

# A Glimpse of Smuggling

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The smuggling trade through Norway House was run on a financially sound basis with two families in Guernsey. The enterprise was clearly designed to take advantage of the Early Charters held by Guernsey which exempted her from paying revenue to British Customs. When George III found himself short of revenue during the Napoleonic Wars, he renewed efforts to impose Customs and Excise officers on Guernsey. Relying on their Charters, Guernsey refused. In 1767 Customs and Excise managed to attain a precarious foothold in Jersey and Guernsey. But they were later routed, in fact 1775 became known as the Golden age of smuggling.

The families who shared the enterprise with Norway House, the Priaux and the Tupper (related to Victor Hugo), lived overlooking St. Peter Port where many of the vaults were under their command.

Now came the discovery of the subtle improvement in flavour of wines and spirits matured in the caves under the climate of Guernsey. This led to the opening of a regular and facile route between that Channel Island and Cornwall.

The Priaux traded directly with Roscoff: the Norways then traded directly with Guernsey. As a precedent, the trafficking between Lanlivery and Guernsey, run on successful business lines, may reveal a glimpse "as the gentlemen go by."

A cargo of brandy cost £1500 in Guernsey, and sold in England for £3000. A gallon cost 3/3 smuggled, but 5/4 over a counter.

When the ancestral home in a parish provided the finance, captain and crew were never lacking. On the word Captain would hire a boat £150, also £100 to pay 4 crewmen £25 each. Then £1 per tub was banked to cover expenses.

Even before landing the galley was recognised by knowing men and women on farms on the cliffs, especially one farm overlooking Polmear. On nearing the entrance to Fowey harbour, the cutter drew in towards the small bay. Here two deep steps have been cut into the rock face providing a smuggler, loaded with a tub means to make his way to the long tunnel in the south cliff which led under fields to the farmhouse above. The tunnel opened in the dairy. From the farm a field path led with all appearance of innocence, down to the roadway, where stood conveniently, the-Ship Inn.

If the way were clear to slip into the harbour, signals having been exchanged as to "strangers" being about, rowers took their cargo up the river. The goods weighed several tons. To compete with the shallow river, at the first creek smugglers transferred their cargo to barges. Word went swiftly round. Farmers were waiting at many creeks upstream. After dark goods were unloaded at short quays. Nightfall was the favoured time for landings. On drawing up to the quay the Captain landed

and took his stance. Beside him stood a man with a lantern, his back to the wind. All was quiet and orderly. The men were bonded by trust and there were no loafers nor drunkards among them. That firmest of all bonds, a common enemy, held them. A joke which scored off the Excise men was greeted with high glee. The farmer was heard with relish whose wife's quick wits won when she heard the Revenue men approach: she pulled the pins from her hair, stood it on end, rolled her eyes and gibbered. The Excise men took one look and fled, leaving her seated on a tub of brandy!

Smuggling called for men who were athletic and muscular, with presence of mind and who welcomed risks. The Cornish, being Celtic, had that innate romanticism and were acknowledged in the smuggling world for their lack of viciousness and brutality. During summer months miners often formed part of the crew. To travel over to Guernsey or even Roscoff, would have provided the essentials their way of life lacked.

With the assured protection from families of standing as here, the 19 farmers on the estate soon showed a reckless daring. Indeed Squire as J.P., M.P. was conversant with every form of rescue. In 1788 Capt. John Carter, the widely heralded "King of Prussia," was sheltered by Lanlivery though £300 was offered for his apprehension. He came to rest with a sorely injured eye. Leeches had failed. A doctor operated. After 6 days the King of Prussia, much relieved, returned to "duties" unapprehended.

Squire Nicholas Kendall of Pelyn in Lanlivery, though the house is Elizabethan, had cellars under the entire house. Although under 2 miles inland, his connections with the Norways soon become unmistakable.

A great uncle of the writer, Osmond Priaux, made many journeys from Guernsey, between 1870 and 1890, staying at Norway house or with his cousin Nicholas Kendall at Pelyn. He recounted how landings took place at nightfall. A landing at Lanlivery quay could amount to 15 tons of goods, tea and spirits. Being essentially a country parish silks were seldom of the cargo.

As word preceded the landings, ponies were loaned or borrowed unknown. A cousin named Barry, aged 95 in 1970 remembered staying with her uncle, Frank Kendall at Lanlivery vicarage in 1885. He would come in to breakfast rumbling with rage. "The horses were left groomed and fed. Now they are out there covered with mud." One morning he came in beaming. There was a tub of brandy in the stable! An old man who lived near Fowey harbour as a boy, told me how his mother spotted a smugglers' cutter unfailingly. He would be sent out to row over with bottles of "lemonade" if accosted, and returned, his bottles well filled with spirits.

Finally there are three sequences that comply with this glimpse of the smuggling world. On 8th of May, 1863 Nicholas Kendall married Clair de Lancey Priaux. When the traffic began to grow, Roscoff with her vaults and cellars was chosen as the port of trade.

In 1973 the Western Morning News reported that "the last remaining Customs Officer was being withdrawn from Guernsey because of shortage of Customs and

Excise in England. They were first sent to Guernsey in 1805 to stamp out smuggling.