

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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Gravel Story: A Cliffhanger

The 75 people who attended the April 8 Planning and Zoning Commission hearing on the application to excavate gravel on the Strobel Route 7 property never got a chance to air their views. Reason: the experts and lawyers with first dibs on the meeting raised so many unanswered technical, procedural, and jurisdictional questions that the validity of the application itself was in question. At length P&Z Chairman Bill Lyon called a huddle and the commission members, with consultant Tom McGowan's concurrence, elected to delay the public-input part of the hearing until further notice so they could confer with P&Z attorney Tom Byrne, who was not then in attendance. (The hearing has since been scheduled for May 8, 8 p.m., Town Hall.)

Unhappy parties to the proceedings are in evidence wherever one cares to look: the Strobels themselves, who say they didn't want to get into the gravel business in the first place, just to tidy up the unsightly pit on their property at minimum cost; Peter Stiglin and James Taylor, who see their peaceful country holdings threatened by gravel removal nearby; the other Strobel neighbors, who remember the dust and noise they experienced from 1987 to 1993 during the previous mining operation which laid the site open; and certainly P&Z, which envisions protracted sessions with attendant vitriol

and migraines.

To make matters worse, there were a number of public-notification errors committed which Leonard Blum, attorney for James Taylor, enumerated in detail: a wrong date on a previous hearing notice; the current notice sent out to adjoining landowners a day late; and the lack of a road number in the mandated legal notice. Defective notification, Blum concluded, equals a defective application. He also emphasized the fact that P&Z regulations call for a five-year moratorium after closing down a mining operation before allowing it to reopen.

The Strobels' attorney, Michael Zizka, argued indignantly that a defective hearing notice in no way nullifies the application itself, and that the five-year stipulation does not apply here because the mine was never officially closed.

Blum, in turn, advised the commission to call in the \$40,000 performance bond attached to the Strobel property and have the pit graded off, with top soil replaced, according to the original 1987 permit terms. He further took P&Z to task for allowing this "fiasco" to go on with a continuously faulty application. "It's not fair to these people," he argued, indicating the audience, to have them come out again and again "until the applicant gets it right." But the commission,

which faced another two hours of post-hearing work that evening while "these people" were home in bed, was noticeably short on sympathy. "I do not consider attending hearings to be a hardship," one member stated. "Just part of the democratic process."

—Scoville Soulé

News from CHC

The Cornwall Housing Corporation is considering the feasibility of purchase and renovation (with state or federal aid) of the former Marvelwood Calhoun building to provide ten apartments, for either rent or cooperative ownership, for persons 62 years of age or older.

Answers to last year's Elderly Housing Questionnaire indicated significant interest; however, only three seniors came to the meeting scheduled to discuss the issue. At this time we urge all those who might wish to take advantage of such housing to indicate their interest by calling Ella Clark (672-4817) or Ken Keskinen (672-6486).

Negotiations with Cornwall Castle, Limited, about setbacks and screening on CHC's Valley Road parcel have been successfully concluded, and the parcel is again available for building. A parcel on Pierce Lane is now being leased to Celia and Emmett Dwyer, who expect to build a new home this sum-

-Ken Keskinen

TUESDAY SUNDAY MONDAY WEDNESDAY **THURSDAY** FRIDAY **SATURDAY** Library Hours 2 3 4 Hughes Memorial: May Art Show Nat'l Iron Bank Judy Gafney Preschooler Tues. 4-7, Sat. 9:30-12:30 Cornwall Bridge, Danielle Mailer Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Cornwall: Mon. and Thurs. 2-5, Wed. 2-8, W. Cornwall Merchants Fri. 10-noon and 2-5, Sat. 9-1 Assoc. 10 a.m. Cadwell's (The Cornwall Library now has a copier for public use) 8 Book Fair 8:15 A.M.-3 P.M. Region One 10 11 5 6 Budget Referendum CCS (p.4) Public hearing on Birdseye Book Fair 8:15 A.M.-3 P.M. Kent Singers concert Lasagna Dinner Book Fair 8:15 A.M.-3 P.M. noon-8 p.m. Town Hall CCS PTA 7 P.M. 5 and 6:30 p.m. seatings Brook Bridge on Great Hollow 8 p.m. First CCS (p.4) CCS (p.4) Park & Rec 7:30 P.M. Town Office CCS Library Congregational Church, Road, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Mohawk Ski Lodge (p.4) Judy Gafney Preschooler Agric. Adv. Comm. P&Z special meeting and Washington (p.4) Bd. of Selectmen Story Hour 10 A.M. Library 7:30 P.M. W.C. Firehouse public hearing about gravel 8 р.м. Town Hall mining 8 P.M. Town Hall (p.1) Inland Wetlands 8 P.M. Town Hall 18 MOTHER'S DAY 13 14 Annual Meeting 2 p.m. 17 12 16 Hughes Memorial Library Deadline for all Bd. of Education Down River Race Kent Singers concert Student Art Show Judy Gafney Preschooler CCS Art, Computer & Music 5/13-5/17 CCS (p.4) June Chronicle 5 p.m. CCS Library 11 а.м. (р.4) 4 P.M. Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Events 6-7 p.m. (p.4) St. Andrews Church, CODY. Art Show, Sal Condoluci Bd. of Finance Cornwall Association Town Meeting 7:30 P.M. CCS Kent (p.4) Housatonic River Comm. 4 P.M. Town Hall Paintings, 5/13-6/8 Library 7:30 P.M. CCS Library to vote on budget (p.2) 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 8 p.m. Town Hall followed by Bd. of Fin. meeting Dem. Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall 25 19 20 22 23 24 Rep. Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Judy Gafney Preschooler Covered Bridge HVRHS Board of Ed. Open Grange Meeting Plant Swap 10 A.M. Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Slalom Bace 9 A.M. (p.4) 7 P.M. HVRHS Library 7:30 P.M. Ellsworth Grange Hall 21 CCS parking lot (p.4) Jabberwocky and Jazz Bd. of Selectmen Travelogue: 8 p.m. Town Hall International Schools 5 p.m. UCC (p.4) 7:30 P.M. CCS Library (p.4) 26 29 **IUNE 1** 28 30 31 27 MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVED MEMORIAL DAY Covered Bridge Dance ZBA 8 P.M. Town Office* Judy Gafney Preschooler Open House 2-4 P.M. For Memorial Day schedule **Hughes Memorial Library** Story Hour 10 A.M. Library 6:30 p.m. See Page 4 West Cornwall (p.4) (p.4)

...and Now It's Hingson Hall?

Have you noticed? Cynthia Kirk's pedimental sunflowers that adorn Rumsey Hall seem to be smiling down on a becalmed and happy town. The sale of Rumsey to Andrew T. Hingson—approved by a unanimous voice vote at a town meeting on March 30—appears to be proceeding on schedule. The closing will probably take place in May, with June 3 as a cutoff date. Some work on the building will start soon thereafter.

"I fell in love with Rumsey as I drove by,"

Drew Hingson told the crowded meeting. He fielded a host of questions with quick candor, and even offered personal information not specifically requested. But it was First Selectman Gordon Ridgway who got the laughs. After explaining that the property had been shown to nearly 20 prospects-most of whom were turned away by the peeling paint and crumbling clapboards, or finally turned off when they opened the front door-Ridgway said that after months of advertising and showing, Hingson's was not only the best offer but the only offer: "Mr. Hingson is the market!" Later, asked about Hingson's credit rating, Ridgway said that his credit and references had been checked in at least four states. All reports were excellent. "Never in the history of Cornwall," Ridgway quipped, "has someone had his credit so thoroughly checked before moving into

Drew Hingson has had a varied life-actor, comparative literature teacher, stockbroker, and, more recently, fireplace and chimney mason, real estate developer, and restorer of nearly 100 vintage properties. He has done Greek Revival restorations before, and plans "to celebrate Rumsey's existing exterior with the sole exception of eliminating the unsightly fire escape and possibly developing a rear porch that complements the neo-classical front facade." Inside, he will add the traditional wide stairway off a front hall. "I consider myself fully capable of building new chimneys and fireplaces with my own hands." Upon completion, the building will be his principal residence; his Westport house—also a Hingson restoration—will probably be rented, and his Georgia farm has full-time management.

Ridgway explained that the terms of the sale were unorthodox only because the whole transfer was such a singular event. Hingson will pay \$60,000 of the \$150,000 asking price down, with the town holding a second mortgage until 2006. With interest, total income to the town over a ten-year period will exceed \$200,000.

The shocking moment of silence that followed moderator Rita Quinn's call for the nay vote came as a surprise, since some people had advocated demolishing Rumsey to keep over two acres of good property in town hands, or at least retaining the nearby gym for town use. Ridgway may have de-

fused this vote with some telling numbers: demolition could have cost \$100,000, whereas sale meant \$150,000 to the town and eventually an estimated \$8,000 a year in taxes. As for the gym, the Hingson offer would never have been made without it (no one living in such a house would want a property line a few feet from his bedroom window), and for several reasons—septic, access, parking—the two buildings are a single unit. Hingson did say that he would probably keep the second building as a gym, which the town would be welcome to use when he wasn't using it himself.

Tim Prentice, who is as closely tied to the past and future of Rumsey as anyone else in town, now thinks that "if all goes as Hingson promises, this will be a very happy resolution. He certainly has the skills to fix it up." Prentice was the first to address Hingson at the meeting, not with a question but a warning—it takes at least a generation for any house in Cornwall to become known by a new owner's name.

But Tim could be wrong. This is a unique event. With all the special circumstances, it may be "Hingson Hall" before the man gets a chance to burn his mortgage. —Bob Potter

Cornwall's Budget for 1997

The budget to be presented at the town meeting on May 17 at CCS shows expenditures of \$3,629,096, up 5.1 percent from last year.

The selectmen's budget has been pared by \$26,400; the Board of Education's budget is up by \$21,516, or 1.1 percent. However, proposed capital expenditures have increased by 110 percent, from \$165,210 to \$347,555, because of, among other things, the town's need for a new highway truck and for town-office renovations.

The Board of Finance suggests an increase of ½ mill in the mill rate. If this is approved, property taxes, all other town income, and a transfer from municipal funds will produce enough revenue to balance Cornwall's budget.

—Celia Senzer

Nightwatch

The Youth Group, led by Peter Hammond, had an exciting adventure in New York City on the weekend of April 13–14. We attended an overnight program called Nightwatch at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Our group, sponsored by the UCC, would sleep in their gym, take a tour of the huge cathedral, and visit sights in Manhattan. Eleven Youth Group members and four chaperones went on the trip.

Once in New York, we took a subway to Battery Park and a ferry to Liberty Island. To our disappoint-

ment the Statue was closed and

there was a 45-minute wait to go up to the halfway point. So much for being patriotic! After another subway ride, pizza, and a great basketball game, we started Nightwatch. There was much singing accompanied by guitar, after which a candle-light service was held at the main altar and

then a fabulous demonstration of the huge organ. Everyone was fascinated by the immensity and beauty of the 104-year-old cathedral.

Following a very late night, the lights were flipped on at 7:15 the next morning. We were delighted! After an interesting tour (seeing a 40-foot stained glass window and various memorials to the past) we had a closing service with singing and prayer. We were all sad to leave and wandered throughout the cathedral for awhile.

Our next adventure was at the American Museum of Natural History, visiting the reptiles, whales, and primates as well as the IMAX Theater where we saw a very realistic film about tornadoes, hurricanes, and other violent occurrences.

We all wanted to stay, but we reluctantly drove home. I would like to thank the parents and chaperones for making our awesome trip possible. —Winfield Wilson

Good-bye to Friends

José Machado Calhoun Stephen Z. Meyers John H. Porter

Congratulations

Arnold Weinberg to Carol Elbaum

Land Transfers

Michael Matacchiere Trust to Russell D. Durand and Lorie A. Miller, house and land at 250 Flat Rocks Road for \$140,000.

George and Andrew Kotsaftis to Bruce and Paul Witik and Keith Rondal, 65.8 acres at the Crooked Esses, off Flat Rocks Road, for \$114,000.

Cornwall Housing Corp. to Theodore M. and Donna B. Larson, house at 42 Jewell Street for \$95,000.

Town Wins Sawmill Case

The long legal tangle over sawmills in town seems finally to be unsnarled. On March 5, the state's Appellate Court released a unanimous decision in support of the town's sawmill regulation, finding that the Planning and Zoning Commission had acted in accordance with the law.

Six and a half years ago, Larry Stevens applied to operate a sawmill on Cream Hill. Realizing that technological advances had made portable saws less noisy and that the existing regulation had only one requirement, a 500-foot setback, the commission decided a revision was needed. Eventually an amended regulation, reducing the setback to

200 feet but adding many detailed requirements, such as buffers of trees, compliance with health-district decibel

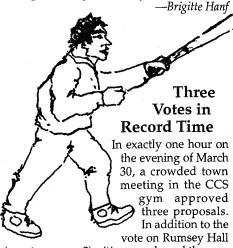
ratings, limitation of hours and vehicles used, and access-road safety, was approved

after public hearings.

Opponents Toby and Sally Cole and Lois Redington appealed to the courts both this new regulation and the permit P&Z had granted to Larry Stevens. The legal procedures were too lengthy to list here, but the money spent by the town reached a grand –Ginny Potter total of \$23,142.

Dynamic Duo at the Library

Vim, vigor, and vitality (or, as my German grandfather used to say, "wim, wigor, and witality") best sums up the combination of Cindy Kirk's paintings and Skip Hunt's wooden figures, the new exhibit at the Cornwall Library. Big paintings, little figures, all shaped from humor and good cheer. Hers are mostly about the private life of inanimate objects, travel, going places, three-dimensional mementos of two-dimensional memories. His are super-animated animals, vivid birds stalking on stilt legs, an endearing snake trying to live up to its menacing reputation and failing miserably. Until May 11.

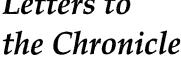


(see story, page 2), citizens endorsed the purchase of approximately half an acre of land to the south (about 75 feet) and east (about 25 feet) of the Library/Town Office parcel from Marcia Shaw for \$13,000. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway explained that the purchase was not for expansion of town offices at the present time, although that, of course, might be an option at some future date as would be additional library space. A more urgent need is for expansion of the septic system, since the present property line runs only about 25 feet to the south.

The meeting also approved the addition of two alternates to the Park and Recreation Commission. Most town boards and commissions now have alternates, and the commission felt the change would greatly facilitate its operations. -Bob Potter

Selectmen Dispose, Propose

At their regular meeting on April 15, the Board of Selectmen announced an end to a ten-year relationship with Raymond "Bucky" Whitney, whom the town has been supporting in a mobile home on Lake Road. Whitney has secured both a "sponsor" and Letters to the Chronicle



TO MINE...

It's about time Cornwall heard the truth about the famous four-acre gravel pit we now own. It is not visible from Route 7 or the river. It was operated from 1985 to 1993, when its previous owners went into bankruptcy. We battled continuously to have more controls placed on the project. Neither James Taylor, nor the HVA, nor the Appalachian Trail Club offered any help or showed any great concern over that gravel op-

We finally bought the property at public auction in December 1994. Our newly remodeled home is close to the pit. Strangely, Mr. Taylor, having the whole 100+ acre farm to choose from moved his caretaker's house to the knoll overlooking the pit! That's when the complaints

We approached Planning and Zoning in April 1995, without legal counsel, for permission and guidance to reconstruct the pit area. Our original proposal was to remove a small amount of material, then regrade and reseed. We intended to blend it in with the adjoining land, and with minimal additional expense make an attractive piece of property. It could have been completed by the fall of 1995, but Peter Stiglin insisted that we get a gravel mining permit.

Each delaying tactic by James Taylor and Peter Stiglin has added considerable legal and engineering costs to our plans, making it impossible for us to just clean up the existing mess without recouping the expenses involved in meeting the additional requirements for a Special Permit to Mine Gravel.

—Ken and Jackie Strobel

...OR NOT TO MINE

I would like to expand upon the article appearing in your April 1996 issue, To Mine or Not to Mine.

The application by FSB Associates (the Strobels) currently before our P&Z is for a 12.25-acre site in the heart of the Housatonic River Valley, just opposite the second longest still-pristine stretch of the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail. It sits atop the recharge zone of a large aquifer which will likely be Cornwall's main source of fresh water 50 years hence.

The opinion that "restoration" of the site is FSB's goal is contradicted by the fact that at least two offers have been made to the company which would have allowed them to recoup their investment, with a small profit, while restoring the site. One was rejected, one was never responded to.

Finally, the larger issue before the commission is not "should gravel mining be allowed in Cornwall" but, rather, should gravel mining be allowed in this fragile area of an industrial/residential zone. There are currently three other gravel mines which have been in operation in Cornwall for many years. None of our neighboring four towns along the Housatonic River allows gravel mining at all. Even New Milford has now banned it, after learning their lesson the

The opposition has nothing against gravel mining. I have nothing against heart surgery either. But I'd want to look long and hard at the potential risks, benefits, and necessity before letting someone cut into my heart. No less can be asked of us in behalf of the heart of this amazingly beautiful valley enjoyed by all.

–Peter Stiglin

the promise of a job in a pottery shop in Maine. In a formal agreement signed April 4, Whitney agreed to relinquish all claims against the town and expects to seek no further assistance. The arrangements, most of which were worked out by Selectman Earl Brecher, call for the town to now spend \$12,000 to settle Whitney in Maine. The sum of \$10,000 will form a down payment on a trailer and land in Maine, and will not go directly to Whitney; \$2,000 will cover moving and related expenses.

"We looked at several options," said First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, "including a rent supplement and an apartment at Kugeman Village. Maine seems to be the best solution-not quick and easy, but one with a long-term chance of success. It will end the trailer saga." (Incidentally, the town now has a 50x12-foot mobile home for sale at a good

price. Interested? Call the Town Office for a showing.)

In other business, the selectmen added two items to the annual Budget Meeting scheduled for 7:30 P.M. on May 17 at CCS:

- The selectmen wish to acquire Foote Fields, to the south of Route 4 heading west from Cornwall Plains. When the land was given by the Foote family to Marvelwood School some years ago, a provision in the deed called for the two playing fields to revert to the Footes should Marvelwood ever cease to use them. That time has come: the Footes now offer the land to the town at no cost, and CCS will welcome the space to host boys' and girls' games simultaneously.
- The town wishes to buy approximately four acres adjoining the landfill, which is now formally closed but continues to leach (continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3) onto neighboring property. This buffer would extend from the Town Garage entrance to the rear of the transfer station par-–Bob Potter

Events & Announcements

Memorial Day Schedule: Activities begin at 9:15 A.M. with a traditional observance at the North Cornwall Cemetery led by Charles Gold. Participants often bring flowers to decorate veterans' graves. At 10 A.M. the Seamen's Memorial Service will be held at the Covered Bridge. -6239

The annual parade and ceremony on the Village Green will start at 11 A.M. The parade will form on Hubbard Field at 10:30 A.M. In the event of bad weather, the program will be

shifted to the CCS gym.

Directly following the ceremony, the Memorial Day Carnival will be held on the grounds of the United Church of Christ. Hosted by the church and the Cornwall Child Center, the carnival will offer entertainment, games, and food for all.

From 10:30 a.m. to 2 P.M. the Cornwall Historical Society on Pine Street will feature an exhibit, Rumsey Hall. In wall call flow.

Hughes Memorial Library: The Board of Directors announces that all are welcome to attend the annual meeting on May 14 at 2 P.M. at the library on Lower River Road in West Cornwall.

There will also be an open house at the library on Saturday, June 1, 2-4 р.м., at which the newly refurbished north wing will be dedicated to the memory of Dutch and Myrtle Yutzler.

Community Calendar: Planners of community events can now check with Lisa Lansing at the Treasurer's Office (672-2707) in order to avoid conflicts with other events. Lisa will have the calendar in her office computer so a drop-in or a call during the day can assure a conflict-free listing.

Travelogue: On May 24 at 7:30 in the CCS library, Denis and Barbara Jean Curtiss will talk about their experiences working in international schools in Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Greece. This event is sponsored by Park & Rec.

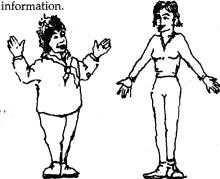
Grammar Tip

Like governs nouns and pronouns; use as before phrases and clauses, e.g.: "The Chronicle, like all nonprofit publications, needs regular contributions, as you well know." Valley-girl usage differs: like may be injected at any point to replace *uh*, e.g.: "Our treasurer, Moneybags, is, like, going to have a cow if our revenues don't keep up with our expenses." As like!

☐ Mail the Chronicle to the out-of-town address above: \$10.

Lasagna Dinner: A dinner will be held Sunday, May 5, at Mohawk Ski Lodge to benefit Dan Gracey, who was severely injured in a logging accident in January. Tickets must be purchased in advance for the 5 P.M. or 6:30 seatings. The cost is \$8 for adults, \$4 for children under 16, and \$20 for a family (two adults and children). Tickets may be purchased at various places around town or by calling Cheryl Evans (672-0094) or Barbara Yohe (672-0047).

Kent Singers Go French: The Kent Singers, featuring Cornwall soloists Susan Fox and Marie Prentice, will present a program of French music on Saturday, May 11, at 8 P.M. at the First Congregational Church in Washington, and on Sunday, May 12, at 4 P.M. at St. Andrew's Church in Kent. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. Call 672-6261 for



From CCS: The annual student art show will be held during the week of May 13-17 at the school. Student art will be on display all week and visitors are welcome. On Tuesday, May 14, at 6 P.M. there will be an art show opening and computer open house, followed at 7 P.M. by a musical performance.

There are more Cornwall hats for sale. In two colors, navy and maroon, they are \$10.

There will be a Book Fair at the school on May 8, 9, and 10, at 8:15 A.M.-3 P.M.

Covered Bridge Dance: On Sunday, May 26, rain or shine, the Fire Department will sponsor the fifth annual Bridge Dance in West Cornwall. Proceeds will fund equipment and training for firefighters.

The Cristina Dawn band from Nashville will play country music from 6:30 P.M. Food

service will begin shortly after 5.

Parking on the west (Sharon) side of the river will be at the Northeast Utilities lot north of the bridge, and on the east side at the Firehouse and CCS. Shuttle buses will run from parking areas to the festivities start-

Advance tickets are \$5 for adults, \$4 for 10-to-16-year-olds (\$7 and \$5 at the gate). Kids under 10 are free with an adult. For more information call 672-6313 or 672-4959.

Congratulations to the CCS sixth-graders on their recent Cornwall Chronicle Jr. This edition is a full ten pages, complete with news, illustrations, and a puzzle. Well done!

River Races: The annual Down River Race sponsored by the Housatonic Area Canoe and Kayak Squad will take place on Saturday, May 18, at 11 а.м. The race starts in Falls Village opposite the hydro plant and ends at Housatonic Meadows in Cornwall Bridge. Entry fees will benefit the Sharon Audubon Center. Registration is 9-10:30 A.M. the day of the race and is open to recreational and experienced racers alike. For more information, call Bill Tingley at 364-5321.

The Covered Bridge Slalom Race will be held on Sunday, May 19, at 9 A.M. in West Cornwall. Advance registration is required. For information or to register, call Barbara Kingsborough at (914) 763-6253. Entry blanks are also available at Clarke Outdoors, 672-6365.

Swap Till You Drop at the annual plant swap at 10 A.м. on Saturday, May 25, at the CCS parking lot. Call 672-4815 or 672-0094

Jabberwocky and Jazz, a program of light verse read by Tom Brokaw, Nick Jacobs, Ken Keskinen, and others, and jazz by the Peter McEachern-Mario Pavone Quartet will take place on Sunday, May 19 at 5 P.M. at the United Church of Christ. There will be a sandwich smorgasbord in the Parish House following the program. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$5 for children under 12. Proceeds will fund the third annual June trip to Cornwall by the Jubilee School, the church's partner school in inner-city Philadelphia. Advance payment is strongly suggested as seating is limited; call the church office (672-6840) or 672-6486 for information or to reserve places.

Houses for Sale: That is, houses for bluebirds and bats, built by members of Cub Scout Pack 15, are for sale at \$10 and \$15 respectively. Examples are on display at local stores. To order a house, ask any Cub Scout or phone Craig Robinson (672-4936) or Larry Stevens (672-6065).

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

ILLUSTRATIONS Tom Bevans

MAY EDITORS

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Ginny & Bob Potter Denise Bate

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