

Aussies Cousin Jacks

The 2011 Kernewek Lowender in South Australia's Copper Triangle (May10-15) still claims to be the biggest Cornish Festival in the world and with some of our family in tow it was certainly the biggest logistical exercise we had undertaken for some time. With growing grandchildren it was time for some of them to experience a little of the fruit of their Cornish heritage. Skilled logistician Beryl arranged accommodation for three families, registrations, transport and a thousand other things to make it a time to remember.

The Moonta Street procession had to be a feature. Flourishing a camera in one hand and gathering our Cornish tartans and flags in the other hand we paraded behind the banners of the Cornish Associations and joined the Cousins in the Oggie Oggie Oggie chorus waving all the way to the Moonta oval and Fair.



Marcus, Lorinda and myself arrived first as a kind of family advance party to help with the Spiritual Retreat in the old Moonta Mines Church Hall.

The Retreat, "Praying with the Cornish/Celtic Saints" was the first event on the official Festival programme and extended over Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th. It was all a bit of an experiment to test interest. The initiative may have surprised some with a more secular, commercial interest in the Festival but it went well with twenty enthusiastic participants. As far as timing was concerned, the focus on an often neglected heritage theme, (*eg the Cornish Saints*) took place in an early, appropriate spot and led nicely into the rest of the week's festivity. The change of season had increased the mouse population in the area and the only hic-up we had came when a brave mouse mounted the Communion Table in a desperate attempt to steal the communion bread!!! I think I heard someone whisper, "what would St Piran have done"? Rev Dr Robin Pryor led us and Marcus made some important indigenous connections around a small camp fire. Papers at our Saturday Workshop presented at Wallaroo covered "Celtic/Cornish Prayer and Spirituality" and "Celtic Bridges to the Future". While these presentations may have seemed a little like a "brain fest" to some, another twenty five attended and left with plenty of food for thought and an invitation to explore Cowethas Peran Sans. I had the privilege of preaching at the Moonta "Cathedral" Church and at Yelta in the evening so there was plenty of opportunity for festival ministry in between fresh fish and chips with members at Pt Hughes. .

The biennial CASA History Seminar focused on “The Ingenious Cornish Inventions, Enterprises and Exploits” and presentations were the best ever. Ralph Thomas, a Cornish miner from Pendeen with a crisp Cornish accent entertained us with an amazing array of enterprising, “proper job stories”. Historian Geoffrey Blainey also presented a paper Having been responsible for the church at St Erth Cornwall for twelve months I noted with great interest that one grave that was recognized at Moonta was that of Richard and Jane Hayes. Richard was born at St Erth in 1830.



“West Country Lullaby” on the harp was also well received although as a Welshman he was still recovering from being asked to bear a Cornish banner at the Gorsedd.

Perhaps the heavy showers of rain gave the old mining towns a fresh look but I was left with the impression of a marked improvement in the tidiness and infrastructure of the Copper Triangle. Heritage buildings have been spruced up over the years and with street curbing, lighting and well kept gardens the place looked great.

One of the re-occurring delights of the Festival comes with the unexpected and co-incidental connections you make with people. Marcus met a man from Marazion. Neil met a workmate he had not seen for 25 years and I met a range of past parishioners and another family with my surname. The now polished South Australian Cornish Choir featured at the “Meet the Cornish” evening and in-between plenty of pastie we sang songs like “Lamorna”, “The old Grey Goose” and “Sweet Nightingale.” Professor Graham Aubrey’s



We could mention school children in short pants and braces enjoying traditional street games like hop-scotch and skipping or the favourite old hymns at the closing Moonta Mines church service like, “Come let us all unite and sing”, “We have heard the joyful sound.” or the Metropolitan Male choir. We could mention the Festival of Cornish Films or the increasing number of people decking themselves out in period costumes. We could go on and on but I’m inclined to think we would eventually conclude that “Cousin Jack” in Australia has not been affected by any world or local crisis. In fact the “Jack’s” are standing as tall as ever in the southern antipodes and I suspect that they are already planning for 2013.

Rev E.A.(Ted) Curnow.May 2011

