't one that had been heated burn the skin? Finally, my anemic deductive reasoning skills kicked in and I realized the man was talking about the Cornish pastry sold and celebrated in these parts.

It was with some relief, that after sitting down to speak with local woman Carol Kinyon, that I learned

that the word should be pronounced PAAH-sty (rhymes with "nasty"). Kinyon is a member of the "Cornish Clan," descendants of tin miners brought here from Cornwall during the gold rush of the 1800s. She has also gained some local notoriety for her participation in the annual Pasty Toss, a part of the St. Piran's Day festivities that happened last Saturday in downtown Grass Valley. By her recollection, Kinyon has been baking the pasties used in the event for "six or seven years."

To be politically correct, the organizers of the pasty toss decided that the pasties used should not contain people food, so it was agreed they would be filled with dog food instead. Since Kinyon had a baking background, she was asked to check with local bakers to see if they would be interested in supplying pasties for the event.

"Two different people that I checked with said, 'Oh no, we couldn't do that,'" Kinyon said. "Since I'm a baker, I looked online and found a scone recipe. I thought, 'That's kind of doughy, that might



Win this medal and you are a Cornish Champ? (Photo by Kitty Quayle)

work,' so I just played with it and rolled it out, made a circle, put some kibble inside, folded it over and made it look like a pasty."

According to Kinyon, the competitive element of the toss includes having a facsimile of a Cornish flag, black with a white cross on it, placed on the ground. Competitors are instructed to throw the pasty as close to the center as they can from a distance of approximately 25 yards. The best toss wins. Typically, local dignitaries participate, and for spectators, the event is sort of like watching a game of horseshoes.

Kinyon says initially, her pasties tended to come apart in midflight, causing her to have to rethink the original recipe.

"The first year wasn't so great, but I perfected them so that they would hold together when they were thrown," Kinyon said. "I use flour, butter, milk, a little salt and liver in the dough. After the dough is rolled out and cut, I add some kibble, then fold it over and crimp the edges and bake them."

It would appear that the canines present are the real winners of the pasty-toss competition. "If real pasties were being used, they would fall apart, and we didn't want to do that, because people are going hungry, even in Nevada County. We can't be throwing food on the ground," Kinyon said. "We invite people to bring their dogs so



While the judges are busy measuring a pasty toss, one of Grass Valley's canny canines moves in on a treat at lower right. (Photo by Kitty Quayle)

they can eat the pasties when the competition is over.”

Apparently the dogs in attendance are highly appreciative of Kinyon's efforts.

“Our former mayor, Mark Johnson and his wife, have a golden retriever and from the beginning, that dog loved the pasties,” Kinyon laughed. “Last year, some of the pasties were on a table and the

Johnson's dog got away from Mark's wife and grabbed one. It was funny when she said, ‘I'm taking him home now.’”

Kinyon believes events like the St. Piran's Day fest are important to the community, because it reminds us all of this area's rich ethnic and cultural background.

“The celebration helps us to keep remembering the Cornish heritage,

because it was the miners from Cornwall who came over here because they knew how to do hard-rock mining,” Kinyon said. “If it wasn't for them, the mines here would not have been as successful as they were.”

*\* Our thanks to The Union newspaper for their permission to reprint this article.*

## “OUR MIGRATION”

### 2012 GATHERING • BRIDGEPORT/BODIE



**When: Sign-in begins at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 8, 2012**

**Where: Bridgeport Memorial Hall, 73 North School Street**



- ◆ Full registration is \$85.00 per person and includes ✓ Friday Night Buffet Dinner ✓ Saturday Pasty Picnic Lunch, Park Entrance Fee & Tour at Bodie ✓ Saturday Barbecue Dinner
- ◆ Partial Registration is \$75.00 per person and includes everything except the Friday Dinner Buffet
- ◆ Children, Age 7 through 12, are \$40.00 and kids 6 and under are FREE.

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: MAY 31, 2012**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Number of FULL REGISTRATIONS \_\_\_\_\_ at \$85.00 each, for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Friday Dinner Buffet—Number of Entrees: Pork \_\_\_\_\_ Fish \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Pasty Picnic Lunch—Number of Pasties: Beef \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Night BBQ: Number of Entrees: Steak \_\_\_\_\_ Game Hens \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Number of PARTIAL REGISTRATIONS \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$75 each, for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Make meal choices above, excluding Friday Dinner Buffet)

◆ Number of Children, age 6-12 \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$40.00 each, for a total of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Make Meal Choices Above)

**Please make checks payable to California Cornish Cousins and mail to  
Pat Carson, 3300 Narvaez Ave., Sp. 16, San Jose, CA 95136**



# MAY DAY

## One of a Series on Cornish Customs by Kitty Quayle

*...And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

William Wordsworth

Springtime in Cornwall is purely a delight to behold. There are fields of nodding, sunny daffodils, their trumpets lifted to the sky as if to herald the return of the sun. Clotted cream-colored primroses lighten and brighten the shaded banks, mingling with the foxglove and cow parsley in the hedges. Flurries of pearly hawthorn blossoms drift on the breeze like fragrant snowflakes and all the woods are carpeted with Monet-worthy sweeps of sun-dappled bluebells.

By the time May arrives, the earth has awakened from her long hibernation with lusty exuberance; the birds are bursting with song to attract a mate, the plants are heavy with perfumed bloom seeking pollination and one can feel one's own blood rising as does the sap in the trunks and branches of the trees. It is no wonder then, that humans have long celebrated with May Day rituals the return of the fertile, good times of the warm months after the bleak, cold death of Winter.



**The Maypole. (Photo by Kitty Quayle)**

The ancient Romans are known to have held May Day fertility rites and celebrations to honor Flora, the Goddess of Spring, with chariot races, bawdy theatricals and general licentiousness. The old Celtic traditions are also of unabashed sexuality and promiscuity, with the celebration of Beltain, one of the four great festivals of the year. Beltane is dedicated to the return of the Celtic sun god Bel, who makes the crops grow and the days lengthen. The Celts also believe that this is a magical time to collect wild water (dew and flowing streams) with which the girls bathed their faces and bodies for beauty

and all folks drank for their health.

Practiced all over England on the evening before May Day, young couples would go "AMaying", spending the entire night in the forest, ostensibly to greet the May Day sunrise and bring back bunches of flowers and boughs of greens to decorate the village the next morning. These trysts were called "greenwood marriages," lasting just the one night and were sanctioned by the community. Any resulting children were called the "merry begots" and were considered to be children of the gods. Kipling wrote:

*Oh, do not tell the priest our plight,  
Or he would call it sin,  
But we have been out in the woods all night,  
A-conjuring Summer in!*

Greenwood marriages are referenced in the nursery rhyme "Here we go gathering nuts in May". As nuts are not gathered in England in May, this is thought to be a corruption of "knots in May," referring to the blossoms of the common hawthorn, also known as the "May-tree" and sacred to the ancient Celts.

Central to many May Day celebrations is the Maypole. Although its origins are lost in the murky mists of time, its symbolism in the fertility rites of Spring is obvious, as the large pole is inserted deeply into the prepared hole in the earth and then danced around by a group of pretty, flower-bedecked girls and handsome youths twining ribbons, symbolizing the coming together of male and female. So obvious in fact, that in the 17th century the Puritans, reacting in pious horror, outlawed Maypoles and discouraged most other May Day rites such as the greenwood marriages, labeling them as "Beastly practices of ye mad Bacchanalians."

No one knows when the townsfolk of Helston began the Furry Dance, only that it is one of the oldest customs still practiced in the UK. Coming from the Celtic word "feur", meaning "festival", the Furry Dance is performed during the Flora Day celebration, held each May 8th (except if the 8th falls on a Sunday or Monday, when it is held the preceding Saturday). The town is transformed by colorful flags and garlands of the first greens of Spring, traditionally hazel, laurel and sycamore, interspersed with vivid bluebells, snowy hawthorn blossoms and golden gorse.

### **The Dance is the Main Event**

The dance is the main event of the Flora Day celebration (not *Floral* Day, a common mistake, but

Flora, the Goddess of Spring) and is performed three times during the day, in the morning, at mid-day and culminating in the evening. The Children's Dance is mid-morning, with the little ones all dressed in white and wearing the symbol of Helston, the Lily-of-the-Valley. The adult dance takes the form of a dignified dancing procession led by the Mayor wearing his chain of office, along a traditional route up Coinagehall Street and through some of the shops, homes and gardens of the town. In front of the Mayor goes the Town Band, striking up the lively Flora Dance tune which is played from memory as the tune has never been written down. If you've ever walked up Coinagehall Street from the Grylls Monument, you can fully appreciate the lung capacity of the band!

The Furry Dance was originally the dance of the town's gentry, which is why the men perform in full black morning dress and tails, with grey top hats and gloves. The ladies are magnificently attired in their finest full-length ball gowns, long gloves and lavish hats. All of the dancers wear the Lily-of-the-Valley; the men on their left with the flowers facing up, while the ladies have them upside down on the right.

At several venues around the town, performances of the Hal-an-Tow are given. It is a mummer's play of mythical and historical themes in which St. George slays the dragon, St. Piran arrives and lots of disparaging remarks are made about Spaniards, in reference to the 16th century invasion. There is rather a difference of opinion on the translation of the name, ranging from "first of the month garland" to "haul on the rope", so you may take your pick.



The 'Obby 'Oss cavorts in Padstow. (Photo by Kitty Quayle)

The area around Penzance, including Newlyn, Mousehole, Paul and St. Ives, has its own version of Spring celebrations called May Horns. It was common in the time before the 20th century for the young folks to make May Horns, often out of tin cans, called "tintarrem's". A loud trumpet blast at midnight would announce the beginning of May Day (the Celts always figured their days from sundown to sundown and night was the perfect time for the Druids to light their Beltane fires atop the nearest beacon hill) and by dawn the young folk were heading out into the countryside to spend the day junketing, picnicking and stopping by farmhouses to fortify themselves with rum and milk. In the woods they would gather young branches from the sycamores and fashion May Whistles from them. When they had a sufficient number, they would return to town with the band playing, whistles blowing and folks singing. This practice had died out by WWII, but was revived earlier this century from historical records.

### The Party Continues Into the Night

Today Penzance holds its annual May Horn festivities in the grounds of the lovely Treerife House outside of town, dressing the Maypole in the morning prior to the raising of it at noon. Then comes the picnic, which includes the traditional May foods of rum, junket and heavy cake. Workshops are held for learning a number of traditional crafts including how to make May whistles. As evening draws in, the revelers parade back into town to the Admiral Benbow Inn, where the May Horns party continues into the night.

Up on the north coast, on the western shore of the Camel Estuary, the fishing port of Padstow celebrates May Day with what is believed to be the oldest fertility rite in all the UK, the 'Obby 'Oss. While the exact origin is again unknown, historians reckon that the ritual dates back to the Celtic Beltane, celebrating the fecund Spring and coming of Summer. It all begins at the stroke of midnight on May 1st, with the traditional singing by the 'Obby 'Oss Choir, calling all the townsfolk to

*"Unite and unite, let us all unite,  
For summer is a come unto day,  
And whither we are going we will all unite,  
In the merry morning of May."*

at the "stable" of one's chosen 'Oss; the Golden Lion Inn for the "Old" (and original), or at the Institute for the "Blue Ribbon", a 19th century addition created by the Temperance Movement who frowned upon the copious amounts of alcohol consumed by the followers of the "Old". By daylight the town has been adorned with colorful flags, greenery and blossoms of bluebells, cowslips and forget-me-nots. The townsfolk are dressed all in white, with sashes of red or blue identifying them as followers of the "Old" (red) or "Blue Ribbon" (blue)

‘Oss. The ‘Osses wear huge, gruesome masks and wire frames covered by black capes. He and his followers cavort around the harbor, then up the narrow lanes and through the gardens of the town, lead by taunting “Teasers,” gyrating dancers, singers, accordion players and drummers playing a hypnotic folk tune, the May Song. The ‘Oss represents the fertility symbol of the stallion, and tries to catch young maids under his cape. It is said that girls caught under his cape, called “riding the ‘Obby ‘Oss”, will conceive within the year.

Once to Broad Street, the ‘Osses, teasers, dancers, singers, musicians and onlookers (some 30,000 people flood the town for the day) dance around the magnificent Maypole, beautifully decorated and crowned with a silhouette of the ‘Oss. The weary ‘Osses finally return to

their respective stables at 10 p.m., but at the Golden Lion at least, the festivities continue into the night.

Throughout the history of the world, one mythology has given way to the next and mankind’s religious views have evolved as has mankind itself, but in Cornwall, as in many places, some of the old ways persist. The Cornish are known for being fey and superstitious, and when it comes to something as important to their very lives as a good summer, be they farmers, fishers, tanners or tradesmen, they are sure to pay homage to all the powers that be, or may be. Even as the times have changed, it still never hurts to cover all the bases.

*A little madness in the Spring  
is wholesome even for the King.*

Emily Dickinson



## Cornish Christmas Is Here to Stay

At least 40 people complained late last year when it was reported that the Grass Valley Downtown Association was changing the name of “Cornish Christmas.” The reports, which appeared in the Sacramento *Bee*, Grass Valley *Union*, *USA Today* and other publications, proved to be erroneous.

Until the error was explained, GVDA director Howard Levine was

confronted in his office and on the streets by people whose reactions ranged from disbelief to irate.

“We’re not changing the name—no how, no way,” Levine told them.

The flap began after *Nevada County Gold*, a regional tourist publication and website, said that Grass Valley’s Friday night street fairs were now called “the Sierra Foothills Christmas Festival” instead of Cornish Christmas. The publication coordinates but is not affiliated with the GVDA, the long-time sponsor of Cornish Christmas.

“We never changed the name of the festival,” Levine said to the press and during radio interviews. “We like ‘Cornish’ and we like ‘Christmas,’” he said.

Cornish Christmas is an old-fashioned holiday celebration that features the singing of the Grass Valley Cornish Carol Choir and the sight of people eating pasties on the street. It includes carolers, gospel music, jugglers, professional and children musicians, harps, bell-ringers and the Tommy Knocker Cloggers. Chestnuts roasted on an



## THINGS TO DO

**BRIDGEPORT  
BODIE**

- **MONO COUNTY MUSEUM** (open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 - 4) – Collections of artifacts, photos and documents pertaining to the area’s mining, ranching and Native American influences.
- **WALKING TOUR OF BRIDGEPORT’S HISTORIC PLACES**– Map provided by Mono County Museum.
- **FISHING**– The area is famous for its fishing, whether you are into fly fishing, trolling, shore, stream or float tube. The season opens April 30th and fishing is excellent on both the east and west Walker Rivers, Virginia Lakes and Kirman Lake.
- **HOT SPRINGS**– Soak in hot mineral waters while enjoying stunning views of the Sierras at Travertine Hot Springs, just a mile outside Bridgeport. There are numerous hot springs in this area of ancient volcanic activity, all the way down to Mammoth, which is actually built in a caldera.
- **HIKING, KAYAKING, BIRDWATCHING**– Surrounded by the stunningly beautiful Sierra, a walker can find any number of awesome hikes. Mono Lake, Mono Craters, June Lake Loop all are great options. Kayaks are available at Mono Lake.
- **PHOTOGRAPHY**– Ansel Adams took some of his best and most famous photos in this area. So can you!
- **YOSEMITE**– Just a nice drive south of Bridgeport, take a right at Lee Vining and cruise into one of the most beautiful places in the world. Carved by glaciers over millions of years, it is a site not to be missed.





Chestnuts roasting on an open fire.

open fire are offered compliments of the GVDA.

Cornish Christmas occurs every Friday night between Thanksgiving and Christmas on Mill and West Main Street from 6 to 9 pm. The streets are closed to motorized traffic.

The Cornish Christmas tradition began in 1968 when Johnny George, a donut shop owner of

## TELLING THE CORNISH STORY IN ESCONDIDO

Southern California Cousins Tom and Robyn Houts, Judy Powell and Jan Davis pose at the California Cornish Cousins booth they manned early in March at the LDS Family History Fair in Escondido.



Portuguese and American Indian ancestry, approached other merchants with the idea. The merchants recognized the uniqueness of the Cornish traditions and were determined to keep them alive.

In an interview given several years ago, Johnny George said: "We wanted a tradition that children would enjoy and remember into adulthood." Grass Valley will celebrate its 45<sup>th</sup> Cornish Christmas in 2012. – Gage McKinney

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**Scott & Leanne Parkey**  
4143 Vintage Avenue  
Pleasanton, CA 94566  
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scottjparkey@gmail.com

**John Fry**  
15151 Marne Circle  
Irvine, CA 92604  
949/857-8563  
fryconst@pacbell.net



## BRIDGEPORT LODGING



**Best Western Ruby Inn**  
[www.rubyinnbridgeport.com](http://www.rubyinnbridgeport.com)  
760/932-7241

**Bridgeport Inn**  
[www.thebridgeportinn.com](http://www.thebridgeportinn.com)  
760/932-7380

**Silver Maple Inn/Cain House**  
[www.silvermapleinn.com](http://www.silvermapleinn.com)  
760/932-7383

**Bodie Victorian Hotel**  
[www.bodievictorianhotel.com](http://www.bodievictorianhotel.com)  
760/932-7020

**Redwood Motel**  
[www.redwoodmotel.net](http://www.redwoodmotel.net)  
760/932-7060

**Walker River Lodge**  
[www.walkerriverlodge.com](http://www.walkerriverlodge.com)  
760/932-7021 - 800/688-3351

## ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ CHURCHES ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

**The Bridgeport Christian Fellowship**  
760/932-7578  
Service at 10:15 A.M.

**Infant of Prague Catholic Church**  
760/934-6276  
Service at 12:00 NOON

**Bridgeport Community Church**  
760/932-7708  
Service at 9:00 A.M.

(This information is supplied for your convenience.  
No recommendation is implied or intended.)

## The California Cornish Cousins—2011-2012 Officers

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□ *Membership in the California Cornish Cousins is from May 1 to April 30. Annual dues are US\$12.00. Membership questions to Maureen Roberts (209) 931-2722. Dues and new membership checks to Pat Carson, Treasurer, address above. Kenderwi Kernewek is published quarterly for members of The California Cornish Cousins. When reprinting articles, please credit "Kenderwi Kernewek, Newsletter of The California Cornish Cousins." Website: <http://www.califcornishcousins.org>*



**BODIE  
OR BUST!**



**21ST ANNUAL GATHERING ❖ JUNE 8-10, 2012 ❖ REGISTER TODAY!**