



A Miscellany of Cornish Memories

Grace Tyler

As related to Paul Tyler

Mother's Cornish Memories

I was born on November 14th 1901 - it must have been about half past seven in the evening and it wasn't the regular ringers' night and they'd just finished their practice and my father came in and went up the 30 steps into the belfry where they rang and said to the ringers, "you must ring another peal because I've just got a little daughter".

So I was born after the end of Queen Victoria's reign; very annoying because both my brothers were born in Victoria's reign you see and I was always twitted because I was one reign short of their births.

I was Christened in Cardynham Church on Christmas Day 1901 and my christening kept back the funeral of the local white or black witch's second husband. She was a little lady called Mrs May and she lived in a terrible little hovel down some half a mile from the church. Her first husband had died and was buried on Christmas day which she thought was a very nice thing, so when the second husband began to get ill in December she wouldn't feed him properly because she said "let him die easy, let him die easy - better die and be buried on Christmas Day". And the Parish people had to send representatives to the cottage with food to see he was getting any. However, he did die and he was buried on Christmas day and my Christening kept the funeral waiting. But some six, seven years after, when I met her in the local Post Office and Cobbler's shop (which was combined, there was just a door between, in Cardynham), about 400 yards from the church on the Bodmin road, just before you go down Bunny's Hill and up on the moor. We used to love the cobbler's shop because we used to sneak bits of leather to make stone slings, the same kind of thing that David killed Goliath with.

And I met little Mrs May in the Post Office there, and she said "I know your Christening kept my husband's funeral waiting but I don't bear 'ee no ill-will". I never thought about my Christening keeping her poor husband's funeral waiting, but I was very relieved she bore me no ill-will.

P. But that was her second husband - she had a third husband.

G.

Her third husband she caught was called Mr Bellringer and he had some affliction of his eyes, poor old chap and the pupils had gone up, so it appeared that he was gazing up all the time. You couldn't see the pupils, but she married him because she reckoned that he was looking at the heavens all the time, so he must make a good husband.

My Grandfather May came to Cornwall, in about 1830 or 40 because, I think that's when he came to South Petherwin, and the reason he came to South Petherwin was that he and Squire Archer had been to Winchester together and Oxford together.

Squire Archer, I'm afraid was sent down from Oxford, 'cause he went playing Buffalo Bill on Boar's Hill and hunting the steers which was forbidden to do it. He went on doing it! and Grandfather May, being a Fellow of New College, wasn't allowed to marry as a

Fellow. Finally he resigned his Fellowship and married Miss Agnew from Winchester, whose father had fought in the Peninsula War, had his leg amputated, seven times I think, without any anaesthetic, having been left for dead on one of the battlefields, his servant had gone out and brought him in. He recovered and finally between them, I think, produced 15 children and my grandmother was one of them. When my grandparents were married they came down to South Petherwin 'cause Grandfather Archer said "I could get you the living of the next door Parish, it's got a nice Vicarage, nice garden and I think you'll be very happy there".

And that's where Grandfather May's three maiden sisters, came to from Chertsey where their mother died, and to live with him. They educated the three younger boys; my father never went to school till he was 13, and he took the highest form a new boy was allowed to take, they taught him both Greek and Latin. One of the three sisters was Caroline Mary who did nearly nine hundred flower drawings, of which ninety odd have been published in the book "Flowers of May".

My father had a friend called Alan Campbell and they had this old horse, Bo, and one day he drove Alan Campbell with him to Tintagel for the day, and on the way back it was dark, of course, they saw a dog-cart in front of them, with apparently a man and woman and they followed it for some time and then it turned away and my father said: "well that's funny, I didn't realise there was side road there" and Alan Campbell gripped him by the arm and said "Did you see the women's face? and he said "no" and he said "well, it was a horrible face". So when they'd got back, my father called the old coachman, Blatchford, to take the horse and he said "Blatchford, is there a turning at such and such a place?" and he said "no, Sir, no turning there" and my father said "funny, there was a dog-cart ahead of us and it apparently turned off there". "Oh", he said "who was in it?". "Well, there was a man and woman". "Oh, Sir, did you see the women's Face?" "No" my father said "I didn't". "Oh", he said "that's a mercy; 'cause you'd have been dead in three months". And Alan Campbell actually died of galloping consumption within three months. A sad story and father would practically never tell that story.

P. Now that's at South Petherwin. What happened to the other two aunts?

G.

Well, they educated the Parish. I think they instituted a penny school. One of them discovered the man who discovered Neptune - there was a farmer's son there. He became a very world famous astronomer and my grandfather went down and he was attending school I suppose, and he said "how are the sons getting on?" and he said "oh, them all all right except the youngest, John, he no good at all, when he going ploughing he has a book in 'is hand with figgers in it", and he turned out to be ... somebody Adams he was.¹

They were quite close to the Archers who were friends, your grandfather got to know the Archers quite well. The Archers had been in Cornwall, supposedly since the days of William the Conqueror, one of the many archers and I suppose they were so troublesome

¹ John Couch Adams (1819 - 1892) : Adams' calculations (1841-45) & the French Mathematician Leverrier predicted existence of Neptune. It was located (23 Sept. 1846) by the German Astronomers Galle & d'Arrest. JCA was a Cambridge fellow & President Royal Astronomical Society 1851-3 & 1874-6.

they were sent as far away as possible down to Cornwall and they started off near the Lizard.

The first record was in a murder trial and one of the Archers was the murderer, I regret to say, but he got off. Yes it was thought to be a neighbourly dispute. I think he paid a bit of a fine, half a crown - this was in the 11th century, it may have been in the 12th, and then they moved to St Kews and became very respectable by that time and they didn't move to Lewannick till about 250 or 300 years ago.

There was a connection between the Mays and the Trelawnys. The Bishop had a daughter called Rebecca and she was engaged to Buller of Down, somewhere near Exeter, and the poor chap got smallpox, and finally they thought he'd died, and you know smallpox very often ended in that sort of trance and the nurses said to each other "well, the poor fellow's gone now so we'll open the window and let in some fresh air". They opened the window and let in some fresh air and the fellow revived, but then Rebecca Trelawny didn't want to marry him as he was so pitted, poor chap. But the story was, the Bishop wouldn't have anything of that nonsense and dragged her to the altar. But we hope they got on. They must have had a son of course, and then there was a daughter.

P. Rebecca Trelawny married the Buller so she had a Rebecca and she must have married a Drury and they had a daughter called Rebecca, who must have married a Watson and then Rebecca Watson married Gibbons, and her daughter was Rebecca Gibbons and she married Thomas.

G.

Yes, that's right - great grandfather, Thomas May and he was called Handsome Thomas. I think that was only a made up name and then Handsome Thomas had no daughters, my grandfather - no that's wrong- no, of course, Handsome Thomas had - Caroline Rebecca she was, and then the next generation , my grandfather had six sons so there was no Rebecca and the next generation, my Uncle Tom and two daughters called neither of them Rebecca. Unfortunately he was given the Rebecca Ring which came down from Bishop Trelawny and he sold it without telling the rest of the family. Uncle Charlie who was the next one to have a daughter, called his daughter Rebecca and she had no daughters, she had four sons and the curious thing was that her husband, when engaged bought her an engagement ring - a second hand ring which was said to resemble the Rebecca Ring. (Until two years ago I didn't know where that ring had gone). She gave it to her god-daughter, Eileen, the only daughter of John May, who is still alive, lives near me, and I met Eileen, I was asked over to lunch, I had seen her since she was a teenager - she was talking, you see, and she said "Aunt Rebecca gave me this ring which was her engagement ring" and I said, "well, that is supposed to be like, if not, the original Rebecca Ring", showed it me and she didn't know the story, she was absolutely thrilled.

The other ring story was about my father and Bishop Hannington. Father and my eldest Uncle and James Hannington, were at Oxford together, and I've lived in Hannington Country now, you know, they've still got the Hannington family business in Brighton.

Anyway, he came to stay at South Petherwin and took a great fancy to your Grandfather Frederick who was a good deal younger than him and they spent many holidays together,

including 3 weeks once on Lundy Island where they were becalmed because there was a fog and the boats they couldn't sail out to them and they ran very short of food. They had to eat seagulls eggs because there was no tinned food, and there was no fridges in those days and there is a wonderful life, you know, of James Hannington telling of getting sea gulls' eggs, there was a most wonderful collection of birds eggs which Roger May has still got, but some of them got broken.

Anyway, James Hannington was going to be married and he asked my father to be Best Man and the morning of the wedding he brought out a tray of rings and he said to my father "I want you to choose one these rings to remember today". My father actually never wore rings but he looked at one and said "I'd like that one" and James Hannington laughed and he said "Oh, you've chose the murdering ring" so my father said "what do you mean?" and he said "Well, the history of it as far as I know is that that belonged to an old lady in the 1700s and she gave it to her son and she was murdered in her bed by burglars and the son as a captain in the Navy and he was murdered in one of the last mutinies of the Navy - either 1700 or 1800 - and then there as a gap, and he wasn't told how James Hannington got the ring and he said - the Bishop - well he wasn't the Bishop then of course, he said "no, I don't believe anything like that - I don't believe anything could have a curse on it" (I must tell you another story about that.) Anyway, he made my father take the ring and 8 years after that he was the first Bishop of Uganda and he was one of the last Christian Martyrs murdered by natives, (Patterson was the last, a Devon man). And the ring was in my father's possession, and my mother hated it and hid it away and it was finally discovered again, and then, when my mother died, I suddenly thought, well where's that ring. I hadn't seen it and we had moved all the things down and I was going through a chest of drawers, and at the bottom of the chest of drawers there was an old fashioned tin cash box, you know the kind with 2 tops and a bottom. I took up that cash box and I knew that the ring was in it and it was, not in the case or anything else, it was just loose - and I kept it carefully in the safe, as you know, carefully labelled with "Murdering Ring", I think, of course, last Christmas, when the burglars took the safe, the ring went too. Of course, I told the police and they said they'd look out for a murder. But I didn't give it away, I should be the murderer.

There's a note about Fred May who went to Portugal it says:

Mr May of Hayle, an ancestor of Fred May, went to Portugal as wine merchant. One day, he received an urgent letter from his wife imploring him to come home at once, so as soon as he had disposed of his business and come back he went to his wife and said "Why did you send for me?" She said "I never sent, I never sent". He showed her the letter and she said, "The writing is mine but I never wrote it". And the story was that they have a little son and he thought that the son had been desperately ill...

Well, during the time he went home, the Lisbon earthquake took place and his warehouses were completely flooded and if he'd been there he'd certainly have been drowned and that is when the Mays lost most of their money.

When I was small there was one small shop in Cardynham which belonged to the wife of the Blacksmith which sold a few groceries, mostly sweets, which you used to buy in little three-cornered packets for a ha'penny. She was a much abused, or rather abused wife, dear little woman. Husband was the blacksmith who always was extremely kind to me

and allowed me to blow the bellows at the Smithy. That was about 200 yards from the Church and is still called Church Town and the school was there, which was modern, of course, and the Wesleyan Chapel and the blacksmith, in those not only did the Smithy work but he did all the veterinary work and he was quite good at it and also on occasions was appealed to as an emergency dentist. One of my first cousins who was the squire of his village where he lived, 25 miles away, was smitten with bad toothache when he came to stay with us once and was persuaded to go to Mr Wilton to have the tooth extracted, and his description of it was that he was laid flat on his back in the front lawn, and that Mrs Wilton, who was a little woman, who I should think weighed about 5 stone, (Phil was 6 foot), sat on his head, and the son and the daughter each held an arm, they were both heavy weights, and the blacksmith more or less knelt on his chest and removed the tooth. I dare say that was a bit exaggerated but it was a good story.

Bodmin was five miles away and it took pretty well a day's outing. The mare in the carriage or the donkey in the pony-cart and that took more, a full day because we walked up all the hills and we walked down quite a lot of them as well. The pony trap had no brakes but of course, the carriage had brakes and with the mare, who was very lively. She had been bred as a hunter and she'd only allow certain of the family to drive her - I - when I got to the age - was one of them, but when we walked up the hills, at the top, she had to be persuaded to stop because if possible she'd go on and leave us behind. My father always rather enjoyed that. He was a great tease.

At the Rectory we had full time coachman and his wife in the stable which had been reconverted from a stable for 12 horses which Parson Vivian had built and half of it had been turned into a house for the coachman and his wife, and then we have John Male who came and cleaned knives and boots at seven o'clock in the morning. He then walked fourteen miles on his post round and then he came back again at 2 o'clock to help in the garden. Father of five children. The eldest was Fazackerley, and in 1916 my father offered to take on the post round if John would join up on Home Service and as the army pay, army allowance wasn't at all good in those days, my father said he would give the postman's pay, half of it to John's wife to help with the children who were all under school age, and half to his widowed mother who was trying to carry on in the post office. He walked on the post round 5,510 miles in just over a year and 21 days in 1917 in snow across the moors sometimes up to his waist.

The village post office was just about 100 yards from the Rectory it was also the cobbler's shop and all the parish had their boots made there - no wellingtons you see. Then there was Doney, who was looking after the horses. He had a gypsy coloured wife who was a wonderful woman in many ways but a bit light-fingered so she was never asked to help in the Rectory. They had 8 children. The youngest one was a complete spastic. They looked after her all the time. The others, there were three sons and there must have been five girls, I suppose. And she always said she treated me as one of her own. And when it came to elevenses I used to share her cup of tea, with my beloved governess looking on horrified but not daring to intervene.

One time, they baked, I suppose, on an open fire and then they got a paraffin stove, and thought they were in absolute luxury. And the old man, as I always called him, Doney, never would sit at table with the family. He always sat in the corner by the fire and had his plate of food on his lap. And she used to buy a whole hock of an animal and she'd paid

for that 2d a pound and she used every bit. She used the best for pasties and pies, you see, the next bit for stews and so forth, and the hock of the hoof bit would make excellent soup. Thinking back, she was wonderful. And before he came to my father, he lived in those parts you see, he was a tailor and he was told if he went on he would get TB and he must have an outdoor life. He'd never earned more than ten shillings a week with that family and when he came to us and my father paid him eighteen shillings a week and he had his house free his garden free, all the dressing for his garden he wanted and a third of the big potato patch with the dressing for that, he thought he was a millionaire. He was a captain of the ringers and he always rang his bell and shut his eyes at a certain moment, you could tell, he rang the treble of course, and if you made a mistake he'd open his eyes and look at you with a dagger look.

I think three of them taught us to ring, his eldest son, Fred, didn't go in the war, he was a farm labourer, and second son went and was killed, and the third son was not old enough to go.

And in 1916, we'd had 16 ringers, 2 grands, a beautiful, beautiful ring of 8, which Athelstone Coode, the previous Rector had organised, he'd added three bells to the original five, and in 1916 half the ringers band went, so we started a ladies' ringers. I think there was four of us rang, four or five, we all wore hats. You weren't supposed to go up in the belfry without hats on, and the classic moment was when Mabel Wilton, (the one who held one of Phil's arms for the dentistry), she forgot to pull the rope down at the right moment, you know, the .. sally, and if you don't do that the bell overbalances and comes down and the rope comes down and curls like a snake and it came down and took her hat off and she never entered the belfry again. It was a staggering sight, I tell you, and the three of us rang regularly for the rest of the war. On Armistice Day 1918, the eleventh, we rang all day from the time that we got the news, which was incredibly soon after 11 o'clock, 'cause it wasn't signed until 11 o'clock I suppose it must have come through on the telegraph. And we decorated the tower with flags. I leant from the pinnacles to put flags out round the four pinnacles. I remember now, with the heavyweight of the ringers holding on to my legs.

We had three in the house always. The total age of them wouldn't be more than fifty years of the three. Very often it was under that. But we had a beloved housemaid for 12 years, who was the daughter of a coastguard who was rather too fond of the bottle, but she had been brought up by an uncle and aunt at Polruan, and what she didn't know about fish wasn't worth knowing. And in those days, this is going back to the early part of the century, I suppose, why she went into service, was that her uncle and aunt died and she didn't want to live with her father and stepmother, although she was very fond of them, and the tales of her childhood when she longed to bathe, but there were no bathing dresses available, so she used to bathe in her night-gown and then get it dry again so that her aunt didn't know what she'd been doing. She was a wonderful seamstress as well.

Mother did all the housekeeping herself but she couldn't cook at all, but she could teach them to cook wonderfully and she was always the most marvellous caterer. I can remember many times in the summer vacation, that 2 or 3 first cousins came down from Oxford to spend the Vac and we'd have visitors. They couldn't have all stayed in the house, because I can remember sitting down 16 to a meal many times and my father used to be very naughty and said "now we'll eat up all the bread and 'cause of the (shortage) of

bread" and in those days mother hadn't a bread making machine and when flour got difficult in the First World War, we had a very primitive and early American machine for kneading the bread and then she used to put in a third of potatoes, cooked potatoes with the bread to make the flour go further.

Cardynham was a parish of a lot of small farms. The biggest was Glebe Farm which was 180 acres. Father, once a year, visited every house in the Parish, taking a Parish Almanac for the year and there was only one house in the Parish where he was never asked in. Otherwise every house would expect to entertain him and in those days you hadn't ever got a fruit Christmas cake, you had a saffron cake made with extra fruit and butter and they always used to keep a piece for Mr May. And sometimes it took him six weeks to get round and he said that at the end of the six weeks it used to be quite difficult to get his teeth into the saffron cake.

When we used to go visiting with him, in the Parish with him, my brothers used to make it a rule to see how many teas they could eat, because wherever you went, from three o'clock to seven o'clock you were expected to have a cup of tea, and it wasn't, of course, just a cup of tea. It was like Dartmoor and the record was my brother Tom who once managed five ending up with pork chops at Kingswood, the moor farm that's up above Margate Woods.

One time father met a donkey at the white witch's house, of course, now it's on the Bodmin bypass, I expect it's fallen down but it had the most beautiful old granite porch that the old houses on the moor had, and when my father and his nephew went to visit there was a donkey in the porch - so they tried to get past the donkey to knock on the door and every time they tried to get past the donkey wheeled round and offered his heels and after a while, Will, my father's nephew, was in fits of laughter with this and after a while the old lady heard this noise so she came out to see and my father said "I'm so sorry, I'm afraid the donkey was kicking out" "Oh", she said "ee don't kick, he heaves 'is leg". And my cousin Will, never forgot. They used to write from Canada to ask for the donkey that only "heaves 'is leg".

Lots of other small farms, all intensely hospitable, didn't matter whatever - and of course there was a very strong Free Church element in the Parish - because where the Parish Church was, literally only three houses - four houses occupied, one of which was so tumbled down it practically fell down, but in the other corners of the Parish there were two hamlets, or three - one was near the Parish Church itself and then one was at Mill Pool which was the biggest settlement and the other was down on the Glynn Estate.

There had been a pub. The great thing about the funeral was that directly after the funeral it was really an Irish wake and there'd be a great deal of drunkenness and the ringers never thought of attending church afterwards - they always went to the pub. And when my father came, it happened that the licensee, the tenancy of the pub fell out, so my father took it up and bought it and changed into a reading room for the Parish, a reception room with a billiard table and put a family in there to look after it. But there were two reception rooms there and some of the ringers were furious and said they weren't never coming to church no more, but they did after about ten years. And it served its purpose.

Which house was it? Right close to the Church the other side from where we went in, the North side and ...

The great entertainment was first, the Temperance one the Racobites, where they had a march round with the banners and so forth, and of course, a big tea and then there was the choir outing which was, I suppose, the main excitement - that was an annual event. And then, as well as that, there was the Sunday school treat which was a great occasion with races and a terrific tea in the coach house- we had a big coach house you see, big enough to take three or four cars I suppose - that was always used for the tea 'cause you're never - you could very seldom count on the weather, and the ringers' supper was one of the great occasions when not only the ringers but all the church wardens and sidesmen were entertained at supper at the Rectory, boiled beef, not roast, I think, enormous quantities of boiled suet pudding, vegetables .. you can imagine it and then of course plum pudding. And then a riotous games afterwards - oh- you can't imagine what fun it was and at a quarter past eleven we all tidied up and went up to the tower and rang the muffled peels and then at 12 o'clock the tenor was tolled and then we rang the peels after that. Then the Mother's Union had their party and the girls had their party and you see there was no Parish room then, everything took place in the Rectory.

When there was the Choir outing it was to Looe. I don't think we ever went anywhere except Looe. We drove with a wagonette and four horses and another one with two. I think that was the occasion was allowed to ride four horses, and Oh, it was a wonderful occasion. We took all our food you see and there used to be a room hired where we could have tea, and so forth, and that was the first time that I ever tasted a cream and potato pasty, believe it or not, it was delicious - well I was probably very hungry.

P. Well, I've got a notice for February 1908 - so you would have been 6 and a bit - this is the re-opening services for the Parish Church after some repairs had been done .. and I notice, not only is there a public luncheon in the Council School Room, tickets 2/- and obviously there are 1,2,3, different services during the day, but a public tea and a sale of work as well. Does that all look familiar?

G.

Well, I don't say I remember it very well indeed. Public tea at the Council School Room, tickets 8 pence - and you ate as much as you liked and it was a jolly good tea - it would be splits with cream and jam, (not tuffs), splits, and seed cake, sultana cake or saffron cake - How wonderful!

It had taken seven years to raise the money for the Church Restoration and I was tempted to think the other night, the only thing I remember about it was the wedding of Mrs Edward-Collins' sister, with George Rashleigh, who was, of course, a great Cornish family. They'd been sweethearts years before, he'd married somebody else and then she'd died and Aunt Pidgy, we always called her, got married - a lovely expression I remember once about old Doney, somebody, a gentleman walked in to call - and I was busy helping to rake the gravel outside with Doney, I said to Doney, "who's that old chap?" he said, "Cor, don't you know he? - I'd know his ashes if they was burnt". And I remember the wedding very distinctly because my eldest brother had to be Best Man and he had a top hat, course he was about - he would have been about eight or nine wouldn't he, and I was bridesmaid,

and either side, because there was all this work going on, was this great hedge of laurels, so they walked down through this hedge of laurel to be married - actually inside the church. It must have been about 1905 - 1906. If you were to look at the parish register you'd find it, I suppose. 7.30 am - at the Great Festivals, you know, we always had a celebration at 6.30 am for the people who were farm people and some of them would walk 2 and half miles to come and they would come three times on Sunday because they were in the choir. So you would reckon they'd walked 15 miles a day to come to their Parish Church.

Sunday was respected as a day when you didn't do any work. My father didn't earn any marks because he allowed us to play games, he always said that far better to be doing something healthy out of doors than to sit indoors back-biting your neighbours or reading Fox's Book of Martyrs or something terrible. Some games were always allowed, on the understanding that we went to church. I never remember being made to go to Church ever, nor my brothers. Directly we got old enough we sang in the choir. We had four parts as a matter of course and very good alto and a very good tenor - old Doney always sang tenor - he never kept still all the time.

During 1917, when we had an appalling wet summer and the corn, the sheaves were out in the field, they were just green, they had sprouted so much, that they were valueless and my father tried hard to make them carry corn, on the Sunday, but they wouldn't. But there was one occasion, I suppose during the war, when the Glebe farmer, I won't tell you his name, he used his horses on Good Friday and everybody said "he'll have no luck" and both the horses died within 6 months - I suppose, well I don't remember, but I remember everybody shook their heads.

I told you the story of old Colonel St Aubyn. Quite incredible. He wouldn't take his own horses out on Sunday, so from Glynn he hired from Bodmin, which was nearly three miles, he hired 2 wagonettes with 2 horses each to come to Glynn and drive him and his wife in one, his domestic staff in the second one, back again after the service and then back again to Bodmin, so the poor horses, you see, had an extra 6 miles at least - hilly miles at that.

I'll tell you one story of the reputation I'd got as a bit of a tom-boy. There was a choir boy called Wilfred Hoskin, he married a very nice little person and he was killed in an accident at the powder mill where now Trago Mills is. And eight years later, I was motoring down with a friend to Cardynham, and we stopped within fifty yards of where the widow lived, - I never met her - to exercise the dogs and she came along, picking up sticks, and she looked very curiously at me, so we passed the time of day and we started to talk and she told me about her husband, whom I remembered, of course, he was a curious looking boy - only boy - and she said "you know, he told me about the Rectory, he used to go to tea of course, Sundays, and Miss Grace - he used to play with them all - she was a proper Tom-boy and the day his elder son was killed was Sunday, and my husband told me that on that Sunday, the news came about ten o'clock and Mr May took the service and preached the sermon" and that had remained in her memory at least ten years. She'd never seen any of us.

We had two cousins who used to come down regularly from Oxford to stay, five of my mother's nephews and nieces, who hadn't got a real home, who used to come and bring

every sort of animal you can think, dogs, a mongoose, an owl - I can't remember. I'm not sure , they weren't snakes.

Five would be Archer cousins, yes. And the two from Oxford were Uncle Charlie's two from Balliol and then the other cousins who used to stay at Jamaica Inn. Their father was permanent Clerk to the House of Commons for 55 years and they lived in a very modern, by those days, house at Weybridge, and a because cousin William was mad about fishing, they were made to come down and spend their holidays at Jamaica Inn where there was no water laid on , and no sanitation of course, and the ladies coming down from the smart house at Weybridge , Surrey used to spend three weeks down there.

P. I wonder what they did with their time while the others were fishing.

G.

Walking , I suppose. We did walk enormous distances. We didn't ride a great deal because we didn't have anything to ride. We couldn't afford to buy another horse - we had- the first bicycle we had was given us by an aunt that had already gone through one family. It was a fixed wheel and boy's bike and we all learnt to ride on it, and then after a period in time, we each got our own bicycle, and my brother Paul always wanted a motorbike, but he was never allowed to have one.

The first car we saw in Cardynham belonged to Canon Majendie. Don't ask me what it was - it was quite a good car - I mean, he was a very wealthy man in those days. And he used to come over periodically, and then the other car, of course, was the one I first rode in, was one used by Robin Lloyd on an epic journey to St Tudy.

Robin Lloyd was a naval officer who actually was very keen on the Arthur Mays, of course, - they were all girls, women, girls. Anyway, Robin was very keen on one of them and he was quartered at Devonport and he used to drive down (and I must have been eight or nine years old, I suppose), and he decided he would drive over to St Tudy because, of course, of Uncle Arthur. I think he was on half pay then for a while - anyway- it doesn't matter, and he used to take me over there for lunch. And the first two miles were fine, and then a tyre burst, that was just beyond Mill Pool going up the hill. So he put on a spare and then we went a little further and than another tyre burst or started to go down, I can't remember which, so he thought, instead of going to St Tudy, we'd better go to Bodmin which was the nearest place you could get tyres. It was rather wonderful you could get them there. And it took so long, that finally, he gave me lunch at the Royal Hotel. I'd never been in an hotel before in my life. It was my suggestion we should have four new tyres. We went on to St Tudy then, under good steam and arrived at half past two. We were told our lunch had been kept warm for us, we weren't popular really, and then , as we drove back, going down on Charles Hill, the brakes wouldn't hold so I was turned out of the car by the road and Robin came down the hill, not sitting in the car but holding on the steering wheel with one hand and pulling on the handbrake with the other. Why he arrived all intact at the bottom ... but he did. It was a wonderful drive.

There were deliveries of bread two days a week from Bodmin and there was delivery of meat from Mount, 2 miles away, and there was a delivery of groceries, once a week, all

with horses. One grocer incurred my father's disapproval because there was a very strong Temperance feeling in the Parish and he went to one of the farms one day and was told he must have a drink - must have a drink of wine. "Tis all right, 'tis Temperance Wine". Well, when you tasted it, it was quite nice canary and the grocer had sold it to them saying it was Temperance Wine. He took it up the grocer and he didn't sell any more wine as Temperance.

They made the most marvellous home-made wines. I'll never forget riding a bicycle after a glass of blackberry wine and the front wheel wouldn't go straight. And Aunty K, I took her to visit one of the farms and she was given, I think, cider - in those days they made their own cider and put it in a brandy cask, you know brandy impregnates the cask you see, and Aunty K couldn't trust her legs after a glass of that.

I used to ride later on. My beloved Aunt brought us a pony, Tommy, and he was half Cornish moors, a bit bigger than a Dartmoor. Paul was too heavy for him, but my brother Tom rode him and I rode him quite a lot. He was quite fast. We still had the dear old donkey who'd come from Egypt. He'd been at the battle of Kirbycam, and unfortunately Tommy got some bad throat infection, when I was at school, and we had him put down.

P. How old would you have been then?

G.

I went away to school at fourteen and a half. It meant a train journey to Salisbury. Paul had to get to Marlborough, Thomas, Tom, went to Sherborne and Paul was very nearly made to go to Sandhurst - he went to Sandhurst in 1916 certainly if not before. He was given a nomination by the headmaster of Marlborough, because during the war, you see, there was no exam necessary, you were given a nomination which was a character recommendation.

P. Now what about Old Cornish traditions, folklore - were you brought up to believe in piskies?

G.

Yes - but they weren't piskies - I don't think. Anyway, I can tell you one story. Old Doney's wife walked to Bodmin one day to go shopping, walked back and it got dark - she never knew how, but she found herself in a field and she walked all round the field to find the gate and she was sure there wasn't one. At last, by the time half the parish were out looking for her, when actually she was in a field about 50 yards from the road, but she turned her pockets inside out and she found the gate straight away. That's what you have to do, you have to turn your pockets inside out, presumably to show you haven't any money to give to -- what did they call them?

Other traditions of witches. We had the witch - she was in the Parish within a quarter mile of the Rectory - they all respected her - no doubt about it at all and then several men and women had the power of healing, snakebites, particularly. When my first dog, walking with my father on the Post Round, got bitten by an adder, they got to a farm on

the moor and the farmer's wife wanted to put the dog straight into a cart and take it over to Warleggan where Tom Welley would charm her - it was charming you see, - of course this is still done on Dartmoor, and my father wouldn't allow it because he thought it was a work of the devil.

Oh, yes, I can tell you another story. --

The same dear lady wanted to teach my father how to charm - a women could teach a man and a man could teach a women but not the same sex. But of course, he wouldn't think of it. But then there was a certain old man on the moor, the other side of the moor, of Bodmin Moor, and he'd been , not quite a local preacher, he'd been a certain authority in the Free Church. Two stories about him. Well, they lived on this very remote moor and even though it was, I suppose, only a half hour from the main road. One morning, he was very busy, doing what they called in those days "Scooching down" - I needn't describe what that was - and at midday he discovered they were out of paraffin so he took his horse and rode into Bodmin , it was only about two and a half mile and when he got there it was very quiet in the street and the shops were shut and everyone was walking about in their best clothes and blacks and he accosted one and said "tell me - who's dead then? who's dead? There must be - the shops are shut and you're all walking about in your best clothes" and he said " young man, 'tis Sunday" and he said "Sunday - the Blessed Sabbath- and I've been scooching down all the morning - I'll go right home now and pick it all up" and he did. And several years after, he was dying and my father went to see him and he said to him, " Now - Copin. What about all this witchcraft you've been charming animals and done, what we would call witchcraft, they say it's a habit of the devil, a sin of the devil".

And in those days you never would name the devil, as the devil, he was "that one". And the old chap said to my father" Well, Sir, have you ever known "that one" do any good?" which was unanswerable - and he said" I've done nothing but good by charming- and they said words out of the psalm - you know, "you shall tread the lion and the adder under your feet"

Cardynham managed to get itself some good peat. That happened in, I suppose, about three hundred years ago in a bit of the land called Lord's Waste where three Parishes met, St Beward, Bolventor and St Neot. And a man was murdered by thieves on the moor, just at this place. And none of the three parishes wanted the expense of burying the poor chap and after a day or two it became rather necessary and it was said that the pious people of Cardynham came up and gave him a Christian burial in their own Parish. And for that good deed they were given 400 acres of moor land for their own and it was the best peat cutting piece of the moor.

I remember them cutting peat there. June, just before hay harvest generally, we used to have - it was a Parish event - it belonged to the whole of Cardynham you see, and we used to go, our two men would go up on bicycles about a week before, cut the peat and stack it to dry out and hope that it was a good drying time, and then we would hire two wagons form the Glebe Farm with four horses, go up and bring home the two wagon loads, which not only did us, but did our two men as well and we, through the winter, had a peat fire going day and night in the hall - never went out. A lovely smell.

That's what all the farms kept themselves warm with and most of them, of course, would have used it for baking as well. They had these cloam ovens I think they were called, beside the open fire place and the open fire place would have two big hooks down, there was always a kettle there and they burnt, of course, nothing but wood and peat - very seldom any coal.

Before we had a car, practically the only way you got out in that direction on the moor was by bicycle. Sometimes we drove as far as Jamaica inn, 8 miles and back and, with our mare when she was younger, but of course by the time the War came she was getting too old and we must have lost the pony by then, and we'd certainly lost the donkey.

That must have been by bicycle that my father and I rode over to Trebartha. Mr Rodd used to let my father come over three times a year to give him the sacrament - because he wouldn't have the local vicar. Poor man. His wife had run away from him - I don't know if it was his fault or not - but Mr Rodd didn't like him and we cycled over 16 miles and we would stay a night, or even two, and then cycle back.

But on that occasion, (I think I was the only one - I can't remember my father being there), the keeper at Trebartha gave me this ferret. Oh, I think I bought it for half and crown and I had it on my handlebars - slung in a sack, luckily I was going slowly and I suddenly saw the ferret had decamped itself from the sack and from the handlebars onto the road, luckily she was easily caught.

That was from Trewint.

We had our first car in October 1921, that's when my first license dates from. I can't remember another car. Oh, there was a car at Glynn, Lord Vivian had a car. It was only a small car with a dickey behind. I once rode in it after the War Memorial was consecrated at Cardynham, the altar rails, the Bishop came to do it, Bishop Guy and I can't remember his other name, but he came from Manchester. And of course, he brought a beautiful top hat, I suppose it was his mitre. And the morning we were to go back, I came down from school to unveil the altar rails you see, so I had to be taken in to the Station. You know, it must have been about 1919 or 1920, and Lord Vivian sent up his car to take the Bishop and me to the station and it was pouring with rain and the Bishop wouldn't hear of me sitting in the seat behind so he insisted I should sit on his lap and nurse the hat in a box on my lap. I've never had such an embarrassed journey 'cause I was no lightweight, and I was trying all the time to ease off my weight, in case the Bishop got ... I travelled with him to Plymouth, he was charming, I must have been either 20 or 21 as I was in the throes of trying to take matriculation.

My first car I had at twenty-one that was a 1915 T model Ford. Ours wasn't a saloon. I remember cleaning the plugs three time on a journey of sixteen miles and each time I cracked one, you had to do it up tight and the porcelain cracked, and then you only had three cylinders instead of four, of course they were very powerful cars you see, they were 23 horse power. In those days you paid your tax on horsepower.

My father was very clever. He arranged when he bought the car from Skelton's garage at Lostwithiel that one of the mechanics would come and stay with us the week to teach me to drive and to give me a certain amount .. but mind you, I had already studied the British

Motoring Journals, to do with Wolseys and we had this nice fellow, he must have been as nervous as I was, because we got up to Four Winds, a little beyond there, that's where the road comes out now, and he said "Now you drive the car". So I drove the car down, just avoiding the ditch each side for the first two or three miles and within two days I was driving out the family. I remember going through a gateway once...

No-one else drove at all. My father would have never learned how to drive. I tried to teach the coachman, but he could never change into top gear. He'd only go at 5 miles an hour - because that was the fastest he'd ever been on a bicycle you see.

There were four gears and the reverse. An' the headlights ran off the magneto, so when you were doing 15 miles an hour, you had just about as much light as a candle lantern. And the two side lights were paraffin, so was the tail. I used to drive that old car up on Dartmoor from in Winter 1926.

That was the car on the famous journey when father went to take the wedding at Penzance. A very dear friend he was, my father had coached the son of the village cobbler. The family, when my father went to Cardynham, were practically the only people who went to church regularly and they all sat up in the choir, 'cause the old father said it was "more intimate like". And the third son I think it was, was very clever and my father coached him in Greek and Latin and he got to St Luke's College in Exeter and probably was hoping too he might have been ordained, but the War came. After the War he was due to be married and wanted my father to take the wedding at Penzance, on the 31st December. And I drove him as far as Truro and then he got on the train and I spent the day at Truro with my old governess and family and then he came back by train and I picked him up and the main road to Truro was closed for some reason and one had to go to Truro through Mitchell, a road I'd never been on , and when we came back, it was dark and misty (and I explained what the lights on the car were like), and we got back to where I could see the road widened out and I thought we'd come to the junction of the other Truro road, which would have been all right, you see. And we saw this man standing at the side of the road with a road light on, so I gave it about six or eight inches clearance and the next thing we'd tipped over into a duck pond which was about a foot deep in the middle and my father, who was sitting beside me, was thrown right over me. We had the hood up, how ever he went without my feeling more, or so forth, I can't tell but he did. So, we were both clear, but of course the hood was smashed to bits. The duck pond was eighteen inches deep - and the only thing that worried me, they came running out from the farm and said "Oh, is it all right, anybody underneath? and I said "no, but I've lost my shoe". They finally found it about half an hour after; came in to the farm house in triumph carrying my shoe - they were charming people.

Of course, everybody teased me that I'd been to the wedding but I hadn't.

They pulled the car out in twenty minutes but they were so hearty they damaged the steering much more than the fall into the duck pond had done. And they retrieved all our luggage was saturated you see, all our luggage, and the farmer standing - it wasn't cold, but where he was standing he found it was where all my tools had been upset. There was about two to three dozen tools because by that time I had accumulated considerable tool chest - Oh they were wonderful those people, because they weren't at all well off. There were about six or seven children - he was a small farmer called Jolly, and we had to - their

clothes, his wife was a very ample lady, so I had to pin her things round me. He was a little man, of course, my father was a big man, he couldn't get into his jacket so he had to sit in his shirt sleeves, with a waistcoat. In those days, of course, you didn't wear sweaters. And they got out all their Christmas things, their Christmas pudding, Christmas cake to feed us, and they wouldn't take any pay. And we spent the night there - I can't remember if we did tell anyone what was happening because I don't think Tremayle was on the telephone then.

We rang Lostwithiel because that was where the garage was, and they came to collect the car next day, but I think we sent a telegram- I don't know what times you could send a telegram - by the time we'd tipped into the duck pond, the baker's van, the one at standing there drove in to Indian Queen's and spread the news so, literally, in half an hour there was every sort of illumination - naked candles being carried, and paraffin lamps, lanterns of very description, and you saw all these lights coming down the road. Wonderful! They had never had such excitement in all their lives. My Uncle then was on the County Council and in no time at all, of course, they'd fenced that duck pond and put up white posts and drained it.

The Rectory is not there any more. It had seventeen rooms upstairs and it was four storeys. There were cellars and five attics up at the top. And the previous vicar but two had been a cousin of a present Earl of Glynn, Lord Bingham, though I think at that time he was Sir H... Glynn - I'm not sure 'cause of course the original Baronetcy came from his leading the charge at Waterloo, but I think he lost a leg...

Anyway, they were cousins, you see, and the one at the Rectory married a rich widow and in those days there was no Women's ..Marriage Settlement²... so she had no right over her own money at all.. and he built on a whole slab of the Rectory. He converted the stable for twelve horses and finally, when he'd spent most of his wife's capital, he went off with another woman. But the Parish remembered him with the greatest veneration because there was an outbreak of diphtheria and the doctors were scared stiff and in any case had to come out on horseback, and he went round and used some very strong disinfectant - anyway he made them drink it. And at that time railways extended from Liskeard down the Bodmin Road and Lord Glynn knew what was going to happen, knew it was going to be a station and at that time the Fletcher's Bridge Drive was open to the public but didn't lead anywhere special you see. But the New Bridge Drive which was the quickest way to get to Liskeard was closed and the Rector and the Squire got their heads together , because they didn't want people coming down by the house, you see. They called the Parish meeting and said that his Lordship was very kind, he was going to throw open the New Bridge Drive to everybody of the Parish but he was closing the Fletcher's Bridge one and then, of course, came the news of the Station. It meant an extra mile and a half had to be driven to it, but the Rectory had the right to use the Fletcher's Bridge Drive because the two skunks had put their heads together.

Lord and Lady Clifden and their children lived at Lanhydrock. Tommy was the eldest but the two youngest daughters were our friends, were only about six or eight years older than my eldest brother. We used to have wonderful times going to Lanhydrock.

² The old common law rule that a husband and wife were one person meant that a husband could dispose of his wife's leaseholds during his lifetime without his wife's concurrence. The Married Women's Property Act 1882 provided that all the property of a married woman should be her separate property.

We drove there and then we used to be driven round the grounds in a triol - and tandem of Shetland ponies , a special little carriage they had made for them. That would have been with Violet and Connie. Constance, the youngest wanted to be a nurse, great opposition, they didn't think it was at all right but she won her day and she did train as a nurse. And Violet survived her by many years.

Eva was the third, she and Tommy were twins. The eldest was May and she at last was allowed to marry a Buller. He was a parson so they didn't think much of him, but it was so late they never had a family. And then came Eva and Thomas, Tommy who, of course, was killed in the First World War and then Gerald and then came Victor and then came Violet, Constance and Alec. I've forgotten what happened to Alec. But they were an extraordinary family. You see there was just one descendent. But Lady Clifden was one of the kindest people you ever could meet. And I was one sent there, I went to have tea all by myself , I remember it now. And she presented me with a beautiful copy of Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Trewardale was the other house we had a lot of constant going to and fro with. The Edward-Collinses were a delightful family.

Oh, Trebartha - that was a lovely house as far as I can remember it because it had a wonderful collection of stuffed birds. What I remember most about it and my recollection of it was going up and down like Pentillie Castle did, you see, 'cause I remember that quite well. Amazing little staircases which sort of lead nowhere, and at Trebartha, what we remember most of course, was the garden, because you could go there at a certain time of year, I suppose in June and July and providing you reckoned the currants had full varieties could eat up to nearly twenty kinds of fruit in a day. It was said that my brother exceeded twenty. But they had everything - apricots, grapes, nectarines, peaches, melons and of course, raspberries and strawberries, and gooseberries, lovely hot houses.

They had an orangery at Trelaske but of course, Trelaske, after my Uncle Charles took it over, deteriorated pretty steadily. He had one Cousin who was a great dear, Cousin Annie Radcliffe, who used to come and stay with him quite a lot. First cousins and her mother, who was a widow, otherwise, whether he was a malade imaginaire I don't know, but I do know that he had every sort of medicinal bath put in, oh all sorts of things, so presumably it wasn't all fancy. And then of course, he had Phil living with him for years. And then finally, they left the place the Phil and didn't leave it to his brother. He didn't approve, you see, of my mother and father's marriage. He didn't think my father had enough money to support a wife.

The great standby of the little cottage was the pig. And my father used to have to go round and admire the pigs always and try and guess their weight on that score. And he always lead the conversation round until someone said "I'd reckon he'd make so much" and then he'd guess the nearest to that and he got a great reputation for guessing the pigs' weight. And there was one family in the Parish, who lived in really what was quite a modern cottage and they had a good slate roof. I forgot how many children there were but certainly there were six or eight and he went to see them once and he said it was the only house he knew where they had their frying pan in the middle and they sat round on boxes. They had no furniture, anyway, they'd killed the pig a fortnight ago and he said "that's splendid, I expect you've got the hams cured and bacon laid by and all the rest of

it". But they'd managed between them to eat the whole pig in the fortnight. And the other story was about the same family. Pathetic really. The mother got ill, so when anybody got it they used to come to the Rectory and report and they used to be given some soup. Really good soup, meat in it you see, and regrettably on this occasion Mrs Varcott got it and the children came to the Rectory and at that time we had a very elderly cook, well over 60 and she used to make bread in the bread oven, the only one we ever had and she was a bit crotchety, you can imagine. Anyway, the children went off with the soup and not very long after the word came back that Mrs Varcott didn't think much of Rectory soup, it was like dirty water. And the story has been, that two lots of children went along this road and one lot of children had oranges for a sick father, and the other lot of children had the Rectory soup. So they decided to do a bit of a swap, eat some of the oranges and drink some of the soup. Well, by the time the other children had had a go at the soup there wasn't much left. But luckily there was a stream of rather discoloured water running down Peachers Hill, so the soup can was filled up with the water. But we never heard what happened with the children who ate the oranges - but the explanation of the Rectory soup was that it was dirty water.

Oh yes. Everybody had wonderful pasties. And they were good because they'd have all vegetables in them and very often not much meat, but if not they'd probably have a bit of bacon. The best ones were divided in half by a division of pastry and one half would be meat and potato - what we'd call vegetable turnip and so forth, and the other half would be apple if was apples or else dried fruit, figs and dates and, I suppose, raisins. And of course the best ones had cream in them too. In the harvest, my Nana used to make us apple pasties and thing was you bit off the end, what they called the Cornwall of the pasty and then you filled it with cream and ate the rest with cream and juice. And they made their own drinks, some of them, herbal tea which they used nettles a good deal, and borage - no, not in those days.

There was a baker who came to the village twice a week from Bodmin. But most of the farmers always baked their own bread. And they'd have a great big baking one or two days a week and they'd bake all their fruit pies in a soup plate, so pastry underneath, you see, and pastry on top and I suppose they used dripping, mostly for their pastry. No margarine you see, we never saw any margarine in the First World War.

Generally saffron cake, and Christmas cake, but for the big teas, like the Harvest Tea and the Sunday School tea treats; then there was a baker, a Lostwithiel, Brewers. Excellent. And he used to make seed cake and sultana cake and saffron cake and, of course, splits, and that was the tea. And unlimited cream, always home-made jam, you ate as much as you liked. Most of the teas you paid six pence and ate as much as you liked. I couldn't believe there were much profits.

It was the Coronation and we were supposed to have a terrific day with sports - with children and sports for grown ups and a public tea in the school room. And the wives grumbled "we always have to do the work" they didn't think it was right. And so the men said "Oh, all right, then. We'll cut the sandwiches". So they cut the sandwiches and one old women was heard to say "Sandwiches, 'taint sandwiches, 'taint nothing but bread and mate!". I suppose they'd put no butter in!
