

CORRESPONDENCE

**Mutilated 'Bridge'
Made Carbis**

To the Editor of "The St. Ives Times"

DEAR Sir,—In answer to Mr. Fowler's letter in to-day's paper, I would like to suggest that although the word "Carbis" was known in the district since the introduction of wheeled vehicles (and that was back in the days when Cornish was still used), there was no such place as Carbis Bay until the coming of the railway in 1877 and the building of the adjacent villas.

It is very evident that no stage coach from Penzance could have passed through "Chiengwheal Carbis" unless there was a bridge to enable it to pass over the deep Carbis Valley.

In 1846, the little chapel at Chy-an-Gwel (or Chy-an-Gwheal?) was marked on the Circuit Plan of the Wesleyan Teetotal Methodists (who had broken away from the parent body and whose local chapel was at Carbis Water) as plain "Carbis," and indeed it is in the vicinity of the bridge that carries the main road over the nearby valley.

FROM THE ROMANS?

It is interesting to try to discover how the word was formulated, and I suggest it may have been in the following manner.

The equivalent Cornish word for "bridge" is "pons," which was most likely borrowed or stolen from the Romans during the occupation. When the cart came into general use, superseding pack mules, a bridge was necessary to enable carts to cross the steep-sided valley. The stream was culverted near the waterfall at the head of the glen, and the space filled in level with the bridled paths on both sides that now form the main road from Treloyhan to Longstone.

Those who were responsible for this structure, instead of naming it "Pons-an-Dower" (Bridge the Water) or "Pons-an-Cart" (Bridge the Cart), a form that occurs in such descriptive names as Ponsan-ooth, Ponsandane, etc., put the cart before the horse, and called it Carbons, a similar form as Chypons—House (near the) Bridge.

The first syllable of a Cornish word often mutates and mutilates the following ones. It is very easy for the tongue to slip from "pons" to "bons." Also it often happens that the vowel is changed, and the syllable shortened and thus turns "pons" into "pis" or "bis."

FORGOT IT

The hamlet that sprung up on the side of the road near the bridge became Carbis Water, while the address of the cottages lower down is Carbis Valley. Mr. Paterson (please note there is no mention of Mr. Carter) apparently forgot to mention Carbis Water on his roads or map.

That is not the only Carbis overlooked, however. Many years ago, I entered a railway compartment of the St. Ives branch line, from the main line at St. Erth. The other occupants were two ladies—visitors—a sailor, and a boy who had reached the facetious age. One lady remarked to the other that the train was late on leaving. The boy promptly chipped in that the train was always late leaving Carbis Turf, as the coal mines were worked out and turf took a long time to raise a head of steam.

On arrival at the next stop, the ladies enquired its name, and the boy informed them, "This is Carbis Lent, but nothing more can now be borrowed, having learnt their lesson." At the next stop the boy said, "This is Carbis Pay. Produce a ticket or pay up the money." At the terminus, on arrival, the seafaring man stood up and turned to reach for his bag upon the rack. The boy now said to the ladies as he was making for the door, "And this is Tommy Carbis." And he escaped the toe of Mr. Thomas Carbis's shoe by an hair's breadth!

Yours faithfully,

C. S. MURRISH.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK

ALL who are concerned with the preservation of the town's special characteristics will be encouraged by remarks made by speakers at the opening of the St. Ives Society of Artists' summer exhibition last week.

They showed mutual desire on the part of both artists and authorities.

Introducing the Mayor, Councillor John Curnow, the society's vice-president, Mr. Bernard Ninnies, expressed the hope that Councillor Curnow would use his good offices in his new position as county councillor in helping to preserve "the character of this town and the natural beauties on which its prosperity, now and in the future, depends."

Ample assurance of his sympathies with this high purpose was given by the Mayor, in his delightful little opening speech.

"The town of St. Ives," said Councillor Curnow, "has often been acclaimed for its quaintness and its own special charm. I am encouraged by the knowledge that the artists as a body are interested in the preservation of those qualities. They realise, as do I and many others, that they must be preserved at all costs."

Any proposal that would destroy them must be rigorously opposed. There may be so-called modernists who, perhaps for a financial advantage, might make proposals that would be to the detriment of St. Ives. We shall need to be very vigilant."

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Rev. A. G. Wyon. "To preserve the beauty of St. Ives," he said, "is of first importance, not only for commercial reasons but from higher motives as well."

The Artist's Eye

ALTHOUGH the Mayor lives in Carbis Bay, he was born in old St. Ives and—as he told his audience—"almost in the midst of the Art Colony, as it used to be known."

He betrayed that his heart still beats in rhythm with his early environment. "Artists," he said, "are deeply rooted in St. Ives, and it would be difficult to imagine the town without them. I have a feeling that they have always been here. If they departed, it would leave a void that I hesitate even to contemplate."

Councillor Curnow told how, watching painters at work, he often wondered what the artist actually sees. "I imagine," he said, "that he sees colours and tints that my untrained eye would never see, and can reproduce on canvas form and movement beyond the range of the layman. It amazes me with what skill the artist can paint the sea so realistically that one almost expects to see the breakers roll in and to hear them splash. The artist's work can outlast time and give enduring joy and pleasure to those who see it."

Future Hobby

One day, perhaps, Councillor Curnow will see his own pictures hanging on the walls of the New Gallery. Not that he, most modest of men, entertains any such ambition. But he may realise it "malgré lui."

In fact, he disavowed that he had ever entertained any ambition to be an artist.

'Carbis' Again

To the Editor of "The St. Ives Times"

Sir,—Carbons, a tenement named after the cart-bridge already there, is mentioned in a document of 1392 and was still Carbonse in 1546; see Hobson Matthews.

Although the bridge has become a mere bolt and the name has lost its "n" as Carbis, Carbence is still there as a tenement and the family that arose there is still Carbins. CAR, cart, and PONS, bridge, when put together become CARBONS: in various places for some reason it has become Carbis or Carbus in modern pronunciation, but never "Carpis" as far as I know.

The invention for railway use was of course the addition of "Bay," which is contrary to local usage, since the beach had its own name, spelt Pripter, 1600, and Poripper, 1619; again, see Hobson Matthews.

R. MORTON NANCE.

Chylason

But he told how painters had always attracted him, how he used to visit the artists' studios, and how he always wished that one day he would be able "to paint a decent picture."

It didn't just remain a wish. "Like many others," he confessed, "I have spent some time and patience in the use of water-colours. And when I have more time, and find myself in need of a hobby, I shall take it up again."

"Gossiping Ladies"

READERS may recall that in a recent issue pictures of Fore Street were featured in our series of old and new St. Ives. The accompanying article contained the following paragraph:

"Nothing could more graphically 'date' the period when this picture was taken than the attire of the two gossiping ladies in the foreground. Those picture hats and those billowy frocks, trailing to the ground? Early Edwardian, of course."

Well both ladies have been identified by readers, one here and another in London. One of the "gossiping ladies" was Lady Hain, wife of Sir Edward Hain, the shipping magnate, and at one time Member of Parliament for the St. Ives division. The other was Miss Alice Williams. The picture was taken in 1907.

B.B.C. Interested

Now Miss Alice Williams was a granddaughter of Thomas Williams, one of two St. Ives apprentices—the other was John Tregerthen Short—who became prisoners-of-war when their vessel, the St. Ives brig, Friendship, was captured by a French privateer during the Napoleonic wars.

The story of the two youngsters was described in a previous issue. It told how Thomas Williams, captured in an attempted escape, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in irons; how he was pardoned by Napoleon; and how the document, signed by the Emperor, was preserved by Thomas Williams, was brought to St. Ives and is now in the possession of Miss Ruth Williams, of "Trenwith Vean," Treloyhan, a surviving descendant.

I hear of an interesting sequel to the publication of this strange history. A copy of "The St. Ives Times" was sent by a London reader to Broadcasting House. It brought a reply from an important B.B.C. executive asking for further details, with a view to making the adventures of the two St. Ives youths the subject of a B.B.C. "Feature."

Salute to a Sailor

CAPTAIN Donald M. Stuart of Lelant, recently home from London after treatment for a serious illness, was central figure in a gracious little ceremony at the Village Hall last night.

Ill-health had for some time prevented Captain Stuart from going to Redruth for the meetings of the "Tre-Pol-Pen" Ship-lovers' Society, of which he is founder-president. So members of the society, anxious to show their admiration and affection for their leader, who has a long and proud record as a sailor in peace and war, decided to come to Lelant for a meeting.

As a surprise, they gave him a copy of a film showing the ships in which he served from his apprentice days in sail to the time when as Commodore of the P. and O. Line, he took the liner Himalaya on her maiden voyage from Tilbury to Australia.

Captain Stuart spent 43 years at sea. For his gallantry as a skipper in convoys during the war he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. The P. and O. Line showed their esteem for him by allowing him to delay his retirement in order to command the Himalaya on her first voyage in October, 1949. He retired at the end of that year.

John Richmond.**Girl Wins Bicycle**

Lynn Nankervis, aged 10, of Chykembro Farm, Zennor, won a first prize of a bicycle in a national paintbook competition organised by a toothpaste firm. The award was