

Ellixia Publishing Ltd.

Recounting Cornwall's Forgotten History

This catalogue describes *A Cornish Almanack* and *Q's Historical Legacy* which is a series of twenty volumes containing the works of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch who wrote as Q.

A Cornish Almanack



Q's Historical Legacy



Ellixia Publishing Limited, Nansmellyon Road, Mullion Cornwall, TR12 7DQ

Email: books@ellixia.com

Web: www.ellixia.com

Tel: (07922) 128422

Table of contents

A Cornish Almanack

Q's Historical Legacy

Series I

- I **The Arrest of Captain Bligh**
- II **The Roll Call of the Reef**
- III **The Last Siege in England**
- IV **Tales of The Looe Die-Hards I - *The Short Stories***
- V **Tales of The Looe Die-Hards II - *The Mayor of Troy***
- VI **Tales of Ardevora I - *Prisoners of War in France***
- VII **Tales of Ardevora II**
- VIII **Tales of Ardevora III - *Ia***
- IX **Christmas Tales**
- X **Highwaymen**

Series II

- XI **Lady Mary**
- XII **Pirates**
- XIII **Love**
- XIV **Scilly**
- XV **Escapades and Occasional Escapes**
- XVI **Hetty Wesley**
- XVII **Tales of the Civil War**
- XVIII **Spies!**
- XIX **The Westcotes**
- XX **Harry Revel**

A Cornish Almanack

'How Cornwall Shook The World'



A Cornish Almanack is a calendar of Cornish events spreading over eight hundred years and, as such, it opens three hundred and sixty windows onto the county.

Written as a day to day calendar, the book records the births or deaths of famous musicians, artists, writers, engineers, scientists and politicians. It also documents significant events such as the opening of *The Royal Albert* (railway) *Bridge*, the launching of the first commercial ferry service between Scilly and the mainland as well as diverse events such as the development of the beautiful buildings of Penzance and of Truro, the very first live radio broadcast by the BBC and the very first conducting of the Nine Lessons and Carols which rapidly became a much loved Christmas tradition across the world.

There are tales of financial and personal scandals, mining disasters and military events and slaves and slavers.

It demonstrates the influence of Cornwall both across the country and, through its diasporas, across the world through one event, birth or death for every day of a year.

Q's Historical Legacy



Now surpassed in fame as a writer by his daughter's best friend, Daphne du Maurier, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Q) was the pre-eminent Cornish writer of Victorian and Edwardian times and founder of the school of English Literature at Cambridge University. Many of his stories related events and described the residents of the town of Fowey, where he was resident for fifty years and which he termed Troy.

Q's Historical Legacy comprises two series of ten volumes of fiction.

Each volume includes a brief biography of Q, introduces and reproduces the tale and then explores and discusses the real life events behind Q's fiction.

Series I contains an amusing story about the arrest of Bligh of the Bounty on the Helford River, a ghost story based on two actual shipwrecks on the same night, amusing tales about Fowey (which he called Troy) and records of soldiers from St. Ives who spent ten years in detention in Napoleonic France and who conducted a 1200 mile journey, by foot, to safety. It also contains a tale of the last military siege in England.

Q wrote extensively over many periods of history and *Series II* includes a tale of a headless carriage careering across Dartmoor, tales of legendary Cornish pirates, stories about Scilly and extensive thrilling tales about the English Civil War.

Two of his best volumes included here are *Hetty Wesley* which is a tragic tale of the life of one of the sisters of John and Charles Wesleys who created the Methodist Church and *The Westcotes* which include much fascinating details about French and American prisoners of war in Napoleonic times and provide much fascinating insight into how the prisoners lived, especially when on parole, and how the local people accommodated them.

Q's writing is of huge significance since his fiction was very often based on factual events which have now passed from memory. Each volume is annotated and referenced with the locations, real identities and background material discussing the context of the story.

I The Arrest of Captain Bligh

An account of Captain Bligh's visit to the Helford River and his subsequent arrest and imprisonment.



In 1803, at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, Captain Bligh (of '*The Bounty*') was instructed to visit Helford to survey the river in order to determine whether defences needed to be constructed or ships needed to patrol the river against a possible invasion by the French.

Frenchman's Creek is Q's tale of Bligh's suspicious behaviour which led to him being arrested and imprisoned nearby. As well as Q's humorous account, this volume also contains accounts by the local vicar Reverend Richard Polwhele in whose shed Bligh was imprisoned and by a 20th vicar who later resided in the same rectory.

II The Roll Call of the Reef



This volume contains Q's most famous ghost story based on the real events of the sinking of the *HMS Primrose*, on The Manacles, and of the transport ship, *Dispatch*, on the Black Rock both on the same night in 1809. *The Roll Call of the Reef*, first published in 1895 is Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's account of the wreck and it is Q's best known ghost story.

The sole survivor of the wreck of the *HMS Primrose* was a drummer boy whilst only seven men on the *Dispatch* were saved. *HMS Primrose* (1807) was a Royal Navy two masted brig (a brig-sloop) with eighteen guns that was built in Fowey and launched in November 1807. Captained by Commander James Mein, she sailed to the Spanish coast in February 1808. The first action was in concert with another brig, *HMS Rapid*, off Cape St. Vincent in May 1808 when they saw off two merchant feluccas sheltering under the protection of a coastal battery. The battery fired on *HMS Rapid* and blew two holes in her bow and it quickly starting to take on water but, thankfully, the entire crew was saved by the crew of *HMS Primrose*.

HMS Primrose sailed again for Spain in January 1809 as part of a convoy and, in a snowstorm, ran aground on the Minstrel Rock, The Manacles on January 22nd 1809.

III The Last Siege in England



In 1734, a pewterer in Helston, Henry Rogers, was infuriated to learn that his recently deceased elder brother had left his farm to his relatively new, very much younger, wife.

This is the quite extraordinary story of how Rogers decided to reclaim his rightful inheritance, leading to the house being besieged by forces from the Pendennis Castle Garrison and ended in a way that was calamitous for all.

It gives delightful insight into eighteenth century Cornish society and history which is now quite forgotten.

IV Tales of The Looe Die-Hards I - *The Short Stories*



During Napoleonic times there was great concern that the French could invade England through Cornwall much of which had many miles of undefended coasts and rivers as well as readily accessible harbours and numerous secluded coves and beaches suitable for landing.

Due to this concern many areas assembled volunteer artillery companies to guard and protect their immediate environment. One of these was the East and West Looe Volunteer Artillery which existed between 1803 and 1809. In all that time, the company which numbered up to 70 members, did not lose a single member and became known as the Looe Die-Hards. Q's stories of the Looe Die-Hards are based on oral and family histories he was told over many years. He wrote about them, using lightly disguised names and locations in a number of short stories which are included here:-

- *The Looe Die-Hards*
- *Hi-Spy-Hi!*
- *Doctor Unonius*

V **Tales of The Looe Die-Hards II - *The Mayor of Troy***



“The Mayor of Troy” continues Q’s comedies about the lightly disguised town of Fowey.

It concerns a pompous mayor who is press ganged into naval service and return ten years later to discover that his absence has not been regretted.

VI Tales of Ardevora I - *Prisoners of War in France*



During the conflicts with Napoleonic France, a large number of British fishermen and naval personnel were interned as prisoners of war as were private citizens who were unlucky enough to have been in France when war was declared.

A number of the fishermen were from St. Ives of whom two cousins, John Tregethern Short and Thomas Williams were imprisoned for ten years. Regular, enforced, movements meant they both endured a march totalling over 1200 miles. Both kept diaries, detailing daily events, descriptions of the towns and villages in which they were imprisoned and their attempts to escape, which they completed when they finally managed their return in 1814 following Napoleon's abdication. Q used their experiences in a brief story called '*A Tale of Ardevore*' (his name for St. Ives from the Cornish *ar devra*, '*Upon the haven*'). Although Q's description of their troubles in France was fairly accurate he was, I believe, unfair in his description of the two men but it is worth reading as it is yet another example of his fiction being informed by real but now largely forgotten events.

This volume, the first of three containing Q's tales of St. Ives begins with Q's tale and is followed by a report of Sir Edward Hain's travels and the diaries of John Tregethern Short and Thomas Williams together with notes describing the places visited, characters and events.

Both diaries are beautifully written and Mr. Short continued his diary until his death and an edited and shortened version is also included in this volume. In the original volume there were, understandably, some apparent spelling and typographical errors, many of which I have corrected. The writer has also excluded some recorded events such as the arrival of fishing boats, details of the installation of gas lighting in St. Ives, records of fish catches etc; which although of interest detract from the main events which I find utterly fascinating. For example, although St. Ives is now famous as a lovely holiday destination and for the 20th century's '*St. Ives School*' of painters, Mr. Short details contemporaneous accounts of fascinating events including,

- Electoral fraud and bribery of voters as well as constituency changes due to the 1832 Reform Act;
- Refugees from the Portuguese civil war;
- The defrocking of the Anglican curate of St. Ives for what now appears a trivial reason;
- The visit and preaching by a native North American Methodist preacher;
- Public support for the treatment of Caroline of Brunswick by King George IV;
- Industrial, mining, developments;
- Terrible storms and gales and resulting shipwrecks;
- Pen portraits of some rather, 'eccentric' characters such as John Knill.

VII Tales of Ardevora II



This volume, the second of three, in this series alone, about St. Ives which he termed *Ardevora* (Cornish: *ar devra*, 'Upon the haven'), include four of his tales recording smuggling, electoral, a friendship between a local, near destitute fisherman and a wealthy elder of the town and the competition between two men for one girl's affections.

They include:-

- Smuggling activities of John Carter, the *King of Prussia*;
- Events in the corrupted, *mazed*, 1768 Parliamentary election in St. Ives where a woman with eight daughters was placed on the electoral roll despite women not being enfranchised.
- Developing friendship between a wealthy man and a fisherman due to the, supposedly, nefarious activities of the fisherman's granddaughter;

It is interesting that two of Q's maternal great uncles served on a naval dispatch boat *The Black Joke* and were captured by French privateers in 1810. Some time after their release they sailed to Tenerife as part of an armed merchant convoy but were never heard of again.

VIII Tales of Ardevora III - *Ia*



This volume, the third of three in this series alone, about St. Ives which he termed *Ardevora* (Cornish: *ar devra*, 'Upon the haven'), relates the tale of *Ia*, named after the Patron Saint of St. Ives.

With clear echoes of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and references to J.M. Barrie's *The Little Minister*, medieval ballads and Biblical references, *Ia* relates the story of the love between two people of very different stations in life.

A perfect example of Q's empathetic and supportive attitude towards women, *Ia* and *Hetty Wesley* reflect his respect and support for women who indeed disparaged by the society they were born in to. The references are described in the afterword to *Ia* in this volume.

Without spoiling the story, *Ia* contains a tale, with lightly disguised historical references to real events in Cornwall but which is also very positive towards women who rise above their circumstances. It is important too for not necessarily following the stereotypical progress of romances of the Victorian era while giving an intimate portrait of day to day life and difficulties in nineteenth century St. Ives.

IX Christmas Tales



Q thoroughly enjoyed many of his annual routines such as the Fowey Regatta but none more than Christmas, '*This is Christmas: a festival of great ceremonies in this small house*'. Doubtless this reflected his Christian faith, his conviviality and devotion to his family.

This volume contains five, Christmas-related, short stories published in anthologies over several decades-;

- *I Saw Three Ships*
- *Shakespeare's Christmas*
- *My Christmas Burglary*
- *Colonel Baigent's Christmas*
- *Pilot Matthey's Christmas*

relating the tale of three wrecks at Christmas and the appearance of a mysterious sailor who disrupts the routine of a coastal community, the astonishing solution devised by Shakespeare to the outrageous demands of their puritanical landlord of *The Theatre* , followed by three quaint and gentle tales of a Christmas burglar, an Indian army officer returning to Winchester, the city of his childhood, and the adventures of a Cornish fishermen and crew desperate to get home for Christmas. All five provide fascinating and entertaining insights in Christmas celebrations of times gone by, etiquette and traditions which are now long forgotten.

X Highwaymen



In the eighteenth century travel was very dangerous due to highway robbery and poor roads to the extent that, when travelling to London on business, many Cornish gentry would write their wills in anticipation that they would not return.

This volume contains three, highwaymen-related, short stories published in anthologies over several decades-;

- *Statement of Gabriel Foot, Highwayman*
- *The Two Householders*
- *The Man Behind The Curtain*

The supposed teller of these tales, ***Gabriel Foot***, appears to be fictitious but the stories are exciting and reveal much interesting information about 18th century etiquette and life in 18th century Bodmin. All three provide enjoyable insights in Cornish etiquette and traditions which are now long forgotten.

XI Lady Mary



My Lady's Coach is one of Q's quintessential ghost stories which is based on fact and legend and completely fulfils four of M.R. James' conditions for a successful ghost story.

This volume contains material from four different sources:-

- **Lady Mary's Coach** by Q
- **Lady Mary's Tale** by Sabine Baring-Gould
- **Fitz of Fitz-ford** by Mrs. Bray (the 3rd of three original volumes)
- **Lady Mary in history** by Mrs. G. H. Radford

This volume takes as its basis Q's ghost story and then draws together material from the three other sources which take the legend and attempt to place it in historical context and reality although Mrs. Bray's telling is an early example of historical fiction whilst still based, to at least some extent, on real people and actual events. It is this that makes Q's work especially valuable to me; a relatively slight and short ghost story leads to the discovery of other writers, other worlds, other times and important events of many centuries ago which have been largely forgotten or otherwise vanished from history.

XII Pirates



Q wrote a huge number of apparently fictional tales but many were actually based on historical facts. This volume contains tales of wrecking, a colonial governor and tales of other, accidental, West Country pirates.

This volume contains his fictionalised accounts of:-

- The wreck of the, Portuguese treasure ship, Saint Andrew in AD 1527 (*Lady of the Ship*) at Gunwalloe followed by the alleged wrecking by the local gentry.
- The Tale of the First Ruler of Sarawak of Sarawak who retired to Burrator on Dartmoor
- Tales of West Country folk who ended up as deliberate or accidental pirates on the Spanish Main and on the West African coast including:- the unfortunate Harry Knox who was kidnapped and forced into working on a pirate ship simply because of his exceptional musical talent and navigational skills.

This volume ends with an authoritative account of the life of the First White Rajah by Sabine Baring-Gould and a summary of the experiences of Harry Glasby.

XIII Love



Q wrote a huge number of apparently fictional tales but many were actually based on historical facts.

This volume contains some of his most enchanting tales describing peoples' actions due to love:-

- The quiet honeymoon of a young couple interrupted by an unexpected visitors (*A Happy Voyage*).
- An unexpected visit to a lightship by a newly married bride (*Visitors at Gunnel Rock*), inspired by the original Sevenstones Lightship anchored off Scilly.
- Two mens' actions to attempt protect the reputation of an innocent wife whose life could be ruined through no fault of her own (*For The Love of Naomi*).
- The love of a woman for a new arrival in the village and the tragic consequences (*Joseph Laquedum*).

XIV Scilly



Q wrote a huge number of apparently fictional tales but many were actually inspired by historical facts.

This volume contains two absolutely enchanting tales about the Isles of Scilly:-

- The rescue of an infant from a shipwreck and events in his early life (*Tom Tiddler's Ground*).
- The influence of the Lord Proprietor and the Commandant of the military defences (*Major Vigoreux*) and the unexpected appearance, following the grounding of a trans - Atlantic steamship, of a mysterious, beautiful woman who changes peoples' lives for ever.

When basing his fiction on actual events of real locations, Q tended to change the names of the locations he wrote about. In these stories, the *Isles of Scilly* are referred to merely as *The Islands* whilst Q's *St. Lide's* is actually *St. Mary's*, *Brefar* is *Bryher*, *Saaron* is really *Samson* whilst his name for *St. Agnes* is *St. Anne's*, *Tresco* becomes *Iniscawe* and the famous *Tresco Abbey* is simply *The Abbey*. Whilst some characters are fictitious there really was a *Lord Protector of the Isles of Scilly*, which was the self styled title of Augustus Smith who leased Scilly from the Duchy of Cornwall in 1834 and transformed its economy

XV Escapades and Occasional Escapes



Q wrote a huge number of apparently fictional tales but many were actually inspired by historical facts. His writings can be categorised as adventure, romance or proto-feminist. This volume contains three tales involving adventure and romance relating escapades and an occasional lucky escape:-

-
- *'Deadman's Rock'*, Q's first novel, tells of the attempt by a Cornishman and, much later his son, to recover the family's fortunes involving trips to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and back to Cornwall. *'Deadman's Rock'* involves travel to foreign parts, romance, escapades and adventures and is very much in the vein of Stevenson's *'Treasure Island'*, Rider Haggard's *'King Solomon's Mines'* and other adventure stories of the late Victorian period.
- *'The Hotwells Duel'* is set in a spa town in the early Victorian period. Hotwells is clearly recognisable as Bath.
- *'Rain of dollars'* is set during the, Napoleonic, Peninsular Wars which inspired many of Q's adventure stories including *'A Tale of Ardevora'* relating the capture and real life experiences as prisoners of war of two men from St. Ives. The tale is based on real life events which occurred under the command of General Sir Edward Paget.

XVI Hetty Wesley



Whilst Q wrote a huge number of apparently fictional tales but which were actually inspired by historical facts. '*Hetty Wesley*' is an exception to this as it was clearly based on the facts of the eldest daughter of an extraordinary family.

Whilst the histories of John and Charles Wesley form part of the fabric of British history with their huge impact on religious faith and peoples' daily lives, far less is known about the rest of their supremely talented family, not least Mehetabel (*Hetty*). Born of a domineering but remote and debt-ridden father, an exceptional mother who treated all her children equally; hatred of and intimidation of the family by the residents of Epworth; a poltergeist; two childhood homes destroyed by arson; an uncle who made and lost a fortune in India and who came into contact with a Cornish pirate; the early death of half her siblings; a lack of food, clothing and warmth; a fabled family fortune; elopement and abandonment; ejection from and ostracism by the family; an unhappy, forced, marriage; the early deaths of all her children, an exceptional poetic ability; ill health and an early death Hetty Wesley's life has all the makings of a Victorian melodrama of the worst sort which would be rejected by publishers.

It is, though, the tale of *Hetty Wesley* and it is all true.

XVII Tales of the Civil War



Q was fascinated by the significant role that Devon and Cornwall played in the English Civil War with the counties being fought over between the Royalists and the Parliaments resulting in the famous battles of Launceston, Lostwithiel, Braddock Down, Stratton Down. This volume contains five tales involving adventure and romance, escapades and an occasional lucky escape:-

- *'Captain Wyvern's Adventures'*, relates the capture and explosive imprisonment of Parliamentarians in the tower of the Lostwithiel Church.
- *'Margery of Lawhibbet'* tells of brother and sister twins and the consequences for both after the brother goes to fight.
- *'Red Velvet'* recounts the outcome of the capture of a Parliamentarian by a female Royalist.
- *'The Copernican Convoy'* retells of the sack of Farnham and the attack on Alton.
- *'The Splendid Spur'* of an Oxford student who finds himself carrying a letter from the King and fights in civil war battles. Although the main characters are fictitious, the historical background is extremely accurate, breathing life into events of almost four hundred years ago.

XVIII Spies!



Q wrote extensively about the Peninsular and Napoleonic Wars. This volume contains four tales involving adventure, escapades and an occasional lucky escape. The tales are not Cornwall - related but once again demonstrate Q's extensive reading, learning and knowledge about Napoleonic Times. The four tales in this volume relate the escapades and adventures of both with the same name, in Spain, Corsica, Portugal and France. Q names them *MacNeill* but occasionally changes the spelling to *McNeil* and are actually fictionalised tales of the espionage activities of *Colquhoun Grant* who is the model for the main tellers of the tales.

This volume contains the following four tales:-

- ' *Two Scouts* ' tells of a lucky escape whilst one pretended to be a surgeon-barber.
- ' *The Cellars of Rueda* ' describe the escape of McNeill/Grant to Paris where he assumes the identity of a recently deceased American and manages to escape to England before returning 18 months later to serve under Wellington again.
- ' *The Rider in the Dawn* ' recounts the activities of McNeill/ Grant in Corsica, the island of Napoleon's birth.
- ' *The Guitar and the Lamp* ' tells of an encounter between both those with the family name *Macneill* (Grant) in Salamanca.

XIX The Westcotes



Demonstrating his fascination with the Napoleonic era, Q tales of *The Westcotes* recounts the lives and experiences of Devon residents who were forced to accommodate French prisoners of war and the daily routine and behaviour of the prisoners, many of whom were used to build Dartmoor prison. Although he places the story in the fictional town of Axcester, the setting is clearly Wincanton which had a large contingent of French prisoners of war imposed on the residents.

This volume contains an annotated edition of *The Westcotes*, a tale of daily life in Devon and Somerset in the times of the Napoleonic Wars and of potential romance between a prisoner and a wealthy gentlewoman as well as extracts of books written about prisoners of war and a summary of the actual lives of the '*parole towns*' prisoners of war in towns and villages in Devon and Cornwall as well as a brief history of Dartmoor Prison which was constructed to accommodate thousands of French prisoners and, of course, a history of Wincanton in the times of the Napoleonic Wars. This volume concludes with the tale of one escapee, Louis Vanhille, who after his escape travelled a complicated route back and forth across England, perhaps to drum up support for a mass uprising of the detained men.

XX Harry Revel



Q wrote many tales of adventure about the Peninsular and Napoleonic Wars many of which are included in other volumes in these series:- ‘ *The Two Scouts* ’, ‘ *The Cellars of Rueda* ’, ‘ *The Rider in The Dawn* ’

In this volume, Q tells of an abandoned child, ‘ *Harry Revel* ’, growing up in a foundlings’ hospital in Plymouth under the motherly care of the institution’s matron, his subsequent apprenticeship to a chimney sweep, despite his desire to become a soldier, and his escape to the Peninsular Wars to escape being falsely accused of murder. The story then progresses rapidly and include vivid descriptions of battles of the Peninsular War and of many of the real life generals serving under Wellington. Whilst the main character is fictitious the story’s backgrounds are of real places and events and breathe life into the history of the Peninsular Wars.

This volume contains a concise summary of the major events of the above war that are pertinent to the story and the story itself, ‘ *Harry Revel* ’ with period illustrations, sketches and paintings and is annotated to indicate the historical background to a very exciting novel.