

O.C.S. Winter Festival, Newquay, 9.11.2013

Pur lowen ov-vy dhe vos omma hedhyu yn Towan Porth Lystri, rag Goel Gwav an Kowethasow Kernow Goth hag yma dh'eseli an bagas-ma, an pympes ha peswar ugens penn-bloedh. Ynwedh, res yw dhymm ri keslowena dhedha adro igeryans an gwithti omma hag yma whans dhymm dhe leverel 'Chons da' dheugh- hwi oll gans an gwithti ha'ga bagas yn termyn a dheu.

I am very happy to be here today for the Winter Festival of the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies and the 85th birthday of the Newquay branch. I also want to congratulate them on opening a museum here and wish them every success with it and the future of their branch.

The motto of the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies is 'Gather ye the fragments that are left, that nothing be lost'. This motto has never been more important to our future and the preservation of our way of life than now. The government has decided that Kernow, as with other places, has to build more houses on a vast scale and I am not sure who their future owners will be; probably NOT starter homes for young Cornish people, but probably the houses will be for retirees and second home owners, who want a little 'pad' in the West. As an Old Cornwall Society, we may not be able to stop this, but we can make sure that these houses blend in with our Cornish environment and more importantly are suitably named.

As you drive into the centre of Truro from Chiverton Cross, one's eyes are assaulted by a hoarding from Taylor Wimpey, announcing a new housing site called Woodleigh Grange. This is on the old site of Richard Lander school, named after a Cornish explorer. Woodleigh Grange. It immediately smacks of England and some place in Surrey where Penelope Keith would live 'To the Manor Born'. In schools, teachers are told to teach the history of their town, their environment, so that their children understand a 'sense of place'. If I said to you, I have a friend who was born at place called Kangaroo Flat, in Wallaby Avenue, you would know immediately in which country he lives. What understanding are the children going to get from 'Woodleigh Grange'? Nothing Cornish, that's for sure. The name should reflect the topography of the place. Concerning Woodleigh Grange, there is no wood there, 'grange' is a French word and 'leigh' is Old English, thus a name not suitable for its environment. The site lies in Trehaverne Ward, (in Cornish, the Farm of Summer Ploughed Land), in the city of Truro meaning Three Turbulent Rivers and is surrounded by ancient places named in the Cornish Language.

This idea of naming places in an inappropriate way is not confined to Woodleigh Grange, Truro. In the east of Cornwall, outside Saltash, Broadmoor Farm has been sold for development and is going to be a housing estate called Garden Village. There's no garden and no village - yet! This site is immediately surrounded by ancient hamlets named in the Cornish Language. Trematon, meaning Tre Myghtern, the home of the king, built in 1086 by William the Conqueror who had the sense not to annoy the locals by naming it in the Cornish language. He wanted a peaceful country. Other names are Botus Fleming, the dwelling of the Fleming, Trehan, which is Tre byghan, the little homestead, Carkeel, carrick ughel, meaning high rock and yes, it is in one of the highest places in the area, the name follows the

topography. In St. Agnes, there was a similar problem with a Taylor Wimpey housing site named 'Drover's Way'. Now in Cornwall, we don't do a lot of droving of animals. For a start most of the landscape does not lend itself to droving, being hilly, except perhaps up Week St. Mary way, where they had flatter agricultural land and large sheep markets, but I don't think St. Agnes was 'big' on droving! I understand that this Taylor Wimpey project name has been resolved and now has a more suitable name, albeit in English. They explained that Drover's Way was only a working name, but as far as I am concerned, that is the thin end of the wedge. If you don't complain, you will be stuck with it.

As you can see, we have a major problem going on. It is up to us to write and complain about things we see happening in our towns, things that would change its Cornishness, its distinctiveness. As Grand Bard, I wrote to complain about the name Woodleigh Grange and had a courteous reply. I quote from the letter: "When choosing a name for a new development, we consider many factors, but in this instance we failed to take into consideration the desire for a Cornish name for the site and for this I apologise- it was never our intention to offend the people of Cornwall." This lady writes that they failed 'in this instance' but she seems to forget the Drover's Way incident, so be vigilant as they are obviously making a habit of it. Personally, I think there should be a Cornish bye law which states that names of places should have a relevant meaning to the place being named. We don't want to end up with a street named 'Mediterranean View' when that is not possible, or witness again a name change like Penhallick being renamed Heartlands.

So besides having your Motto 'Gather ye the fragments that are left, that nothing be lost', I would like to add, 'Guard all things which are distinctively Cornish, so they might not be eroded, changed, then lost'. Let NOT this happen on OUR watch.

Good luck with all your endeavours today and in the future. I hope the day will be a tremendous success.

KERNOW BYS VYKKEN

Steren Mor
Bardh Meur Kernow

Maureen Fuller
Grand Bard of Cornwall