



Kenderwi Kernewek

(Cornish Cousins)

Newsletter of the California Cornish Cousins

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SUMMER (HAV) 2013

Another Great Gathering in the History Books!

The 22nd Annual Gathering of the California Cornish Cousins is now in the history books and it was a great event!

Outstanding Performance by GV Choir

Attendance was about 40 total including three children (thank you to Yvonne Bowers' two very sweet granddaughters for playing with my daughter!) Friday night's dinner and sing along with the Grass Valley Male Voice Choir, directed by Eleanor Kenitzer, got the event off with a festive and energetic tone. I want to thank the Choir – who share an enthusiasm for our heritage – for providing an outstanding evening of entertainment.

Saturday was spent at Malakoff Diggins (yes, that is spelled correctly) State Park where we were given a special guided tour of several historic buildings in the town of Humbug – including a furnished home, general store, pharmacy and saloon.

Wow—Homemade Saffron Buns!

Our pasty lunch was elevated thanks to homemade saffron buns provided by Kitty Quayle. Thank you Kitty! Funds were raised for the club at Saturday night's dinner, thanks to Lydia Tregoning. She made a limited number of beautiful pillows – featuring the California state flag on one side and St. Piran's flag on the other – and gave 100% of the proceeds to the club. She made 12 and they sold out before I could get one myself! She has offered to take orders for anyone who wants one, or two.

Our key note speaker, Gage McKinney never disappoints when speaking, and his talk about the countertenor Richard Jose was entertaining and informative. We were treated to a performance of the song "Silver Threads Among the Gold" by John Darlington, a member of the Grass Valley Male Voice Choir, which made Richard Jose even more tangible.

Thank you all for coming. Maddie, Lori and I had a wonderful time getting to better know our California Cornish Family.

Save the dates for three Fall Luncheons—in Southern (October 5) Central (October 12) and Northern (October 12) California.

Atascadero, New Almaden and San Diego

The northern contingent will gather at New Almaden Quicksilver Mine on October 12, 2013, which also coincides with their Pioneer Day. Phil Hosken, founder of *Cornish World*, will be in California in October and we plan on having him speak October 5th in San Diego (see page 7 for Jan Davis's announcement) and on October 12th in San Jose. Bob and Lolita Christian have announced tentative plans for a luncheon on October 12 as well. This one will be at their home in Atascadero in Northern San Luis Obispo County. You can contact them with your thoughts and ideas at Rnczoo@charter.net You'll be able to find the latest details about the Fall Luncheons on the California Cornish Cousins Facebook page.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Thanks to Pat for Counting the Coin

Finally, Pat Carson, our Treasurer, has moved back to Idaho where she will maintain her role as Treasurer this year while looking for a replacement. If you'd like to volunteer for the job, Pat promises training in Quickbooks. I offered to fly her back and forth to California on California Cornish Cousins Air Force One, normally dedicated just for the President (me), but she said she wants to just enjoy her home state in retirement. On behalf of the California Cornish Cousins, I thank Pat for her tremendous dedication and work as Treasurer.

See you in the Fall!

Steve

Cousins Explore Their Hydraulic Mining Heritage

At this year's gathering the California Cornish Cousins explored the divide between the South and Middle Forks of Yuba River. At the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park at North Bloomfield we had an excellent tour by Ranger Ann, who volunteered her time. We saw "the Little Giant," the mechanized water monitor designed by Joshua Hendy, a native of Morwenstow, Cornwall.

We learned about some Cornish families who brought their technical know-how to this region. At North Bloomfield the Glassons of St. Ives were the blacksmiths. John Glasson went on to become an officer of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad and one of Grass Valley's most prominent businessmen. Those of us who found our way to the cemetery had a moment to reflect on our Cornish forebears buried there.

At Relief Hill, five miles away, the Penrose family hammered at the forge. There James and Sarah



Penrose raised their 15 children in a remote settlement of close-knit families.

Nearby at Graniteville, Robert Curnow began a distinguished mining career that eventually took him to South Africa and Alaska. He ended his days in the high country of Calaveras County, California.

At North Bloomfield we had a perfect spring day with bright sunshine and a pasty lunch in the shade. It was well-planned by Steve and Lori Murphy, and seemingly

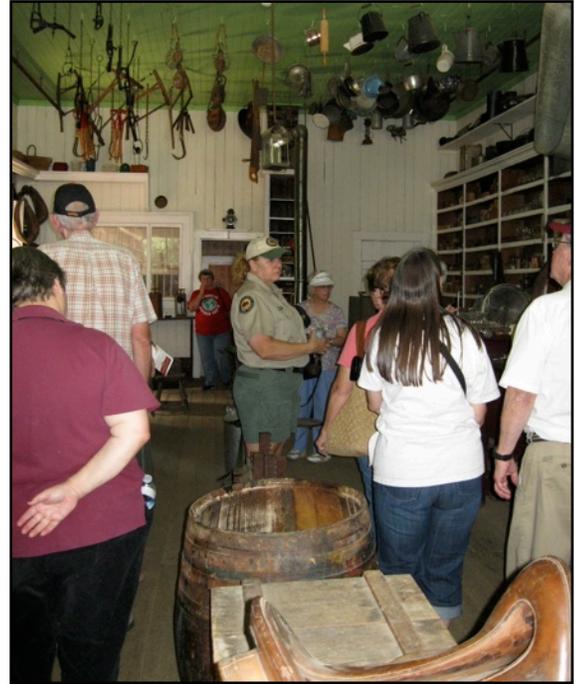
enjoyed by the children who played near the picnic tables under the trees.

The water cannons of Malakoff left beside their path of destruction a ridge on which we can read geological time. None of us regret that those cannons were silenced long ago. By such means our forebears who were part of hydraulic mining established themselves in America and gave us a place in this land. **Gage McKinney**



Cousins making the tour of Malakoff Diggins in North Bloomfield pose for the official 2013 portrait.

GATHERING PICTORIAL



Clockwise from top left: Keynote speaker Gage McKinney trades notes with Claude Edwards. Ranger Ann leads tour of North Bloomfield hardware store; Organizers of this year's highly successful Gathering—CCC President Steve with first and second ladies wife Lori and daughter Maddie. Lydia Tregoning's St Pirans pillows were a big hit at \$10 each, all proceeds going to the California Cornish Cousins.

FALL LUNCHEONS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS

This coming Fall will be a busy time for California Cousins with three luncheon meetings being planned:

- ❖ October 5—San Diego: Contact **Jan Davis**, Lemon Grove CA, 619-890-5901, jandavis3@cox.net
- ❖ October 12—Atascadero: Contact **Bob & Lolita Christian**, Atascadero, 805-461-3347, rnczoo@charter.net
- October 12—New Almaden Quicksilver Park, San Jose: Contact **Steve Murphy**, 412-855-9914, murphy.steve@hotmail.com

CHECK THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE & ARTICLES ON PAGE 7 FOR MORE DETAILS

Richard Jose—the Great Cornish Singer

by Gage McKinney

[Editor's note: The following is the talk Gage gave at the Saturday night banquet of the 2013 Gathering of California Cornish Cousins in the Holbrooke Hotel.]

At this gathering we're celebrating the 150th birthday of Richard Jose, the great Cornish singer. And in proper Cornish fashion we're doing it "dreckly"—a year late!

I suppose to most Cornwall is only "a speck in the eye of Europe." To us it's the granite kingdom, realm of Arthur, stronghold of saints, land of copper, fish and tin. It's also a land of music. For countless generations our Cornish forebears made their peninsula reverberate with song. When the Oxford and Huntington Library scholar A. L. Rowse wrote his autobiography, he remembered the music. He remembered hearing Cornishmen singing when as a boy he lay in bed at night. He wrote:

Their voices sounded sweet in the road outside, approaching, then receding uphill from the house, fading away in the distance. Even then they held an incurable nostalgia for the small boy who heard them mingled with sleep and drowsy warmth, the security of the walls of home. I recognize it well, that nostalgia, which has underlain all my experience of life, in one form or another, like the not always explicit burden of a song.

In the American West the Cornish produced an unequalled exemplar of their musical culture and the greatest of all of Cornwall's remarkable singers. Richard Jose (1862-1941), was born in Lanner, a village along the road from Redruth to Falmouth. He became America's first popular recording star. Jose had the rarest of voices — a true countertenor of which each generation produces only a few. The mature countertenor sounds in a range between tenor G and treble C, considerably above a tenor's range. Joe Pengelly, a former BBC announcer and champion of Jose, described it best:

Where even the Pavarottis and Domingos of the tenor world are at the limit of their upward range, Jose is getting into a sort of tenor overdrive, not the falsetto of the male alto, but a powerful bright voice reminiscent of a boy soprano and all the more powerful because the voice is supported by the lung power of an adult man.

Centuries before Jose, and especially in the churches of England, such voices were prized. The composer Henry Purcell, who in the 1660s grew up singing in Westminster Abbey, was a countertenor. Eventually such singing fell

out of fashion, but not necessarily in Britain's far west where old ways are never readily relinquished.

Jose descended, we think, from a line of singers that stretched back to the troubadours of the high Middle Ages. His ancestors probably sang at village fairs, on saint days and at sheep sheerings. His mother, a miner's daughter, and his father, a copper miner who signed his name with an "x," were Methodist voices in the choir at Lannar. There as a boy Dicky Jose sang and received his musical training. The little chapel rang with the sound of his remarkable voice.

Sifting Fact from Fiction

From there Jose's personal story is as stirring as his voice and yet it may never be told with complete accuracy. His was one of the earliest of Hollywood biographies and his story was embellished until no one can distinguish the actual from the apocryphal. When his father died, his widow and five children were left destitute. Dick's mother reluctantly agreed to send him, the oldest son, to an uncle in America. Dick was probably fourteen or fifteen when he left home, though the Hollywood account gives his age as eight. The boy departed the Redruth train depot with a fourth-class ticket in his pocket and a label sewn in his jacket bearing an address in Virginia City, Nevada — 4,500 miles away!

Young Dick passed a fearful winter crossing from Plymouth to New York by singing hymns and carols and boosting the morale of fellow passengers. They called him "the singing kid." (The Hollywood account included a ship wreck.) Bewildered and penniless in New York, fed by a Swiss family on the overland train, Dicky arrived in Virginia City to find that his uncle had disappeared. Somehow young Jose fended for himself in the strange, cracked wilderness of yucca trees and buzzards by delivering bread to miners.

After a time he crossed twenty-five miles of rugged desert to try his luck in Carson City. Destitute and running out of hope, Dicky Jose drew on his one sure talent. He walked into a saloon where he was allowed to sing for his supper. According to the story (as his publicist told it), when the hardened men looked up from the gambling tables there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Soon there was a ballad about Jose himself:

Youthful minstrel of the Comstock,
Carson's barefoot ballad boy.
Who filled saloons with Cornish tunes
And miner's hearts with leaping joy.

Jose's career as a saloon singer did not last, though his singing went on. Fearing for his innocence, the Women's



Cornish tenor Richard Jose.

Temperance League of Carson City had the sheriff remove him to Reno, where he miraculously stumbled into a relative, blacksmith Bill Luke. Young Dick continued his singing beside the forge, building up the barrel chest evident in later photographs and the lung capacity that sustained the later recordings.

His voice brought him to the attention of the Rt. Rev. Whitaker, Bishop of the Episcopal Church, who arranged music lessons. Later he joined a minstrel troupe touring the mines; and so, instead of developing a repertoire of classic music — as did the other great singers, the Italian Enrico Caruso and Irish John McCormack — he had a repertoire of popular song.

On to the Big Apple

From stages in the west, Jose was recruited to a minstrel company in New York City. From there his fame grew and his portrait often appeared on the cover of sheet music. He won a gold medal for ballad singing at Carnegie Hall, toured with the musical *The Old Homestead*, and traveled to South Africa, where the diamond mines were said to have closed so the miners could hear him.

From the stages of America and the mining camps of the world, news of his success filtered back to Cornwall. In the summer of 1895 he returned there. As Jose told the story, he walked at night from Redruth station to his mother's house and "in the window of every house in that

Cornish village there was a candle burning." It was his village's tribute.

Jose recorded—as did Caruso and McCormack—for the Victor label. His 1904 recording of "Silver Threads Among the Gold" was America's biggest seller—the first popular hit song. Caruso said to him: "Ricardo! You are the world's greatest ballad singer."

No Electronic Amplification

Richard Jose's original acoustic recordings were made from 1903 to 1909 without electronic amplification. In the recording process the power of the voice was dissipated in registering on the wax master, and yet the voice is so strong that the listener hardly notices. One appreciates in every phrase the strength of a workingman's lungs, and one can believe the story that Jose's un-amplified voice once filled Madison Square Garden theater when, in the era of silent films, he sang, synchronizing his song with the lips of an actor on the big screen.

Here now is a 1905 recording and one of Jose's favorites: "I Cannot Sing the Old Songs." [Editor's note: Search for "Richard Jose, I Cannot Sing the Old Songs" to access a recording on You Tube.]

The other recordings we have include Jose's most famous numbers such as, "With All Her Faults I Love Her Still," "Dear Old Girl," "Time and Tide," and his biggest hit, "Silver Threads Among the Gold." Left unrecorded were the more maudlin numbers he popularized, such as "Grandfather's Footsteps" and "A Mother's Grave."

The irony of Jose's "I Cannot Sing the Old Songs," is that old songs were precisely the ones that made his reputation. Many of the songs that Jose recorded he had made popular years before recording equipment was available and when his voice was still young. They extolled the virtues of another time, idealized the attachments of long-married couples or lamented the loss of a partner. The songs came from a period when age was still venerated, when family stability was paramount, and when adults were still the principle audience for performers. His lyrics suggested a respectability that later generations would think sentimental or corny, but they expressed exactly the kind of respectability that working class families were seeking. He was a voice of fidelity and self-restraint.

He Practiced What He Sang

There was nothing inconsistent in the lyrics Jose sang and the life he led. By all accounts he was a clean-living, charitable man who put his energies into his work and his Masonic affiliations. Owing perhaps to his experiences in mining camps (and not to a



pledge to his dying father, as some accounts say) he didn't smoke or drink. After he made hit of "Silver Threads" he sought out its destitute composer and prevailed on the Victor Company to pay him royalties. When he visited Cornwall he sang for chapel benefits and in hospital wards. In the Spanish-speaking communities of California he became known as "Juan Ricardo José." Though his surname was old in Gwennap parish, and possibly of Roman-Celtic origins, Jose erroneously assumed that his ancestors were Spaniards who had wrecked on the Cornish coast. Building on that identity, he further gilded his story, gratifying an age that loved him.

Appointed Deputy Real Estate Commissioner

As Jose's singing career drew towards its close, he relied on his reputation for integrity and was appointed deputy real estate commissioner in California. Working from a San Francisco office, he helped elevate professional standards.

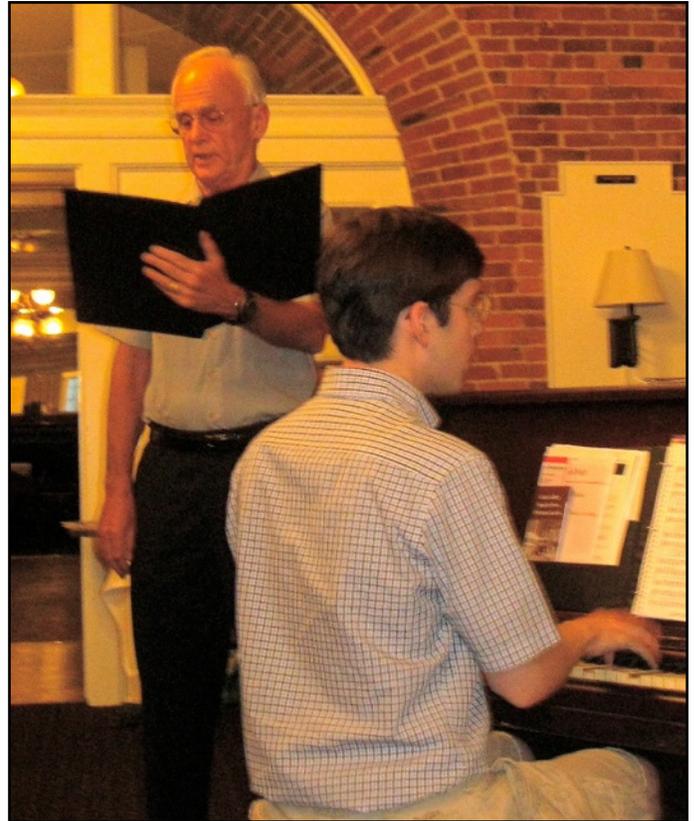
He eventually enjoyed a sudden resurgence of popularity as a singer on "The Ship of Joy" radio program, sponsored by Shell Oil, that originated from KPO in San Francisco, and was heard over affiliates from Los Angeles to Seattle. Singing the old songs, such as "When You and I Were Young, Maggie," Jose became a favorite on the nostalgic show that aired weekday mornings from eight to nine. He fit well with the program's mixture of music, jokes, poems and inspirational readings, and with its genial master of ceremonies, "Captain Dobsie." The radio host said of Jose:

When Dick approached the microphone, he closed his eyes. He seemed to be shutting everything from his view and instead, picturing before him memories of great audiences. He lived over again the enthusiastic plaudits from his concerts of years ago in America and abroad.

The volume of fan mail Jose received forced the studio to hire additional secretaries.

During his long career Jose had many Nevada County connections, including his younger brother Almond, who sang in the Grass Valley Carol Choir. Jose's music was so popular in Grass Valley that the 1897 Methodist Christmas concert featured J. R. Jenkin performing "Silver Threads" on solo cornet--hardly a seasonal selection. As late as 1931 Rosie Johns, a local musician, was playing the old tune at the Sons and Daughters of St. George Christmas party.

The Rowe family, who came to Grass Valley from Lanner, were his cousins and resembled him in more than appearance. In 1994 our member Jean Rowe Keeny told me: "My grandfather, David Stephen Rowe, was a tenor who sang locally as a soloist." Jean was only eight when her grandfather died, but she can remember him singing



Retired judge John Darlington, accompanied by Joshua Jones, sings *Silver Threads Among the Gold* at the California Cornish Cousins banquet.

"Silver Threads." Jean said: "He must have had a recording of Richard Jose and was inspired by him."

When Jose died in October 1941 even the *New York Times* published an inaccurate account of his life. Regardless of how Jose's story is sentimentalized, the quality of the voice is true. "The voice," writes an antique-record enthusiast, "is technically one of the most beautiful to be preserved at any time in a century of recorded sound."

That voice (aside from the recordings) is gone, but Cornish music lives on. Here in Grass Valley it lives on at Christmas in the voices of the Cornish Carol Choir, and all the year round in the Grass Valley Male Voice Choir, directed by our own Eleanor Kenitzer.

It's my pleasure now to introduce to you one of the principle voices of that choir. John Darlington is here to sing once again Grass Valley's all-time favorite song: "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

[Editor's note: The program concluded with John Darlington, a retired Superior Court Judge in Nevada County, singing "Silver Threads." He was accompanied by Joshua Jones on piano.]

Cousins to Attend New Almaden's Pioneer Day, October 12

The California Cornish Cousins will hold their northern California luncheon on Saturday, October 12, at Pioneer Day at New Almaden. The event is being held in conjunction with the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association (NAQCPA).

At this year's lunch, NAQCPA will dedicate sculptures at its outdoor museum. The sculptures represent miners and other people in New Almaden history. One of the figures will be dedicated to the Cornish miners.

Lunch will be served at the outdoor museum, which is beside the main entrance to the park.

The New Almaden Quicksilver Park is located 12 miles south of

downtown San Jose. Follow the Almaden Expressway south and turn right at New Almaden Road. The Casa Grande that houses the New Almaden Museum is located near the center of the village of New Almaden. The main park entrance and outdoor museum are about 1/4 mile south of the Casa Grande.

Plan on arriving between 11 and 11:30 am. Lunch will be served at noon and costs \$10 per person and half-price for children under 12. (Bring cash or check payable to NAQCPA.) Parking is available nearby. You'll see tents and tables for eating and vendor displays.

New Almaden was the first site of mechanized mining in California, as the mining of quicksilver (mercury) predated the Gold Rush. Cornish miners installed rails and operated steam engines there in the early 1850s.

Eventually several hundred Cornish families lived at New Almaden. America's first Cornish bard, W. J. Trevorrow, was born there. The Harry, Tregoning, Pearce, Faull, Paull and Hicks families (to name a few) called New Almaden home for generations.

The New Almaden Museum will be open following the lunch and dedications. It represents the history of the mining era and includes the story of the Cornish miners and their families.

Editor's Note: Special attraction at both the southern and northern luncheons will be the attendance of Phil Hosken, founder of Cornish World magazine. Phil will be in California from his home in Cornwall and is expected to talk about Richard Trevithick of steam carriage fame in San Diego and at New Almaden.

Phil Hosken Will Speak in the North & South

Philip Marrack Hosken, former publisher and editor of *Cornish World* magazine, will be visiting CCC luncheons in San Diego and at New Almaden this fall. Born in Redruth and educated at Truro School, after a few years in banking he entered commerce with the family firm of HTP Motors Ltd., Truro, and F W Woolworths. He then joined Marshalls of Cambridge for some years becoming manager of various British Leyland motor dealerships and managing director of the distributorship in Jersey, CIs.

A change found him managing a brickworks in North Wales followed by a quarry in Jeddah and the Chrysler International distributorship in Saudi Arabia. He returned to the U.K. to run a retail business in North Wales and eventually retired to Cornwall.

In Cornwall he launched, published and edited *Cornish World* magazine for the Cornish Diaspora for six years before leading a team



Philip Hosken

to build a replica of Richard Trevithick's famous 1801 Camborne steam carriage. A bard of the Cornish Gorsedd, he travelled in many parts of the world and, for

several years has been chairman of the Trevithick Society where he co-authored a book on the building of the locomotive and contributed to the Society's journal and newsletter.

He wrote *The Oblivion of Trevithick* as a response to the many enquiries received by the Trevithick Society concerning the lack of credit awarded to Trevithick for his remarkable contribution to mankind. This was followed by *Genius, Richard Trevithick's Steam Engines*, an abridged version of the first book based on the same research.

SoCal Cousins Plan Fall Luncheon in San Diego

Mark Saturday, October 5 on your calendar! The Southern California Cornish Cousins will meet at Old Town in San Diego for a tasty Mexican lunch at Casa Guadalajara. As noted elsewhere on this page, our guest speaker will be Phil Hosken, founder of *Cornish World* magazine.

Consider coming early and spending the day or weekend in Old Town, a California State Park. There is so much to see there, history, dancing, colorful flowers, margaritas (YUM!), etc. Amtrak has a convenient stop there so you don't even have to drive on the freeways. There is plenty of free parking for those who do drive.

Please call or email me before October 1 if you are planning to attend so I can make reservations. We will each order off the regular menu, but I will need to get a table large enough for the group.

Jan Davis, Lemon Grove CA, 619-890-5901, jandavis3@cox.net.

The California Cornish Cousins—2013-2014 Officers

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□ *Membership in the California Cornish Cousins is from May 1 to April 30 of the following year. Annual dues are US\$12.00. Membership questions to Kitty Quayle (530) 313-0421. 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>*

SAVE THE DATE

23RD ANNUAL GATHERING

CALIFORNIA CORNISH COUSINS

PASO ROBLES

MAY 30-31, 2014

