Churks, Clidgy & Doodle-Dashers

Hayle Tales and Trails

Including memories, archive photos, expert articles and new historical walks around Hayle, St Erth, the Dynamite Works, Gwithian Tin Streams and Godrevy

Compiled and edited by
Lucy Frears, Hayle Oral History Project

Churks, Clidgy & Doodle-Dashers

(cinders, toffee & blow-out toys)

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Special thanks to Winnie Bassett and Hamilton Hawkins;
great storytellers who made the project interesting from the start.

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We have tried to check all facts but if you notice a mistake please contact us.

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If you'd like to share your stories or learn more about Hayle's history, please call 01736 753962 or pop into the Brewery Office, 1 Sea Lane, Hayle, TR27 4DU on a Tuesday or Thursday morning 10am – 1pm or look online: hayletaleshome.blogspot.com or www.haylearchive.org.uk

If your first edition copy has loose pages, please come to the Brewery Office and swap it for a replacement (no DVD).

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CORNISH MINING

Front Cover: Regatta.
(Hayle Community Archive)

Back cover: Riviere Towans chalets.
(Hayle Community Archive)

Back cover inset: Commercial Road.
(BT169H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

In memory of
John Russell Frears 1936–1999 and Uwe Schütz 1963–2009

Love, thanks, kisses
Louis Frears, Sam Frears, Chris Ryan,
Kate Benson, Andrea Frears, Naomi Frears Hogg.

Three Hall girls dressed up for the Towans Carnival. (Sally Hall)

Introduction

by Lucy Frears, Hayle Oral History Project Coordinator

I am delighted that there has been enough demand for another print run of this book – thank you Heritage Lottery Fund for making 1,500 copies possible. *Churks, Clidgy and Doodle-Dashers* contains the memories, the history, of all kinds of people from the Hayle area. Oral history feels gently revolutionary. It's a move away from history (his story) written by those with education and power (traditionally men, often lords and monks for example), but instead gives everyone a voice. Instead of just hard facts, hours of recordings have been edited down into stories that are funny, sad, informative and sometimes a bit naughty. We have written them as they were spoken, to help you 'hear' the voices as you read. Of course you can listen to memories on our blog: http://hayletaleshome.blogspot.com/

We only started the project in 2009 so it was a race against time and a great community effort to get this published by December 2010. Thank you to all involved. We trained children and adults to interview over 100 people, to transcribe interviews, edit audio and scan photos. The oldest people we interviewed were born in 1913 but I also looked over other sources, for example the letters of Henry Elywyn Vercoe provided by his granddaughters. Henry left Hayle for South Africa in 1912 but guided his daughter around his hometown through regular letters during her visit in the 1950s.

We added our scanned photos to Hayle Community Archive's collection and many of these are in the book, as well as photos from Cornwall collections and the Imperial War Museum. Thank you all for your generosity.

I invited historians and local heroes to share their experience and to put the recorded memories into some kind of historical perspective. Some sections in the book have been written by these historians (*By* Brian Sullivan for example), others have been created from interviews (*With* Bob Cleave), with an attempt to keep their turn of phrase. Thank you for your voluntary contributions and for allowing us to question facts so rigorously before printing!

All these elements have been pulled together, often to create walks. I like to enjoy history and this beautiful area through walking, and luckily, Hayle residents and visitors demanded walks from us too!

Churks, Clidgy and Doodle-Dashers never pretends to be a comprehensive history but is simply a peek into people's lives and legacies in the Hayle area. Throughout the book I mention other publications and groups who can offer more in-depth information. Hayle Community Archive and Hayle Library have copies of other books about Hayle.

Yours, Lucy Frears FHEA, Hayle, 7 February 2011.

The first edition was a multimedia book with a DVD containing archive film, animations made with recorded memories, audio clips of stories and transcriptions of whole interviews. Unfortunately this was too expensive to repeat for this run but the material can be found on our blog or at Hayle Community Archive. Due to space restrictions some photos are reproduced at a small size in the book. To see a larger version you can look at the book online: http://hayletaleshome.blogspot.com/ or visit Hayle Community Archive at the Brewery Office, TR27 4DU.

Ivey Oats (right) camping in style on Hayle Towans with a friend. (Gay Hingston, Hayle Community Archive)

Churks, Clidgy & Doodle-Dashers
Hayle Tales and Trails

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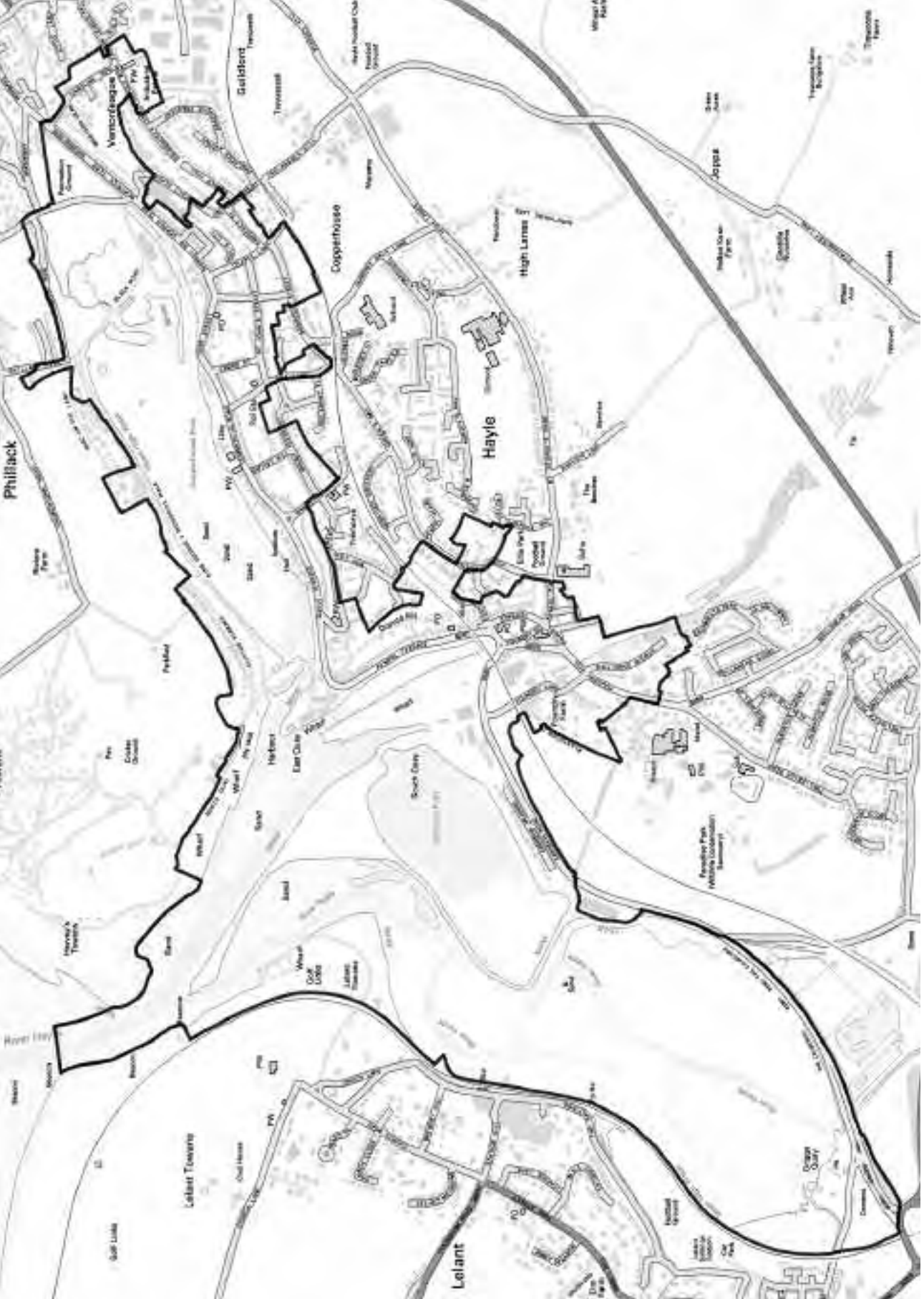
Hayle from the air showing the canal to Copperhouse and Paddy's Mill. (Hayle Community Archive)



Cornish Mining World Heritage Site boundary for Hayle. (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010)

Prologue **Hayle: A Centre of Industry**

By Ainsley Cocks, World Heritage Site Research and Information Officer

The development of Hayle during the 18th and 19th centuries was largely directed through the influence of hard rock mining in the wider landscape and, specifically, that of the allied smelting and engineering industries, which were established locally in consequence. A complex set of social and industrial relationships were to be established in Hayle through the sometimes bitter rivalry between two competing organisations with a diverse range of mercantile and mining-related interests: Harvey & Company, and the Cornish Copper Company. These businesses were to dominate economic activity in the locality and create the geographically distinct urban settlements of Foundry and Copperhouse that today comprise the town. Hayle was also to be shaped by both its proximity to the mining hinterland and the rail networks, which developed to serve this, and its coastal location in relation to the Welsh coal fields and copper smelters with which there was to be considerable reciprocal trade.

Extensive quays, canals and sluicing facilities were constructed by Harvey's and Copperhouse, and during the late 18th and early 19th centuries Hayle was to grow into the most significant mineral shipping port in Cornwall. This well-defined industrial focus, represented through the excellent survival of many of the industrial and urban features from the time, was to see it included within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site, or Cornish Mining World Heritage Site, as inscribed by UNESCO in 2006.

Between the early 18th and the third decade of the 19th centuries, copper ore was smelted into 'fine' copper metal at, firstly, Penpol and, later, Ventonleague, with the name Copperhouse coming into use for the locality following the establishment of the Cornish Copper Company's (C.C.C.) furnaces at the latter by 1758. While the C.C.C. works was to become probably the largest surviving copper smelter in south west Britain by the turn of the 19th century, by 1819 the intensive competition posed by the South Wales' smelters at Swansea and Neath had become overwhelming, and copper smelting ceased locally. Evidence for this activity remains, however, through the use of cast copper slag blocks, 'scoria', in the construction of local buildings and structures such as Phillack Church Hall and the aptly named Black Bridge.

Coincident with the decline of copper smelting was the rise in engineering manufacture, which was to become the new industrial focus of Copperhouse.
The foundry of Sandys, Carne and Vivian, later Sandys, Vivian and Co., which, under the name of Copperhouse Foundry, was to produce some of the finest steam beam engines of their kind. In parallel with this activity at Copperhouse, however, was the rise of engineering and mercantile trade at Foundry to the west, which claimed its name from the works established by John Harvey in 1779. This grew through the early years of the 19th century to become one of the most respected companies for the manufacture of steam engines and mining equipment in the world. Harvey's and Copperhouse, along with the Perran Foundry at Perranarworthal, were to manufacture the largest steam beam pumping engines ever built.

The name Harvey's is also closely linked to that of Richard Trevithick, inventor of the high-pressure steam engine and the world's first practical steam road car. Richard was married to Jane of the Harvey dynasty and this relationship is represented in the town through the former White Hart Hotel, now the Masonic Hall, at Foundry Square. Originally described in St Erth parish records as 'Foundry Public House', this was constructed in 1824 to provide an income for Jane while Richard was travelling in South America following the installation of his revolutionary steam engines at the mines of Cerro de Pasco, Peru.

Today, good examples of housing exist alongside key industrial and public buildings, which together reflect the social divide of the labouring and managerial classes: the high-density terraced housing of the workforce contrasting with the villas and mansions of the artisans and managers. The industrial remains in Hayle are also extensive with the buildings and quays associated with Harvey's and Copperhouse foundries, providing an excellent indication of the importance of engineering and related trade to the town.

The visitor can now more readily explore the features that made Hayle a driver of the Industrial Revolution by the means of town trails created by the Hayle Townscape Initiative in 2009, which differ in content from walks in this book. The town trails can be downloaded from Hayle Town Council's website: www.hayletowncouncil.net/walks.htm.

Please visit www.cornishmining.org.uk for further information about World Heritage status and the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site.

Harvey's 70-inch Bull Engine cylinder 1887. (Hayle Community Archive)

Parkandillick Engine, St Dennis made by Sandys & Vivian & Co. in 1852. It is known as the Dog's Paw Engine as a dog's footprint can be seen above Vivian. A dog ran across the sand mould before the cast iron was poured! (Chris Quick, Hayle Community Archive)

Popular Hayle Beach (Gay Hingston, The Ark, Michael Williams)

'I've never had a holiday in my life. I'm nearly eighty-eight. Never wanted a holiday 'cause I've had everything I've ever wanted from life in Hayle. I love my rugby. I was a tomboy. I went rugby every match. I loved my cricket; I went my cricket every summer. I loved the beach, loved swimming, I loved to go down on the weir, dig bait and when you had the weather go off in the country, pick blackberries, pick up old sticks an' all the stuff for the fire. Lovely. Happy as larks, now what I want to pay to go on holiday for?'

Winnie Bassett

Henry Harvey, Father to 21

By Philip Hosken, Trevithick Society (after research on the Tonkings by the late Dorothy Selby-Boothroyd and Michael John Harvey Tonking)

Although Henry's position as the head of the most important company in the history of Hayle is well known, his position as head of what was probably the largest family in town is seldom mentioned.

Historians record Henry's social life by simply saying that he was never married. They paint a picture of an astute but caring boss of a very progressive engineering business. There was another side to Henry however: he had a partner called Grace Tonkin from St Just. This was no secret affair; Henry had installed Grace and their family at Mellanear House on Foundry Hill while he ostensibly lived with Elizabeth (Betsey), his unmarried sister, at the family home in Foundry House. Between 1818 and 1837 Grace bore Henry 10 children, nine of which survived. They were baptised as Grace Tonkin's children (eight described as 'base,' meaning illegitimate). All except one had the middle name Harvey and all had the surname Tonking, to distinguish them from the more usually spelt Tonkin.

Anne, another of Henry's sisters, married John Harvey, a well-to-do carpenter from Helston but not a relative. They were to have six children before both parents died in quick succession leaving their offspring as orphans. Henry and Betsey took them into Foundry House and looked after them.

Another sister was Jane, the wife of the errant Richard Trevithick. She was a resourceful woman with six children. While Richard promised much, he seldom delivered and a great deal of the cost of bringing up his children fell to Henry. We know from correspondence that they looked upon him with gratitude for being a generous, thoughtful uncle.

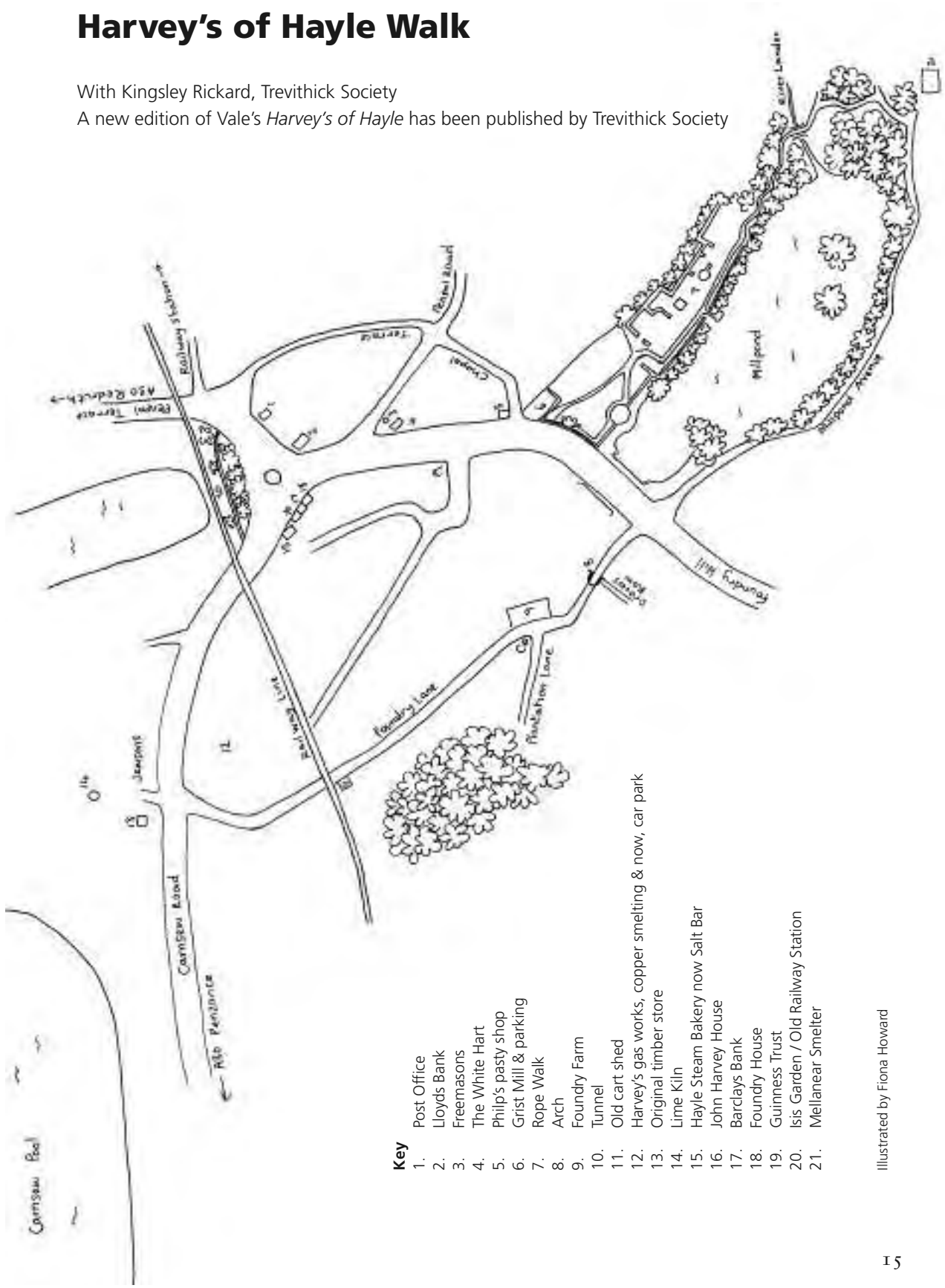
Henry was a good father to all 21 children, saw that they were well cared for and received a good education and a solid start in life. Many were apprenticed, not only within the Harvey works but throughout the country. Prior to his death in 1850 he made over property at Stithians and St Gluvias as a trust fund for his illegitimate children and their mother. This ensured that his children were not disadvantaged by his lack of a marriage.

It is frequently and erroneously said that Henry's father, John, had forbidden him to marry the housemaid, but John had died in 1803 about 15 years before the liaison. We do not know why Henry never married.

Harvey's of Hayle Walk

With Kingsley Rickard, Trevithick Society

A new edition of Vale's *Harvey's of Hayle* has been published by Trevithick Society



Key

1. Post Office
2. Lloyds Bank
3. Freemasons
4. The White Hart
5. Philp's pasty shop
6. Grist Mill & parking
7. Rope Walk
8. Arch
9. Foundry Farm
10. Tunnel
11. Old cart shed
12. Harvey's gas works, copper smelting & now, car park
13. Original timber store
14. Lime Kiln
15. Hayle Steam Bakery now Salt Bar
16. John Harvey House
17. Barclays Bank
18. Foundry House
19. Guinness Trust
20. Isis Garden / Old Railway Station
21. Mellanear Smelter

Illustrated by Fiona Howard

Harvey's of Hayle Walk

Stand by the viaduct in the car park next to Foundry Lane.

Hayle grew from two separate communities. The eastern end developed around the Cornish Copper Company and the western settlement around Harvey's of Hayle. The Cornish Copper Company started in Camborne 1754 but moved to Hayle in 1757–58. A copper company with smelters, it eventually entered engineering and produced beam engines that went all over the world. The Robinson Engine at South Crofty is one of its most celebrated engines.

John Harvey, a blacksmith from Gwinear, moved to Hayle in 1779 and set up Harvey and Company. He had eight children. Of the four boys, two died young, one here in the works at 15. It was the son, Henry Harvey, who made Harvey's of Hayle. Harvey's got off to a shaky start but became a successful enterprise. In 1847, Harvey's as a business was listed as millers, engineers, iron founders, iron and coal merchants, ship builders, ship owners, ironmongers, wholesale grocers, tea dealers, general merchants and rope makers.
It employed a thousand men.

Harvey's delivery vehicle. (Dick Bowden)

'Harvey and Co was a law unto itself, weren't they? To be honest, they had the run of everything. They was a powerful family. I don't think of all the work we done over there we put in planning. We used to be told in the mornings go so and so and do so and so. So that's that.' *James Noall*


Harvey's shipyard, SS Ramleh c.1890. (BT3-H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)


Illustrated picture of Harvey's working foundry. (Hayle Community Archive)


SS Ramleh, the largest ship built by Harvey's. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)


Harvey's ship builders 1898. (Hayle Community Archive)

The Cornish Copper Company resented the competition of Harvey's and leased land right up to the South Quay. Harvey's had nowhere to expand initially until 1869, when the Cornish Copper Company ceased trading. Harvey's expanded considerably and took over the quays. Behind *Jewsons*, Harvey's built the large SS Ramleh, its largest ship, approaching 4,000 tons.
Most of the buildings that we can still see date from 1780 to 1820.
This area opposite *Jewsons* is the site of the copper smelting shop and Harvey's gas works, not Hayle Gas Works, Harvey's had its own. Nothing remains now.


SS Ramleh. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

'Our Fitting Shop was in a yard opposite Jewsons and in there was a round building where we kept packings for the steam cranes, for the joints. In another building runnin' long the road was the Blacksmith's Shop. There was another building running parallel to the Railway Viaduct, then going over in the next yard was a mine shaft. You drew fresh water from there. In the yard at the top end was another long shed where during the war we had parts for the shipping – we made barges for D Day. The American fitters shared the Fitting Shop with us so we had some of their rations.' *Alfred Williams*

'I had an uncle working in Harvey's timber yard and he mentioned that there was a job going on the maintenance staff. I went over there the following day and seen the foreman and he took me on. I started work in February 1949 and I worked there 33 years. It was a family-run business, you had the bosses there, you used to see them every day. They had a boast, "From your foundations to your chimney pot."' *James Noall*

The South Quay was built in 1819, when Harvey canalised Penpol Creek so that ships could come all the way up. Its timber works was where *Jewsons* is now. Harvey's engineering side closed in 1903 and it turned over to being builders' merchants. You can still see the original timber store; the bricks have gaps to allow a draught through. Everything else has been demolished.


A part of Harvey's works. (Hayle Community Archive)

Penpol Terrace and creek. (The Ark, Michael Williams)

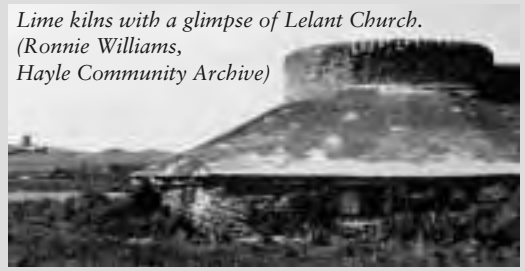
Dock workers with coal on South Quay. (Hayle Community Archive)

'Sometime in the '30s, there was a very big fire at Harvey's timber yard at Hayle. Where I lived in the Towans you could see the blaze from there. All of the sky lit up with a red glow.'

Donald Thomson

'When I started first, the timber yard had a dozen men. Our gang, which was the maintenance gang, had two masons, a painter and about five carpenters. I was there as a labourer. I suppose we was about eight in the maintenance gang and the foreman Gartrell Harvey [no relation]. I suppose there was a dozen on the quays. They had men there shovelling up coal, bagging up coal, then 25-odd dockers, crane drivers and labourers working on the quay.'

James Noall



Lime kilns with a glimpse of Lelant Church. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

There was also a lime kiln behind *Jewsons* that has been demolished.

'The Lime kiln – we had that as our store down Carnsew. We used to keep all our stuff in there. There used to be one over on North Quay, too. They had them for a mess hall. That was bigger than the one down Carnsew.'

James Noall

The Great Western Railway didn't reach Penzance until 1852, but Hayle features in early railway history since the Hayle Railway Company started in 1837. The present road loops around to go through the viaduct twice. In the loop was the original railway station (now Isis Gardens), demolished in 1948. The railway went along Penpol Terrace (the grassy bank by the harbour) and out across the original drawbridge and up what is now King George V Memorial Walk. It left Hayle by *Loggans Fish Bar* and up an incline called Steamers Hill at Angarrack and on to Camborne, Redruth with spurs to Portreath. The railway had numerous sidings down through the docks here and through the back to Harvey's works as well. In 1852 the viaduct was built and Harvey's put in a link to Hayle's wharf, which was in use until the mid-1960s for shunting. No locomotives on the wharf, but horses were used.

Foundry Square and railway viaduct, c.1960. (Winifred Allen, Hayle Community Archive)

Steam train on viaduct. (Georgina Schofield, Hayle Community Archive)

Part of the tension between the Cornish Copper Company and Harvey's arose over keeping the harbour free of sand and silt. Copperhouse used to release water from the other arm of the estuary (Copperhouse Pool) at half tide, and the flood of water would rush down and push the silt out. Harvey's did the same. Behind *Jewsons* Carnsew Pool was enclosed; there are still some lock gates in a poor state there. It was the pool for this arm of the harbour. The two companies argued for 30 years and did their best to thwart one another's shipping movements so one couldn't bring vessels in. A lot rested on sluicing.

'When I started [Harvey's] had a mass of property. We had to tend to property all the time. They had the timber yard and all the buildings on the harbour. Foundry Quay had buildings all the way down, used to be the cement works there under the viaduct. Across the main road where the car park is now there used to be buildings all along the road there. All Drivers Row belonged to Harvey's. We used to spend a lot of time up there repairing. Out by the ponds those cottages used to belong to Harvey's. They had them up St Elwyn's Church. There was houses up Commercial Road. Opposite the War Memorial was the old Police Station. They had half a dozen houses up there between the old Police Station and the Baptist Church. That mill up where the car park is, that belonged to Harvey's. Phoenix Store, up Copperhouse, that was a big store. Their properties wasn't nothing at all; mind you they was only half a crown, 2s 6d a week. They sent a carpenter up to put a new lock on – that was well over a month's rent. They had to get rid of them. They sold them off cheap, some of them we pulled down, those by the Steam Packet and in St Elwyn's Churchyard. Foundry Hill was sold off, I think £250/ £300 each. All the roofs was going, everything was old, [only an] outside toilet, they was in a poor state really.' *James Noall*

Walk up to Foundry Lane (there's a little walkway next to the road or you can walk to the road and turn left). Walk to the large (now empty) building to the right, with the empty green space and large granite blocks on the left.

This is the main building complex. This was one of the Pattern Stores. Storage was difficult, as they had to make a pattern for every single item they cast. Opposite was a cart shed with different bays until it was vandalised and caught fire. Next to it are modern buildings built on derelict land that helps raise funding for Harvey's Foundry Trust to save other buildings.

'One of my grandfathers worked for Harvey's and one worked for Vivian's. Copperhouse and Foundry were a bit at odds with each other but I don't think my grandfathers were! Floyd was a draftsman at Harvey's. He drew all the boats and things that were built.' *Vivian Bray*

'On the right hand side, opposite side of the cart shed for the farm, Hosken Trevithick Polkinhorn used to have a cargo in of all groceries. Every second week they had a steamer come in called the Victor. When I was a boy she used to come from Liverpool loaded with boxes of dried fruit and everything in the grocery line. That's where they used to weigh up all their dried fruit – sultanas, currants and sugar.' *James Noall*

Walk forward to the corner of the road and turn to face the way you have come. Foundry Farm entrance is behind you.

'Mr Trevarthen came down and mentioned the lifestyle of the old Mr Harvey in the later days of his life. If you take the walk opposite the farm up to Foundry Lane and then turn left towards St Michael's Hospital, you will see a reservoir dug out in the ground. This fed the old Foundry of Harvey & Co.'s. Water was brought in from Water Lane, in an aqueduct with a drain on top of a hedge running down over the old buildings. Mr [Henry] Harvey built a summerhouse on the little island in this particular pond and Mr Trevarthen said his father had to row [Harvey] across in his little boat. He was a big gin drinker and he would take over two or three bottles of gin. Mr Harvey may spend two or three days there completely sozzled, and Mr Trevarthen [would] see if he was alright.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

One of the oddities of the site is this door with the "Keep clear at all times" sign. It's a lengthy tunnel constructed of brick, possibly the source of moulding sand. It has a dead end against the Pattern Shop wall.

The tunnel on Foundry Lane that ends at the pattern shed. (Hamilton Hawkins)

'After I took over [Foundry] Farm I was ploughing a little meadow and my wheel went down into a pit and I filled it up. Sometime later the same thing happened again and I found that sand had been taken from there. Thinking about it I remember Mr Rotherow [Harvey's Head Horseman] telling me that the first job that the boys used to do when they were starting was to go into the field opposite Carnsew and pull sand from there down to the Smelting Works. I located this place where they had the sand. Before the Railway was put through there was a tunnel running into this particular field and there was a seam of sand. What sort of sand it is I don't know but it was used for smelting and the same seam of sand can be found in St Erth, which was used by Holman's of Camborne. This sand was dug out and wheeled out in wheelbarrows into the carts and then taken down to the Smelting Works at Foundry. [When they built some bungalows] they came across the old sand pits. All that was supporting the top was pillars which they left around. When I went through it there were some of the old miners' iron bars stuck in with a little round disk on it where a candle was stuck in. If we go behind the old Trevithick and Polkinhorn Corn Store in Foundry Lane you can see the end of another tunnel which went into the same ground taking this sand out.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

Tunnel under the 'old mowey', the little meadow behind The Old Piggery. (Hamilton Hawkins)

Walk into the courtyard for the studios at Foundry Farm

Foundry Farm dates from 1820. Everything was horse-drawn and at any one time it's said that 800 to 1,000 horses were being used in this area pulling ore from mines, moving goods to the quays and so on. Here there were stables, mills for food for the horses and a grain store with some original cobbled areas.

‘Mr Rotherow [Harvey’s Head Horseman] can remember anything from 18 to 20 horses tied up to a rail up the top end of the yard to be shod after they all left work and there was three blacksmiths, three wheelwright men and carpenters all in that yard. They’d have to re-shoe the horses ready for work next morning. The horseman had to wait until the shoes were fitted because the horses always came first. These were always fed with hot corn. In Foundry Farm there used to be several big boilers with a fire underneath where they use to cook all the corn for them. One was situated in the farmyard itself and the other two were in the tunnel opposite the farm. They’d have to come and light the fire and get the food for these horses and then they would go back and have their breakfast. They’d be ready to start at half past seven. The horses would then be harnessed up into the wagons pulling sand from a tunnel at Foundry Lane down to the Smelting Works. The horses would carry coal from Hayle to the various mines such as Geevor, Levant and Redruth. Mr Rotherow can remember picking up a Bob (beam) for a Cornish pump ’round about 35 ton in weight with 31 horses. He and a boy pick it up and took it to Killifreth Mine – that’s the mine just outside of Chacewater. When they come to go up the hills, there be always a team of horses helping to pull them up and they got as far as Redruth and part way down the hill the shoe drag chain broke on the wagon. He had to whip the horses fast and got down through without any damage done. The horses were cut up. The people of Redruth presented him with a Silver Whip for his bravery and avoiding a serious accident.’ *Hamilton Hawkins*

Walk out of Foundry Farm. Turn left. The Old Piggery is on your right.

‘[Henry Harvey’s] ambition was that he would build a big mansion up on Higher Carnsew. He was going to build a driveway up there which is through the big doors in between the two big walls [The Old Piggery]. That was going to be his fine weather drive and his other one was through a tunnel. They dug a tunnel out and it goes right through and comes up near where there’s a bungalow built now.’

Hamilton Hawkins

Go under the arch and stop.
Henry Harvey made the arch for decoration in 1843.

Foundry Lane arch. Drovers Row is on the left, Foundry Farm on the right, the Old Piggery is straight ahead. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘One morning at Foundry Farm about seven I heard a clatter so I went out. There was a digger, compressors and everything else all lined up so I said, “What you boys going to do?” He said, “We’re going to knock this arch down!” I said, “You are not!” “We are, we’ve got instructions to do it from West Penwith Council.” I brought my twelve-bore shot gun out, I never had no cartridges in it. They took fright and the arch was saved. Back in the twenties when the railway went through, there was another arch down there and Council just took that arch down and the stones and beautiful cast gates were never seen anymore.’

Hamilton Hawkins

Chapel Terrace shops. (Hayle Community Archive)

The road on our right is Drovers Row, formally Drivers Row, a series of cottages for the drivers who looked after the horses.

'When I took [Foundry] farm over, on a Sunday morning [I] used to get five old gentlemen coming down and have a cup of coffee with me and we used to chat about the old times. They were the old horsemen of Harvey & Co.'s. One was Mr Rotherow, another was Mr Roberts. Mr Rotherow, [now in his] 90s, was the head horseman for Harvey & Co and his father worked for them before him. They used to live in Drivers Row. Back in those days, starting from the top, there was one little cottage with one up and one down. When you got married you moved down – two down and two up, until as people died off or retired, the horsemen would move until you got down to the bottom which was the Head Horseman.'

Hamilton Hawkins

Walk down to the end of the road and cross over Foundry Hill. Walk left past the Millpond and stop by the car park near Millpond Gardens, opposite *Philp's*.

Here you can carry on with this walk or take an additional short circular walk around the Millpond area, described by Georgina Schofield in the next chapter.

Foundry Square 1903. (Hayle Community Archive)

Walk towards the viaduct to the front of the White Hart Hotel.

The White Hart Hotel was built in 1838. To its left is a smaller building built in 1824, which is the Masonic Hall, the original White Hart. Henry Harvey built it so that his sister Jane Harvey could earn money to support herself. Jane was married to Richard Trevithick, who was a bit of a wanderer. It is said that he went to South America for years and, being a good family man, wrote home twice!

Coliseum wall. (Eve Ellen, Hayle Community Archive)

Coliseum wall. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

The "Coliseum" was on the site of the Guinness Trust houses. It had beautiful arched windows in cast iron frames but was demolished in the 1980s.

'John Harvey, father-in-law of Richard Trevithick, manufactured many of the parts, technologically well in advance of anything in the world, for Trevithick's inventions. It is to the seldom attributed credit of Harvey that he managed to cast Trevithick's safe high-pressure boiler. One of the boilers was used on Trevithick's road locomotive that climbed Camborne Hill on Christmas Eve 1801.'

Philip Hosken

The main road out of Hayle was here, Foundry Square and Penpol Road, not along the front winding through Copperhouse. Lloyds Bank was Hayle's original cinema and also Foundry Market. The Royal Mail Sorting Office beyond was a smelter that was bought out by Harvey's in 1855 and promptly demolished – it was competition. Mill Row, now called Tremeadow Terrace, is visible. It was built to house the mill and rope workers. You can also see Isis Gardens (between the roads and under the viaduct), the site of the original Hayle train station and named after the first Hayle Lifeboat.

Richard Trevithick. (Trevithick Society)

Tea treat procession in Foundry showing the old Train Station. (Eileen Couch, Hayle Community Archive)

The Isis lifeboat. (Barbara Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Old Train Station. (Hayle Community Archive)

Steam engine made with Harvey's expertise. (Hayle Community Archive)

Chapel Terrace. (Hayle Community Archive)

On the left is an attractive building that was originally built by Harvey's but was later run as the Cornubia Biscuit Works by J.H. Trevithick & Co. The company became part of the group Hosken, Trevithick and Polkinhorn – H.T.P. They were millers with Loggans Mill at the other end of Hayle.

Foundry Square with The White Hart and Cornubia Biscuit Works (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Foundry Square flooded c1900. (BT47F with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Harvey's Office, Foundry Square. (Harvey's Foundry Trust)

Barclays Bank was originally Harvey's Emporium. Harvey's had a monopoly over its staff. You worked for them during the day and you spent your money [Harvey's own coin system] on Saturdays in Harvey's shop because there were no other shops. The main road, now Penpol Terrace, has shops built in the front gardens, because once the Truck Act was repealed in 1831 other shops could open.

Penpol Terrace with shops built in gardens after being allowed to open rival shops to Harvey's Emporium in 1831. (Hayle Community Archive)

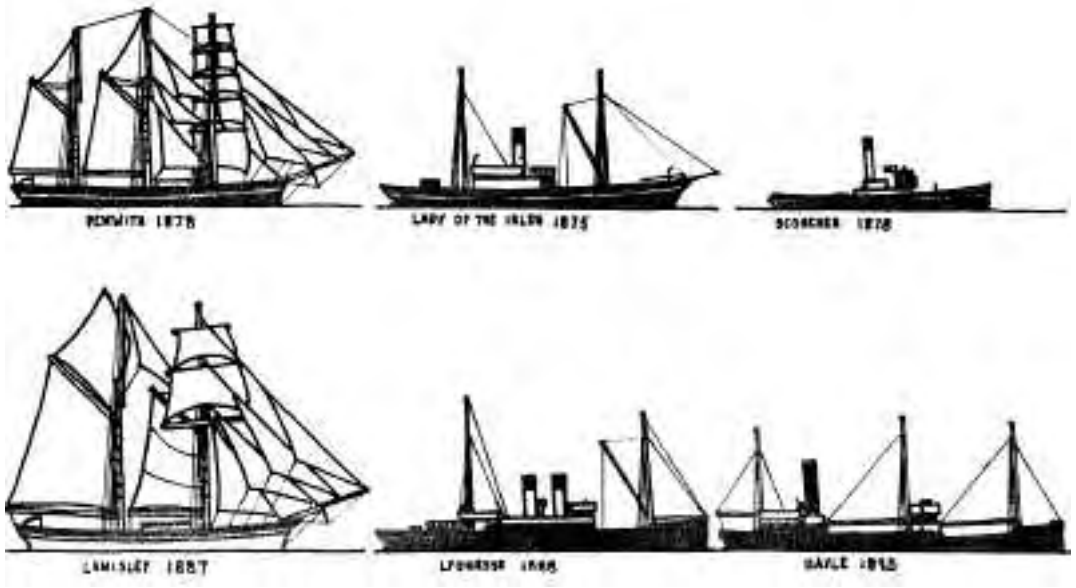
'I would be sent down to the bank to cash a five-pound note which was a huge piece of paper. On the back it would have names and addresses crossed out so if you lost it, people would know who it belonged to. When you changed it in the bank you'd cross your name and address out.' *Brian Sullivan*

Penpol Terrace showing the tracks that led to North Quay. (Hayle Community Archive)

Chapel Terrace from the viaduct. (Vivienne Lawrence)

Hayle Steam Bakery, next to the viaduct. (Hayle Community Archive)

Cast iron columns from Harvey's office, now John Harvey House, are still visible through the windows. The boardroom was in the room above with two huge walk-in safes built of ships plate where ledgers and cash were kept. Walking to the back we pass what was Hayle Steam Bakery and also H.T.P. At the back of John Harvey House the wood-clad drawing office can be seen above.



Ships built by Harvey's of Hayle. (Teacher's Book on Hayle, Vivian Bray)

'I went into Harvey & Company offices as an office boy when I was 14 in 1944, which was very exciting in World War II. In the office upstairs in the building under the clock tower in Foundry Square I operated the small PBX switchboard, which had extensions in the various parts of Hayle; the harbour office, the timber yard and of course I had to make long-distance calls – shipping priority to ship owners in Cardiff or London and it was left to me to do that. I also had to get the ledgers out of the strong rooms – massive things, 40 pounds or so weight with copperplate writing. The men stood all day at chest high desks. The head clerk was Tommy Johns, a widower in his 60s. He was rather short so had a little wooden platform that he stood on. He kept the master ledger and lived in the art deco white houses opposite the War Memorial. The girls had high stools and two were typists but they did keep small books and odd petty cash books. The other man was Mr James Bird Read; in his 90s, absolutely stone deaf. He was the company's secretary and looked after finances. He'd come back because Higgins, the company secretary, had been called up to the war. J.B. Read was sent out to close the South African operation that supplied engines and pumps in about 1900 so he was knocking on when I was down there. Gosh, he could run up a line of figures like that … He had a winged collar and rode a bicycle down from beyond St Michael's hospital. Of course the roads were empty then and he'd come sailing down on an ancient bicycle. He could swear like a trooper while Mr Johns was a very upright church organist; very straight-laced gentleman. It was an open plan office. There'd be utter silence; the scratching of pens, no one on the phone and J.B. Reed would say "Damnation!" Mr John would put his pen down and say, "Disgusting, disgraceful, someone should talk to him!" Of course we could talk about J.B. Read because he was deaf. The deputy chairman was Cecil Harvey, one of the Harvey family. He was non-stop and he ran the place. I was the general dog's body there. They simply ran Hayle Harbour and the huge builders' merchants. They had this whole area of Cornwall to themselves. Harvey's had builders' merchants at Falmouth, Camborne, Penzance and St Ives. They owned Porthleven Harbour and had their yard there. In Truro, they had ships dropping off timber. Of course they had Hayle Harbour as Lloyd's agents. Harvey's were dealing in builders' materials, shipping and control of the harbour – the foundry and shipbuilding were all in the past. They had a small fitting shop and a carpenter's shop and they did own quite a bit of property in Hayle. They had a huge timber yard and sawmills.

'The interesting place in that office was the drawing office in the wooden extension at the back. It was 50 years since the foundry had been closed and the drawing office was exactly as if they were coming back at nine o'clock tomorrow morning to start work, even the drawing pens were there. They didn't have easels, they had long tables at each high window, inclined mahogany tables with drawers containing drawings and plans of ships, plans of engines. I used to go in there and eat my sandwiches at lunchtime and have a look round. There were half hulls of ships' models they made with all the plates drawn on them all stacked up in the corner. Harvey's firm wasn't interested in its past at all. They more or less gave everything away. I'm sure if I'd asked for one of the models they would have given it to me. Now they're a thousand pounds each. All the Harvey's ships' models disappeared. Before my time they had huge beautiful models of their ships in glass cases about 10, 15 feet long with incredible detail of historic ships. In 1937 they gave seven or eight of these to Penzance Museum. I've got the names of them from The Cornishman but… they're gone! Where did they go? What happened to Penzance Museum?

'The general foreman, Gartrell Harvey, would unlock the strong rooms in the centre of the building upstairs made of riveted ships plates, no windows and probably two inches thick iron doors, one main door and then the secondary door – you had a vestibule and then the strong room. He would unlock the office, every door. I would come in at quarter to nine, get the ledgers out and put them at the appropriate place where people used them and go into the chairman's office and change the blotting paper. He had the most beautiful eight-day ship's chronometer in a box, brass bound and I'd unlock that. The chairman would come in at nine o'clock and check his watch against that. At nine o'clock the staff would come in and the directors would wander in.

'Cecil Harvey would just want his extension, "Could you get me Cory & Co in Cardiff?" It was a very antiquated phone system. I would dial '0' for the operator in Penzance. It was wartime priority and would jump all the personal calls. I would say, "Shipping priority to Cardiff 1234." She might say, "Half an hour delay to Cardiff," and then ring me back. If there was no delay you would hear a buzz and then a voice would say, "Truro, give me St Austell," buzz, "St Austell, give me Plymouth," buzz, "Plymouth, give me Exeter," "Exeter, give me Taunton," "Taunton, give me Bristol," "Bristol, give me Cardiff," "Cardiff, give me 1234 please," and then a voice would say "Cory and Company." "Oh, is Mr Smith there?" "Yes." "Could you hold the line, Harvey of Hayle would like to speak to him." And then I'd call Cecil Harvey and say, "Your call to Cardiff."' *Brian Sullivan*

'I left school when I was 14. My father he was a shoemaker in Hayle, course he [got to meet] most people and got a job for me. I started work with Harvey & Co of Hayle learning my trade as a fitter and turner. We started work eight o'clock. We had steam cranes on the quays, North Quay, East Quay, South Quay that would unload coal, timber and we used to maintain the steam cranes. When they broke down we made most parts to get it going again. Part of my apprenticeship was [that] I left work at four o'clock went home washed and changed and [then] came back into Harvey & Co.'s office to work from five to six o'clock. I worked the switchboard and chop up wood for the fires, make sure the coal was there and, well, just help out in general in office. I was paid five shilling a week and of course mother had most of that.' *Alfred Williams*

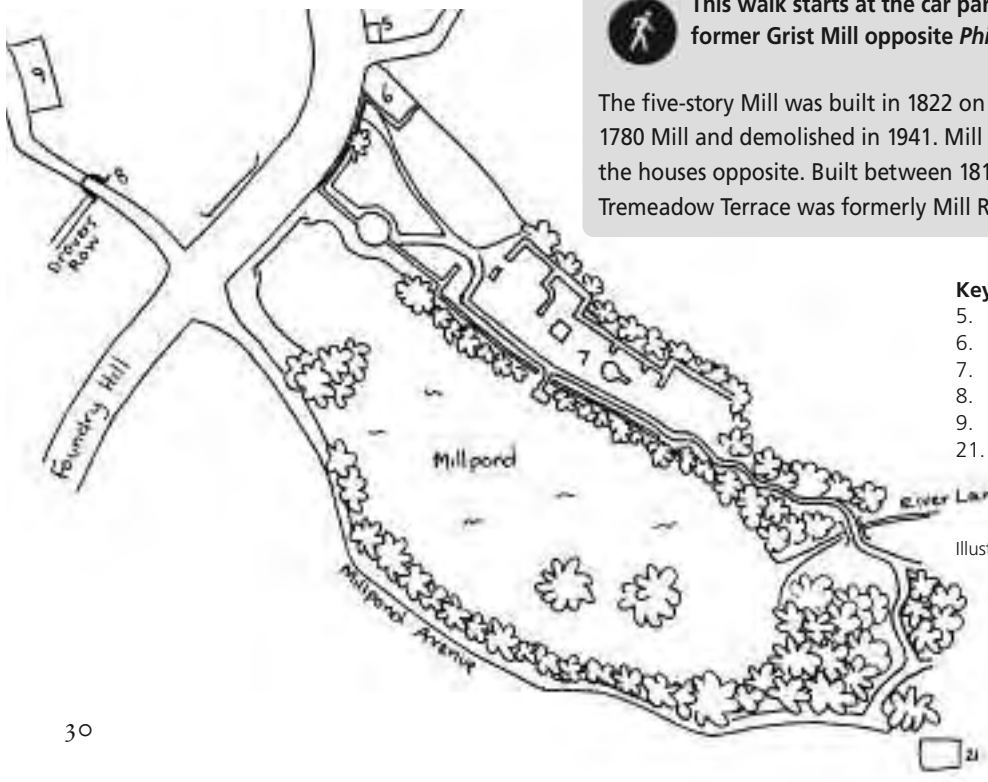
Millpond Walk

By Georgina Schofield, Hayle Community Archive

Millpond or Swan Pool. (Hayle Community Archive)

This walk starts at the car park in front of the former Grist Mill opposite *Philp's*.

The five-story Mill was built in 1822 on the site of the 1780 Mill and demolished in 1941. Mill workers lived in the houses opposite. Built between 1819 and 1825, Tremeadow Terrace was formerly Mill Row.



Key

5. *Philp's* pasty shop
6. Grist Mill & parking
7. Rope Walk
8. Arch
9. Foundry Farm
21. Mellanear Smelter

Illustrated by Fiona Howard

The walls of Harvey's Hammer and Boring Mills now surround the present-day Millpond Gardens. The Penpol Foundry operated from 1776 to 1913. The two Millponds were the power source for its three water wheels and steam generators. The Upper or Swan Pool is man-made and dates from 1780.

Follow the Rope Walk Nature Trail through the wood.

Rope was made there from 1793 to 1916 and the Key-Hole Pit once held the engine for the Rope Capstan.

'The shallow arches of the ropewalk seem to mirror the famed Maidenhead Bridge – on the London to Bristol Railway. People thought Isambard Kingdom Brunel's shallow arches rather than high ones would never hold, but they are still in use.' *Brian Sullivan*

Penpol Leat flows alongside the Rope Walk joining with River Lander beside the Butterfly Garden. Cross the bridge and turn right which leads into Millpond Avenue.

'Harvey's had a tin smelter (as Williams Harvey) here from 1837 to 1905. In World War One this derelict smelter, called Mellanear, was opened up again for a short time.'

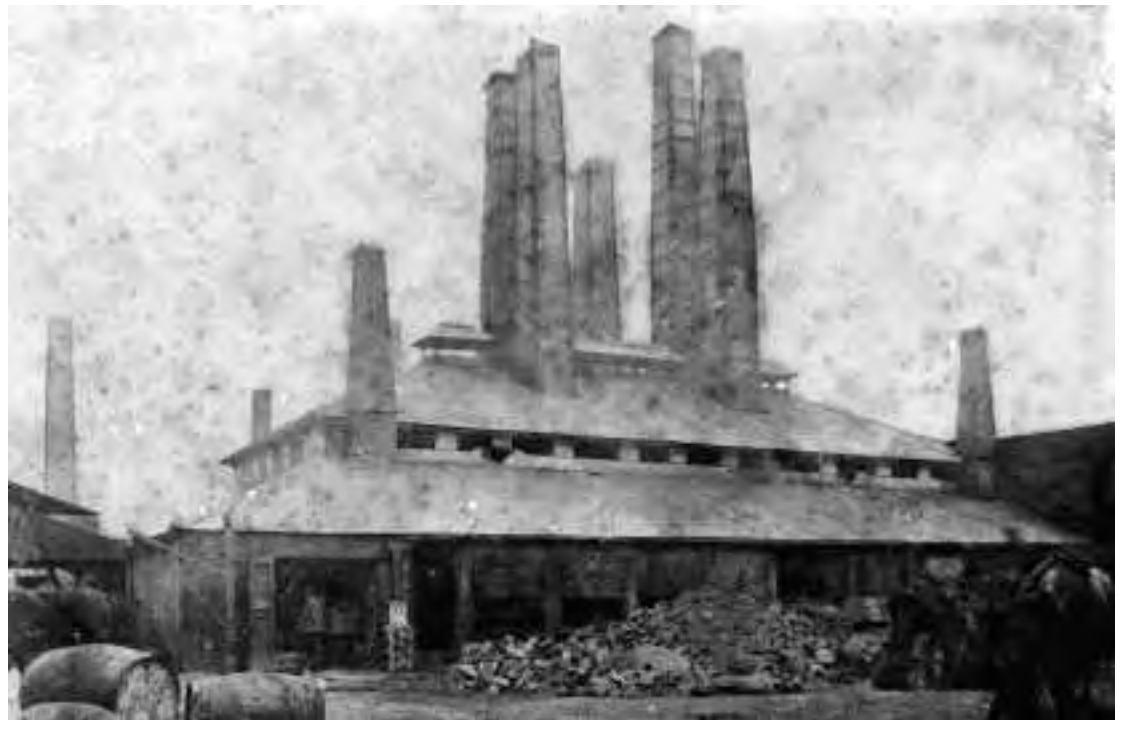
Kingsley Rickard

The fine town villas that date from the 1850s were built to house sea captains, merchants and Harvey family members, with workers' cottages next door.

'Harvey's treated their directors like gentlemen while Copperhouse didn't seem to bother – two different views on staffing.'

Kingsley Rickard

'They was the bosses and we was the workers, put it that way. If they wished you a Merry Christmas you was lucky. You never had nothing at Christmas, never had a gift or nothing; used to have two days off – Christmas



Mellanear Smelter. (Hayle Community Archive)

Day and Boxing Day and back to work the following day. Used to work a five and a half day week, eight o'clock 'til five, [with an] hour for lunch and always worked Saturday morning – 'til the forty-hour week came in and then we had the Saturdays off.' *James Noall*

The Farm Bailiff lived on the corner of Millpond Avenue opposite Foundry Farm where the walk ends.

Millpond. (With kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Three Cornered Leek – Allium Triquitrium. (Georgina Schofield)

The Millpond's Nature Credentials

Hayle Millponds form an urban Nature Reserve, which have been studied extensively by Hayle Town Trust's Ecological Survey. Since it began in 1985 over 1,000 species of plants, trees, animals, birds, moths, butterflies and other insects have been logged. Its small colony of Western European Pond Turtles was brought from Holland over 100 years ago.

There are specially planted areas around the site to attract 27 species of butterflies, 29 species of moths plus Dragon and Damsel flies.

Besides resident wildfowl, kingfishers, herons, egrets, warblers, buntings and wagtails frequently visit the ponds. Firecrests are regular winter visitors, as are tufted ducks, Gadwall, little Grebes, Water Rails and long-tailed Tits. Redwing and Fieldfares are cold-weather migrants.

Three species of bat were identified in the 1989 Bat Survey, and 250 species of plants have been recorded; 20 are indigenous to the South West such as the three-cornered leek, Italian Aram Lily and balm-leaved Figwort, a rare red Data Book species.

Hoskens from 1800 to H.T.P.

By Philip Hosken, Trevithick Society

The old H.T.P. building, Loggans Mill. (Chris Quick, Hayle Community Archive)

Benjamin and William Hosken were half brothers who worked Trevetho Mill from 1800. It exists today as the Watermill at Lelant. Benjamin did not marry and died young. William's wife died after giving birth to their seventh child. He married again and produced a further eight children.

H.T.P. Loggans Mill 1901. (Michael Smaldon, Hayle Community Archive)

William moved to the mill on Loggans Moor and, for a time, was operating both mills.

He and one of his sons, another William, extended the mill twice before 1852. Hosken Senior commenced the production of flour for human consumption in addition to grist for animals, and the mill prospered. A wheel was driven by water from adjacent moorland.

Young William replaced the conventional grindstones with porcelain rollers purchased in Paris. An article in *The Miller* described Loggans as producing the finest flour west of Bristol. William lived at Penmare, a large house that became home to his son and grandson Henry.

William's daughter Caroline married John Rosewarne and lived at Nanpuska. Their daughter Jane married Samuel Polkinhorn, a commodities businessman from Truro.

Samuel Hosken, William's only son, had no interest in the milling business, preferring to look after his father's herd of prizewinning shorthorn cattle. As his father entered his 80th year, arrangements were made for the accountants of the Hosken and Trevithick milling companies to hold clandestine meetings on Hayle Towans. The result was that old William Hosken died in October 1889 and the largest, most complicated company ever floated in Cornwall at that time was operating by the following April. Samuel Polkinhorn was appointed a director.

The famous Hosken, Trevithick, Polkinhorn & Co. Ltd, H.T.P. was established in 1890 with a capital of £750,000 and composed of Hosken's Loggans Mill, J.H. Trevithick &

H.T.P. delivery truck. (Philip Hosken)

H.T.P. and Steamship Company advertising. (Michael Smaldon, Hayle Community Archive)

H.T.P. road train mishap at East Mill Tuckingmill while travelling to Truro 1902. (Philip Hosken)

Company's retail trading and milling company at Foundry that also included the shipping line to Bristol, Cardiff and Liverpool, and Polkinhorn's wool-combing business based in Truro.

The Hoskens' milling activities can be traced back to a mill at Penryn in 1660 and the Trevithick business had been a part of the Harvey foundry and merchant enterprise until 1852. Sam Polkinhorn travelled Cornwall buying wool from farmers and wholesaling it to mills in the North of England.

H.T.P. prospered for many years by acting as financier for the daily activities of the Cornish farming community and buyer of their mature crops. In addition, H.T.P. imported building materials and coal by sea and shipped Cornish mining products to South Wales for smelting. Steam trucks delivered flour to bakers throughout West Cornwall and a daily road delivery by traction engine train to Truro revealed the advantages to be gained by spreading the company's interests.

Grain was imported to Hayle from around the world and the Parish Council continually accused the company of tearing up the road between the harbour and Loggans with its mighty 20-ton traction engine and trailers.

In 1911, a riverside mill was completed in Truro followed by expansion to Plymouth, giving rise to the suggestion that H.T.P. stood for Hayle, Truro and Plymouth. Administration was moved to Princes House in Truro, the former home of Samuel Polkinhorn, and a large showroom was built alongside.

In 1936, the milling side, along with the name H.T.P., was sold to Spillers the Millers. The company continued to expand its strong farming connections under the name Farm Industries Ltd and became a distributor for motor vehicles.

H.T.P. continued to be an emotive name throughout Cornwall and there were few people who were not touched in some way by the company's activities. During World War II the fine cotton flour bags were washed out and carefully recycled into knickers. The lettering was difficult to remove and there were many stories about H.T.P. knickers.

12lb wartime flour bag prior to conversion into knickers. (Philip Hosken)

Hayle, Hoskens and South Africa

By Philip Hosken, Trevithick Society

Hosken's Johannesburg shop, South Africa. (Philip Hosken)

William Hosken, chairman of the Reform Committee. (Philip Hosken)

William Hosken, the cousin of Samuel Hosken at Loggans Mill, was a Hayle lad. An agent for Harvey & Co in Johannesburg, he became president of the Chamber of Commerce and first chairman of the Cornish Association of the Rand. He was a hard-headed businessman but was anti-racist and had sympathy for the sufferings of the under-privileged. There were many instances of this throughout the Boer War and he became chairman of the famous Reform Committee set up to defend the interests of the mainly British Uitlanders, who were opposed by President Kruger's rising Boer regime. He financed a great deal of their activities that included amassing 2,200 rifles and spending £400,000 on explosives and provisions for a siege.
All came to nothing when the ill-fated Jameson raid on Kruger's headquarters was launched prematurely.
The outcome included Hosken being sentenced to death and other committee members being jailed for two years and fined £2,000 each. Kruger relented when one of the prisoners went insane and cut his throat. He bowed to public pressure and released all the prisoners. *Cornish Pioneers in South Africa* by Richard Dawe and the website www.btimes.co.za/98/0607/survey/survey10.htm have more details. Still active, William became involved with social activists such as Gandhi and Emily Hobhouse, a Liskeard woman who sought to relieve the suffering of women and children of all nationalities who were herded into camps after their homes were destroyed in the war.

Pulsack Manor c.1938. (Philip Hosken)

Gandhi said William, "was known all over South Africa to be the friend of the non-white races at a time when practically every public man with the exception of Mr Hosken seems to be opposed to the Indians."

William died in 1925, heralded as the most influential Cornishman in South Africa. One newspaper believed he would have been Prime Minister, except that, "his candour, his regard for the native races, his religious fervour and the tenacity with which he held a belief in free trade probably robbed him of the leadership of the British electorate in the Transvaal."

William's son, also called William, returned to Hayle prior to the Great War to pursue the UK government's attempt to develop a sugar beet industry. At that time the country was dependent on imports from Germany and expensive cane sugar from the colonies.

Trials of sugar beet in Cornwall proved very satisfactory and a factory was planned on Hosken land adjoining Penmare. However, William was unable to convince the Cornish farmers that they had an assured market with a guaranteed price for their crop. They may also have objected to Hosken's exotic lifestyle at Pulsack Manor.

He rode about the neighbourhood in a handsome carriage, spent money indiscriminately and hosted many balls. The Hoskin (not Hosken) family subsequently occupied Pulsack.

The government awarded the contract to a company that became Tate & Lyle. The land for the factory was eventually given to the people of Hayle and is now the Recreation Ground.

Plaque at Recreation Ground. (Philip Hosken)

Memories of Carnsew

Hayle Harbour and pools 1960s. (Hayle Community Archive)

Carnsew cottages. (Bob Cleave)

'Black Houses' where the sluice mechanism was housed. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

The Graving Dock sluice at Carnsew. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

'I was born at Carnsew, that's where *Jewsons* is now and across from where they were they use' to build boats and break them up [the plating of some were used as a dune retaining wall between Dynamite Quay and Lelant Ferry – *Keith Harris*]. They were five lovely cottages there. We didn't have too far to go to the beach. We would just walk over the first bridge then we'd get down by the second bridge, which was the black houses. Black Houses weren't houses or anything [they were the place where] the men came to wind down the shutters to keep the tide in [for sluicing]. My mother had a garden and we had a little hut made. My mother used to bake, cook the pasties and bring them down to us so we were on the beach from morning till night. We use' to go on the beach to the Cock Pool and swim there and walk from there then right up to the Causeway and get plastered in mud. That mud would dry, fall off and we would come back to Cock Pool and wash there. Cock Pool was the safest beach around, no waves, just calm water.' *Tilly Mitchell*

'One of the postmen, William Drew, built bathing huts, one for boys and one for girls to undress, 'cause we were all going down there to swim and bathe in the pools, safer really, than the beach. And they built a raft, diving raft… and we used to learn to swim to get out to that raft.' *Nora Harvey*

'I went swimming every day in Carnsew Cock Pool. We had a raft there, high step where you climb up and dive in. My gosh, used be plenty there. That was our amusement.'
Alfred Williams

'We lived in Carnsew, it was a good place to live because that was where everybody used to come down to swim.' *Eileen Wheatley*

'I started to take up swimming, which my mother was more keen [on] than me. So we used to do a lot of practising there by the black houses and there was quite a family of us. It was Henry Richards, Peter Richards it be my sister, self. We had to train when we 'came champions of Cornwall. We probably start in May to practice and we went down in all winds and weathers. People said it was dangerous but we could tell soon as the tide was going to turn so we'd come out of the water then.' *Tilly Mitchell*

'Down in Cock Pool my step-grandfather 'e used to go shrimping and 'e used to sell pint mugs of shrimps at the gate on Saturdays. I hated it because if 'e 'ad any shrimps left that was our tea and you either 'ad to eat the shrimps or go hungry!' *Eileen Wheatley*

'I can remember my mother knitted our swimming costumes and as soon as you get into the water; the wool! It would go down to your ankles!' *Nora Harvey*

'There were two big gates that opened and closed with the tide. When the tide came in the gates opened and as soon as the tide turned, the gates would close so that when the tide went out it would hold the water in there. They closed more like a 'V' against the water, so the more water that pressed against it the tighter they would close. In the middle of those gates were paddles, small gates that worked up and down. Carnsew Pool had two lots of sluice gates, one with three tunnels that came under

Plantation and the Causeway

Plantation – Harvey's walk and gardens but also an ancient site, with an early Christian burial stone with translation slab. (Hayle Community Archive)

Early overhead power lines over the Causeway around 1910. (Yvonne Cleave, Hayle Community Archive)

Gravestone – real stone on right. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

and ended up at the Carnsew sluice gate, which was right up by the Harvey & Co's shipyard down there – a timber yard then.'

Dick Bowden

'We used to have a little dinghy. Father Kay had two houseboats: the Jubilee Queen and the Fairy Queen. They were both moored down at the ferry. On the Saturday when all the business was finished we used to pile up everything and go in the dinghy, tide permitting and go down through the gates to the ferry.
We used to stay there on a Sunday, it used to be lovely. In 1939 when they had that storm, some of them were very badly damaged.'

Sheila Murphy

'There used to be all those houseboats down there, too. They was all old fishing boats converted into houseboats. A lot of them rotted out and some of them moved. In latter years, they started dredging the river and they dug a great pool, they used to have great scrapers down there. Well, in time, it formed a kind of a quicksand, the water soaking down through and one morning on a big tide and a gale wind all the point moved right out. Donald Couch told me he never seen nothing like it, he said everything moved and this great surge of water come up and took away the end of the weir and there was a great gully dug out in it.'

James Noall

'During the war they built landing barges down on the weir. Originally the weir was only very narrow, the slag from the smelting at the copper works all put down. Then they filled that in. it was never as wide as that. There used to be a lovely beach there.'

Denis Hollow

Carnsew Pool and cockle bank. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Estuary Nature Reserve Bird Watching Walk

By Jenny Parker,
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Lapwing. (Dave Flumm, RSPB)

Shelduck. (Dave Flumm, RSPB)

Hayle is a fascinating coastal town best known for its three miles of golden sands and industrial heritage, but hidden at the heart of the town is a wonderful wildlife haven. Hayle is justly proud of its 'jewel in the crown,' the most south-westerly estuary in Great Britain. When cold weather invades the rest of the country, this nature reserve is a sanctuary for thousands of birds that cram onto its mudflats.

Acquired by the RSPB in 1992, the estuary is one of the Society's most important reserves for migrating and wintering birds, a first and last staging post for wading birds and ducks that use the area to rest and feed.

Although much of the area has been lost for development, the remaining sections of Lelant Water, Carnsew Pool, Copperhouse Creek and Ryan's Field attract birds from all over the world.

With each season, visitors to the estuary will have a different experience. Winter is when the highest number of birds can be found on Hayle Estuary. At low tide on Copperhouse Creek or Lelant Water, you can enjoy the spectacle of hundreds of teal and wigeon feeding on the algae-covered mudflats. Wading birds like oystercatcher, curlew and redshank also feed from the mudflats but they probe the mud with their long bills for worms and shellfish. At the end of each day, look out for golden plover and lapwing as they come down off the surrounding farmland to roost and bathe on Copperhouse Creek and Ryan's Field.

The main bird migration happens during spring and autumn, and visitors can see new birds arriving on the estuary every day, some staying for just a few minutes and others staying for months. Oystercatchers, ringed, golden and grey plovers, lapwing, knot, sanderling, little stint, curlew sandpiper, dunlin, ruff, snipe, black-tailed and bar-tailed godwits, whimbrel, curlew, common sandpiper, greenshank, redshank and turnstone, are regularly seen at this time of the year. In addition, Mediterranean, lesser black-backed, herring and great black-backed gulls are still present until late April, but by May only the local breeding herring gulls remain.

The start of the summer is always a quiet time on the reserve as our wildfowl and wading birds leave the UK to breed in the Arctic and northern Europe. Shelduck, however, stay on and nest in disused rabbit burrows in the nearby sand dunes, later bringing their brood down the streets of Hayle to reach the safe waters of the estuary. By the end of June, waders and terns start moving south again and often stop off on the estuary, finding refuge in a muddy corner of Carnsew Pool or Copperhouse Creek.

There is a circular walk around Ryan's Field and a public footpath around Carnsew Pool. Copperhouse Creek can be accessed from the public highway; there is a footpath at the eastern end and good views from the north shore from the King George V Memorial Walk.

Hayle Regatta c.1907. (BT181H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Memories of Hayle Regatta – Hayle's Big Day

'Beautiful, it used to start at eleven o'clock in the morning, with the sailin' boats. Doctor Mawes had a sailing boat called Cock-y-Bondu. I lived up Copperhouse Hill and I could see the pool from my bedroom window.
As soon as I seen that first boat I used to shout to mother "Oh, mother, Cock-y-Bondu's now come up, hurry up and get my dinner!" I used to go down on Foundry Bridge, get inside the bridge on the grass so I could watch all the swimming matches. They swim from the bridge right to the bathing pool and I used to spend all my day there, watchin' all the swimmin' matches, high diving, greasy pole, feather fights, sailin' races, swimmin'. Beautiful. There'd be a single-oared boat, and then two and then four, all skiffs and then they used to have whalers with eight great big men in them. Wonderful day. Clifton Terrace was nothin' but a mass of colours. And after Regatta, sixpence to go carnival dance.' *Winnie Bassett*

Hayle Regatta showing fairground rides. (Hayle Community Archive)

(Hayle Community Archive)

People used to sit on the bank below Clifton Terrace. (Hayle Community Archive)

(Hayle Community Archive)

'Oh, that was a day! My mother use' to do a lot of baking, the house was open then for the day – relations always come in, helped themselves. All the stalls used to be there by the bridge and it used to be packed. Over Clifton Terrace there people could sit. Lots of swimmers use' to come from up country and swim there.' *Tilly Mitchell*

(Hayle Community Archive)

'Hayle Regatta was absolutely fantastic! We used to get down about eleven in the morning. Mr Pearce, was [announcer for] the swimming and Mr Petters, he was in charge of the sailing events. They used to always be quite rude to each other because they wanted to make an announcement at the same time and at times they were trying to upstage each other. In those days, the 1950s, you had difficulty to walk where the Customs House was with all the people there. Everybody attended; the town was empty because they were all around the pool.' *Trevor Millett*

'We used to 'ave time from shop, all the shops used to close when it was the Regatta day. The butchers used to get together and give so much meat and they used to 'ave a luncheon!' *Madeline Thomas*

Regatta, pre-1905. (Hayle Community Archive)

(Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Band played at Hayle Regatta on top of a truck. (Hayle Community Archive)

'The band used to play down in one corner, near the bridge. All around the bridge there used to be a lot of canvas stalls lit by naphtha flares, naked flames.' *Donald Thomson*

'Now my bathing costume was just like a long vest really. Well, my dear, we would be talked about if we wore [a bikini]. We used to do all sorts of sport and my mother bought us boys' trousers and it was looked down upon very much. Well, I wouldn't say I was nervous or anything but when you got ready to dive, your stomach used to be up, but once you've hit the water that was nothing, we didn't think anything about it. Everyone in Hayle used to cheer for us.' *Tilly Mitchell*

'Prior to the Regatta all the young men who lived in Undercliffe would get four barrels and sink them in the river at Undercliffe Bridge. They would get four huge poles to put in them and these they would decorate with flags and bunting. Several days before, my grandmother would be making saffron cake, heavy cake, tarts and a host of pilchards would get marinated. I remember stalls lit with braziers where the War Memorial is and in front of J&F Pool's. These stalls would sell fruit, plums, toys and clidgy [Cornish Toffee].' *Phyllis Pascoe*

The Regatta with views of the harbour, sluice, Steam Packet and Clidgy Cottages. (Hayle Community Archive)

'The place was actually black with people. There was an elderly lady who lived Lower Clifton, there was a lovely row of cottages there, who used to make this rock and I've heard father say they would go there and help her. This rock had to be hung on the washing line and pulled down to long lengths [reputedly with spit on her hands] to be cut off and made into pieces – "clidgy."' *Trevor Millett*

'Hughie Love used to raise a crew. I can't remember them ever winning anything but whenever they crossed a line, the band used to play, "Here the Conquering Hero Comes!"' *Bill Harvey*

'Hughie Love had his boat, which was a huge, enormous thing, how he ever got it in the pool I don't know, but I remember on one occasion we went across with my father and a group of men to help him put up the mast on this boat. They didn't deliberately do it but they hoisted this huge mast up and as they lowered it down into the boat it went right through the bottom of the boat, I think the boat was rotten. It ruined his chances that year. Hayle skiffs were quite long, John Daniel's family had their own boat called the Dorothy and then there was the Ryans and the Hancock brothers. There was great rivalry between these three families, it was exciting.' *Trevor Millet*

'They used to have very large whaling boats, dilapidated things, enormous oars, painted black – tarred really – and they had a coloured streak around the top of the gunnels red, blue, green and yellow, I think. Of course one boat was always thought to be faster than the others. Before Regatta Day chaps used to go down at night and repaint the red boat yellow and yellow on the red because they'd drawn the lots; they wanted the red boat. It was good fun but could really get quite vicious up at the Copperhouse end. They would come back with blood flying. It was a bit competitive.' *Trevor Millett*

'They had five whalers. It was always a good race, but the main attraction was Manny Ellis, a helmsman who was inebriated most of the time. You could hear him down by the bridge swearing at the top of the pool. He never won anything, but he was the star attraction.' *Bill Easterbrook*

(Hayle Community Archive)

Regatta, showing Clifton Terrace and the races. (Gay Hingston, Hayle Community Archive)

'There were the old whalers and they were always kept in that little bay in front of the cottages that used to be there, what we call Clidgy Bay. Where the swimming pool is now, there used to be a little jutting piece of green there. They used to have a marquee there; you could rent chairs. When it was all over, my sister and I used to go down and see what money we could find and up the Undercliffe where it was just the rail track then. You'd be amazed at the crowd that would come. Mother used to say, "Now you go and get some of this toffee for me." She liked that whirly toffee [clidgy], and they used to hammer it, break it.

(Hayle Community Archive)

Oh it was a marvellous day! Quite an event, everything stopped for it. There were three families then in Hayle who were top-notch swimmers: the King family from Copperhouse, the Thomas girls, Jessie and Tilly from Carnsew, and the Richards family from Tremeadow Terrace, the builders. They used to scoop the prizes. I'd been in one or two races but never got anywhere against them but it gave you a little bit of what the Americans called bragging rights. They used to say, "I've swum in the Regatta!" That was a big thing when you were ten or eleven years old!'

Bill and Nora Harvey

'My brothers took me and we went down about half past ten in the morning and they was older, they could play but they made me sit and wait and I hated it. Mum would come down twelve o'clock and bring pasties then we stayed all the afternoon to watch the Regatta. I was dressed up clean and tidy and all I was allowed to do was sit there; boring i'n' it, you wouldn't be allowed to run around and play because you might go in the pool.'

Dorothy Cook

Hayle Regatta, 2nd September 1909, the start. (Hayle Community Archive)

(Donald Thomson)

Regatta. (Hayle Community Archive)

'They had a great big pole stuck out full of grease. People had pillow fights on this pole trying to stay on, falling into the water, causing a great deal of amusement.' *Vivian Bray*

'Cheeky Carruthers lived down at Carnsew and used to put on this show on Regatta Day. He would appear ready for this underwater record bid dressed in a Cornish wasp bathing costume with the stripes, arms and legs, very old fashioned and he'd be rubbed down in grease, like he was going to swim the channel. He'd go up onto the high diving board and the announcer would say, "Mr Carruthers is about to attempt to break his record of last year", and he'd make a great performance of diving off. He would hit the water and just disappear. Hughie Love would be out in the safety boat watching, a very old dilapidated rowing boat. He'd [have] a very large galvanised bucket with a handle and no bottom in it and he used to drop this bucket just down into the water and put his head down into the bucket to see if he could see Mr Carruthers collapsed down on the bottom of the harbour or not. 'Course all fun. Mr Carruthers would swim underwater very efficiently across to the swing bridge. He would come up under the swing bridge and would just hang on these chains and stay there with just his face above water. A lot of people knew he was in there but of course a lot of the crowd didn't and they still accepted the fact that he was still underwater swimming around! The announcer would be counting off the seconds, you see, [giving Carruthers] the signal. Mr Carruthers would come out from under the bridge, couldn't see him of course, and come up with a big splash. Sometimes he would be dragged into the safety boat, other times to the edge of the dock. St John's Ambulance chaps would give him artificial respiration. He had the knack of keeping a lot of water inside his mouth and throat and this water would come up in a spout like a whale and there was mutiny in the crowd. He would always break his record by 10 seconds!' *Trevor Millett*

'Tommy Stevens used to put on exhibitions of Cornish wrestling. He would come out with these very long shorts on right down to his ankles, a tiny man, and would wrestle two hundredweight stuffed with straw. He would throw this bag of straw right out into the ring and Tommy would leap on it and one minute he'd be under the bag and the next minute he'd be on top of it and it was some exciting. Then the bell would go and he had to be sponged down and they would fluff up the bag of straw and get it ready for the next round.' *Trevor Millett*

Regatta. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

'Joan Philp was Carnival Queen and one of the twin Williamses, Joan, was attendant and I was the other attendant. They'd come and fetch us in the morning and take us up to St Michael's hospital to visit all the sick. Then we went back to the White Hart hotel and had lunch and then we were taken to Hayle Regatta. Mr Glanville had a horse and carriage so carnival night we used to parade right through Hayle. The streets used to be lined with people.' *Sheila Richards*

Carnival Queen Joan Philp (centre) with her attendants: Joan Williams (left) and Sheila Pedler (right), 1945. (Gay Hingston, Hayle Community Archive)

Carnival Queen Joan Philp and attendants in Hayle Carnival 1945. (Gay Hingston, Hayle Community Archive)

Carnival. (Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

‘In the evening we had the Carnival and that was something in those days, really something. The Carnival Queen! It was Mrs Peddler who kept a drapery shop, she done it; all the carriage. There was two shire horses pulling it. Mr Glanville – they were his horses – all the gleam of the brass work around it and the coach where the Queen sat was all purple and she looked so lovely in her gown.’

Dorothy Cook

‘At the end of the Carnival, you would follow the Carnival into Foundry Square and the Carnival Queen would then appear on the balcony of the White Hart and wave, like at Buckingham Palace.’ *John Pollard*

‘I’ve got a cup at home that was Hayle Carnival Queen, first one on that was in 1933.’

Richard Horwell

Carnival mid-1950s.
(Carole Hollow, Hayle Community Archive)

Cornish Arms Carnival Float, early 1950s.
(Gay Hingston, Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Carnival float. (Mr Richards, Hayle Community Archive)

‘There was a gentleman called Billy Glanville. He had a landau, a carriage which the carnival queen would be dragged around in with her two attendants. Poor old Billy, he had very bad eyesight and he became quite deaf at the end. The youngish lads realised this and they used to walk alongside the horse and right into the horses ear they’d say, “Whoa”, and of course the horse would stop. Well, Mr Glanville didn’t know why the horse had stopped! And he would say “Get up”, and they would go on again, you know, and after a few yards the idiots would say, “Whoa” again, and the horse would stop! Course then they would get told off and that would be it.’ *Trevor Millett*

‘Of course the highlight of my career was when I passed my driving test and drove a decorated lorry in the carnival. It was second only I think to driving the Queen in those days! Eighteen years old! You think, well now I’ve arrived!’

Bill Harvey

‘In 1945 my friend Betty and I sat down on the side of the pool and saw these skiffs rowing round for the race and Walter Ryan came around and chatted to us as he went by. In the evening we went to the carnival and he was a sheik on his horse called Victor, we were Swiss maids and he was talking to us on the way. In the evening at the dance, he danced with me, so it was a great day for me. We were married in 1947; it was fifty-four years that we were married.’ *Anne*

Carnival passing Paddy’s Mill.
(Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

Memories of John Couch, the Ferryman who rowed between Hayle and Lelant

John Couch the ferryman. (Hayle Community Archive)

'You had to call to Mr Couch to say that you wanted to go; he would take his time. People would pick it up [from] the spit in the middle of the river too. One day one lad was taking a bit of time and it was a bit rough. Mr Couch said, "For heaven's sake chap, jump in!" He literally jumped in and nearly capsized the lot of us. The air was blue because Mr Couch had a very interesting vocabulary.' *Sheila Murphy*

'Harry used to say [to the ferryman] "Jack want to go over." "Ooh," 'e said, "I know who you are," 'e said, "you aren't 'aving me!" "No, no, we really mean it, we really want to go across today." "No, last week you got me 'alf way in the river and you ran off." "We promise, Jack, we won't." And what 'appened? Jack got 'alf way across and we'd run off!'
Michael Trewartha

Lelant ferry with the pylons that Bill Easterbrook flew under (see p.67). (Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

Lelant ferry. (Hayle Community Archive)

'We would also see the ferry crossing, quite overloaded. The Faience came in and he knew he had right of way as a ferryman and continued to proceed across the river. It was a spring tide and the boat was coming in quite swiftly but he just carried on. They actually bumped into him and pushed him on a little way but he still carried on and completed his journey to the other side of the river.' *John Buchanan*

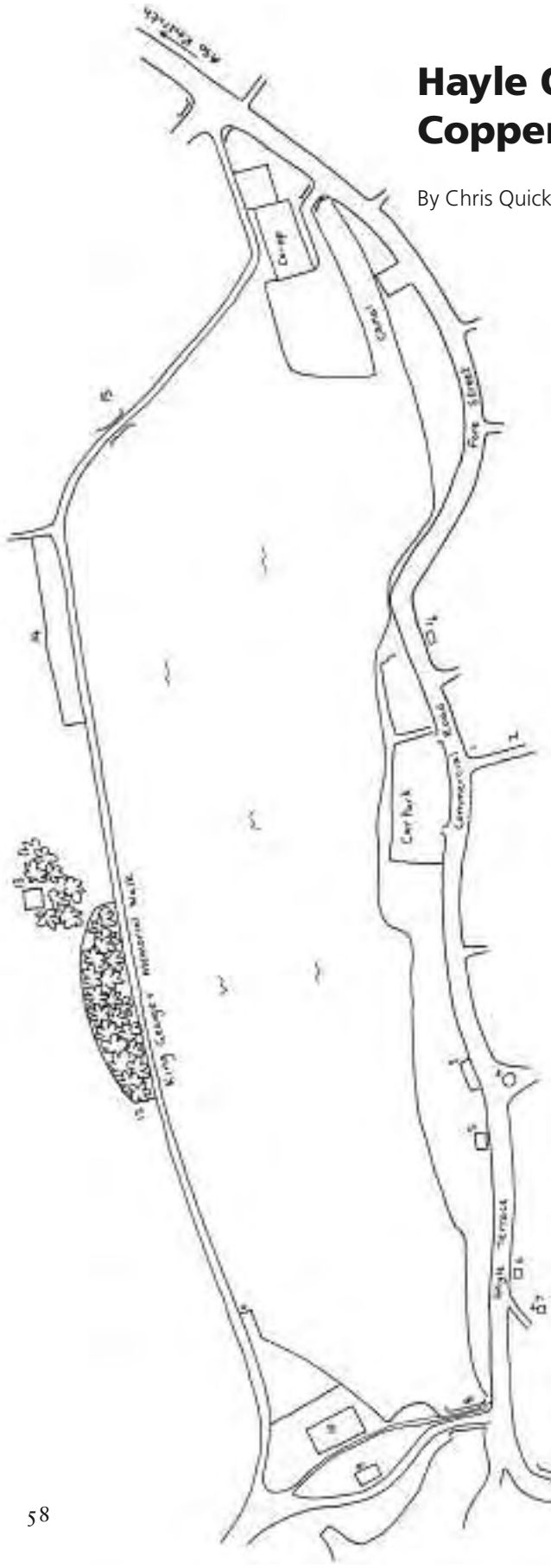
'With tides changing people would have to take pot luck getting across with the ferry. There were several women waiting. He put the boat aground so they could get on. One or two of them got aboard and then he started to push the boat out because it wasn't a very good position. So one of these proposed passengers said, "Hey, wait for us." He said, "Oh, no worry my dear, I be like Jesus Christ going off to find a better place."' *Timothy La Touche*

'Mr Couch was really naughty, wasn't he? There were people on the Hayle side who wanted to get across and he'd tell them where to stand and more often than not it would be the sinking sand part, and you could see them struggling. He used to be laughing his head off, he really enjoyed it.' *Eileen Murphy*

Lelant ferry with Hayle in the background. (Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Quays and Copperhouse Pool Walk

By Chris Quick, Hayle Community Archive



Key

1. Cornish Arms
2. Old Brewery Office
3. Art Deco buildings
4. War Memorial
5. Passmore Edwards Institute
6. Old Carwin dairy
7. St Elywn's Church
8. Swing bridge
9. Harbour office
10. Swimming pool
11. Slipway
12. Gardens
13. Riviere House
14. Riviere cottages
15. Black Bridge
16. Copperhouse shops

Illustrated by Fiona Howard

Clifton Terrace and Copperhouse Pool taken from Merchant Curnow's Quay.
(PL with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

We start our walk from the rail and vehicle swing bridge at the entrance to East Quay.

Hayle Gas Works near the Swing bridge.
(Hayle Community Archive)

'We'd take coal to Hayle for the Power Station [by train]. We used to go in behind the signal box, drop down, across the main road and out across the iron bridge to the docks. I brought the last remaining wagons out of Hayle.'

Jim Richards

Clifton Terrace.
(Barbara Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

'When that hooter went at twenty past twelve a sea of bicycles came out off that North Quay. There were hundreds of men working at that time in the Power Station, ICI and Esso and they used to come out to the swing bridge. The police used to be there to stop the traffic on the main road.' *Michael Trewartha*

Hayle rail tracks. (Bob Cleave)

‘The swing bridge used to open during the 1800s. They used to swing it open to let the ships up to Copperhouse. Once or twice a year they used to have to swing the bridge to make sure the mechanism was still working. They’d unbolt the gas pipes either end of it. We used to go down underneath it to see all the wheels and chains, which pulled it, still there apparently. That bridge hasn’t been opened for probably forty years now.’

Mervyn Sullivan and Michael Trewartha

‘Two big carthorses used to pull all those trucks. One man would run along the side with those chocs, holding the brake, on and off and he would run all along the way from the station right out to electric works on his own momentum.’

Mervyn Sullivan and Michael Trewartha

Copperhouse dock.
(RonnieWilliams, (Hayle Community Archive)

Horses on North Quay.
(Michael Smaldon, Hayle Community Archive)

Merchant Curnow’s Quay was one of the first quays in Hayle. John Curnow started operations in the first half of the 18th century importing and exporting goods for the fast growing mining industry. The quay was taken over in the late 18th century by a Camborne copper smelting company, the Cornish Copper Company. The C.C.C. moved to Ventonleague in 1758 to take advantage of the Hayle estuary and built a canal from the quay to its works. The site of the works and surrounding shops was then called Copperhouse.

‘Right opposite St Elwyn Church, [Copperhouse Pool] – they were proper pool shapes when we were kids. We used to go swimming in these two pools, thirty or forty kids used to be in there. The really deep pool was that dark and that deep you couldn’t see. No one ever got to the bottom of it. That’s where I learnt to swim with Jessie Power. She was a very powerful swimmer and taught a lot of the Hayle children to swim. She was holding me by my costume one day and the belt of my costume snapped. I went under. I had to swim back to the edge very quickly, that was it! Around those pools were mud flats and we used to slide across the mud. You could go ten or twelve feet and straight into the pool.’

Michael Trewartha and Mervyn Sullivan

Copperhouse pool showing swimmers, trucks heading to the National Explosive Works and Clifton Terrace.
(Mr Richards, Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Railway, built in 1837 from Harvey’s Foundry to Redruth, had a linking drawbridge at this location. The swing bridge was built in the 1860s.

‘They had an 1836 railway line that ran from the middle of the harbour, North Quay. To go up Angarrack Hill they had a big steam winch to pull it up the hill there. Before my time, the railways were made with granite quoins with the rails just joined onto the granite quoins; they didn’t have no cross pieces (sleepers). There are parts of North Quay where you can make out the stones in a line between the old sulphur house and the weighbridge. A lot of them are dug up for the granite.’

Dick Bowden

‘Could always tell when they had a ship coming ’cause the train used to bring down scores of trucks and park them on the quay ready for when the ship docked.’ *James Noall*

The bridges formed part of the sluicing process to clear sand from the channel. The C.C.C. had originally built sluice gates here in 1788-9 and these gates were utilised when the rail bridges were erected. The sluicing process continued into the latter part of the 20th century to allow coal boats to deliver to the Power Station.

Sluice gate.
(Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

North Quay. (Hayle Community Archive)

The sluice gates, cockle bank, harbour, quays and Copperhouse Pool. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘That was a terrifying sight to see, the sluicing. You imagine now, both those sluice gates open – one out from Carnsew Pool and one from the Copperhouse Pool. When those two rivers of water met off the end of the weir, a torrent’d go straight out into the bay. The water wasn’t blue or green, it was yellow with sand.’

Mervyn Sullivan

‘That’s why the bank was built in the middle of the harbour to channel the water from [Copperhouse Pool] one side and Carnsew Pool the other side.’ *James Noall*

Second sluice. (Eve Ellen, Hayle Community Archive)

At the far side of the bridge is the Harbour Office and the slipway where smaller crafts can be launched into the estuary. Parallel to the slip is the second sluice. Water was released from Copperhouse Pool via these sluices. Where the waters met a swirl was caused, which agitated the sand and cleared it from the channel.

‘During the war [my father] went to work for Harvey and Company on the docks. All the men would be there from six o’clock and the foreman would come out and pick out men for that day’s work. The rest, they were sent home. They had to be there six days a week in order to try to get a job. They were lucky if they worked three days a week.’ *Dick Bowden*

Second sluice. (Barbara Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

‘When I was going to school in the 1930s, I remember Hayle as quite a busy town. We had the electric works, the Power Station, the ICI, Oil Works, and Shipping Company. The harbour was very busy; coal boats, timber boats, cement boats comin’ in over the bar – one of the busiest harbours in the county.’

Bing Hosking

Coal unloading, North Quay. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘North Quay was the most worked quay. Because of the Power Station a lot of coal used to come in there. East Quay was used mostly for gas, coal and domestic coal. The only coal that was used in Foundry Quay was for steam. Foundry Quay was used for scrap metal. South Quay, cement and timber used to come in. Part of the old quay up by the clidgy side was a big scrap yard where they used to scrap all small ships and submarines. On North Quay, before my time, tin came in to be exported. In my time was the Associated Octel sulphur shed.

Coal coming to North Quay. (Hayle Community Archive)

Harbour, 1921 HMS Bristol and seven destroyers. (Hayle Community Archive)

Harbour Office weighbridge. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘I unloaded the first and last load of that. When we worked on that stuff to begin with no one understood what sulphur was. It was burning our eyes and we had to go into the Associated Octel and be treated. The second incidence we had, “Put” Williams was a docker and he was tipping an iron tub. Our lorries had an iron base and the two irons met and ignited the sulphur dust. A big flame and smoke came up and frightened everybody. I can see poor old “Put” now clearing the side of the lorry, and he was an elderly man then, one hand on the top and over the top, literally clearing it.’

Dick Bowden

‘You dreaded the days when the sulphur boat was coming, especially if the wind was blowing. The poor dockers were struggling; water would stream out their eyes.’

Michael Smaldon

‘I worked on the harbour walls quite often – the cement work dug out and pointed up. Those harbour walls, they aren’t thicker than garden walls, only about eighteen inches wide that’s all. What’s behind that? Mostly clean sand full of shells because there was all banks at one time. I’ve dug pits down there for tying the wall back. We dug trenches in the quay and went through the wall and put a piece of railway line across the front, chased it back, concreted in the railway lines at the back of the trench, tightened up chains and pulled the outside railway line tight against the quay wall. That used to keep it there. If you dig down three foot, is all hard ground – iron filings dumped in it too.’ *James Noall*

‘When I was a kid my father worked in Hayle Electric Works and I was coming off school and my mother used to say, “Go on, take father over his dinner at ’lectric Works. Here’s two bags, pick up a bag o’ churks.” Power Company used to throw out the churks, cinders. Get up a fire, get a load of churks in on top, then they used to all glow red and last all the evening. “See if the banana boat’s in.” Any that had a bit of marking on them used to be throwed in a heap on the quay. We used to pick up a bag of bananas and a bag of churks and drag them.’ *Winnie Bassett*

‘There was a boatman called Hughie Love, it was before my time but they tell the story. He was fishing alongside the ship called the Taycrag and she let go of her anchor and it went straight through his boat. He couldn’t swim so as the anchor chain was going down he was climbing up! Another time he told us that during the war you had to have a permit to sail issued by the Admiralty. His boat began to leak while fishing. He was going to go under if he wasn’t careful. It was now dark and he wasn’t allowed to sail by night; you had to have a special code, the code of the day and a flashing light. Someone signalled him and he didn’t reply. By the time he got in, on the Lelant side, the St Ives and Carbis Bay Home Guard were all there ready to shoot him out of the water and this side had the war Special Police. He said he was in the boat up to his neck in water and was challenged to identify himself. He replied with, “Can’t you see I’m sinking, you damn idiots? Let me in!”’

Brian Sullivan

‘Harvey & Co used to have sixpence a ton for every ton of coal landed.’ *James Noall*

‘The Power Station had a constant supply of ships with coal, they were the biggest ships that came into Hayle. There were huge piles of coal all along the quay.’ *Brian Sullivan*

‘About one in six of the ships wrecked on the North Coast between 1800 and 1920 were engaged in the coal trade and a surprising number had just left ports. Before the middle of the 19th century there were no lighthouses between Longships and Lundy so that night passages were particularly hazardous. Weather forecasting was very rudimentary. The Margam in 1820, the Providence in 1830, the Mary Welsh in 1857 and Little Benjamin in 1869, all bound from Hayle to South Wales, sank in the vicinity of Godrevy. In Clive Carter’s book, *Cornish Shipwrecks – The North Coast*, the map showing St Ives’ Bay reveals a wreck-strewn area.’ *George Wilson, Trevithick Society*

Glynn, 1885. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘The Electric Works down there, they used to have ships in there regular, two or three a day, biggish coasters, eight or nine-hundred ton – about a thousand ton was the biggest they could get into Hayle because anything longer they couldn’t turn in there. See the boats used to go up the harbour and you know the big bank in the middle? They used to put a rope out on a pole and the boatmen used to take the rope over and they’d put it on the hook and they used to haul that in and bring the boat around. Some of them could come up the harbour and gently put their bow against the quay up the top end of the harbour and just keep their prop going slowly and they used to turn around like that. But the longer ones would come up through and turn on the bank. That bank was full of cockles. I used to go out there regular at low water scraping cockles.’ *James Noall*

Plan of shipwrecks in St Ives Bay between 1800 and 1920. (Printed with kind permission from the publisher)

Pertinence aground on the beach near the mouth of the Hayle estuary. (Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

‘There used to be a cockle bank, we used to swim across the river and then float back on your back with a great basket of cockles on your chest.’ *Winnie Bassett*

‘You couldn’t go [on the weir] during the war because they were building landing barges for the Normandy Landings. We used to swim around the French crabber. It’s a bit of a mystery how that came to be on the middle of the sands there. It came in during the war one night, various stories about bringing in spies. If you go down there when the sand is low, the deck still shows itself. There used to be one of the ropes on the mast and we used to swing out and drop off into the pool. The water under that crabber was very deep, icy cold, green, crystal, like being in the Caribbean, looking at it, but freezing cold. That’s where we spent a lot of hours.’ *Michael Trewartha and Mervyn Sullivan*

Hayle estuary with the French crabber. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘I’ve seen seventeen ships tied up in Hayle because our ships used to join convoys in wartime. Because it’s tidal our ships would have to get out of Hayle on the previous high tide. The convoy never stopped moving so ships would leave it to come into Hayle and our ships would have to chase after it to catch up with the convoy. If the convoy was delayed, you’d have ships waiting in Hayle and sometimes the quays were completely full of ships.’ *Brian Sullivan*

‘Every time the Poultney comin’ in over the bar, it used to go “Doo-doo! Doo-doo!” People’d say, “Oh the Polti’s in.”’ *Winnie Bassett*

‘They used to bring coal from Barry for the Power Station on a boat called Seabrook. When they used to unload it with a crane some would tip over and fall on the decks. We used to sweep it up, put it in bags, fill a punt up with coal, row across the river and take it up to her mother.’ *Eileen and Roland Wheatley*

‘ ’Course as [coal lorries] go along the road, going ’round corners, the coal used to fall off. Now my mother used to say to me, “Now, go down gasworks corner, you, and you go up Keverne’s Corner,” to my brother and when the lorries go around the coal fall off, we could run out in the road to pick the coal up!’ *Winnie Bassett*

‘The two that I remember regularly was Victor, the flour boat, and the Poultney that carried coal, but she was torpedoed in the Irish Sea with a load of potatoes on board. There were times when it was rough and the whole bay would be covered in ships.’ *Vivian Bray*

‘When I was twenty-two I was training near Bristol and we had to do a low-flying exercise in preparation for intruding into France. We had to fly very low. I thought, “Ah, I’ll nip down to Cornwall a minute.” So I came down and flew over the Power Station and saw the big towers with high-tension cable going across the harbour from the Power Station to Lelant. I thought, “I’ll nip under those a minute,” and I came up and up and pulled around by Mount Pleasant. I did a slow roll and that sort of thing. I was just showing off. I had a girlfriend; her parents lived at Gwithian on the seafront. So I went down and pulled up over their house; poor souls, they nearly died! The Wing Commander Flying was called Jackson and his father was the vicar at Gwithian. He had me in

his office and he said, "I know where you've been! Do you realise you've broken fourteen flying rules and regulations?"' *Bill Easterbrook*

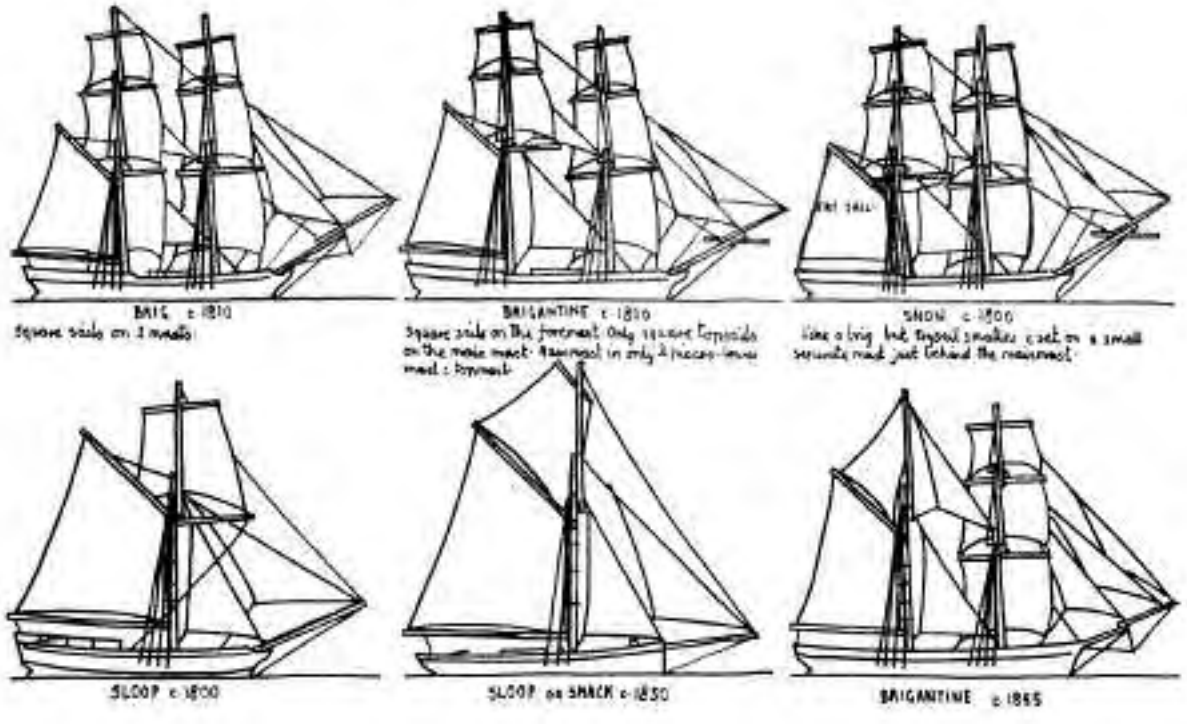
'They had HMS Bristol in there for breaking up, her topmast brought down the power cables. The cables was crossing the harbour on the great big pylons. They must've lightened her to take her in!' *James Noall*

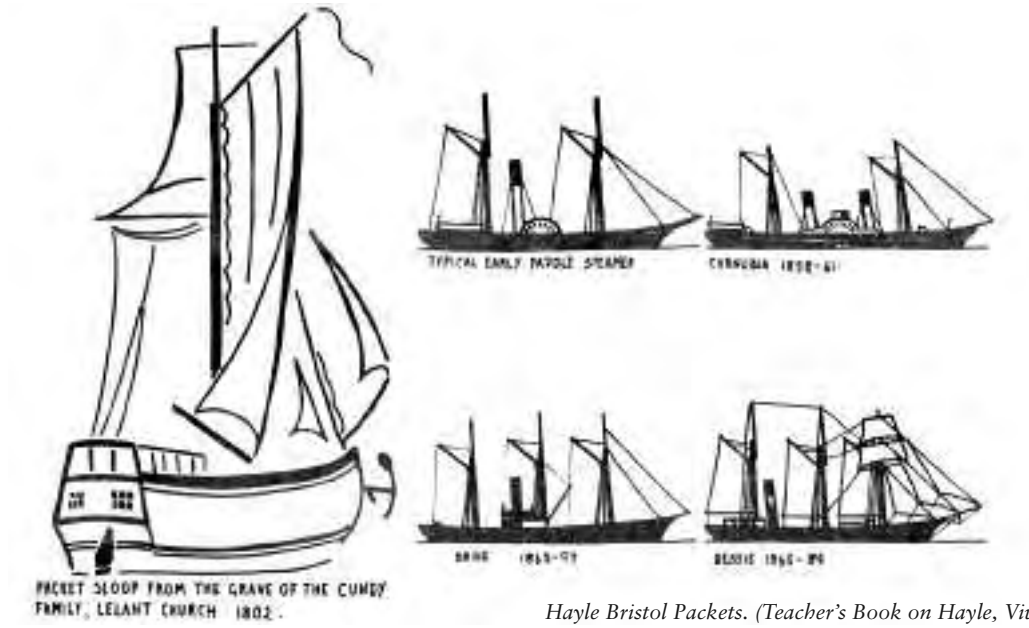
'In the morning, after the Harvey's post had come in, I would go onto South Quay. There might be five coasters tied up there and I would go on board with the ship's mail. All you had was an ordinary plank of wood coming down, and if the tide was out the ship was perhaps five or six feet down and it was slippery and muddy. They were always very pleased to see me. I'd have a great big mug of tea and a piece of cake. There were a number of Dutch ships, coasters; they were family owned, most of them. Our ships, already forty or fifty years old, were filthy – especially the steam-powered ones. They were carrying coal for the power station from South Wales and the galley always smelled of sour cabbage, but the Dutch ships were clean as a new pin; freshly painted with little curtains at the portholes and you could eat your food off the decks.
They were beautiful.' *Brian Sullivan*

Near to the Slipway is Bristolmans Dock, the location of the Hayle to Bristol Steam Packet service that ran in the 19th century taking passengers and freight. This was the site for the Steam Packet Hotel.

'I was over at Steam Packet when I was about seventeen. A flat became empty and we went upstairs and the rent was fifty pence a week. We had one room to live in and eat and one bedroom for four of us to sleep in. There wasn't no bathroom in they days and the toilet was outside. We had to share the yard for drying. You had a day to wash, that let other people wash as well.' *Phyllis Blewett*

Ships that came into Hayle Harbour. (Teacher's Book on Hayle, Vivian Bray)





Hayle Bristol Packets. (Teacher's Book on Hayle, Vivian Bray)

'The Steam Packet [hotel] did have a bit of a reputation in its time. [It] was built for people staying overnight to catch the next tide; businessmen, mine captains. The Cornubia ship, built on South Quay at Hayle, was the first Steam Packet to go from Hayle to Bristol. Everything was built here, they made the whole ship, the engines, paddles, the hull everything. It could do that trip in twelve hours. That ship then in the 1850s was doing twenty knots.

*Steam Packet hotel and the Harbour office.
(Hayle Community Archive)*

*Aerial shot showing power station, Cockle Bank, Steam Packet hotel, Clidgy Cottages.
(Barbara Williams, Hayle Community Archive)*

High-speed RNLI lifeboats today do twenty-five knots – that was like a formula one racing car! That Cornubia was so fast that the American Confederate Navy came over in the 1850s and bought the ship from Harvey's, sailed it back to America and used it as a blockade-runner during the Civil War! It ran aground on a sand bank and the Union Navy towed it off. They used it as a gunrunner along the Texas coast as it was the fastest ship in America at that time. The fastest steam paddler ever – built down there on South Quay.' *Mervyn Sullivan*

We will continue the walk along King George V Memorial Walk, but you can take an additional walk towards the old Power Station and beach by walking up North Quay to the left.

Hayle Power Station.
(Donald Thomson, Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Harbour from the Towans, c.1910.
(Winifred Allen, Hayle Community Archive)

'We played on the beach most days. We used to go mainly just in front of the Electric Works, what they called Electric Works Beach. Mother would make pasties and wrap 'em up in a tea towel to keep 'em warm and then we would go off beach for the day with a bottle of pop. We'd be there from possibly nine until six in the evening.' *Michael Trewartha*

Hayle Power Station, known as 'lectric works.
(Hayle Community Archive)

Associated Octel magazine cover. (Hayle Community Archive)

'The triangle with the hot water [where children would swim] was from the power station, from cooling the generators. It came to that Associated Octel could get more bromine from warm salt water than they could from cold seawater. They made an agreement with the Power Station; they would have the hot water and they supplied the power station with cold water. They used to get their seawater from the "in" tunnel by the sand bank in the middle, the cockle bank. It used to exit into that there tower. The problem was when they built the extension they needed more water. They dug a tunnel then from the Power Station right across into Carnsew Pool and they built up the exits to the Carnsew Pool where the sluice gates were so that it would hold millions of gallons more. They dredged out the pool and Carnsew Meadows was all dug out and made into reservoirs.' *Dick Bowden*

On this corner, where the swimming pool is now, was Clidgy Bay. There was also a row of cottages [Clidgy Cottages] on the opposite side of the Memorial Walk.

Steam Packet hotel and Clidgy Cottages.
(Hayle Community Archive)

'You remember Clidgy Bay, where the hot water used to come out from the ICI where they used to make bromine. They made bromine to stop the knocking in the aircraft engines during the war. We used to sit in that hot water, it was brown. Used to keep your skin clear but rot your bathers.'
Mervyn Sullivan and Michael Trewartha

'[The outfall from Associated Octel] used to come out of a tunnel in Clidgy harbour. The stink that used to come out of that! There were four or five clidgy cottages there with people living in them. That stench is coming up like a steam.' *Dick Bowden*

'Just over the road from the Steam Packet used to be cottages, they used to belong to Harvey and Co. That was when the railway line went out right across the side of the pool to the dynamite works.' *James Noall*

King George V Memorial Walk was the route of the Hayle Railway and was purchased from Harvey & Co. and the Great Western Railway in 1936. C.C.C. built the road to give access to their works at Copperhouse from North Quay, one of their main quays. It was known as 'The Black Road' as its foundations were made of scoria.

'Slag, called scoria, from the copper smelting at Copperhouse, had to be got rid of so the Copper Company had the idea to run off the slag into three different sized moulds. Let it set and you've got large building blocks. A lot of the houses in Hayle, including the quays, are built with these blocks. They are very hard indeed but if you try to cut them they shatter like glass. You'll see houses made of them with the odd brick put in upright to make up the space because you only had the three sizes and couldn't cut them.' *Kingsley Rickard*

Towards the end of the Memorial Walk is a large house surrounded by trees. Riviere House was built in 1791 for John Edwards, the first manager of the Cornish Copper Company, C.C.C.

Riviere House. (Hayle Community Archive)

On reaching the end of the Memorial Walk we turn into a part of the road still named 'The Black Road' and go over 'Black Bridge.' The two arches of the bridge are of different height. The larger was built so that Canon Hocken, the Rector of Phillack, could go under it in his boat (wearing his hat!).

Black Bridge postcard with writing. (With kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

The Black Road leads into the heart of the Cornish Copper Company works, which extends on either side of the canal and up to Ventonleague. At the end of the Black Road there was a mill known as 'Paddy's Mill.' It was built in 1840 for grinding corn to feed the C.C.C. horses. It operated via a sluice, which closed at high tide to retain a large amount of water. On opening the sluice the water turned a large waterwheel used to turn the grinding stones. Later on a small steam engine was installed to drive the mill to allow continuous operation, but the waterwheel was retained as a backup. The mill was demolished in the 1930s and the engine house in the 1970s.

Copperhouse Mill (Paddy's Mill). (BT207H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Paddy's Mill wheel. (BT4F with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

'There were two mills, they were both under [shot] wheels. The one from Copperhouse, that had a stream running down there from underneath the bridge, end of Queensway. There used to be a mine back of the council houses up there, where the car park is, the water was a continuous drain from it and that was what was working the water mill. The one at the Copperhouse end, the Phillack end, that was driven mostly from Angarrack.'

Dick Bowden

Remains of the mill and J&F Pool works building. (Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

'Where the recreation ground is, across the road used to be an old mill but that's gone now. That used to be a lovely pool. They used to have [Wilson's Pool] as a yacht pool. The tide used to come in, right from [Copperhouse Pool], and fill that pool up, and summer evenin's, all around that pool, were people sittin' and the men used to have model yacht racin' all evening. Beautiful!' *Winnie Bassett*

Copperhouse Pool and Hayle beyond looking from Phillack. (The Ark, Michael Williams)

Copperhouse Terrace. (The Ark, Michael Williams)

Fore Street, Copperhouse, looking towards 'The Rec'. (Barbara Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

At the junction of the main road through Hayle we see the canal and the Copperhouse dock; this was used by the C.C.C. to load and unload ships. The car park of the old Daniel's grocery store was a ship-turning area. The dock gates were also used as a sluice, holding back water at high tide; when opened at low tide, the gates helped to clear the canal.

Duke of Edinburgh's visit as it passes J&F Pool's old offices and the cinema. (Eileen Couch, Hayle Community Archive)

Bodriggy Street, part of the C.C.C. housing area. (With kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Copperhouse street scene. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Turning right into the main road through Hayle, we enter the area where the company of J&F Pool operated. The company started in the 1860s at the time when the C.C.C. ceased trading.

Fore Street, Copperhouse, looking towards 'Keverne's Corner'. (Hayle Community Archive)

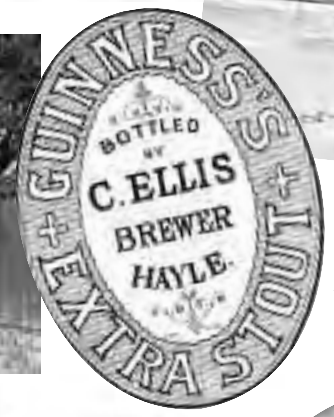
Cornubia Hotel in Copperhouse. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Between Copperhouse and Foundry was located the brewery of C. Ellis and Sons on Sea Lane, now the location of the Hayle Community Archive and Hayle Oral History Project. The Helston Brewery moved to Hayle in approximately 1800. It was taken over by St Austell Brewery in 1934.

The wedding of Christopher Ellis, 1888. (Hayle Community Archive)

Job reference from Ellis Brewery for John Henry Symons. (Gene Thomas, Hayle Community Archive)

Brewery Office. (Hayle Community Archive)



Ellis beer label. (Hayle Community Archive)

Ellis Brewery bottles and close-up of logo. (Hayle Community Archive)

'My grandfather Henry Elwyn Vercoe emigrated to South Africa in 1912 when he was in his twenties. He was a stonemason and he came with his brother to Durban and opened a successful building business there. To our knowledge he only returned once [to Hayle] when his father died in 1924. When I came to Hayle five years ago, following my grandfather's letters, I struggled to find Brewery Lane, which he referred to. Eventually someone said, "It's up there." It was Sea Lane. I walked up and I could see the building. It had builders' scaffolding around and I saw the broken old letters of 'Brewery Office' that my grandfather referred to in this letter. He'd cut them out when he was a schoolboy, not as a working man himself, he cut them out in cardboard.'

Coral Allwright (one of the Vercoe sisters)

As we get to the end of the walk we pass the Passmore Edwards Institute. The building started in 1893 and was opened in 1896 as a gift to the people of Hayle. John Passmore Edwards was a Cornish journalist and philanthropist, editor of *The London Echo* and Liberal MP whose parents came from Hayle. He later sold many of his shares in the *Echo* and focused his attentions on philanthropy.

Commercial Road taken from the site of the War Memorial looking towards Copperhouse. (Hayle Community Archive)

War Memorial and Passmore Edwards Institute on Commercial Road. (Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle War Memorial. (Michael Williams and with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Keep walking along the street, past the Drill Hall with the pool on your right, to get back to where you started at the Swing Bridge.

'The last building I worked on when I left home was built for [the] Drill Hall. The date over the door I fixed myself.' (Taken from a letter by Henry Elwyn Vercoe)

Commercial Road. (BT169H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Commercial Road, Hayle c.1910. (BT175H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

'St Elwyn Church was built by our great-grandfather, his name was Edward Glasson. He had also taken part in building the school. We worked out that must be the Church Hall at the bottom.' *Vercoe sisters*

Harbour view from the Towans. (Hayle Community Archive)

Remembering J&F Pool

With Brian Pascoe, former J&F Pool Director

J&F Pool's canteen tickets.

J&F Pool. From the top: 1 and 2 works then Phoenix Works, also the engine house for Paddy's Mill. (Brian Pascoe, Hayle Community Archive)

J&F Pool's stone screen c.1920s. (Brian Pascoe, Hayle Community Archive)

James Pool formed J&F Pool in Hayle in 1848. In 1862 James Pool's sons, James and Frederick, formed a partnership to continue the company by marketing perforated metal and wire mesh screens. After working in mining in South Africa, they were aware of the need to screen and separate stones to grade them into different sizes and thought that Cornwall's mining and quarry industries would benefit. Their first factory was a small building behind Landers in Fore Street, next to the canal. They installed two wire weaving machines and, later, in 1867, a perforating press. They eventually moved to Chapel Lane to include services for the general public, such as plumbing.

At their peak they owned most of the land previously owned by the Cornish Copper Company although there was no connection between the companies.

J&F Pool quarry managers 1928. (Brian Pascoe, Hayle Community Archive)

J&F Pool worker. (Hayle Community Archive)

J&F Pool workers, World War II. (Hayle Community Archive)

I started with the company as office boy in 1952, having left school and spent 12 months at Redruth Art School. I was 16 and paid the equivalent of £2.30 for a 44-hour week. My father worked at Pool's for 47 years. He asked Mr W. K. Coombe, the works director, if I could have an apprenticeship in the machine shop with the option of moving later into the drawing office, since I wanted to be a draughtsman. J&F Pool was a family company and when I joined the chairman was Aubrey Pool. His son, Franklyn, was managing director and I used to light the fires in their offices in the mornings.

In the First and Second World Wars, J&F Pool made trench mortar bombs. Women turned the rough castings and cutting threads for the end caps. During the war my father worked in the sheet metal workshop in the Old Market House. I remember a big wooden jig (a frame the shape of spitfire sections) that was used to check the panels that were being made.

With the decline in the mining industry, Pool's broadened its output and produced many items including: panels to line the walls of the Jubilee Line underground station in London, the lighting grilles for 001 and 002 Concorde aircraft, air intake grilles for the Jaguar fighter plane, and panels with acoustic tiles for the award-winning Lloyds Building in London.

The company cut back on people and premises at the end of the 1980s and ended up on a site we called Number 3 Works (or the Phoenix Works, now Madison Vean housing estate). Most of the J&F Pool buildings are gone with the exception of the little shop behind Fore Street (its original perforating shop), the Old Market House, which is now *Down the Line* surf shop and flats, and the *R&J Supplies* building.

The company was taken over and ceased trading in the 1990s.

Phoenix Works, now Madison Vean. (Hayle Community Archive)

Memories of Work

‘There’d be a boy with a man and a shovel – he’d be the sticker and the boy would be the dropper. Every hole that he dug we put a plant in. We used to do that after school and all day Saturday for about half a crown. I never spent any, give it to mother – might get a penny or two to buy a lollipop.’ *Barrie Pellow*

‘Before Easter we’d go and pick primroses, bunch them up in bunches of twelve with two leaves for button holes and send them off to market and that used to buy new suits for [my brothers] for Easter.’ *Barbara Pellow*

‘When I had my first child, I used to go bunch flowers and take ’em with me in the pram. They weren’t allowed to send flowers away, ’cause the war was on, so they used to put them in coffins. I used to be paid nine pence for a hundred bunches and I ’ad to put twelve in a bunch.’ *Winnie Bassett*

‘Everybody was workin’, ’ad a job. We weren’t now actually overpaid but we had enough money to live, ’ave a few beers.’ *Bing Hosking*

St Michael’s nurses.
(Richard Horwell, Hayle Community Archive)

‘I kept real old Cornish shire horses. We used to do most of our agricultural with the shires. I bred them and exported them all over the world.’ *Hamilton Hawkins*

Blind hauling at Godrevy. (John Clemens)

‘When I was seventeen I came over Hayle and worked in Coop Butchers. We did have a laugh; I had a swear box for them! When I got married in nineteen-fifty-nine I had to finish because Coop didn’t employ married women so I went to work for Sammy Philp when he was starting off where the Spar shop’s to.’ *Shirley Thomas*

Runnalls Butcher’s advertisement. (Hayle Community Archive)

‘[I did] laundry work, it was a little hand laundry in St John’s Street, only six girls. Everything was done by hand. We used to have to fold that shirt up a certain way and b’ time we’d finished you think it come out of the shop, without a crease.’ *Winnie Bassett*

‘I had a traveller from Holland came to see me. I gave him some bulbs to take back, some ordinary daffodil bulbs and the following year he came over to me and he said, “You know those bulbs I had from you, they flowered six weeks earlier than any bulb in Holland.” He said, “I’d like to have a few more.” That started the export business of the bulbs to Holland. I started off with twenty tons a year and when I sold up from farming I was selling anything up to a thousand tons a year.’ *Hamilton Hawkins*

Buying and selling

‘Every Friday night I used to have to walk from Angarrack down Hayle, I could not have been very old, down to Saddler Tredinnick’s buy half a crown piece of leather and half a pound of hobnails for dad to mend his shoes and the boots on the weekend. We all had black shoes and nearly all had hobbs in our shoes so we didn’t wear them out. As we knocked or kicked the hobbs out Mother would bang in more so Fridays I’d have to buy more.’ *Shirley Thomas*

‘There used to be a horse and a wagon, which used to come round selling meat once a week. You had a few flies. You never had any fridges; you used to have a mesh meat-safe on the wall to keep things cool.’ *Richard Horwell*

Clearing the net after blind hauling, Godrevy. (John Clemens)

'Mr Glanville would deliver milk to the houses in a big can and a measuring jug. He used to whistle to the horse and the horse would walk up through the street to where he was. He would deliver to eight or nine doors and then whistle to the horse and the horse would walk on again up through the street.' *John Coombe*

Willie Dingle the milkman at Gwithian. (Jean Charman)

'Clarke's, it's now Warrens in Foundry Square, used to deliver bread and splits. A split is a small bread roll. Whenever the driver came along three times a week, he would drive along Clifton Terrace and we would go out there, us boys, and he'd give everybody a split. Mr Blamey the milkman used to come round with the milk float, just churns of fresh milk on it. He had these little ladles, a pint, third of a pint, and we used to just scoop it out and put it in Mother's jug. The fisherman used come over with a horse and cart, with all sorts of fish just in open boxes on the back of his cart: there was nothing frozen, no ice or anything.'

Mervyn Sullivan

Grandpa Seager working. (Barbara Emmett, Hayle Community Archive)

Church, Chapel and Tea Treats

Copperhouse Chapel. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Reverend La Touche. (Carole Hollow, Hayle Community Archive)

A drawing of the Round House, Copperhouse. (Barbara Peller, Hayle Community Archive)

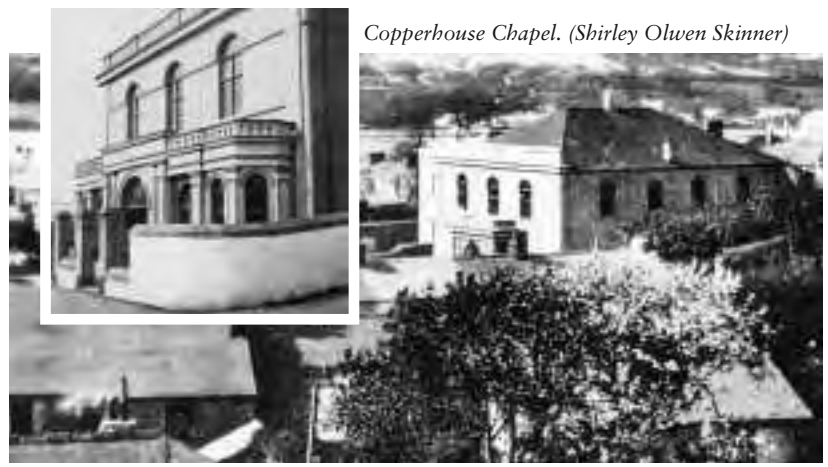
'The Cornish Methodist Church record for February 1893 pointed out that there was a violent thunderstorm at Hayle in about 1783. People were alarmed supposing that the end of the world had come and went to Wall for Methodist preaching.

Wall was the centre of Methodism in the area and John Wesley used to stay there with Francis Hale, a wheelwright. Several people went to Wall that night, heard the preaching and formed the society at Copperhouse. They built the round chapel out of scoria, black Copperhouse slag.'

'The large Copperhouse chapel was built in 1818 when the circuit was formed. Each member donated sixpence a quarter. Harvey's were mostly Church of England but there were so many Methodists that it was agreed that there would be another chapel in Foundry in 1846. They paid a great deal for it.'

Cedric Appleby

Copperhouse Chapel. (Shirley Olwen Skinner)



Wesleyan Copperhouse Chapel, now demolished. (Hayle Community Archive)

Methodist Chapel, now Pratt's Market. (Michael Smaldon, Hayle Community Archive)

Interior of Foundry Chapel. (Hayle Community Archive)

Copperhouse Wesleyan Sunday School march. (Shirley Olwen Skinner)

'A lot of the head bodies in the various chapels and churches were employers and you were expected to be in chapel or church. If you weren't, you'd be asked on the Monday morning, "Where were you yesterday?" I've heard my father say that it was a question of having to go and show your face.'

Trevor Millett

'When Foundry chapel closed first, we used Copperhouse chapel until the new one was built. As we were negotiating coming together, we from Copperhouse used to sit one side of the room and Foundry sat the other side of the room, until a dear old boy called Alfie Hemdon, from Foundry, said, "If we're going to worship together in the end, it would be nice if we all sat together."' *John Coombe*

'My father always said there's no place for women at funerals, and my own mother was not allowed to attend her daughter's.'

Vercoe sisters

'A lot of ladies would never sew on a button on a Sunday or knit a jumper.' *Barrie Pellow*

'There was a parade after chapel; Copperhouse had a chapel, Foundry had a chapel. Copperhouse would come down, and we'd all go up and down Penpol Terrace, part of Hayle Terrace, turn around and go back again. I think that's what they loosely call, "eyeing up the talent!" If you spoke, it was a step nearer. If you didn't approve, you just turned your head. If we didn't have that, we wouldn't of had much social life.' *Nora and Bill Harvey*

Salvation Army, Hayle. (Hayle Community Archive)

Tea treat procession along Penpol Terrace. (Hayle Community Archive)

'Sunday school tea treats we used to go to Carbis Bay, it was a great day. We had our saffron buns and a cup of tea. We used to have a boat trip out around Godrevy lighthouse provided by some benefactor.' *Bob Rickard*

'Whit Monday afternoon it was our Sunday school tea treat and we used to march with the band then, from Copperhouse, right down around Hayle Quays right across to where the Cricket Ground's to now, the Towans. We used to 'ave races, a saffron bun and a cup o' tea. There used to be an old man over there, he used to 'ave a horse and cart. He used to sell all elastic bottles and doodle-dashers – you know, you blow it out with feathers on the end – and all watches and things for children. We'd say, "Mr Lavis, our doodle-dasher won't work." He'd say, "Go and ask your mother for another 'a'penny."' *Winnie Bassett*

'They had those massive buns. They tasted entirely different [then] because they were made with real saffron.' *Shirley Thomas*

'[For tea treat] we had splits and butter with jam, sugar lumps, the boys went mad over sugar lumps, and Kunzle cakes for tea. They were like a chocolate case filled with a creamy mousse mixture. They'd have jellied fruits on top to finish them off. They really were something out of this world. We had races. Miss Lavine used to come armed with her bag of thr'penny bits and sixpences and we'd have money for winning the races. She'd throw what was left in the sand and they'd all grovel on the sand looking for these coins.' *Barbara Pellow*

'We used to have Sunday school treat. We went to Praa Sands one year. It was really exciting; it could have been the other end of the country!'

Doe Harry

Hayle Salvation Army tea treat 1948. (Mr Richards, Hayle Community Archive)

Wartime Hayle

By Brian Sullivan, writer and local historian

The impression given by wartime black and white newsreels and documentary film suggests an atmosphere of dark grey streets and downcast people – a colourless world of dreariness. Nothing could be further from reality. Dreadful as war is in its many aspects, as a town Hayle lived through one of its most exciting periods between 1939 and 1945.

The community rallied around with Union Flags displayed and 'V for Victory' signs. Shop windows displayed colourful patriotic posters warning that 'Telling a Friend may mean Telling the Enemy' or 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' and 'Be like Dad – Keep Mum.'

Social events were organised each day for all ages. Concert parties were popular, especially the "Hayle Merrymakers", a wonderful and much-loved group of entertainers mainly composed of the Quinn and Moon families supported musically by Desmond 'Des' Philp and various performers throughout the war. They did it all for charitable causes, no expenses or payments were ever claimed. Their motto was 'For Others.'

Dances were held weekly both at the Drill Hall and Masonic Hall, and were well attended, especially by the servicemen stationed in the town. The dances were very popular social occasions. Teenagers were catered for by cadet units, including the Army Cadets and Air Training Corps for boys, and GTC for girls. They held their own events and social functions, including their annual sports days.

Whist drives and other fund-raising evenings were held including the very popular choir concerts.

Hayle had a large contingent of soldiers present during the war, training on the towans and manning the defences. Military vehicles of all kinds could be seen going through town each day. The regiments changed from time to time. Later the American Army took over Hayle and things really changed for a while. The biggest events, though, were 'savings weeks', organised once a year and dedicated to one of the armed services: 'War Weapons Week', 'Warships Week', 'Wings for Victory Week', and 'Salute the Soldier Week'. Huge amounts were put into National Savings during these weeks. Hayle once even saved enough for a Spitfire. Many towns in Cornwall, including St Ives, had their name on a Spitfire, but because Hayle was part of the West Penwith Rural District Council the money just went into their savings pot. The savings weeks were big events with military parades, town fetes, streets with flags and decorations, armed forces displays, exhibitions and RAF fly-pasts.

The two endings of the war: VE-Day (Victory in Europe Day) and VJ-Day (Victory over Japan Day) were greatly celebrated. Open-air dances were held in rotation in different streets on following evenings with music supplied by Gerald Berry. People would come to dance from all over Hayle to whichever street was holding a dance that night. At the weekend the whole population gathered on the Recreation Ground for the grand celebration finishing with fireworks.

Hayle Merrymakers 1940s.
(Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Merrymakers 1944.
(Mitchell Collection, Hayle Community Archive)

Memories of the Second World War

Enemy planes, bombs and Hayle's defences

'1941 we was out down Carnsew swimming and two fighter planes came in from the bay. I thought they was Hurricanes but they were two Messerschmitts. I waved and he waggled his wings and I di'n't think nothing of it. They went over Carnsew and 'long Causeway back up to the top end of St Ives. I was told they machined gunned a Double Decker. They came back, I waved again but they was so low that they's under the barrel of the Ack-Ack guns; the one on Hayle Towans near the entrance to the harbour and the other was in Carbis Bay. They went up to Gwithian Lighthouse went in towards St Ives and bombed the St Ives Gas Works. Then the Ack-Ack guns opened fire when they was going! I could have been shot there sure enough. The Electric Works was in full blast, ICI was in production, they was chemicals there and of course the Petrol Depot there – they could have been bombed, machine gunned, but no – that was my lucky day.'

Alfred Williams

'I was on the beach and the tide was quite far out. We were playing in the water and the Germans flew over and machine-gunned the beach. I remember Mother waded out in the high water right up to her thighs and said, "Come in, come in!" She tried to get us in a cave that's there on the beach. I hate being in tight spaces and she kept saying go deeper and I just couldn't. On top of the cliffs of course there were a lot of Americans in tents and I think a lot of the mothers were up there because they weren't down on the beach with the children. No one got hurt, but it was the same day they bombed St Ives Gas Works. It was really scary.'

Anonymous

Gwithian Beach showing protection from aircraft and landings during World War II. (Bob Cleave)

'I can remember one Saturday, there was a German plane and it was so low. We was waving, you could even see the man in the plane. Then we saw the swastika on the side. We was lucky he didn't turn on us, he must have took pity on us.'

Sheila Richards

'When the German planes came over, we used to come out the school and go up the lane and lean back, so they wouldn't see us.'

Phyllis Blewett

'If you look closely enough on the Towans you can see some of these concrete bases still there where they had the anti-aircraft guns. There was a large gun behind Clifton Terrace; you can still walk around the gulley where they had the defences and the walkways. Out on the Towans there's still a gulley all the way behind the black cliffs. The whole front of the beach was covered with barbed-wire defences and at the end of the war those barbed wires was all pulled away so people could use the beach. They were dumped at the top of the beach on the corner by the river, by the power station. The beach was covered with hundreds of poles

J&F Pool workers being taken to the Towans as a reward for their hard work towards the war effort. (D12424 by permission of the Imperial War Museum)

that stick out of the sand probably about twelve feet high, which were anti-aircraft landing poles. People think they were anti-shipping poles, but they weren't, because if ships unload troops onto the beach or tanks they couldn't get up the sand dunes. Anti-landing defences were more up the Gwithian end but at Hayle it was anti-aircraft landing.'

Mervyn Sullivan and Michael Trewartha

'Soldiers were living in the bunkers on the cliffs. My mother used to cook for some of them and my older sister used to darn their socks!' *Sally Hall*

'My father and another gentleman more a less next door to us were both in the first war and they started the Home Guard in Hayle. It was actually the LDV. the Local Defence Volunteers at that time, which my father used to call the Look Drunk and Vanish brigade [or Look, Duck and Vanish brigade]! It became the Home Guard and I remember the front room filled up with rifles and stuff because they had nowhere else to store it. We had a shelter dug in the garden, huge thing. If we ever had a direct hit we'd have been buried without a doubt but we used to go up in that when the siren went initially but gradually we didn't bother – just the siren going again, damn thing.'

Trevor Millett

'We had a Home Guard, patrolling the beach out there at the Towans with broom handles!' *Bill Harvey*

'There was a Bofors gun site, anti-aircraft gun site, at Nut Lane roundabout, up the top. The centre of that roundabout was where the billets were and the Bofors gun was situated somewhere about the middle of the A30. It was guarding the Hayle Power Station. When the gun was at rest, it was always set lying down the line of the hedge. If you lined it up, it was pointed directly at St Erth Church. One day when they opened the gun, it had been laid down with a live round of ammunition in it. If somebody had pulled the trigger by accident, it would have obliterated St Erth Church.'

Michael Eddy

'All the cargo boats in those days had balloons on to stop aircraft flying above them and bombing them. My husband [in the navy] had to take off these balloons when they came into the harbour and put them back on before they left. One day some Jerry planes came over and someone pushed a rifle into his hands and he said, "What do I do with this?" They had to try to shoot this plane. When he came home that night he had a slow puncture. When he got it repaired they got a bullet out of the tyre.'

Barbara Jeffrey

'My mother never locked her doors 'til the war came. Being over at Clifton there was this awful fear, when France gave in, that we would be invaded. We were told that it was only twenty miles between us and invasion. I learnt to power a rifle. I thought, now, my father's a cripple, my mother's coming on an elderly woman, my younger sister's there and an evacuee boy we had from London. Now, I thought, I should be responsible for the safety of this household. So I went over to the Drill Hall but I wasn't allowed to have a gun!
I didn't find that out until I nearly put my shoulder out doing it! I said, "Now where do I get a gun?" Bill's uncle said, "You can't have a gun!" I said, "Well, what did I come over here for?" When France fell, Mother said, "I think we better bolt the back garden gate." She said to Father, "You better buy a bolt and fix it, to keep anybody from coming in." Mother kept the German Panzer Divisions away with a bolt!' *Nora Harvey*

Putting wooden posts in on the beach for war defences. (Jimmy Clemence)

'We had to join something for the war effort. We had Mr Mills, who had been in the First World War. He'd come and teach us how to drill and march. Henry Luke had a firing range on Mexico Towans. We used to have to go over there and learn how to fire a gun, and then Jack Reynolds, he used to be in the electric shop down there, he would come down and show us how to change a plug. We had quite a bit of learning to do which we enjoyed.
We used to parade over to Phillack Church and once to Angarrack Chapel – we thought we were "it" parading up through Hayle!'

Sheila Richards

'I can remember the blackout; shelters were built in St John's Street; of course nobody ever used them. Being a factory producing ammunitions, J&F Pool had a warning system. They had a warning when it was five minutes away, two minutes away and overhead and we would go and sit underneath the table and underneath the stairs. Fortunately nobody in Hayle was ever killed.'

Sheila Murphy

Pillbox on Gwithian beach. (Rita Carswell)

'We had barbed wire across the front green [in Gwithian near the Jam Pot] and you had to be accompanied by a soldier when you went on the beach. There was the Home Guard where the Surf Life Saving Club is now and scaffold poles about 15–20 foot high and posts on the beach. Convoys of ships went by with barrage balloons on top.' *Bob Cleave*

'There were several planes crashing around here and when one came down word flew around town and the youngsters all went out there. This plane was just at the end of the cliffs where the dunes start for Mexico Towans. It was brand new being ferried over to Britain from Morocco. Because it was coming over empty they had packed it full of goodies for the American Forces; boxes of ring donuts and sweets which they just chucked out to us. It was in the tide line so water would come in and surround it. They obviously couldn't work on it then so they'd go. We could jump up to the end of the wings and run down the wing and get into the plane.' *Brian Sullivan*

'It was Bank Holiday Monday during the war and we were near the Cove Café. We heard explosions and then out of nowhere, a [Whitley] Bomber came in just over the water, over the beach and dropped down. Its tail swung over the minefield. The end of the beach towards the Power Station was mined. Some people walked off, one guy was carried off on a stretcher. They'd been shot up and just managed to make land.' *Brian Pascoe*

'We were just chatting in the kitchen and then suddenly, 'Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!' Four bombs. They shook the house. There was nothing up there [on the Towans], we all assumed that he probably just ditched his bombs to get back to Germany and saw the power lines sparkling in the mist.'

Donald Thomson

World War II pillbox and tin stream pylon visible in the background, 1940. (Bob Cleave)

'We had a lovely summer up on the Towans in the chalets in temporary accommodation, but we got bombed. Four bombs fell about 200, 300 yards away around where the entrance to *Haven Holidays* is. They only fell in sand so it flew straight up in the air, it didn't injure anybody. We went over next morning to see the craters, as we always did. The bombs fell parallel to a Cornish hedge and I saw a little glint of silver in the hedge, so I dug the sand away and pulled out a lovely piece of bomb splinter.' *Brian Sullivan*

'Two bombers being chased by spitfires dropped their load and the last bomb was dead short of the ICI – if only they started dropping a few seconds later they would hit ICI.'

Alfred Williams

'Hayle was bombed quite seriously at Guildford – four bombs there where the road comes up from Guildford viaduct, towards the football field, two of them severed the railway line. There was a single parachute mine. That was an enormous crater, biggest one seen in Cornwall at the time.' *Brian Sullivan*

'In the war these German planes used to come over and, one night, dropped bombs. I remember all the glass in our house come in. Daphne and me was crying and I said, "Oh my dear, Dad, whatever there was that?" I can always remember my father looking up and saying, "Don't worry, old beauty," he said, "it's only a car backfired!" They had some crater up there. Mother said, "I know what we can do to get some money for the Red Cross." We had swarms of people come to look at the crater. She made up two tins and Daphne and me collected.'

Sheila Richards

'I can remember sitting on my father's shoulders watching Plymouth being bombed, the glow in the sky.' *Bob Cleave*

'We boys were around thirteen. From the river back to the cliffs was a minefield with barbed wire on each side of it to stop tanks coming up. We were out playing and there was a tremendous explosion and a column of black and yellow smoke went up in the shape of a mushroom over the minefield so we went to have a look. Two dogs had got through the wire, one was a Great Dane and the other was a smaller dog. Apparently the big dog had set off a mine and there was all bits of fur around a great rib cage hanging on the wire all dripping red. No one was hurt in Hayle except when an old sea mine washed in below the *Bluff Hotel* then hit the cliffs and exploded; flying glass injured a lot of the soldiers. There were people killed by American army lorries; they had a couple of accidents taking the pieces of the barges down. When they came over the swing bridge they'd turn right towards *Philp's* pasties. These drivers would swing around and if it wasn't secure it could slide off … I saw one or two slide off the back of the lorry. Unfortunately, one night there was a coalman delivering coal and they took his foot right off. They were on the recreation ground in tents and they were driving their lorry to come down to work and they hit a local chap on a bicycle and killed him. Then there was an accident on the roundabout on Foundry Square. It was much sharper curve then because the old station was in the middle of the road. One Saturday night there were two American soldiers and two girls in a jeep with the roof folded down or open, and they were coming back from Penzance. There was a keep left sign in the middle and they hit that, the jeep flipped over and finished up in front of Lloyds bank. The four of them were killed.' *Brian Sullivan*

'I was walking from Harvey's to the post office and as I got to the middle of the road this American truck came belting down and went towards St Michael's hospital. As it went in front of me this khaki piece of shirt floated out

all soaked in blood and fell down in the road. An American officer had been demonstrating a mine or a shell or something and they were all sitting in a hollow on the towans and they all went up.' *Brian Sullivan*

'One summer day we were up in the garden and suddenly different planes seemed to be going over and kept coming. We didn't know what it was but I imagine it was D-Day.' *Anne*

'At the end of the war, I went out with my father and sisters and we went out to see the bonfires they had all over the country. At the Primrose Dairy they had an effigy of Hitler, I can see them burning this person at the stake. It frightened me.' *Doe Harry*

American soldiers

'The Americans were very generous. The middle classes looked down on the Americans but in the town they mixed in, they were just like us – friendly, played darts in the pubs. The ordinary people took them into their homes and the Americans brought them food, for they were well looked after. At least the Americans died well-fed.' *Brian Sullivan*

'I spoke to one soldier and he said, "You talk like me!" I said, "Well, we're English aren't we?" He said, "I'm American." "Well, we understand each other." He said, "I don't know where I am." I thought that was sad. "One night we was in barracks and the next night we was sailing across and here we are." I said, "You're in Cornwall, in Hayle." "Oh, thanks, mate." Afterwards I thought, oh I hope he ain't a German spy! They's the best lot I've been with and majority of them died during the war and that was sadder.' *Alfred Williams*

'The Americans always had sweets and all, so we were around them all the time.' *Richard Horwell*

'During the war the American soldiers treated us really well as children. One day we went to the Drill Hall to a party put on by the American soldiers. I remember having my first orange, first banana, which I'd never seen before let alone tasted, and they came around with big boxes of chocolates, huge cherries in a liquor and chocolate covering. I never seen chocolates that size since, but I can remember biting that one, never tasted anything like it in my life because we never had sweets during the war, never had any luxuries at all, no fruit. People grew their own vegetables, and this was something unbelievable.' *Mervyn Sullivan*

'The black Americans were the engineering corps. They were helping to build the barges. They were northern black Americans. The Twenty-ninth Division was the Southern National Guard, which was like the territorials – they weren't regular soldiers. They were white Southerners and in those days they didn't mix with black Americans and so it did cause a bit of trouble, friction and fights. American MPs sorted all that out, our PCs just withdrew from the scene: the Americans were armed to the teeth. People in Hayle weren't racist at all. The cause of the trouble [was that] girls would dance with the black Americans and then a white American would say, "Don't dance with that n-----", and then there'd be a fight. It was sorted out in the end by the black Americans being confined to their billets on, for example, Monday, and the whites were allowed out on Monday, and then Tuesday the whites were kept in and the black Americans were allowed out, so they never met.' *Brian Sullivan*

'The war broadened everything and Father allowed my younger sister and me to go to the Masonic dance. There used to be a dance every Saturday night. We had to be home before midnight and make ourselves known that we were home safe. Well, the Yankee soldiers used to come. There was a smattering of our own boys home on leave. The Yankee soldiers came, but the black boys weren't allowed into that dance. We thought that was horrible. Why treat them like that? One of them got killed at one time. I don't know if somebody hit them over the head with a bottle. When that came out, my father never let us go for two to three weeks. I said, "It wasn't in the dance; he was trying to get in."' *Nora Harvey*

'One black soldier must have been in a fight with a white soldier and his face was really cut open, a terrible sight, must have been a razor.' *Mervyn Sullivan*

'The black lads [American soldiers] had a wonderful choir. They came to sing on a number of occasions at Copperhouse Chapel and it was wonderful to hear them.' *Emily Murphy*

'Personally I had little to do with them, I wasn't fond of Americans. I was talking to one an' he was saying he couldn't understand the way girls dressed here – everybody in America seem to have a fur coat and had all this and I thought oh you're just boasting. I made friends with quite a few of the British boys that was here and unfortunately quite a few of them I realised after had been killed. It was a sad time.' *Dorothy Cook*

'I can remember some General with pearl-handled six-shooters in his holster standing up in Foundry Square. Somebody said he was General Patton.' *Alfred Williams*

'I was working for West Penwith District Council for thirty-five shillings a week as a shorthand typist. Down at Carnsew the Americans was here and they were building barges. I found out that they was paying two pound five shillings a week so I went to work down Carnsew. It was over spit where they made the barges. I was down there until Elsie and Honor, who worked in my parents' shop, had to work on munitions at J&F Pool's. I wasn't old enough to be called up so I had to come to work in shop with Father, much to my disappointment.' *Sheila Richards*

'[American soldiers] was queuing at the bench where the grinding stone was, sharpening their bayonets, and two days after we all went in work and they weren't there, just gone. They didn't let on to us, top secret. It was uncanny, really, because we had all that comp'ny and we had our ration of cigarettes a day, chewing gum, oh, and I had chewing tobacco – they was all gone.' *Alfred Williams*

'The army did a lot of training here, the American army in particular on the other side of my place. In my hedge we found two unexploded 1940s U Burma campaign mortar bombs and on that hedge somebody with a metal detector found a live hand grenade.' *Michael Williams*

Prisoners of war

'The Italian prisoners of war (POWs) were all Catholics so they had to go to the Catholic Church at St Michael's hospital chapel. They were marched with maybe one English soldier with them and they would have this uniform with big coloured patches to say they were prisoners of war. They built the first mechanical water pump for St Erth Village. In their spare time they used to make rings out of aircraft perspex, a lot of girls had them. Part way through the war Italy surrendered and changed sides so they were then free to go out. They changed the uniform to having Italy on the shoulder and no patches. A few local girls married them.' *Brian Sullivan*

'We used to go in to Plantation and pick up tobs of earth and the [Italian POWs] used to ride pushbikes along the Causeway. We used to throw tobs of earth down on them but one day

they was all organised. The rest of my gang fled. I, being a smart aleck, stayed behind but hid behind a tree trunk. Unknown to me they come round and climbed the hedge. I never 'eard them. They arrested me and I thought, they can't do that! "Show me your 'ands," I showed them me hands, I never had no earth on them. They said, "Me take you to see the Commandant." I didn't answer. They grabbed hold each arm. Now, from Plantation on Causeway Road there's a little openin' in the wall. You went down some steps an' out on to the main road. It was one at a time and they had a job to catch hold my arm because it was so narrow. I just done a runner. I ran over to Lelant Woods and hid 'way until I thought they was gone.' *Alfred Williams*

Barges built for D-Day at Carnsew

'When they arranged for D-Day I was approached by the American Officer; [and asked] will I come over to Carnsew in Hayle and start to make a slipway where they could land the landing barges, which I knew nothing about at the time. I came over there and started and eventually they sent down three or four other bulldozer drivers, white Americans and blacks. It was my job to train them to do the job correctly 'cause the slope of the slipway had to be a little bit something like it. Back in those times, the Americans, the black and the whites, used to fight like mad. The bulldozers were parked in the yard opposite, which is now *Jewsons*, and they'd cross the road. They had to let the whites come first and the blacks come after and we had to work the whites one side of the Carnsew and the blacks the other side. I think we made around about three-hundred slipways for the barges to be built. Some of the barges were partly built, the hull and that, and they were put on a lorry and transported up as far as Plymouth for the modifications to be done, and the others were built there and towed around Land's End and parked in the Helford River and places like that. As far as Hayle is concerned there should be something put up to remember the men that left there 'cause a lot of them left and never came back. These barges built in Hayle helped to win the war.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

Evacuees

'I was an only child and desperate to have an evacuee. They were assembled in the Drill Hall and you went down and picked somebody. We picked McGarth.' *Brian Pascoe*

'I remember all the children who came down to Cornwall. We had one group from Bermondsey, they were pathetic scraps, and a Jewish school. We were quite surprised because they were allowed to do anything they liked on a Sunday when we weren't at all. Sunday was Sunday; you didn't go out to play or anything like that. Of course then on a Saturday they didn't go out to play because that was their special day. Although in many ways it was a very sad time, it was also a very enlightening time for those of us who'd led such a sheltered life, suddenly to be meeting people not only from London but the Americans coming over in the forces.' *Sheila Murphy*

'During the war when the evacuees came down first, me and my sister were used as propaganda by holding a pig to drink out of a bowl of milk. That went into the London papers as "London Evacuees on Cornish Farm Enjoying Themselves." At that point you couldn't have got an evacuee within fifty yards of a bloody pig.' *Michael Eddy*

Work during the war

'My father died here in Hayle during the war on one of the American ships that had been torpedoed. He was on the night shift down

J&F Pool workers are given a demonstration of the mortar trench bombs they made in record numbers. (TR673 by permission of the Imperial War Museum)

J&F Pool workers making trench mortar bombs during WWII. (TR660 by permission of the Imperial War Museum)

J&F Pool workers rewarded for their hard work and output with a day out on the Towans.
(Hayle Community Archive)

there, on his own, re-plating it. He got overcome with the fumes and they found him the next morning, which left my mother with three children.' *Anonymous*

'I worked in Truro. During the war the trains were blacked out and were late. We had to wait on the platform and then sit in the dark all the way to Hayle. It wasn't very nice.'
Barbara Jeffrey

'Nineteen forty, I had to walk in the dark to work ten o'clock at night, perhaps with the air raid going. You weren't allowed torches.'
Anonymous

'My husband drove to his navy job every day until the commander said, "Jeffrey, I see you're driving a car every day – I'm commandeering it!" "It's my aunt's car, sir." "Well, you'd better tell her I'm commandeering it!" We gave her £100 and the car was ours then and Geoff drove it for the commander. At that time the commander was friendly with the artist at Lamorna, Lamorna Birch, and Geoff used to drive him out there every now and then 'til very late at night. One day my husband said to Mr Lamorna Birch, "Do you ever have any paintings that you aren't pleased with and you throw away?" When Geoff went again with the commander Mr Lamorna Birch said, "Oh, I just did this for you." He signed it, 'To Geoffrey, S.J. Lamorna Birch 1941."'
Barbara Jeffrey

'I used to knit nets and string vests, we were paid a little bit. Behind Daniel's shop, used to go up steps there and a man used to issue string. It was easy to make mistakes. They'd examine them and they'd find what they called a stolen mesh. They'd cut it away and mend it.'
Anonymous

J&F Pool workers in WWII rewarded for hard work. (D12423 by permission of the Imperial War Museum)

J&F Pool workers being taken to a demonstration of their work on the Towans.
(D12427 by permission of the Imperial War Museum)

Family life

'I can remember a parachute coming down and all the women were rushing out to get the silk to make blouses, but it was confiscated!'

Bob Cleave

'One morning we were in bed fast asleep and the warning went up and we woke up. We heard this plane and next thing our bedroom window was spattered. A bomb had dropped up at Tolroy and all the earth had come down on our house. Another time the warning went off and we woke up, the bedroom was flooded with light. We tore downstairs and raked out the bonfire that had flared up during the night.'

Barbara Jeffrey

'We got married 'forty-one, and he knew he was going abroad again. He said, "If we get married I can get a service allowance." Bill went over to see Father and Father said, "I reckon she's too young to be married." I was twenty, but he said, "She will not have the domestic burden of a house to run if you're going abroad. [It's] a way you can save money for when the war's over." So he gave us permission and Bill got a forty-eight-hour pass. There was so many people getting married in the war, local Foundry Chapel minister at that time couldn't put us in. I said, "Well, he's only got forty-eight hours, it's got to be that Monday." Father said, "Look, I've booked the luncheon down in this guesthouse." They were Hayle girls running this guesthouse in Carbis Bay.

'Keverne's Corner'.
(Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Toppa and other soldiers. (Sally Hall)

Father said, "Why not go down to one of the chapels or church down to Carbis?" Well, I went down there and saw the minister, and he said, "Yes, I can marry you Monday." There was a lot of eyebrows raised because it was out of the blue. We'd been courting for a couple of years at least. Even my boss called me in when I resumed work. He said to me, "I'm talking to you, my dear, as a father." He said, "Is there any special reason that you got married so quickly and so young?" I said, "No, not what you're thinking!"'

Nora Harvey

'One day there was a very big gale and the seas were so rough they came in over the rocks at Godrevy and news came back to the Towans that there were shoals of mackerel washed up. They took out bucketfuls of fresh mackerel. Daddy and Mother took them back and they cleaned them and cooked them for the soldiers along Mexico Towans.'

Sally Hall

'You used to have ration books with [coupons for sweets inside]. They used to come out once a month. There used to be a little shop next to The Standard, a Mr Hancock. The first of the month everybody was down there buying sweets. When the war ended Mr Clack put up this notice that ice cream was to be sold; we couldn't get any ice cream during the war. There was a great queue going right round Keverne's Corner, two or three deep, to get this ice cream.'

Richard Horwell

VJ party Trelawney Place.
(Mr Richards,
Hayle Community Archive)

Joan Philp (Carnival Queen) and Mr Sercombe, the oldest man in Hayle at 98, sit at the top of the VJ celebration table on Tremeadow Terrace 1945.
(Gay Hingston,
Hayle Community Archive)

Toppa, other soldiers and Sally Hall's family. (Sally Hall)

Hayle's Own Air Training Corps Contingent: An Unfinished Story?

By Professor Charles Thomas, writer and historian

Shoulder badge. (Charles Thomas)

The previous '77 (Hayle) Detached Flight sign. (Charles Thomas)

The Air Training Corps, formed in 1941 and soon to celebrate its 70th birthday, is perhaps the most successful of the cadet movements. It goes back to 1938, when the Air League of the British Empire decided to enrol 20,000 cadets to be trained for Britain's air arm. The Air Defence Cadet Corps (ADCC) began in July 1938 at Leicester with No.1 Squadron and the first 50 squadrons were allowed later to suffix 'F' for Founder (squadron). In Cornwall, on 29 November 1938, No. 24 F Squadron was raised at Penzance by Col. Sir Edward Bolitho, the Lord Lieutenant. Four months later No.77 (Camborne & Redruth) Squadron was raised by Holman Bros. Camborne. These two were Cornwall's only ADCC squadrons, both from towns with engineering backgrounds.

On 1 February 1941 the ADCC became the Air Training Corps, under the Air Ministry, and was greatly expanded. In Cornwall No. 77 Squadron became 'Redruth Grammar School' and new No. 147 appeared in Camborne. Two other early ones were No. 730 (Truro City), 9 February 1941, and No. 1157 for Falmouth and Penryn, 7 March 1941. But what about Hayle, still a port, still a harbour town with a strong engineering element?

A problem is that detailed ATC records for Cornwall and elsewhere before 1945 are missing, or defective. When peace came in 1945, No. 24 F at Penzance was renamed 'West Cornwall'. It then had four flights. A flight, originally 50 cadets, was on paper a component of a squadron, originally 100 cadets. Here, one flight was at Penzance; three 'detached flights' or DF's were now at Hayle, St Ives and St Just. These bore numbers 1834 (Hayle) 1900 (St Ives) and 1950 (St Just). The flights on their own never began with unique separate numbers. There is a very strong implication that at some date around 1942-1943 an actual No. 1834 (Hayle) Squadron was formed. The best evidence for this comes from a surviving, first-pattern, shoulder badge with '1834 Squadron' – I found this years ago in a Penzance junk-shop, which is shown above alongside a similar one for No. 24 F (Penzance).

In 1959 No. 24 F reverted from 'West Cornwall' to its original 'Penzance'. The St Ives contingent now became No. 1900 (St Ives and District) Squadron, with detached flights – now squadrons – at Hayle and St Just. Eight years later No.1900 ceased to exist and a remnant flight was transferred as a DF to the distant No. 1157 (Falmouth) Squadron. St Just disappeared. At Hayle, the DF continued, may have briefly linked to No. 147 (Camborne), but

1911 to recent times Drill Hall signs. (Charles Thomas)

by 1970 was a detached flight of No. 77 (Redruth – no longer 'Redruth Grammar School') Squadron. Sadly, the old No. 24 F at Penzance was finally disbanded in March 1977. For a short time, No. 1900 (St Ives) was revived, but Hayle's contingent remained attached to Redruth.

In the official lists issued by Plymouth & Cornwall Wing ATC at RAF St Mawgan we find that, end of year 2005, St Ives has dropped out; Penzance has a new squadron No. 626; and Hayle has become '1900 (Hayle) Squadron'. *The Cornishman*, 2 Feb 2006, p.20, had a nice photo of 'The newly formed Hayle Squadron Air Training Corps' (boys and girls together now; the ATC attracts a great many girls!) meeting at Hayle Rugby Club. A smart new sign with '1900 (HAYLE) SQUADRON' soon appeared at the Commercial Road Drill Hall.

There is a new one now, though (see *The Cornishman*, 14 Feb 2008). We see inside the hall the first parade under the altered title of 'No 1900 (West Cornwall) Squadron', with a DF at Penzance; the squadron commanded by Flt. Lt. Julie Matraves-Piotrowicz, before this the C.O. of the new No. 626 (Penzance) Squadron. In that February 2006 *Cornishman* article it is stated that with the recognition of the No. 1900 Squadron 'for the first time in history there was a Hayle Squadron'. Well I'm not sure about that.

My belief, as a historian of all Cornwall's cadet and auxiliary forces, is that around 1942 or so there was a real 'No.1834 (Hayle) Squadron', and its 70th anniversary looms. It had its own shoulder label and it probably met in one of the Hayle schools. Boys from it would, for preference, have joined the RAF.

Here's the challenge for the Hayle Oral History Project. Are there any wartime members still alive in their eighties? Did anyone's father serve in it, and do any photos survive? Where did the Squadron meet; the Foundry end or the Copperhouse end? Does anyone know when it actually began? The Hayle contingent of the Air Training Corps seems to have a real unbroken history. We ought to know a lot more about it. Start asking!

Memories of Entertainment and Courting

Mr & Mrs Phillps. (Bob Cleave)

Mrs Dustow. (Ronnie Dustow)

Bob and Margaret Cleave. (Bob Cleave)

'Don't matter which dance I went to, my mother always used to come and pick me up. I was always told, "If you ever go outside the door, you will never go to another dance as long as you live," so I made sure that I never went out. I loved dancing, that was my life. They use' say, "Who's seeing you home tonight, Mother again, I suppose?" but they never took no notice, they still walked me home just the same. She always used to say, "People will talk if you're out all hours of the morning, you've lost your character."'

Tilly Mitchell

'I was courting and I missed the last bus from Camborne and had to walk home. In them days you got to be home by ten o'clock or the door will be locked. Well, I got home one o'clock in the morning; I had a belting.'

Alfred Williams

'We'd go to a dance in Camborne, but the dance didn't finish until midnight and then you had to walk home from Camborne back to Hayle. There would be scores of people on the road. If you met a girl there and you said, "I'll take you home" and she lived the other way, you had to walk twice as far!'

Donald MacGeorge

'Sundays we used to go church in Gwinear and then we'd go up Carnell and walk up and over the archway. Boys would come over from Connor Downs. That's how I met my husband.' *Teresa Thomas*

[Anne met her husband on Merchant Curnow's Quay, which is featured in a Stanhope Forbes painting]. 'When we were on our honeymoon in Taunton we saw the original. It was thirty-five pounds. I saw it and loved it but I couldn't ask Walter to buy it for me because he only got five pounds a week and seven weeks' wages would be too much to ask.' *Anne*

'There were several girls that I used to take out for walks and chats. I used to go walk on the Towans and walk along the cliffs. Often I thought it would be nice to sit down, but we never did.' *Bill Easterbrook*

'Down Daniel's was five of us that 'ad a chap and they used to be out there Saturday nights lined up!' *Madeline Thomas*

'Used to go around chip shop every evenin' and all the farm boys, they used to go down there. My friend and me used to sit on another table and keep looking across, y'know. I used to see 'im like comin' down from the farm, always liked 'im. When I got about sixteen, he asked me to go out. We wouldn't go out on our own. They took us up the farm where they worked to show us the pigs! I just fell for 'im and that was it.' *Winnie Bassett*

'When I was sixteen, all the young boys used to catch a bus on a Sunday night and walk along the Prom in Penzance, because that's where all the girls used to go. Then we'd catch the last bus back.' *Richard Horwell*

Entertainment and sport

'We had no money but we laughed. Would take us a fortnight save up go pictures.'

Tilly Mitchell

'The only people in St John's Street that had a TV set were the Glanvilles. The Coronation was in 1953 and I can remember about twenty-eight people in that room, lined up, row after row, watching the Coronation on TV from London. It looked as if London was snowing with the poor quality of the picture.'

John Coombe

'Hayle obtained a grant from the Rugby Union and bought Hayle Rugby Ground. It's called the "Memorial Ground," in memory of the [dead and missing in] the first war.'

Denis Hollow

Cornwall Ladies Cricket Team 1950s. (Eileen Couch, Hayle Community Archive)

John H Symons Crimson Tours bus to rugby game in London 1950s. (Gene Thomas, Hayle Community Archive)

'I was on the committee of Hayle Rugby Club when we bought the field. Everyone thought that we were mad. "A thousand pounds for that field! My dear life!" The chairman offered ten pounds for someone to design the badge and logo for the club. I designed it and it was accepted: I never got the ten pounds!'

Bill Easterbrook

Tennis club 1893. (Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle's Junior County Cricket Champions 1937. (Mr Richards, Hayle Community Archive)

Godrevy camping. (Jean Charman)

Connor Comets. (Bob Cleave)

Memories of Marriage and Home

Fred Collins and his wife at Godrevy. (Jean Charman)

Mr & Mrs Dustow. (Ronnie Dustow)

Godrevy chalets. (Jean Sharman)

Marriage

'I was nineteen, and war was on, nineteen-forty-one, and 'course callin' up men and all and we thought we'd get married. So my 'usband, he'd got seven an' six [for the] seven shillin's an' sixpence licence and we thought we'd go get married in Penzance Registry Office; we never 'ad no money or nothin'. So his mother and him, he lived further up from what I did, they caught the bus at Copperhouse and I caught the bus at Cornish Arms and we went to Penzance. The bus fare was two and seven return, right. So we got in Penzance and we went in the Registry Office. We got married, about five minutes it was, called the messenger boy down from upstairs to be a witness.

'We came out and it was about a quarter past eleven and we thought we'd go somewhere have a bit o' dinner. We thought it's too early yet so 'e said, "C'mon love, let's go down Woolworths and 'ave a cup o' tea," 'cause they 'ad a great counter and high stools then. So we went in Woolworths now. The three of us got up on these high stools now, had cup o' tea each, three pence each, right. Well, while we were in there drinking the tea, the girl came down with a great dish o', well, we call 'em buttered buns, but they call 'em rolls now, buttered buns with pork in 'em, three pence each. So my 'usband then said, "They're lookin' nice ain't they?" So we said, "Yeah." So we 'ad one each with our cup o' tea, and they was lovely. So 'e say, "I could eat another one of they, couldn't you?" So we ended up, we 'ad three each and another cup o' tea each. We didn't want no dinner. Three shillings and nine pence.

Phil Collins getting a shave at Godrevy. (Ronnie Dustow)

'We came out from Woolworth's. We bought a' apple each, which cost us nine pence and we went Morrab Gardens and then in the Ritz to the pictures. The pictures cost us one and nine pence each. And then we come 'ome on the bus and that was my wedding. And I had fifty-four years of 'appily married life until my 'usband died.'

Winnie Bassett

‘My father wasn’t a good man to his wife in those days. He used to get paid Saturday dinner times, twelve o’clock and from there he’d go straight into the White Hart Hotel. Me and my mother have gone out a Saturday night at nine or ten o’clock to find him. He used to walk through the fields to Trelissick and one time we found him in the hedge sleeping. My mother went through his pocket and he only had about one shilling and six pence in his pocket to last mother the whole of the week. He had the priority of the money. He’d have his tobacco for the week and his pints of beer Saturday night immaterial of what money mother had for the living and keeping we children. We were four children at that time and times were very hard.’ *Dick Bowden*

The Webb family. (Rita Carswell)

The Pascoe family. (Patrick Warrick)

Home life

‘We had what we call a Cornish slab [for cooking] that had to be cleaned regularly with black lead, hard work too. You put a bit of paper in, a few sticks and a bit of coal and light it. No heating in the house; ooh when we went to bed the sheets would be cold! They didn’t have wallpaper, they’d lime the walls. Dad would buy some lime, quench it then put a bit of yellow ochre in it and turn it into a cream. I remember when mother first papered. You didn’t have wallpaper paste, just flour. The next morning it stood off the wall – it was just standing out!’ *Anonymous*

‘We’d have roasts, we’d have pasties on Saturdays sitting out on the step, stews, rabbit pie… my mum could make a meal out of two slices of bacon.’ *Shirley Thomas*

‘Mother used to say, “Now you go down the road and pick some quicks [sticks] for the fire.”’ *Teresa Thomas*

‘I was the sixth of nine children. Father was quite strict. Children were seen and not heard. We were not heard.’ *Shirley Thomas*

‘I was illegitimate and my mother married my stepfather. It was horrible, you was called a “B-----.” I had a step-aunt – she called me that

Fred Collins and Cyril. (Jean Charman)

Riding in a jingle. (Jean Charman)

word hundreds of times [as though] it was my fault! I was married and pregnant and as [she] passed me she used spit in my face. My step-father didn’t want me, mother used to side with him: they wouldn’t go against their husbands. When my mother died my father, more or less, told me don’t come around again.’ *Anonymous*

‘My mother was pregnant again and wasn’t a very work-ish type. She’d sit in front of the fire all day and read tuppenny novels. Granddad came in one day and I was on the floor, soaking wet, about three and a half with no socks or shoes on. He went bananas, picked me up and took me home. I never had a birthday or Christmas present off either of them. The only time my parents took any interest in me was when I was leaving school and going to work. My gran was no fool and insisted I stayed. I went to my mum’s funeral and no one knew who I was.’ *Anonymous*

‘I lived in a cottage in Roseworthy, no water, electrics, shower or nothing, and if you opened the back door you’d have all the animals from the farmyard coming in.’ *Dick Bowden*

‘We didn’t borrow money, we just saved it up. My husband got seven pounds a week and I got five pounds. We didn’t go anywhere, do anything and lived in a caravan for five years then built the bungalow.’ *Shirley Thomas*

(Jean Charman)

‘I must have been eight or nine. I went into Tolroy, to the big house. In nineteen-forty-one Mr Trevithick died and the only family he had were two nephews who lived in London. They came down and went through the house and took what they wanted. They found a box in the attic, which was full of silver. The two nephews said to my father, “You can take the farm, lock, stock and barrel if you so wish.” The house was left with all the old furniture. It was beautifully equipped. There was a bottle of sloe gin, which was more like syrup, and I can always remember being given a taste of that; what a beautiful drink that was. There was a beautiful oak-panelled room, which we used to call the smoke room, which led into the conservatory. There was a big hall and a lovely open staircase and to the left hand side the dining room and drawing room that you could open up as one big room. There was a beautiful walled garden with three greenhouses and a fountain right in the middle. The gardens were beautifully laid out with a lovely great lawn, a great monkey-puzzle tree, a lot of imported trees, the fishpond and orchard. Apparently, the stone to build the house came from the hilly field at the back of the house and you can see the dip in the field now.’ *Eustice Eddy*

Undercliffe, Phillack and the Towans

Undercliffe, Glebe Row and the waste ground that became 'The Rec', the Recreation Ground. (Hayle Community Archive)

Undercliffe

'Some day before May Day all the boys and girls [from Undercliffe] would scour the area collecting old trees and furze (known as trade) so as to have a big bonfire in the evening. We always wanted our bonfire bigger than the one at Ventonleague. The bonfire was held on the refuse tip, where the recreation ground is now. Prior to the May Day bonfire, the children would select their May Queen and on May Day would all dress up, usually in old net curtains, put garlands of flowers on their heads and carry bunches of flowers, then would go around singing May songs. When the bonfire was due to be lit in the evening, all the neighbours would assemble on the refuse tip. All the windows would have lighted candles in them.'

Phyllis Pascoe

Undercliffe, Glebe Row. (The Ark, Michael Williams)

Undercliffe. (002590 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Lethlean bridge and Glebe Row blacksmith's. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

'Undercliffe was constantly visited by artists, the main one being Stanhope Forbes of the Newlyn School of Art. Many local children appear in his paintings; we would think ourselves so important to be asked to "sit" somewhere for him when he was doing one of his paintings of the river and thatched cottages.'

Phyllis Pascoe

'Miss Chin was quite a character and quite a learned person. She kept ducks in one of her bedrooms. These ducks would come down the stairs, out through the front door and into the river. One of her downstairs rooms she used as a little shop. The walls were down to the bare stone, no plaster. To cover the walls, Miss Chin pinned up sheets of brown paper with drawing pins. Time meant nothing to her, you could go to the shop at eleven or after at night. There would be this lovely smell of stew cooking. She never handled anything with bare hands. She picked up a piece of paper and held it on her hand and you were given your change by this method.'

Phyllis Pascoe

Phillack

Phillack, Hayle. (Michael Williams and with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Phillack School 1902 Rectory grounds. (Hayle Community Archive)

Phillack from across Copperhouse Pool. (The Ark, Michael Williams)

Mellanvrane Mill, Phillack. (001961 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Phillack Hill. (BT167H with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Gathering, Phillack Church. (Michael Smaldon, Hayle Community Archive)

Phillack from Black Bridge 1899. (Hayle Community Archive)

Towans Beaches

'We used to do go over to the beach with a great pram load of stuff. Used to go nine o'clock in the mornin' and when the war was on it was double summer time and it weren't dark until 'leven o'clock. Whole crowds of us used to go out together. We used to go along the beach and pick up all the bits of stick, put a couple of stones around, make a fire and boil a kettle up. 'An'some, wouldn't want nothing else.' *Winnie Bassett*

'This is an extract from letters in 1951 from my Grandfather [who left Hayle in 1912] to his Daughter. "Go on the Towans. I don't think there's another place in the world like the Towans. It was a grand place to wander about in the old days."' *Janet Muller, Vercoe sister*

Hayle Towans. (Michael Williams and with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

The Cove and Bluff crowded beach. (Hayle Community Archive)

'On one occasion I went past Cove Café and a cave that has always intrigued me. I entered with some friends with our torches. We walked in quite a way through the cave and traversed some ledges and pools. It must have gone in for about a quarter of a mile or so and at the end there was a great big tall shaft that seemed to go up towards the top, it may have been about a hundred feet or more and I assume it would have come up approximately in the middle of the caravan site owned by the Haven Holiday. Quite by chance I walked along the beach a few days later and I noticed there had been quite a lot of rock-fall, it had completely obscured the entrance.' *John Buchanan*

Hayle Towans, paddling pool. (Michael Williams and with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Taylor's Tea Rooms. (Hayle Community Archive)

'I was brought up by my granddad and grandmother at Mexico Lane, Phillack. We used to go on the beach and my granddad always used to have a chain and a sack. We collected driftwood, which kept us going in our little sitting room all the winter. In those days there were a lot of ships made of wood so we collected a lot of planks. I can remember Granddad struggling over the cliff with this chain on his shoulder pulling these planks of wood.' *Barbara Emmett*


Hayle Cove Café.
(Winifred Allen, Hayle Community Archive)


Wheal Lucy on Riviere Towans.
(Hayle Community Archive)


Camping in 1926. (Hayle Community Archive)


The Cove and Bluff with spoil heaps from the mine Wheal Lucy. (Hayle Community Archive)

Hayle Towans showing Lelant and Trencrom.
(Michael Williams and with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)


Donkey rides on the Towans.
(Sally Hall)


The Cove, Riviere Towans.
(Hayle Community Archive)

Chalets

'My parents used to come to Cornwall for a month on holiday. We used to stay at Riviere Towans. We would meet up with the same people every year. While we were there we used to have the carnival last two weeks of our holiday in August. The afternoon was taken up with this fancy dress and people came by the hundreds. During the war we could not get material so mother used to use crepe paper. After we had all gone to bed at night she would start working. My sisters and I had costumes made with little violets and we had hats like violets with the stamens sticking up in the air. Mother put wire through a lot of the outfits. One year we were Spitfires with the wings, and another year we were Spanish ladies. After the sports and fancy dress we used to have to queue up for a big saffron tea treat bun. You'd all be sat around with these buns and I have never tasted anything like it since.' *Sally Hall*


Sally Hall spitfire costumes. (Sally Hall)


Chalets and Post Office Hayle Towans, c.1960. (Winifred Allen, Hayle Community Archive)

Chalets on Riviere Towans. (Hayle Community Archive)

'Out on the Towans in the early thirties they used to have a tea treat, it was half a carnival almost. You just came from home and joined in.' *Donald Thomson*

Towans carnival – Donald Thomson far left. (Donald Thomson, Hayle Community Archive)

'It was lovely over there in the summer. In the winter it was rough, rough. No heating only electric fire. The wind used to blow. You used buckets; you used have to pay half a crown to have them emptied. The rent was twenty-one shilling a week.' *Eileen Wheatley*

'There were earwigs and wood lice in the sheets so I would tend to sleep with my knees bent. We would wake up in the morning and you could see through the boards of the chalet to the outside! The chalet has been maintained with timber from the beach, including parana pine, teak, chestnut and lots of woods that were deck cargo. On rough, wet weeks we would have little bits of sheet torn up with the sheet pinned in where the drip would come in and they would all lead down into a number of buckets to catch the water.' *John Buchanan*

Towans carnival and chalets. (Roy Lindus)

Locals and holidaymakers at the Towans carnival. (Sally Hall)

Champy Nicholls. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

Champy Nicholls

Bucket of Blood, Phillack. (Ronnie Williams, Hayle Community Archive)

'The local grave digger used to go up to the *Bucket of Blood* every night and always used to drink Guinness. The landlord always used to give him the first pint and from then on, especially in the summer, he wouldn't buy another pint because he would be telling tales to the visitors. He went up there every night and he never missed a night for forty years. Guinness came down and presented him with a watch. He would say if you went down to the cemetery at night and leaned over the gate, you would see ghosts. The visitors would believe him and I've seen them down there leaning over the gate looking for ghosts 'til midnight. He would be staggering down, passed them drunk, full of the Guinness they'd bought him!' *Richard Horwell*

'Mr Willie Nichols was nicknamed "Champy." During the winter evenings he would have a fire in the fringle in his back kitchen. My step-brother Jack would go there spend the evening and watch them mend nets ready for the following season. "Champy" kept ferrets and greyhounds. Where the salt marsh is now, many years ago about the only plants that grew there was thrift, sea pinks and samphire. After the tide had gone out this land was left flat and the sun would dry it. "Champy" would take his greyhounds, followed by all us kids. "Champy" had invented a fine contraption made from part of a bicycle turned upside down. A rabbit skin would be attached to a piece of string and taken to the other side of the mud flats. When the pedals were turned this would wind the rabbit skin back to the cycle. Once it started to move the greyhounds were released and chased across the mud flats. You can imagine the sport we got from our own dog track.' *Phyllis Pascoe*

Excuses for Absence in St Erth Wesleyan School Log 1872–1900

By Cedric Appleby, writer and local historian

St Erth Wesleyan School. (Cedric Appleby)

In 1872 the St Erth Wesleyan School opened its doors and remained open until 1922, when children were sent to the new Council School on School Lane along with the older (Anglican) National School pupils. Although the 1870 Education Act provided places for the children, attendance was not compulsory until a few years later. Grants for the school depended on attendance as well as the standard of education, and the headmistress recorded reasons for absences in the School Log.

From the log it is possible to reconstruct a calendar of rural life in the last half of the 19th century. Boys were needed on the farms and girls always at home. The hay and cereal harvests demanded a great deal of child labour, and weeding of crops, in the absence of weed killers, was needed as spring approached. Primroses were picked from St Erth hedges in March and April as well as tilling potatoes and broccoli. In 1882, one boy returned in March having been working at this since Christmas. Attendance was so poor at harvest time (June and July) that a holiday was granted, although the annual visit of the thrashing machine after the harvest drew many out of school. Blackberries were picked, especially on St Erth Hill, in September. In October ferns were picked, on Steppy and Porthcollum Downs, for winter fuel. Help was needed just before Christmas for the preparation of poultry "for the market."

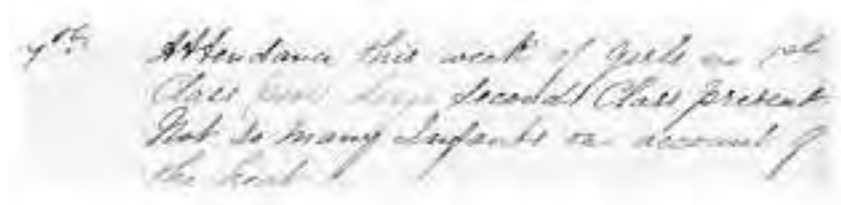
A common reason for girls' absence was looking after children. On occasions a parent would demand that if a girl attended school she must bring the baby! It was traditional to clean houses in St Erth the week following Feast Monday (the nearest to October 31st). Girls were needed at home for that as well as weekly baking days.

Feasts, fairs, circuses and events were common reasons for absence. Hayle Regatta did not have a set date, appearing in the log anywhere from late June to August. Pupils voted with their feet and a half-holiday had to be given. Circuses appeared at Hayle regularly and there was often a menagerie.

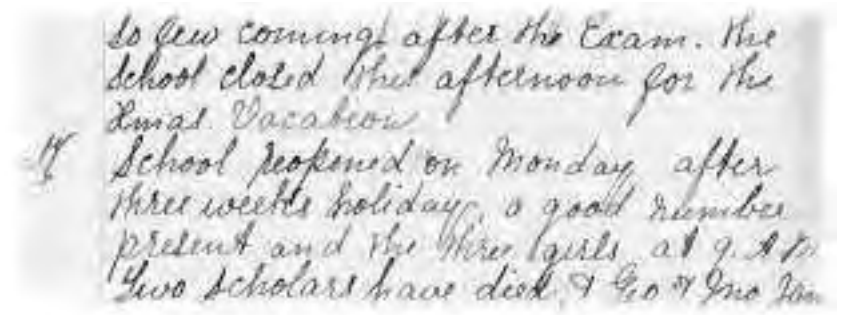
The St Erth School Log shows that the weather kept children off school. Throughout the years it snowed severely in all of the months between December and March. In 1891 the notorious 'Great Blizzard' disrupted a mild winter on March 9th. During that week of snowfall, attendance only reached a maximum of 12 out of over 100 pupils. Those who attended would have been dismayed when the Easter holidays were virtually confined to Good Friday and Easter Monday, to make up for the time lost!

Flooding was very serious in St Erth, and in mid-November 1894 only a few children were able to leave their homes. Cold weather was always accompanied by winter ailments such as coughs, colds and chilblains.

The first reference to a serious illness is in March 1872, when scarlatina closed the school. Winter ailments could become serious. In March 1876 Edith Roberts, aged 13, died of inflammation of the lungs (probably pneumonia) after a heavy cold. There were further cases noted in December 1892 and February 1896. Measles was spreading in December 1881, and a child died of it in January of the following year. Measles caused fluctuating attendance in November 1886 and May 1890 and was so serious in September 1894 that the Medical Officer closed the school for a month. Grace Lobb died of typhoid in March 1894. Whooping cough was often reported from 1880 onwards and was noted as 'epidemic' in December 1890. Some pupils were unable to resist eating berries in 1889



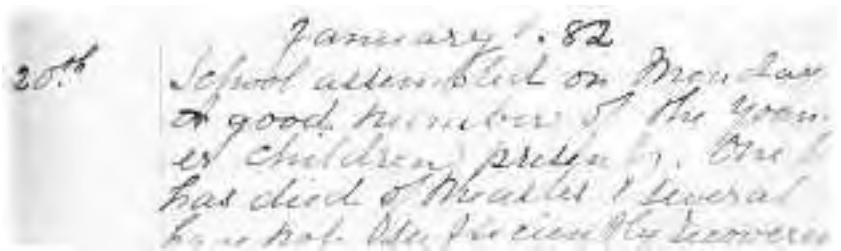
St Erth School log, 17th & 20th July 1874. High absence due to heat.



St Erth School log, 18th January 1878. Two scholars died during the Christmas holiday.

St Erth School log, 12th February 1880. Two children sail to Australia.

St Erth School log, 12th March 1880. Poor attendance due to potato and primrose season.



St Erth School log, 20th January 1882. One death from measles.

and apparently suffered from blood poisoning but recovered. Ringworm appears in May 1894 and there were many sufferers in December 1897 and August 1898. Influenza is mentioned for the first time in February 1890. Jane Stevens was thought to have suffered a mild attack, but when she returned to school she was still 'very poorly.'

Other illnesses were 'abscess gathering' in a pupil in May 1890, a type of 'eczema in the head' in November 1895 and 'hysteria' in November 1894. A pupil suffering from St Vitus' Dance had to go to the infirmary in November 1895.

Diphtheria came in February 1898 with one case, not fatal, but it was in the next century that St Erth was badly hit with fatalities. There were several deaths of children in 1919 and 1920. *The Lancet* report for 16 December 1887 revealed that its closeness to the churchyard and other sources of contamination made the water there unfit for drinking.

Memories of School

Penpol School.
(Eileen Wheatley, Hayle Community Archive)

'There was no school in Angarrack, we had to walk to Connor Downs whatever the weather. I loved school, I suppose really it was to get away from having to work at home.'

Shirley Thomas

'At harvest time in World War Two, it was published in newspapers that children in school could work on farms so many hours a week and be absent from school. It was divisive because poor children from the elementary schools, Bodriggy, Penpol and evacuee schools, went. It was the poor children who could go out for four pence an hour working on a farm. I only did it for one day, when it was hot in July, and it finished me. For three hours I was paid a shilling, that's about one pound fifty in present money. For a lot of parents it was compulsory that they should bring in four pence an hour.'

Brian Sullivan

Boys' working group.
(Michael Smaldon, Hayle Community Archive)

'I really enjoyed the school lunches and the puddings that you had at school. It was pretty sparse at home, I remember having rabbit several times a week; it was the staple diet.'

Bob Rickard

'Children were educated to be farm labourers, apprentices in Pool's and shop girls. You had final examinations and if you passed that you'd go, if your parents could afford it, to Penzance County School for Boys and Girls. If you didn't pass that it was end of story – you simply left school at fourteen and went into one of these occupations depending on your intelligence and ability to do figures. Girls could go into shops because they could add up fast. Boys, if they were good at arithmetic, would go into Pool's or the Power Station, as they were able to use micrometers. Just on the strength of having passed that exam you could get a job as a clerk in the Power Station.'

Brian Sullivan

'I worked with a girl who passed her eleven plus. Her mother was a widow. She said, "I couldn't go. Mother couldn't afford to buy the uniform."'

Nora Harvey

Bodriggy School garden, 1955.
(Mr Richards, Hayle Community Archive)

'I got the scholarship, went to the Penzance County School for Girls but of course there was money involved then; train fare, books. Dad lost his job. You could borrow, but Dad wouldn't do things like that. Unfortunately I had to come back after a year.
It broke my heart.'

Anonymous

Bodriggy School 1920s. (Carol Kitto, Hayle Community Archive)

‘When I was eleven years of age I took the eleven plus, which I failed, and my parents decided to send me to Hayle Grammar School, overlooking Hayle Railway Station. The school itself was just like a Dickens novel; outdated, scruffy and totally devoid of any comforts whatsoever. It was thirteen pounds a term, four terms a year. There were two uniforms. If your parents had lots of money, you had a little blue and yellow striped blazer, with the badge imprinted on the top pocket, and if your parents didn’t have too much money you had a little blue plain worsted blazer. There was always a lot of animosity between the boys that had the striped blazers and the boys that had the blue blazers because it was a form of class distinction. I had a blue blazer but I was able to stick up for myself!’ *George Hoare*

‘The first two years of Bodriggy School was at the old Copperhouse Chapel. We had individual blackboards and chalk [and] a combustion stove. When it was lit on a Monday morning you could hardly see the teacher for smoke; it didn’t heat anything.’ *John Coombe*

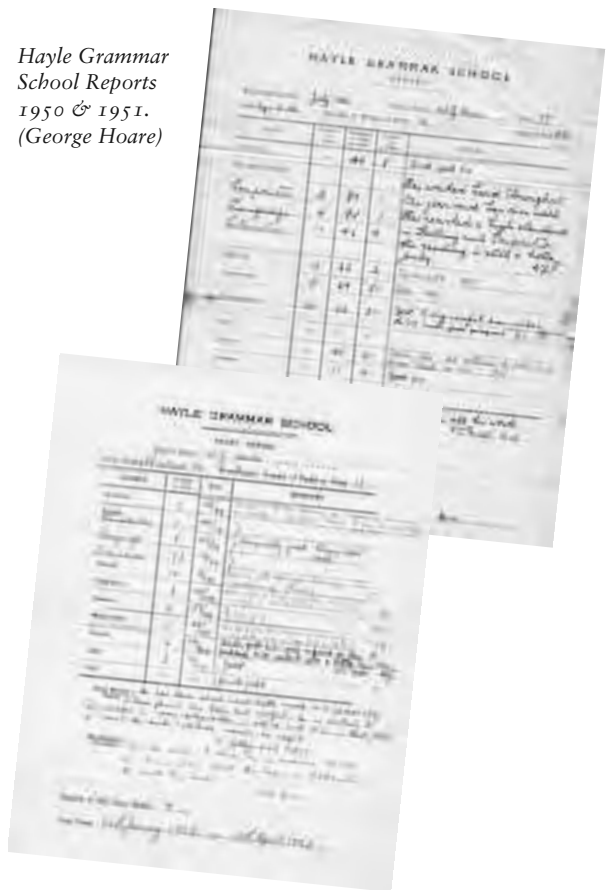
‘Our sports field was a long way from the school. All the changing had to be done in the school. You put on the old leather studded football boots with shorts down past your knees and we would have to march up to the sports field, the best part of a mile and a half away. You were tired out by the time you got to the field!’ *George Hoare*

‘We weren’t allowed to catch hold the stair handle coming down the banister. If we were caught, we were made to vinegar and water it and then use polish. I hated French and would say, “Oh, I’ve got a headache.” We were sent down to the headmistress’s sitting room and she used to come in with this long little bottle, like poison. She’d put a few drops of that in a glass with some water and she would stand there while you drank it.’ *Doe Harry*

Hayle Grammar School badge. (George Hoare)

‘My form master could throw a blackboard duster (the ones with the wood on them) more accurately than anybody else I know; he could always hit you.’ *Donald MacGeorge*

‘We used to have a teacher for cricket. He used to sit in the hedge and go to sleep. When it was time to go home we used to wake him up. Well, one day we just left him there; we didn’t wake him up. He woke up eventually in the evening and he had to go home to Penzance. We suffered for that.’ *Richard Horwell*



Hayle Grammar School Reports 1950 & 1951. (George Hoare)

Memories of Playing

Patrick Warrick and friend. (Bob Cleave)

Riding dandies or butts. (Rita Carswell)

Riding dandies at Gwithian. (Rita Carswell)

‘We made our own fun. I’ve run miles with an iron hoop and when it broke there used to be a little smithy, Mr Veal. You’d go in there and say, “Can you forge my hoop, please?” “Yeah, in a minute boy, but while you’re here you can pump.” We used to have to keep pumping the fire while he finished and then he would forge our wheel and off we’d go again. We’d run miles with hoops.’ *Richard Horwell*

‘We used to make our own games, no toys to play with as such. We used to make our own butts [go-carts]. We used to go off and find an old pram and use the wheels; used to have the small wheels on the front with the rope steering it. A wooden handbrake just went directly onto the wheel, hopeless. We used to go down Trelawney Hill, down around the roundabout, [and] from Clifton Terrace down the hill towards Esso Works.’

Michael Trewartha and Mervyn Sullivan

‘There was never any “Don’t be gone more than an hour.” You took a couple of sandwiches and you’d be gone all day, no one worried about you. We used to play Fox and Hounds. Several would go off and hide and you’d have to go and find them. They could be around the Parish, not just around the corner and so you could be hours trying to find people.’ *Bob Rickard*

Playing 1951. (Rita Carswell)

(Hayle Community Archive)

Gwithian Beach, 1953.
(Bob Cleave)

Snow at Gwithian, 1947.
(Rita Carswell)

'We used to go out in the quarry [Angarrack]. My mum used to give my sister a box of matches, a bag of potatoes and a bottle of pop and we'd all, nearly all the village I reckon, go in the quarry. We'd build a bonfire, we'd build it up first with stones around, had a fire, put our potatoes in and that was our dinner. We'd dam up the river and swim in the river. We weren't allowed up the Werps, in the Moors, no more when polio came out, the water was stagnant, so we played in the river instead. When we heard the hooter from electric works we had to be in. Stopped whatever we were doing and be in and washed and sitting down at the table waiting for Dad to come in for our tea.' *Shirley Thomas*

'We used to go and scrump apples. We would never do any damage; we'd shake a tree and get the apples that came down. [Once] we jumped straight at the feet of PC Wherry. He said, "Oh boys, what you doing?" I said, "Nothing, Mr Wherry." He laid his cape on the floor and he said, "Right, put them in there." We put all these apples in his cape and I'm sure he took them home. We had a whiz around the ear and were sent home.' *Richard Horwell*

'John Small was coming back from Air Training Corps (ATC). Horse Pool [Gwithian] was frozen over. John gets off the bus and in he goes skating, right through the ice, soaking wet, mud. So he came home and had quite a dust up with his mother. I goes over and [his mother] says to me, "He can only go out if you promise to look after him." [They went to skate around the Garrick pool]. He went around the edge of it, it was quite hard, it could stand me and John. He wasn't satisfied and moved further out. "Don't go out further, John, thinner out there!" Well, I'd no sooner said that before CRACK. He'd gone through, soaking wet. I got John out. I had a fixed-wheel bicycle, rat-trap pedals, so I said to John, "Get on the cross bar of my bike, I'll run you home." On the way home, pedal came round, caught the leg of John's trousers and ripped the leg right off. Got back to John's place, I dumped John off the cross bar and took off as fast as I could go. I didn't see him for a fortnight.' *Tom Prisk*

'Some of the other children felt sorry for us, Mother was very strict. If we did wrong we'd be shouted at and walloped. She didn't spare the rod, my dear. The woman next door she'd be down in the garden, put up tents for the children and play: we'd be sitting indoors, watching. We didn't go to the beach, I'd never been in the sea until I was sixteen. We were under her scrutiny. We stayed in evenings. I used to read on the toilet as Mother thought you should be doing something, dusting, polishing.' *Anonymous*

'We used to have a penny given to us Saturday nights. We'd go up the shop and buy what we'd call h'aypeth – halfpence - h'aypeth of this, h'aypeth of that – sweets. We'd go home and put back one lot for Saturdays and the other lot for Sundays – that was our weekly ration. Uncle would come down from Carnell and gave us a penny; we thought that was a fortune.' *Teresa Thomas*

'There used to be, down in Copperhouse, a shop called Andrew Eddy's. He used to hire out bikes, thr'pence – the old three pence – for half an hour. You'd hire this bike and you'd think, "Oh, I've been over my half an hour," and then you'd just lean it against the wall and run. Then you wouldn't dare go in there for a month or two until he's forgot about it!' *Richard Horwell*

'There was a chap sitting outside Angarrack Inn and he asked my father would he like him to light his pipe, but instead of lighting the pipe, he lit his beard and he chased him for miles and miles and eventually got home where the maid sent him to bed. When this gentleman called she said, "He couldn't have been out because he's been in bed all evening!"' *Betty Elliott*

'We used to go Hayle Cinema Saturdays. Dad used to give my sister the money. She used to pay for us to go in, quite often we'd have to find an adult to go in with, someone in the queue. We used to have ice cream blocks and she'd break that up and give us all a piece. Then we'd come out and have chips. A shilling went a long way.' *Shirley Thomas*

'I was born at Hayle Terrace south of the war memorial, which made me a Foundry boy. I was fortunate because generally I could go to Copperhouse and join in things because I was in the middle, but the boys at the very ends were always at variants with each other, gang warfare at times and quite violent.' *Trevor Millett*

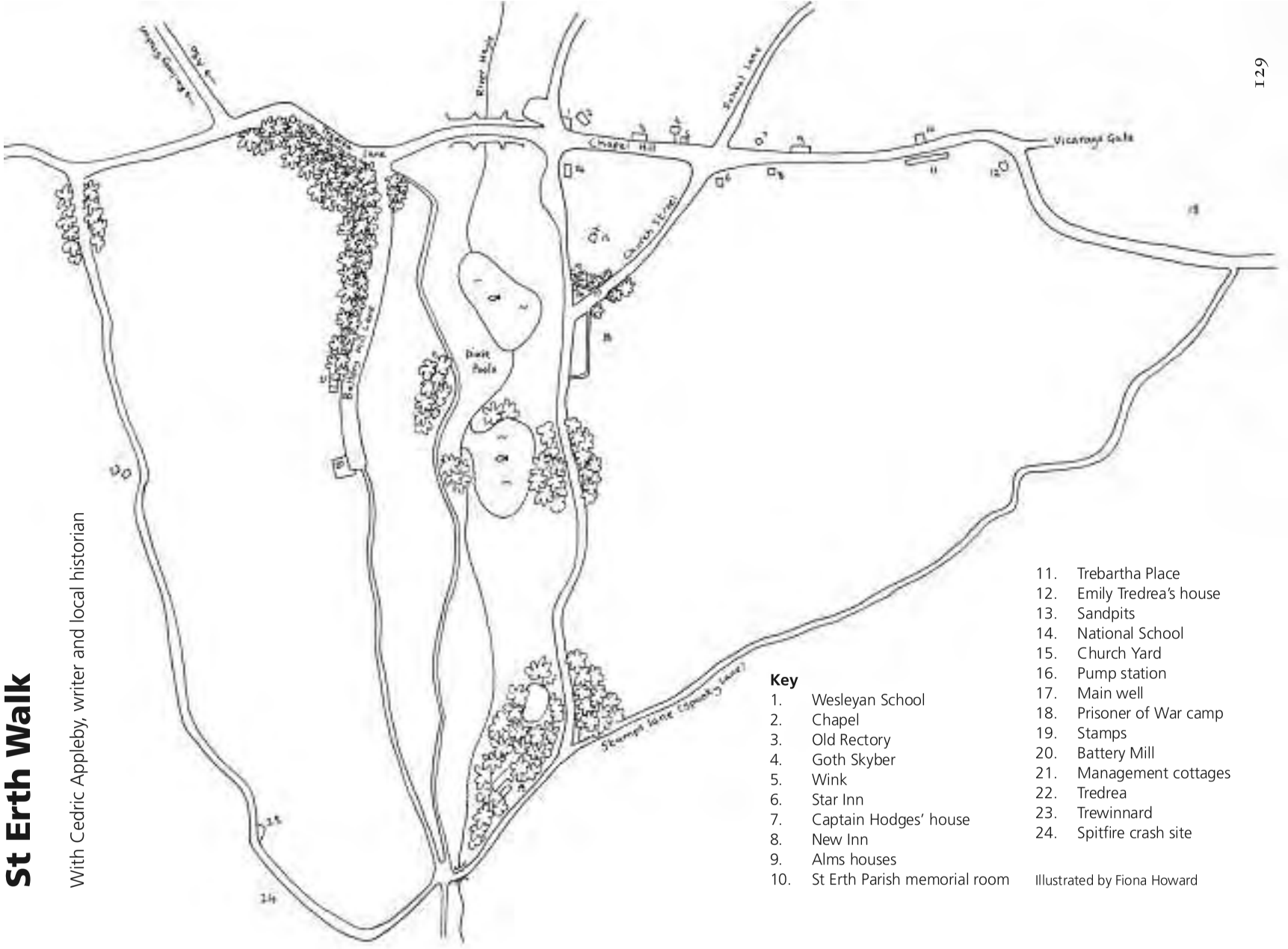
'If we went certain areas we was questioned by the young men there what was we doing there. I di'n' go Copperhouse much but we went over the Hayle Towans and we was questioned there and the other end of Foundry – Joppa – we weren't allowed up there. It was territorial really. We would still go – we would fight. What right have they to question us?' *Alfred Williams*

Playing by Black Cliffs.
(Sally Hall)

Playing on the beach.
(Jean Charman)

St Erth Walk

With Cedric Appleby, writer and local historian



Illustrated by Fiona Howard

My father-in-law.
(Barbara Emmett,
Hayle Community Archive)

The bridge, St Erth. (With kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

We start at the Church car park near the bridge.

The bridge, dating from 1330, was widened by St Erth resident Davies Gilbert in 1816. Gilbert was a great scientist, mathematician and parliamentarian. He helped Humphry Davy and Richard Trevithick get their work recognised and supported them through their litigation battles. He was president of the Royal Society, the highest honour that any scientist could achieve. Like other presidents he had a mountain in Canada named after him. He was very wealthy but had to change his name from Giddy to Gilbert in order to acquire his inheritance. He lived at Tredrea, St Erth.

With our back to the bridge we can see the Wesleyan school on the left and the National School, now the Village Hall, next to the church on our right.

This area used to flood very badly.

'I was 13 when war was declared. We were down church and Parson Roberts gave it out that war was declared. The evacuees came down then. We split the school and they had their own teachers. Some had good homes and still came to visit after the war, some had poor homes and were worked hard.'

Barbara and Barrie Pellow

'We went to live in St Erth in a cottage in a dip opposite the chapel. The rent was six old pence a week, that's all we could afford. The houses used to flood, three or four weeks every winter, and we had to live upstairs. In order to do so, there was a large step at the front door then we'd put a plank across from the front door to the stairway; we all lived upstairs, no fire, no heating.' *Dick Bowden*

'Water used to flood right up to the gate at the back of the church. All those houses used to be under water – water half way up the windows in winter.' *Barbara and Barrie Pellow*

'For a few years the water used to come right in our house and we were walking around on bricks with boards across.' *Bob Rickard*

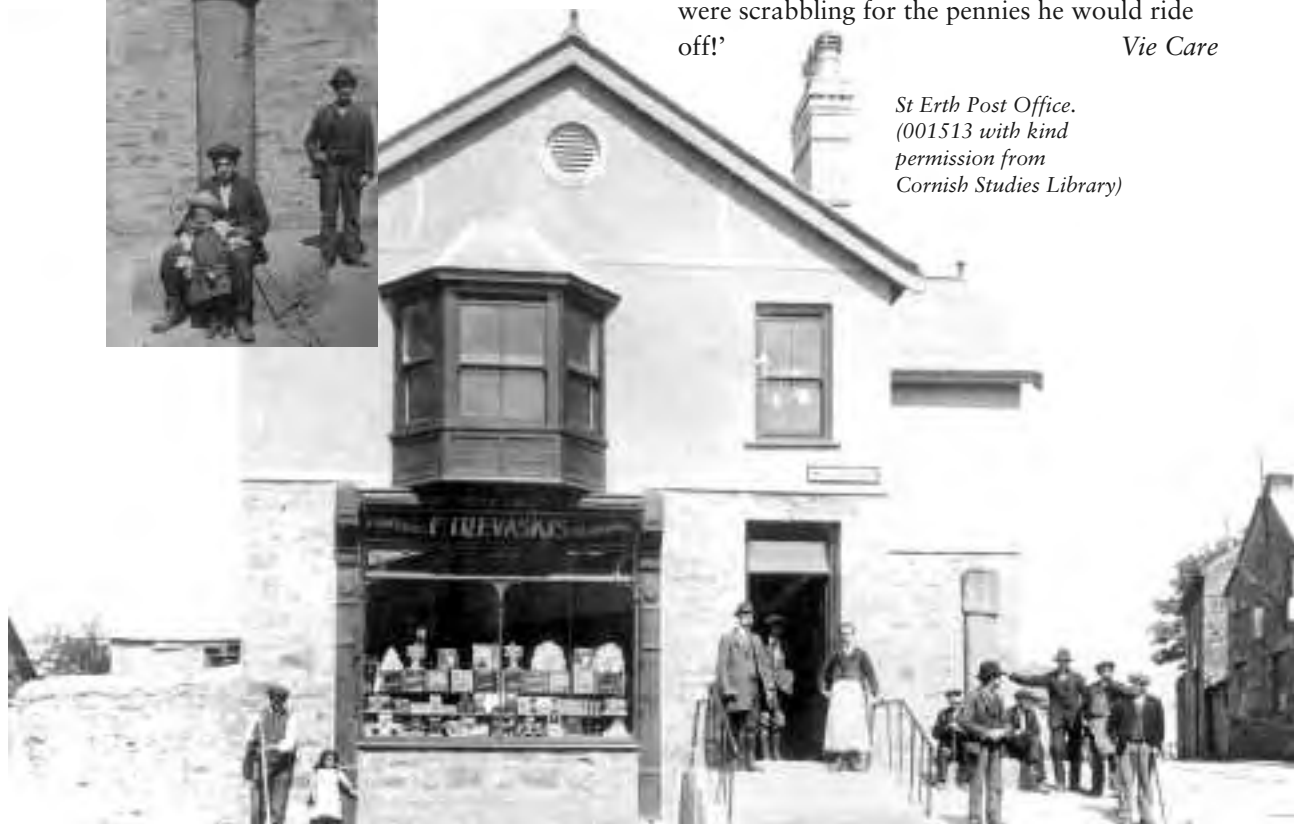
Mrs Hutchinson used to live in some very old houses behind the chapel, Chapel Hill, the oldest part of St Erth. She used to see a ghostly monk on the stairs.

Going further up Chapel Hill we pass the old rectory Tithe barn, Goth Skyber. Until the 1830s farmers had to give a tenth of their produce to the rectors and vicars of their parishes and this would be stored in the Tithe barn. A woman living there reported that her daughter was frightened of coming to visit because she heard voices. Her mother was in bed, the television or radio wasn't on, but she could hear a conversation going on.

St Erth Memorial. (Hilda Stone)

Walking along, there's the Wink [a wink was the name for a drinking parlour] on the left. Go past the Star Inn, it used to have The New Inn right behind it. Continue up the hill. On your left was Eastlea Lashbrook's blacksmith's shop that he shared with a wheelwright. The gap at the end of the building is where the wheels were turned.

'We were very poor, really. We lived in Trebartha Place and our cottage was down a little alleyway and it had two rooms, one up and one down. The one upstairs was over the alleyway and it had a trap hatch where you put your furniture down. We were so poor then, we had parish relief. We had to get this little yellow slip from Mr Saundry, the Relieving Officer, and take it to Mother. That was for us to get food. Mr Saundry used to come to his office in the vestry. All us village children used to sit around the bottom of the steps until he came out. We'd run after his bike and he would throw some pennies back to us and while we were scrabbling for the pennies he would ride off!' *Vie Care*



St Erth Post Office. (001513 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

St Erth's Hart family. (Vie Care)

A lot of St Erth houses were owned by the Rodd family of Trebartha House (Launceston). The small cottages on Trebartha Place have "grope" passages, alleys that run between and under the houses leading to houses at the back.

St Erth Street. (Hilda Stone, Hayle Community Archive)

'We had to carry all our own water from the plump. The plump was a big hole in the ground with a frame up over it, with a roller and a handle and a rope which laid the bucket down and then [they'd] wind the handle to pull the bucket back up. Nearly every house had a spring behind [and] nearly every house had a pump or a plump of some sort. Us children weren't allowed too near.' *Vie Care*

'It was a culture shock coming from Penzance to St Erth [to brand new houses in the 1940s]. You had to pump the water up from an underground tank to get it through the tap. In the summer it would dry up and we'd go down to the well at the church. The toilet was outside, a bucket with a piece of wood on top with a hole in the middle. You had to dig a pit in the garden to tip it overnight.' *Barbara Pellow*

'We never had mains water until 1998; we had our own pump – the old ram. Spring water was really cold and really lovely.' *Doe Harry*

'I was a railway clerk. The boys were going off to war so there was an opening for me. My mother died at forty-two and I had to stay home then so my sister took my job. I took over looking after the family; I hadn't really learnt to do much: not cooking. I had to do my best. Back in those days, we never had any electricity or anything, no indoor water; we had to draw up water from the well. Wash days we had to bring up about twelve buckets of water. I remember taking all day to do this washing and quite a bit longer to cook a meal because to get the old slab going was quite a job in itself, filling the old copper with water and getting that fire… only 'ad a few sticks and if they were a bit damp you'd be all day. We all washed the same way but my aunt's be half finished before I was ready to put them out. Very often we'd put them on the clothesline down in the garden and you had a clothes prop to put them up, and very often the prop fell off and the clothes were down in the mud and you were worse off than before you started.' *Pamela Webb*

'We had a bus service – a charabanc [a coach] called "Daisy." In fine weather it used to have the hood down. Mother used to go to Penzance and on the return journey; it used to stop outside Rockclose House in the middle of the village. The children used to wait for it. We would go to the back of the bus and Mother would pull us up into the bus for a ride up to Trebartha Place.' *Vie Care*

'There were lots of shops in St Erth then. There were two butcher's shops with slaughter-houses. They come round delivering meat with a horse and trap. Jimmy Jones – smart as a whip – he used to wear breeches with brown boots and leggings, a blue coat and snow-white apron. Mrs Jones used to make big pans of dripping. Two Maddon brothers used to come selling fish from Newlyn, "pilcher, pilcher pilcher," selling pilchards for marinating. Girl would come and take your order from Coop in Hayle where Blewetts is now. You'd have blue packets all folded up and tied up with brown paper and string. You didn't have to go out for anything, not outside the village.' *Barrie and Barbara Pellow*

'We'd do our shopping in the village except Saturday. We used to walk to Copperhouse to do the shopping. It would take us quite a while: it were a good three, four miles. We'd walk to the beach from St Erth, mostly the weir.' *Vie Care*

'There used to be a radio station at the top of the hill, which got transferred eventually. The Home Guard were responsible for guarding it by night, that was a bit of a pantomime. They made a roadblock. Anybody who came home with a woman that wasn't their wife; they made sure they identified them.' *Michael Eddy*

'In St Erth Home Guard there was a specialist troop of highly trained young men in case of landings. They were all called out one night. The Germans were on the way up, but the Royal Navy saved us.' *Barbara and Barrie Pellow*

St Erth Home Guard 1942. (Hilda Stone, Hayle Community Archive)

'We had Dad's Army in the village – the Home Guard. They used to have exercises up in our wood and we would go up and lay wires between the trees to trip them up. They didn't half swear at us. We were in the bushes and tried to stop laughing so that they wouldn't catch us.' *Michael Eddy*

Emily Tredrea was murdered by William Hampton in St Erth. He was the last person to hang at Bodmin Jail. This murder and hanging in 1909 is said to have divided opinion in the village for many years. Her house is around the curve of the road near the entrance to Vicarage Gate.

St Erth sand pit.
(Russell Weber, Hayle Community Archive)

'We're at school and the headmaster says that the last man hanged in Bodmin Jail was a St Erth man, Willie Hampton. 'Course you go home, then Mother told me he was her cousin, her mother's brother's son. Then that it was Aunt Grace's daughter, that was Granny's sister's daughter on the other side, my father's side, that was murdered.' *Anonymous*

'Holmans in Camborne used it as a moulding clay, it's like a bluey clay. They had a rail network full of points and the trams had to be pushed. We boys would go on up there and give them a push then you'd have a ride back in the empty tram and you'd come out Vicarage gate. Before that they had steam traction lorries.' *Barrie Pellow*

We're going to turn around, but if we walked on further we'd come to where the sand pits were.

Turn around and walk back down on the same road initially.

Big Lane, St Erth 1905, now Tredrea Lane. (Doris Harry)

St Erth sand pit, weighbridge office and restroom. (Russell Weber, Hayle Community Archive)

'Feast was a week of celebrations. Feast Sunday was the Sunday nearest the second of November. Feast Monday you'd have stalls all down the streets. You didn't have to shut the roads off because there was no traffic. People would come from all over the place selling their rock. Brass band used to play on the cross.'

Barbara and Barrie Pellow

'I was invalided out of the Army and sent down to St Erth valley in charge of German prisoners of war, had about four hundred down there, and to open up mining Alluvial Works. Alluvial Works is where the sand and gravel run down from various parts of a valley and is broken down the same as the sand on the seashore. A lot of it is tin bearing in Cornwall. The residue of St Erth valley came from way up as far as Tindeen, right up underneath Tregoning Hill.

The German prisoners of war were not very cooperative and we had to be armed all the time. They always thought that they were going to win the war and eventually they got so bad that we couldn't control them and were sent back. They were dangerous. I had one or two occasions where they tried to drop a spanner on me. We had about a hundred Italian prisoners of war sent down. They were no problem whatsoever, they really worked and I got on extremely well with them. Eventually we built a camp for them. You pass the church and it's on the left hand side. There came a time that they wanted spaghetti. I did make a spaghetti machine out of an old mincemeat machine and I made it so they could have spaghetti about a foot long. From that day on I never went hungry. They fed me with all their spices. They never had a lot of rations,

Church Street, St Erth c.1920. (001535 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Take a left by the Star Inn on Church Street and walk down to the church. Take the footpath on the left.

In the empty field on the left there used to be the barracks for the Italian prisoners of war.

potatoes was the main thing, but the cook was allowed to go out 'round the fields and pick up various herbs and believe me the meals were good. This went on then until the war finished. Before they went back they made me a big cigarette case and a cigarette lighter and engraved their names on it.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

'I remember the prisoner of war camp, initially with German prisoners of war, and they worked in the open cast mines down there, the Dixies, what is Marazion fishing ponds now.' *Bob Rickard*

'The prisoners of war were very friendly people but we were not allowed to talk to them. They made us a little wood board and little chickens to peck on.' *Phyllis Blewett*

'They mixed up with a lot of the locals, got quite friendly towards them. They used to be very good making things, they'd make these fancy little shoes.' *Pamela Webb*

'The Italian prisoners were there and we had several of them working on the farm. We also had Land Girls. In the winter my mother used to go and light a fire in our little sitting room. Mummy used to say to the Italians and the Land Girls whilst they were waiting for the lorry to come and pick them up, "Would you like to go in the sitting room. I've lit the fire, if you'd like to go down and warm up, I'll make you a cup of tea. I'll get a piece of cake." Mummy was always baking.

'When they'd gone Mummy used to go down to see to the fire and straighten the cushions on the sofa and chairs and she often found underwear stuffed in underneath the big cushions of the sofa, and Mummy was, oh, disgusted!' *Doe Harry*

'Two of the girls had Italian babies and one had a German baby. They'd come up at night.' *Anonymous*

'They used to wear a brown uniform with a yellow diamond on their back and worked on the tin. We had an Italian that came to our house. He taught us how to make flowers from fuse wire.' *Barbara Pellow*

Before coming into the graveyard there was once a pump, which was closed up many years ago. Contamination from buried dead bodies was, among other things, seeping into the water supply and causing death through diphtheria.

'There was a character in St Erth called Bill Hayes, the cross bearer at St Erth church. He used to tell me that at three o'clock in the afternoon you would see a ghost in St Erth Church. I sneaked down at three o'clock in the afternoon once and heard this almighty creak and ran! I've been on Church watch at three o'clock since and seen nothing!' *Cedric Appleby*

'Sundays was a day of worship. Started off ten o'clock Sunday school, eleven o'clock was main service, Sunday school in the afternoon, two o'clock. You'd have heavy cake for tea and six o'clock was evensong, the main service. Then everybody went for a walk, parents and

In the graveyard is the vault of the Hawkins family. Christopher Hawkins of Trewinnard married a Hawkins (1719) so there is a double coat of arms. Hawkins made much of his money in mortgage interest, lending to the Godolphin family among others, and used to ride to church from Trewinnard in a fine coach from around 1700 bought from the Spanish Ambassador that can now be seen in Truro Museum.

Roger Wearne, a local clockmaker, has a gravestone on the church wall; rumoured to be positioned so that the sun lights it on his birthday.

There is a large state monument for Jochabelle Hocken by Davies Giddy / Gilbert; unusual as she was a servant rather than a member of his family.

From the church gate by the school turn left and walk down the Green Lane, which goes past the church wall. You will see the pumping station built by the Italian prisoners of war, 31 October 1943. Walk past the Dixie Pools, now fishing pools.

children. You'd meet other people out walking, bit of chat and on you'd go on again, and that was your Sunday.' *Barrie Pellow*

'There was a little farm called Porthcollum, it's nearly opposite what we call Dixie Pool. While we were there, we were down about eighty feet and we came across some old moorings and the wreck of an old small barge, which had remnants of coal and timber in it. The boat was made of timber. I found in there the old wood hand pump that they must have used for keeping the boat dry. Right alongside, there were two bollards where these boats were tied up. Sometime later Exeter University contacted me. [Near] the quay, which we found, they came across part of an old village [possibly dating back to the medieval period]. Over eighty foot of sand had built up in St Erth Valley.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

'The sand that was taken out was taken up to the rolling mills and put over the vibrating tables separating the sand from the tin ore. Then the tin ore went away to South Wales.' *Michael Eddy*

'There was a mine, Wheal Squire. We used to go down through "Spooky Lane" (Stamps Lane) and over to the rolling mill where they used to roll copper. They had a set of tin stamps over there.' *Barrie and Barbara Pellow*

Hammer Mills.
(Hayle Community Archive)

St Erth Clay Pit work force. Mr Abrahams, the owner, is front row, far left.
(Russell Weber, Hayle Community Archive)

Go to the river. We will go to the right but to the left is a lovely walk along the river to Relubbus.

'While we were there, we diverted the river from one side of the valley to the other. The old river used to come on the right hand side of the valley. With the help of the Italians we made a road all the way from St Erth Church right up to Relubbus Bridge. It's used as a cycle track now.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

'The river used to come right from Godolphin Great Work Mine right down to Hayle Estuary. On the river there was three mills: Carbis, Trannack and Relubbus. They reckoned they come up the river with barges and [made] flour in these mills.' *Barrie Pellow*

'Father was a Penwith Councillor and there's photographs of him in *The Cornishman* rescuing children from Relubbus in the floods, carrying them out through the water. They campaigned and they got the riverbanks built from Hayle Causeway all the way up to Carbis Mill. The river from there to Relubbus was all cut and reshaped, which prevented a lot more flooding going on in the St Erth valley.' *Michael Eddy*

'We were working at another place called Tindeen, which is the other side of Relubbus, and it was my job to pick up the prisoners of war in the mornings in a coach and take them to work. During the time they were in the coach we used to have a little singsong together. We had some lovely voices and had some wonderful times singing.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

We're going across the bridge and following the river to the right, back towards St Erth. On the hillside to the left is Trewinnard Manor with an uneven hillside below it.

'We used to catch little eels. An old lady down Church Street called Miss Brooks used to buy some off us – sixpence for a jam jar full.' *Barrie Pellow*

'At the harvest time, we used to go up to the field to give the men crowst [Cornish phrase meaning lunch]. Mummy would make heavy cake and fruitcake and sandwiches. We had a big flasket and it was all laid. The tea was put in a big stainless steel jug. I can see my mother having a big tag of roast meat because there would be something like sixteen to twenty people. Our big table in the kitchen was eight foot and we used to have another table down a bit further for all the men to sit at. We had to sit in the back stairs. They were all having roast dinner, roast potatoes and mashed turnip and all. On the second day of threshing, they always had pasties.' *Doe Harry*

'The Council filled in the Moors from underneath Trewinnard with refuse covered with fly ash from the Power Station in Hayle. The Moors got very bumpy because it's sunk in various places.' *Michael Eddy*

'There's a junction going into Trewinnard. The German bomber dropped four bombs, one in each road. The next day it was supposed to be a wedding reception at Trewinnard, so they had make a bypass and bring the wedding reception in through the field.' *Michael Eddy*

'We had a stick of four bombs. They were dead in line with St Erth village. If he pressed his button half a minute later, he would have flattened the whole village. We boys dug the shrapnel out of the trees.' *Barrie Pellow*

'Owen Pellow worked with me right through the night. This particular night I heard these two planes coming across. We saw this flash in the air and bang. They crashed about two fields from Trewinnard Manor at St Erth, they collided mid-air. The rescue people were there. We searched the field, one was an Australian and one was a New Zealander pilot: we only found bits of them.' *Hamilton Hawkins*

'I was staying with my aunty at Angarrack and I saw two flashes in the sky in the evening. Two Spitfires had crashed at Trevessa. They were on a training mission; the instructor called the trainee in too close and they touched wings and crashed. My uncle was farming there. My father went in there with him and they tried to get to the aircraft, but there were so many bullets flying around and a fire that they couldn't get anywhere near them. Neither pilot was saved.' *Michael Eddy*

We come to Battery Mills. Copper was smelted in Copperhouse and rolled in St Erth. It has many uses, from the bottom of ships to sugar bowls. Battery Mills closed in 1809, when Cornish Copper Company (C.C.C.) closed.

Keep walking until you reach the bridge where we started. We are turning right to cross the bridge to return to where we started but if you carried on up St Erth Hill towards St Erth Praze, you would come to a white gate on the right. Tregenhorne quarry was up the lane leading from that gate.

'Most of that granite [from Tregenhorne quarry] was the best granite that was used for building the big houses in Hayle. There used to be two traction engines there, one was known as Fanny and the other was known as General Buller. They used to pull stone from there to Hayle. They also used to use a lot of the stone for building the roads around St Erth because it wasn't tarmaced. It was just metalled with hard core laid on it. The quarry closed in the 1920s.' *Michael Eddy*

St Erth railway station is still in use and is also reached by taking a left rather than the right we are taking across the bridge back to the car park by the church.

'When we were little girls, we used to travel on the steam engine to St Ives and they used to cook us bacon and egg on their shovels and then we'd come back in the guard's van.' *Phyllis Blewett*

St Erth Station 1960. (Phyllis Blewett)

Gall's shop at St Erth Station. Mr Gall is in the doorway. (Phyllis Blewett)

Photographs of Angarrack

Angarrack Viaduct. (Marea Harris, Hayle Community Archive)

Angarrack Mill. (Marea Harris, Hayle Community Archive)

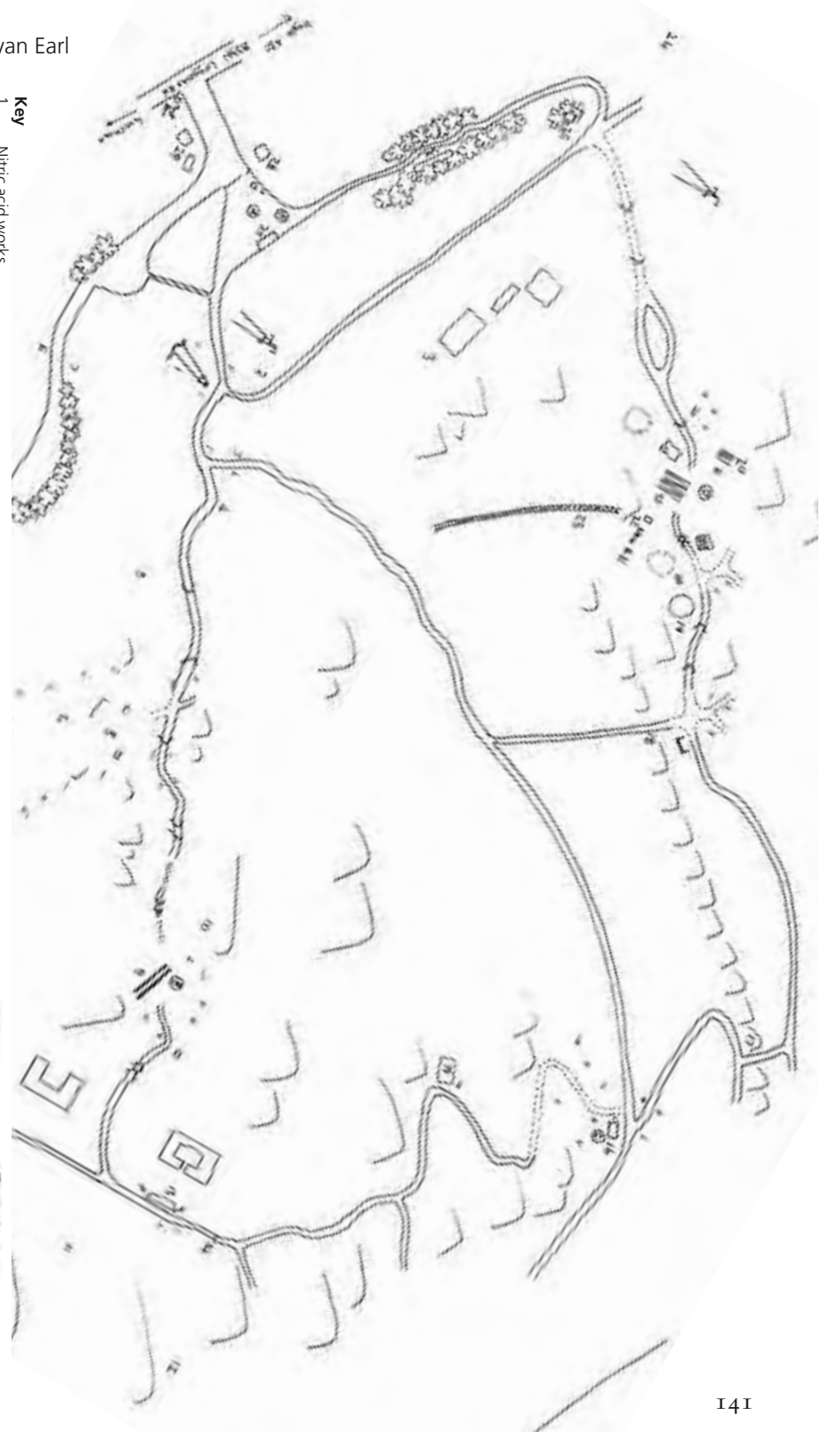
(Marea Harris, Hayle Community Archive)

(Marea Harris, Hayle Community Archive)

Angarrack Village. (Marea Harris, Hayle Community Archive)

The National Explosives Works – The Dynamite Works Walk

With Bob Cleave and Bryan Earl



Illustrated by Fiona Howard It takes about ten minutes to walk between each letter circled on the map

Dynamite Works. The entrance is on the right.

The Dynamite Works Walk

Bryan Earl is a mining engineer and writer. The National *section of his book* Cornish Explosives *offers a more in-depth analysis.*

Bob Cleave is a local historical documentary filmmaker. All the ex-employees quoted in this walk were interviewed by him and are included in his documentary, The National Explosive Works.

This walk is quite long, has many steep uphill and downhill climbs, and is rough, uneven terrain. The paths are sometimes barely marked, so please keep checking visible landmarks and descriptions on the map. There are paths on level ground that can be followed around parts of the site to create your own walk.

Turn left off the B3301 between Hayle and Gwithian. There is a letterbox in the wall on the corner, no name. Park at the end near the large gate with the chimney behind it. Walk to the gate.

Oscar Guttman, a Hungarian naturalised Brit, designed the National Explosives Works, or the Dynamite Works as it was called locally, on the Towans [Cornish for sand dunes] to make dynamite for the mines in 1888. It was the perfect location to build what was the best explosives factory in Europe. Water could be pumped from old lead and silver mines, existing rail and sea links were close by, and with 300 acres available the site allowed plenty of space to isolate the buildings from one another while sand dunes offered natural protection. Marram grass was planted to stop the sand from shifting, and mounds of sand were built up in a square or "U" shape around danger buildings to absorb any blasts with only the roofs visible over the top.

Traction engines kept near the main entrance.

Main entrance to the Dynamite Works.

Site Entrance, the entrance now is further up the road.

Look at the photo of the entrance to the site above. The time office was the building on the far left of the original entrance (that starts earlier than the one now).

On the left of the entrance in the photo (now a bungalow outside the site) was the dynamite store. Small red boxes of detonators were stored in printed wooden packing cases.

Behind you on the right was the workers' changing rooms and mess (a white bungalow now, but the wooden slatted building on the photo) and the high shed for the two traction engines behind the mess room in the photo was on the site of the new building closer to the gate now.

The building inside the gate now does not date from the time of the Dynamite Works.

Walk into the site and stop by the tall chimney.

In 1846, an Italian doctor, Ascanio Sobrero, discovered the powerful explosive nitroglycerine. Alfred Nobel (the same Nobel who created the peace prize) invented the

Detonator box. (Bob Cleave)

Managers' dining room. (Hayle Community Archive)

Cartridge hut.

Cartridge huts.

Main yard, the detonator shed is left, the engine shed right with maintenance workshops.

Everyone was counted in and out using a small metal chip at the time office near the entrance.

The nitric acid yard.

detonator, but he is often also credited with inventing dynamite as he discovered how to render nitroglycerine safer with kieselgur, a type of clay or diatomatious earth.

The manufacture of highly explosive nitroglycerine consists of taking glycerine and adding it to a concentrated mixture of nitric and sulphuric acid.

The chimney is the remains of the nitric acid works. There was also a sulphuric acid plant where the cement works is now (over on the right).

Nitric acid factory.

Nitric acid factory.

After washing and separating processes the nitroglycerine was run off. It was then taken to mixing houses to be combined, by hand, with kieselgur, a diatomaceous earth that soaks up to 75 per cent of its weight of nitroglycerine. The dynamite was dyed red or brown then made into cartridges about four inches long, seven-eighths of an inch in diameter. Girls made the cartridges by rolling paper, filling them up with dynamite and folding the ends over.

Dynamite box. (Bob Cleave)

Nitroglycerine washing and filter house.

Those working with nitroglycerine suffered from severe headaches until they developed immunity, usually after a fortnight. To maintain that immunity a piece of dynamite was taken by workers to handle on holiday!

Continue to walk straight on along the track. You will be taking the first right fork you come to.

Cartridge making.

On the left-hand side you can see evidence of buildings. There were maintenance buildings, workshops and, at the bottom of New Hill, on the left (that has clear lines where a tram track went up the hill), laboratories.

A laboratory near the entrance.

Also on the left was the collodion plant. Originally the Works just made nitroglycerine into dynamite. Nobel also discovered that if you mixed collodion cotton with nitro-

Gelatine mixing house.

glycerine it produced a jelly: blasting gelatine. Even more powerful than nitroglycerine, blasting gelatine was eventually developed into gelignite, more useful than dynamite as it could resist water. Due to the popularity of gelignite, areas in the Works were set aside to make collodion cotton.

Collodion is safe until the dangerous drying process, so the collodion stoves were based in the Danger Area, the inner core of the site that had extra rules, protection, training and protocol.

Collodion cotton pulping house.

The beginning of the Danger Area.

Take the first right fork from the main track at the entrance and walk along.

On your right you will see a flattened area with foundation remains. This was the cordite factory. Cordite was an alternative to gunpowder.

A cordite blending house.

Cordite drys.

Cordite stores in background right, and drys.

Walk up a small path up the steep hill.

At the top of the hill are two parallel, low brick walls.

The first hill used was this hill, Jack Straw's Castle. The name comes from an old inn on Hampstead Heath where the designer of the factory, Oscar Guttmann, lived. Mixed acid was stored in a lead lined tank here.

Jack Straw's Castle.

Jack Straw's Castle with danger buildings in the background.

The cordite factory from Jack Straw's Castle.

At this time the safest method to create nitroglycerine was for it to be made on a hill. Nitroglycerine is liquid and was transferred from one process to another by gravity via covered gutters, or launders, not pipes. If nitroglycerine freezes in a pipe, possible at 13 to 14 degrees centigrade, it is difficult and dangerous to get out. Wrapping in rags warms nitroglycerine up to thaw it, but may make it unstable, which means a possible explosion.

From the top of the hill it would trickle down gently (pumps would make it explode) to a washhouse. If the nitroglycerine became too hot, it was quickly diverted into a drowning tank or pool, a hollow pit that can be seen below. After being washed, it would trickle down to be combined with kieselguhr in the mixing sheds.

Billy Bate, manager.

The foreman of the nitroglycerine plant was Mr Jory from Gwithian. The chemist William Bate, known as Billy Bate, was the manager and lived with his wife, the sister of Henry Trevithick from Tolroy and Bate's sister, at Upton Villa, now called Gwithian Court.

The Macrae family at Gwithian Court. (Bryan Earl)

Upton Villa was one of the large houses built for managers and senior staff near the site. Bate built a ballroom, had heating piped in from the factory and employed a number of staff.

In 1890 the factory was in full production and employed 175 people, which steadily increased to 1,800. Although the work was potentially dangerous, there was always a long list of people wanting to work there. They were paid 18 shillings a week, more if they used their own pony, while farm workers, for example, were paid 12 to15 shillings a week. Those that worked there said it was a happy place to work. There was at least one National Explosives Works Fete at Upton Towans. A local newspaper reported that the 500 workers were given dinner, allowed an extra six pence plus a day's wages and could win more in races with a prize total of £38. Their wives and children were served tea while a band played.

Moving material around the Danger Area became easier once a two-foot iron track was laid. Women pushed the trams around. Before that, runners used wooden boxes attached to shoulder straps.

Dongree House, built for Mr Harrison, assistant manager. (Bob Cleave)

Women pushing a tram. (Bryan Earl)

Tram lines running towards New Hill.

When 'Secret', the St Ives schooner they usually used, blew up, the crew of four escaped, but their 15-ton load and ship went up in an explosion heard at least 12 miles away. The National Explosives Works was then forced to buy a coaster called 'The Lizard' to transport dynamite to main ports and markets 'up country.'

Walk down the hill and join the road, taking a left turn to walk along the road.

You will see the remains of a blasting wall made of black scoria (waste or slag from copper smelting that was made into bricks by the Cornish Copper Company). The wall is in front of an opening surrounded by mounds in a square shape. These sandy, grass-planted walls once protected a building inside. The mounds isolated buildings from each other and stopped debris from an accidental explosion triggering off many more explosions around the site. Only four people were allowed to work together at a time within the buildings so that an explosion would only kill a maximum of four workers. The buildings could be cordite drys, magazines for storage, wool houses or wooden cartridge huts. Their roofs visible over the mounds would help identify them; of course we don't have that help now, the buildings have gone.

The National Explosives Works site showing protective mounds, barriers and buildings.

Dynamite Workers. (Bob Cleave)

Drys looking towards St Ives.

The danger laboratory.

'The wool houses was where they mixed nitroglycerine. I tell 'ee, when there was frost they were nearly afraid to turn the tap. They wrapped anything around the taps. They were scared of the friction, the grip of turning it on [could easily trigger a massive explosion]. When I've gone in them you had to take your boots off outside on a mat and then put one foot inside a plastic rubber boot then the other. You couldn't walk in with your shoes.'

Heward Whear

Nitroglycerine fumes were extremely dangerous. If they got into the hinge of a window and the window was opened, it could be fatal! Brass hinges were used on every danger-building door to avoid a spark.

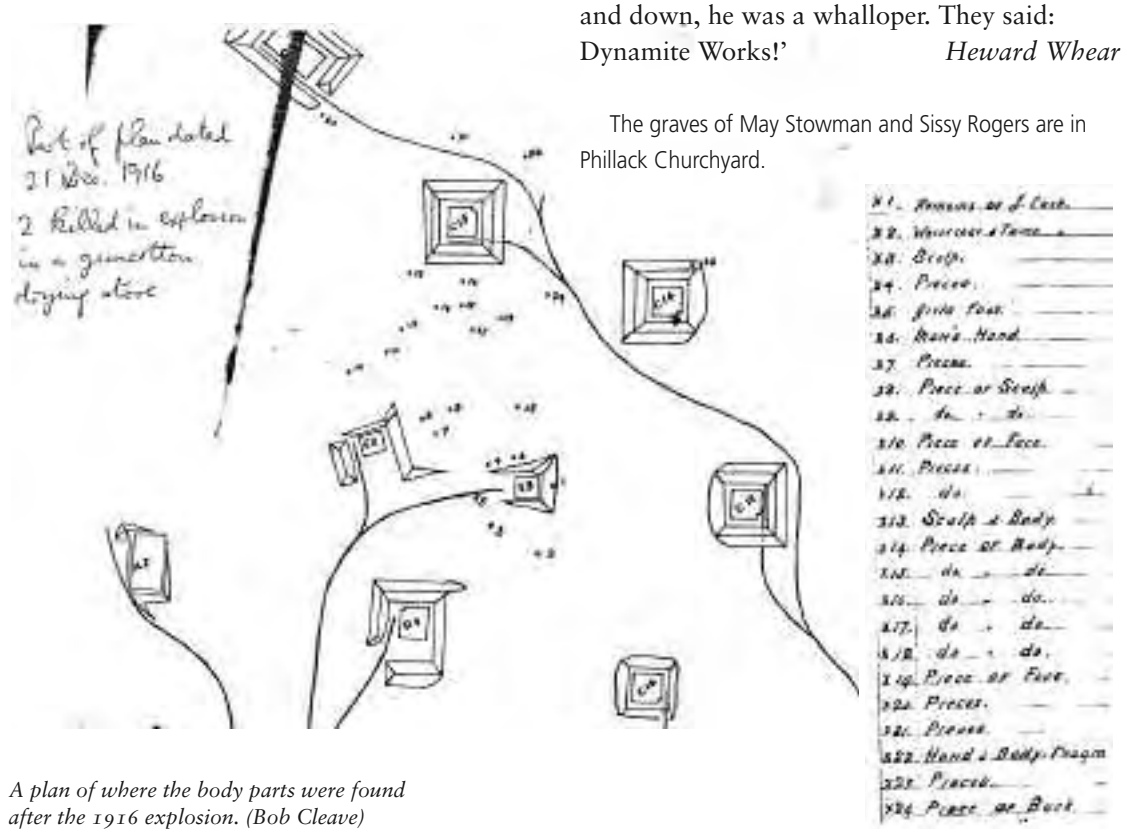
Due to the highly unstable nature of nitroglycerine there were accidents. In 1904 two men were killed when, the story goes, a lid was dropped into a tank of nitroglycerine. A lot of windows were broken over the bay in St Ives!

A 1916 explosion took place in a dry; two young women and two men were killed.

Dynamite workers 1914.
(Hayle Community Archive)

'That was some explosion, the house went up and down, he was a whalloper. They said: Dynamite Works!' *Heward Whear*

The graves of May Stowman and Sissy Rogers are in Phillack Churchyard.



A plan of where the body parts were found after the 1916 explosion. (Bob Cleave)

‘When my father worked up there he used to like his dinner, what he called, “cooled off” before he got in. Mother used to go up there and look through the window and when she seen the first one come out of the gate, she used to take out his dinner. So that day she was looking out, saw the first one and came down, before she got [to this end of the room] all our windows was blown in and our front door. We had a red glass front door and all the lot came in.’ *Madeline Thomas*

‘My father was thrown up into the air and thumped back down to the ground, his clothes blown off him. His face was terrible, burnt, just two eyes peeping and they had to feed him with a teaspoon through his bandages.’
Ken Richards, son of survivor Jimmy Richards who was 21 at the time

Another girl died in 1916 when a cordite cylinder exploded during pressing. Other accidents recorded include a man dying from inhaling nitric acid fumes while cleaning in 1893, and two gelatine mixing house explosions that killed two men in 1894 and a boy in 1899. In 1913 a 29-year-old man died after being caught in a revolving shaft.

From the scoria blast wall carry on along the path.

The Danger Area barrier and gate was where the tarmac changes its shade on the road.

The Danger Area barrier is visible.

Bear left as soon as the road forks, then left again at the next fork (the right fork leads towards the sea). Follow the path as it winds through the hills and dunes. When you come to a flatter open grass area you will see a ruined building towards your right. It’s an old magazine or storage house. Part of its wall is still standing like a triangle. Walk to it and take the path directly opposite it (the sea is on your right and a path leads that way; that’s not our path). The roofless magazine is behind you.

Cartridge huts and protective mounds.

Dynamite works employees, 1914. (Hayle Community Archive)

Follow this path, which takes you round towards a line of mounds that protected the cartridge houses. The path runs right between two of the cartridge house areas.

Bear left as the path forks, the sea is now behind you. Carry on along this path, bearing left when you have the option, until you pass a ruined wall embedded into the dune on your left. This is believed to be the entrance to a tunnel.

The path opens out into a flat area and curves around to the left but you need to walk straight on, up the hill (no clear path).

As you walk part of the way up, on your left you’ll see a large dip down with some foundations. The drowning tank or pool was here to siphon off the nitroglycerine if became too hot in the process of making it on this hill.

Climb to the top of the hill where there are ruins.

In the late 1880s the site expanded and a second nitroglycerine plant was built on this hill, known as “New Hill.”

Once on the top of New Hill, walk forwards (direction towards the chimney and entrance).

Primary separator on hill & secondary separator near New Hill.

The winch foundations (a small square concrete area) are still visible. It wound the cable that pulled up trolleys with tanks of acid to make the nitroglycerine on top of the hill. You can see the foundations of the big boilers used to store the acids to make the nitroglycerine and to keep the soda solution used to neutralise the acid.

Go through the gap between the ruined foundations on the right of the hill and follow a track down.

Looking forwards, walking down the hill, you would have seen the substation that generated the power for the factory. In the same area were compressors, an 80-horse power diesel engine and the cottage where the Pearce family lived, now a ruin. Mr Pearce was in charge of all the horses.

Mr Pearce’s house with the works right behind it. (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, R.I.C)

Take the second track to the left. Just before you turn to take it, look to the right.

‘They used to throw the acid in there, great deep pit it was. Now that acid seeped across the road, there was always a white mark across it, and they claimed that acid killed they horses [that grazed in the field opposite].’
Heward Whear

Dynamite Works, possibly an acid pit in the foreground. (Hayle Community Archive)

The trees on the left, as you walk along, hide the ruins of Mr Pearce's house. The back gardens of houses are on your right. This was the track for the standard gauge railway line built between Hayle and the Works.
The railway platform is very overgrown but still just visible on your left.

'The edging ran right along by the [Copperhouse] Pool [now King George V Memorial Walk], through Phillack, curved by Loggans Mill and through a gate.
They couldn't go far into the works: too dangerous. They went by [the house] Sandbank. They had a great big stack on the front so no sparks could fly out.'

Heward Whear

During the First World War a battalion of soldiers guarded the factory. When the war ended, in 1918, most of the work force was laid off. In 1919 the company went into voluntary liquidation and closed in 1920.

Demolition swiftly followed the sale of loose materials. Bickford-Smith's fuse factory at Tuckingmill, Camborne, took over the National Explosives Works to store their gunpowder and equipment in the five surviving secure magazines. William Bickford invented the safety fuse.

The large building on Lelant Quay (or Dynamite Quay as it's known locally), now just a large metal skeleton, was used by Bickford-Smith to store explosives before being transported on ships or taken by lorry to the Dynamite Works to be stored in the magazines there.

Women used to pack boxes at the station.

Photographs from Gwithian Beach

On Gwithian beach digging sand for the Tin Streams. (Robert Furze)

Gwithian Towans chalets near the beach. The Jampot Cafe is back left. (Hayle Commuity Archive

Jam Pot when it was a Coast Guard hut. (Bob Cleave)

Bill and Mickey at the Jampot. (Bob Cleave)

Bob Cleave and friends playing in Sheeps Pool which used to be over six feet deep. (Bob Cleave)

Photographs from Gwithian Village

Gwithian Village event. (Bob Cleave)

Ben the Postman at Gwithian Post Office in a shed at Glencoe House. (Sally Foster)

Gwithian village. (Bob Cleave)

The pub, now Red River. *The cottage in the foreground burnt c.1930s. (Bob Cleave)*

Photographs from Godrevy

Godrevy chalets showing Gwithian beach in the background. (Jean Charman)

1930s mackerel shoal attacts attention. (Bob Cleave, Patrick Warrick)

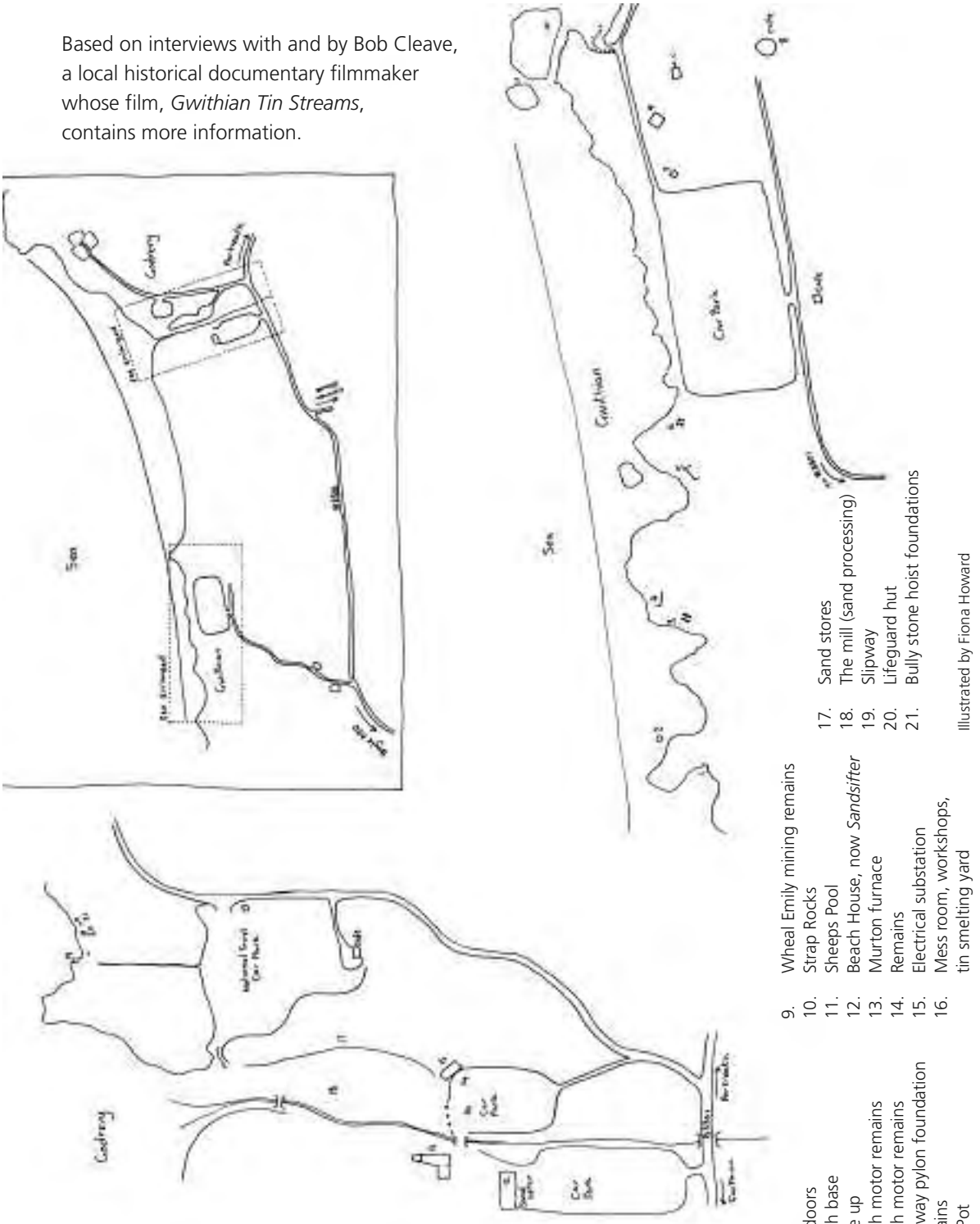
Godrevy Lighthouse c.1894. (0002556 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Godrevy Green (Patrick Warrick)

Godrevy Lighthouse c.1910. (0002290 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Red River – Gwithian Tin Streams Walk

Based on interviews with and by Bob Cleave, a local historical documentary filmmaker whose film, *Gwithian Tin Streams*, contains more information.



Key

1. Iron doors
2. Winch base
3. Cable up
4. Winch motor remains
5. Winch motor remains
6. Ropeway pylon foundation
7. Remains
8. Jam Pot
9. Wheal Emily mining remains
10. Strap Rocks
11. Sheeps Pool
12. Beach House, now *Sandsifter*
13. Murton furnace
14. Remains
15. Electrical substation
16. Mess room, workshops, tin smelting yard
17. Sand stores
18. The mill (sand processing)
19. Slipway
20. Lifeguard hut
21. Bully stone hoist foundations

Illustrated by Fiona Howard

Godrevy, Tin Streams with the large sand containers visible and Gwithian village. (Bob Cleave)

This walk stretches across three main areas spanning a section of beach from Godrevy to beyond Gwithian Beach car park and can be extended right into Hayle. Although there are not many visible remains it is a beautiful walk. Please check tides and walk on the beach at low tide.

The Tin Streams, known locally as "Red River", was based between Gwithian village and Godrevy where *Sandsifter* stands and the adjoining *National Trust* land marked with a chimney. The river that flows between the house and the works used to be full of metal deposits from mining upstream and ran an opaque orangey-red which gave the works its nickname.

Although the business in recent years has been associated with the extraction of sand from the bay, Tin Streams originally started in 1913 to separate valuable tin deposits from beach sand.

The manager of Cornish Sands Limited, the first company at Tin Streams, was Mr Gray, who lived at Beach House (replaced by *Sandsifter).*

Although now a popular surfing beach, at that time Mr Gray could shoot rabbits from his back door without fear that he might hit someone. Beach House had a direct telephone link to Godrevy lighthouse. The Grays would hold the receiver next to the gramophone horn so that the lighthouse keeper could also enjoy their music. In return the lighthouse keeper would warn them of approaching rainstorms, giving them time to 'pick in' their washing.

In 1915 the Tin Streams closed and the Gray family moved away to Shropshire. Perhaps due to the war, the Tin Streams re-opened in the same year, managed by Captain Stevens.

From Gwithian pass the entrance to *Sandsifter*, go over the small bridge (and what was the red-coloured river) and take a left to Godrevy. Park in the *National Trust* car park. Leave the lower car park (with the café) as though going towards Godrevy lighthouse. Keep walking along this green area heading slowly for the cliff edge (the road is on your right, lifeguard hut on your left). You will see four large concrete foundations.

A hoist that pulled up large stones from the beach, known as bullys, was based here. Bullys crushed the sand as part of the process to separate the tin from the sand. There is a concrete slipway nearby that was used for easy access to and from the beach.

Turn around and go back to the end of the lower car park. The café is on your left, the walkway to the beach on your right.

Sand storage tanks. (Bob Cleave)

Buckets carrying sand to the Tin Streams c.1920. (Roy Carne)

On top of the hill, straight ahead, there used to be huge sand storage containers each capable of holding 1,000 tons of sand. The company that followed Cornish Sands Limited in 1928 (Beach Tin Deposits Limited), built them to store larger quantities of sand as soon as it came off the beach.

Take the walkway towards the beach but once at the bottom of the steps keep walking left towards *Sandsifter* (away from the beach).

Remains of Tin Streams behind Beach House, now Sandsifter. *(Charles Thomas)*

The chimney, which was used for the Murton Furnace, and the electrical substation are the only surviving buildings here now, but there was a sand yard, a tin smelting yard, a workshop, a mess room for the workers and an area called the mill where the sand was first processed. The mill is the flat area near the footbridge to the beach. Stored sand was crushed here with bullys, the large stones hauled up from Godrevy Beach, then crushed again with metal balls, put on a separating table called a vanner and then into buddles.

Two aerial ropeways were built to transport sand to the Tin Streams storage containers. One ropeway stretched from North to South towards Gwithian village while the other ran parallel with the beach towards Hayle.

Cross the footbridge and go to the beach. Turn left to walk along the beach towards Gwithian and Hayle.

On your left is a gravel ridge and pools created much later by a sand extraction company.

Anyone visiting Gwithian beach before 1939 would have seen overhead ropeways and buckets going all along here, even crossing Gwithian's green in front of the chalets (where Gwithian car park is now).

Ropeways with buckets carrying sand, Beach House and Tin Streams. (Bob Cleave)

Go up the cliff stairway leading to Gwithian car park. The lifeguard hut is visible at the top. Walk along the top towards Hayle with the cars parked on your left and the sea on your right. At the end of the car park, carry straight on.

On your right you'll see four columns, part of the pylon foundations that held the ropeway and buckets. Please be careful near the eroded but deceptively overhanging cliff edge.

Tom Prisk Senior at Tin Streams. (Robert Furze)

Keep walking forward (the cliff edge and sea is on your right).

Remains of buildings can be seen. The motor to winch up buckets of sand from the beach was housed here.

Now turn around and go back onto the beach the way you came. Once on the beach, turn left. Look through the channel in the rocks towards Hayle (at high tide this is impassable).

The rocks to your right are called Strap Rocks.

'They used to pull sand from the lower beach, what we called Connor Downs Beach. Father had two carts down there, sometimes four horses with one cart. The sand used to be so soft and loaded with tin it used to be quite heavy. He'd come up now around Strap Rocks and pull it up above high water the other side, dump it and then keep doing that until the tide would stop him from getting around those rocks. He'd go to load up again then and take it into the Tin Streams. He was paid by the tonnage. This particular day, I was down with him, father tried one more load and the tide had come in too far. He climbed up on the shafts and pulled me out with his arm and threw me on the back of one of the horses and he cut the cart. He climbed on the back of the horse in the cart. The cart went and the horses came in with we. They found the cart a couple of days later at Godrevy – it was a bit of a close thing. After that they blasted through a channel (around 1932) and then father could bring in a lot more loads. Now the tide could hardly stop him from working. On a low tide there's hardly water in there.'

Tom Prisk Junior

Walk through the corridor between the cliff and Strap Rocks, towards Hayle.

This is the channel that was blasted through after the Prisk accident.

Tom Prisk Senior getting sand from Connor Sands. (Bob Cleave)

Keep walking along the beach.

Sheeps Pool is on your right after Strap Rocks. It used to be deep enough for children to dive into safely.

You will pass coves and caves on your left. One cove has two water pipe outlets in the wall and a huge rock in the mouth of the cove.

Walk onto the next cove and look up to the cliff.

On top of the cliffs of these two coves a motor hauled the sand up via a small ropeway. At the far end of this second cove you can see where the winch was anchored onto a large low rock.

Walk past the rock with the winch anchor and around the rocks / cliff on your left.

Around the corner you'll see a large cave and daylight. A tunnel (called locally 'Iron Doors') was dug out at the base of the cliffs to enable loaded tractors to drive from the beach to the top of the cliffs to meet the aerial ropeway.

Cable that hauled sand up from the beach to join the aerial ropeways. (Bob Cleave)

Bucket terminal c.1925. (Bob Cleave)

'They dug a tunnel but there was a lot of soft stuff at the top and it caved in twice so they [gave up]. They found that where she'd collapsed there was still enough tunnel there to drive two tractors up [to keep them above] high water. There were iron doors on the bottom there.' *Tom Prisk Junior*

The channel blasted out after Tom Prisk's narrow escape as it is today. (Bob Cleave)

Tom Prisk Senior at the remains of the buried church St Gothians. Beach House is visible behind him. (Bob Cleave)

You can turn around now and walk back along the beach to Gwithian or Godrevy car park or keep walking towards Hayle if you want to find the old slipway used to drag up sand from the beach by horse and cart. Walk on until you pass a natural stream that runs across the sand to the sea.

Quite soon after this you will see an approximately 10-foot slope covered in sand. Sand has buried the slipway here.

Turn around and walk back to Godrevy car park, or you can continue to walk along a beautiful stretch of beach or cliffs to Mexico Towans, Riviere Towans and Hayle Harbour.

The short ropeway we have seen traces of at the top of the cliff, and now from the beach, was built when the tractor plan was abandoned.

In October 1929 the Tin Streams was taken over by EPAL and renamed Beach Tin Operating Company Limited with William Furze as Manager.

Three generations of the Furze family lived in Beach House and had an important influence in the area. When they moved out, Beach House was bought and rebuilt after a fire. *Sandsifter* is now in the building that replaced Beach House.

Despite re-organisation by the Furze family, Tin Streams closed and re-opened a number of times in the '30s.

After the war, sand was needed to rebuild Plymouth so planning permission was granted to extract sand from the dunes. There had always been permission to take wind-blown sand away but at this point the process became heavily mechanised which removed huge quantities of sand from the bay over many years.

Furze family. (Robert Furze)

Furze family and friends at Beach House with pylons and ropeways visible behind. (Robert Furze)

Carnell Green, Gwinear, Wall, Fraddam and Roseworthy

Carnell Green.
(A63-37 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Old cottage at Wall Gwinear, visited by Wesley.
(PL with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

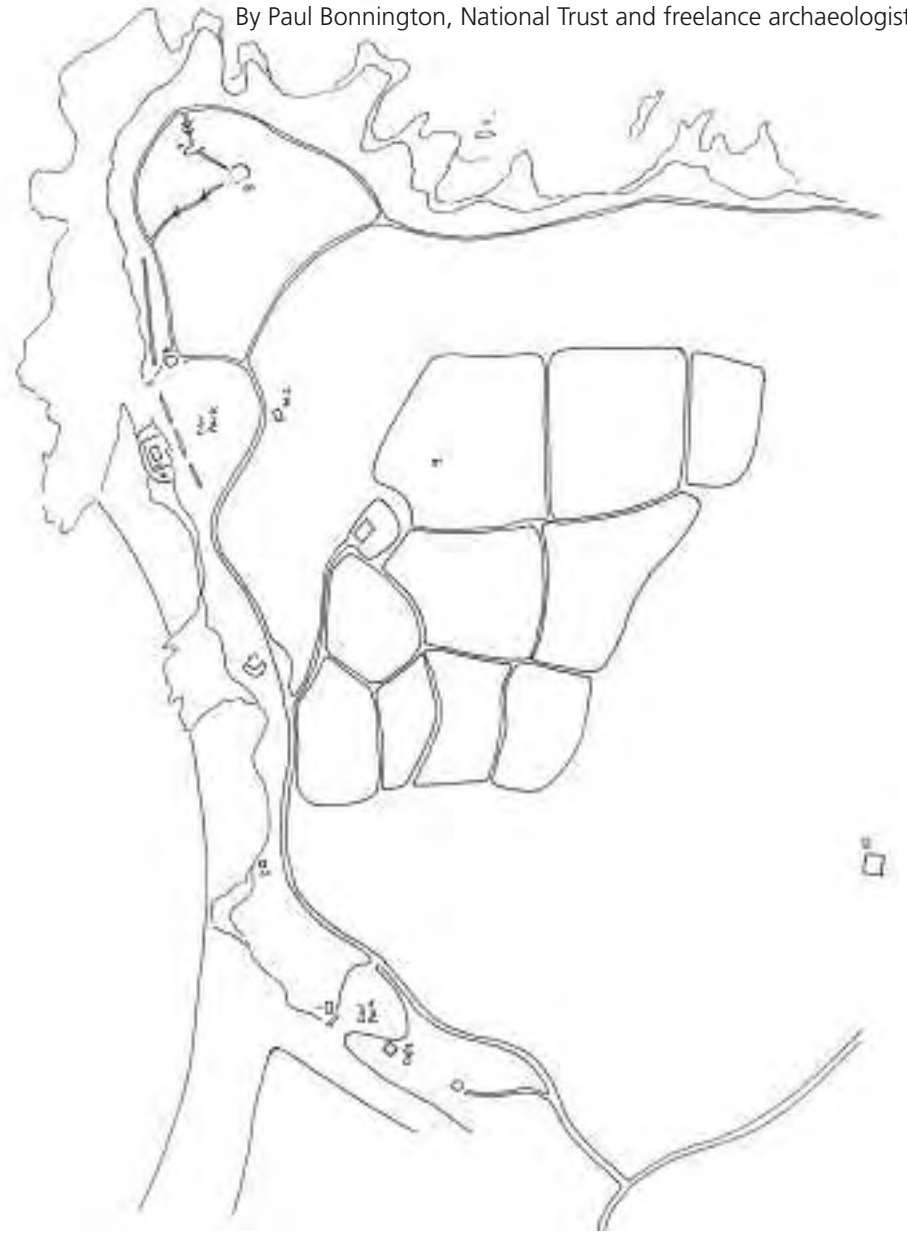
Gwinear c.1917.
(001694 with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Roseworthy Chapel.
(With kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Halfway House Fraddam c.1895.
(PL with kind permission from Cornish Studies Library)

Archaeology at Godrevy Walk

By Paul Bonnington, National Trust and freelance archaeologist



Key
1. Pillbox
2. Romano-British house
3. Fish cellar
4. Old beach café
5. Gun emplacement
6. Barrow
7. Quarry
8. Prehistoric fields
9. Crane Godrevy

Illustrated by Fiona Howard

It may come as something of a surprise to learn that the beaches, dunes and cliffs at Gwithian and Godrevy contain a rich archaeological heritage, which provides evidence for upwards of 8,000 years of human activity. During the centuries the shifting dunes and eroding cliffs have swallowed up many sites; only archaeological discovery and excavation have shown that the area is extraordinarily rich in archaeological remains, some of which are of regional, if not national, importance.

The earliest known evidence comes from the Mesolithic period, which began at the end of the last ice age (c.11,000 years ago), and which saw many coastal regions inhabited by communities of hunter-gatherers who lived off the natural resources available to them. Rather than settling in one particular place, these people lived in small temporary encampments, which could be easily dismantled when the time came to move to another location in search of fresh food supplies. Because of their transient nature, Mesolithic camps are notoriously difficult to identify, the only remnants usually being discarded tools, and sometimes an occasional hearth or midden [mound containing food remains]. It is therefore significant that Mesolithic tools made from flint and stone have been identified at 20 different locations around the cliffs and dunes at Gwithian and Godrevy, as, for example, on the low cliffs at Porth Godrevy and beneath the Early Bronze Age barrow on Godrevy Headland. These show that Mesolithic hunter-gatherers took an active interest in the area; being attracted no doubt by the rich larder of fish, shellfish, sea mammals and birds.

Over time, Cornwall's prehistoric communities started to leave a more lasting impression in the landscape via the construction of permanent structures and monuments. This began during the Neolithic period (c.4000–2000 BC), and although no structures of this date have been identified at Gwithian / Godrevy area, the occasional discovery of flint and stone tools in similar contexts to the Mesolithic examples show that Neolithic people were equally drawn to the area in search of resources.

In contrast, the Early Bronze Age period (2000–1500 BC) saw the creation of at least 28 permanent monuments in the area, these being round barrows that were mostly constructed along the cliff edges in groups of two or six. Sadly, most of these no longer exist, due to later agricultural practices. However, on Godrevy headland one fairly striking example still remains although today this is a shadow of its former self, consisting of only a mutilated mound. Excavation has shown that these barrows were often complex monuments whose use and adaptation might have extended over several centuries, sometimes in association with the burial of the dead.

Professor Charles Thomas undertook a series of excavations between the late 1940s and 1960s and identified numerous prehistoric settlements in the Gwithian / Godrevy area. The earliest sites were located behind Godrevy Towans close to the B3301, and consisted of several regionally important sites, including a small tent-like structure of similar date to the barrows, which is one of only a very small handful of Early Bronze Age 'houses' to have been recognised in the whole of south-western Britain. Furthermore, a series of marks in the ancient land surface close to this structure shows that its inhabitants were systematically digging and ploughing the land, presumably for growing crops of primitive wheat and barley. Such evidence for Early Bronze Age crop cultivation is extraordinarily rare, making the site of national significance.

Over time, the Bronze Age farmstead continued to develop via the construction of more permanent timber and stonewalled round houses and through the creation of permanent field boundaries. As the prehistoric societies around Gwithian / Godrevy continued to grow, the small Bronze Age fields developed into larger field systems, many of which remain in use today, as at Godrevy Farm, which contains boundaries dating from the Bronze Age and subsequent periods. Further expansion took place during the Iron Age and Roman periods via the creation of new terraced fields created by ploughing known as lynchets. New settlements were established on the cliffs between the two National Trust car parks at Godrevy where a group of houses was built during the Roman period. This is likely to be only one of several created at this time, the others going on to form the focus of the farms we still see today. The longevity and success of these early farming communities can also be archaeologically traced into medieval times, when a small manor house known as Crane Godrevy was established in the dunes above Godrevy Headland, thereby reflecting the rise of a wealthy landowning class.

Since then, the area has seen much further activity, particularly during the Industrial Revolution, when mines and explosive factories were established within the dunes, and a pilchard fishing station was located on the rocks on the western edge of Godrevy Headland. More recently, the threat of invasion during the Second World War resulted in the entire area being fortified with formidable defences including slit trenches on Godrevy Headland, located now within the lower car park. A significant number of iconic pillboxes encircle the beaches; although only 70 years old, they have now become archaeological sites in their own right.

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From Winnie Bassett's introduction, through stories of courting and home life, war time, walks and history, it is full of charm. Everyone who loves Hayle should read it.'
John Bennett, Hayle Mayor

It is indeed a privilege to be a 'descendent' of Hayle, and to be a contributor of this valuable piece of recorded history. But even more, it is great to be the owner of the book!"
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