

## From Little Acorns : WG's Poldark Compulsion

Though for seventy long years WG gave liberally and unstintingly of himself in his books, when it came to talking about himself or his work he was always more circumspect and occasionally self-contradictory.

*I have ... written a great many novels, and must through them have surely revealed a fair amount of my own nature and personal feelings. Let that suffice*

he suggested in *Memoirs*.<sup>1</sup> Art, not artist. Why seek more? But such is the fascination that the Poldark saga holds for so many devoted readers and viewers around the world that peripheral questions inevitably arise concerning, for instance, where the motivation to write first came from, why that particular period and location, why those names, on whom are the characters based, why so many books at such irregular intervals over so long a stretch of time, what outside influences informed their planning and writing and so on. And, circumspect or not, WG has touched through the years on all these questions. So:

### (1) Seed

In June 1976, he told an audience in Truro:

*It is impossible to say at this late stage where the original inspiration of the [Poldark] story came from ... It's probably true that the first half of Ross Poldark had some of its origins in novels I had read ... but about half way through ... a change comes over the book – not perceptible to the reader, I'm sure, but very perceptible to the writer; and thence-forward I acknowledge no derivation for something which seemed to spring totally out of my own creative guts.<sup>2</sup>*

Hmmm. Vague and insubstantial. But then, a little over a year later, those unnamed "novels I had read" became something more specific:

*When I was in my late teens I read a short story – hardly more than an anecdote – by the German writer, Hermann*

*Sudermann, about a beautiful woman who made a wrong decision in her youth, which ruined the lives of the two men who loved her. This remained in my mind and would not be banished; years later that seed came to life in the story of Ross Poldark, his cousin [Francis] and Elizabeth Chynoweth, whom they both wished to marry.*<sup>3</sup>

Dramatist and novelist Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928) was a prolific journalist turned author perhaps best remembered now for his 1893 play *Heimat (Homeland)* and if WG's comment above is taken at face value, the likeliest candidate among his numerous short stories to fit the bill is *La Donna e Mobile* (something like *The Inconstant Woman*) from *Im Zwielficht: Zwanglose Geschichten (In The Twilight: Casual Stories)* first published circa 1886 (the British Library's copy, dated 1891, is from the book's ninth edition). The title was published in English translation in 1928<sup>4</sup> (the year of its author's death) which chimes very closely with the time frame ("in my late teens") of WG's recollection. The story, which recounts a train journey from Elm to Berlin, is reproduced in full in [IN PROFILE \(PART TWO\)](#), pages 150-153.

The dilemma of being required to choose between two men and two ways of life faced by Rosa in Sudermann's tale is closely mirrored by that of Elizabeth in the opening pages of *Ross Poldark*. Clearly WG's sprawling saga drew as it developed from much more than this one slight story. Nonetheless, his identification, some fifty years on from first reading it, of its importance as a first seed is persuasive. Once planted into the fertile soil of his imagination circa 1928, it not only sprouted, albeit slowly, to flower first in 1945, but was still producing (*Bella Poldark*, 2002) more than seventy years on.

## **(2) Place and Period**

The first is straightforward enough: though born and raised in Lancashire, WG had moved to Cornwall with his parents in 1925

*at an impressionable age, and immediately took a tremendous liking to the county ... For a number of years I remained an outsider, a visitor in temperament if not in fact [but] as*

*time passed I slowly came to know the Cornish better, and I suppose they came to know me. And a sort of affinity – at least I believe it to be an affinity – grew up.<sup>6</sup>*

By 1948, indeed, he confided to a Plymouth audience that

*now [I] sometimes [feel] ... more Cornish than the Cornish.<sup>7</sup>*

Natural enough, then, that he would wish to tell his story about and set his story among them. But, as to period, why hark back 150 years to the late 18th century? By the end of WWII, he had already published three novels (*Into the Fog*, *Strangers Meeting* and *The Forgotten Story*) set in a Cornwall either contemporaneous (the first two) or of the then-recent past and would eventually produce two more (*The Grove of Eagles* and *The Ugly Sister*) set in the 16th and 19th centuries respectively. But, concerning his *magnum opus*:

*What, I believe, drew me to that particular period [i.e. the late 18th century] was a realisation that it held so much which has since been lost: the mines that have now gone – almost; the fishery that has now gone; the excessive parliamentary representation that has now gone; the importance of Truro as a county town in which many of the gentry had their town houses – and obviously all the other aspects of life then: the smuggling, the beach-watching for wrecks, the poverty, the rise of Wesleyism, the beginning of banking as we now know it; and the new-rich mercantile families that grew up round smelting and the foundries.<sup>8</sup>*

*In the 18th century, Cornwall ... loomed far more importantly in the scheme of things than it does today. [It] returned 44 members to Parliament; there was also the productivity of its tin and copper mines and its strategic position in times of war. Society, too, in the county was much more self-contained and active.<sup>9</sup>*

So, a daunting choice necessitating copious, multi-faceted research involving miles of travel, mountains of correspondence and long months of

study – *every novelist should know and thoroughly understand what he is writing about*,<sup>10</sup> he said – but the reward the reimagining of a bygone era chosen for its lustre, its vigour, its lost majesty, but also for the sharp contrast between the misery and hardship imposed by poverty and want existing cheek by jowl with affluence and privilege – grist enough, surely, for any storyteller's mill.

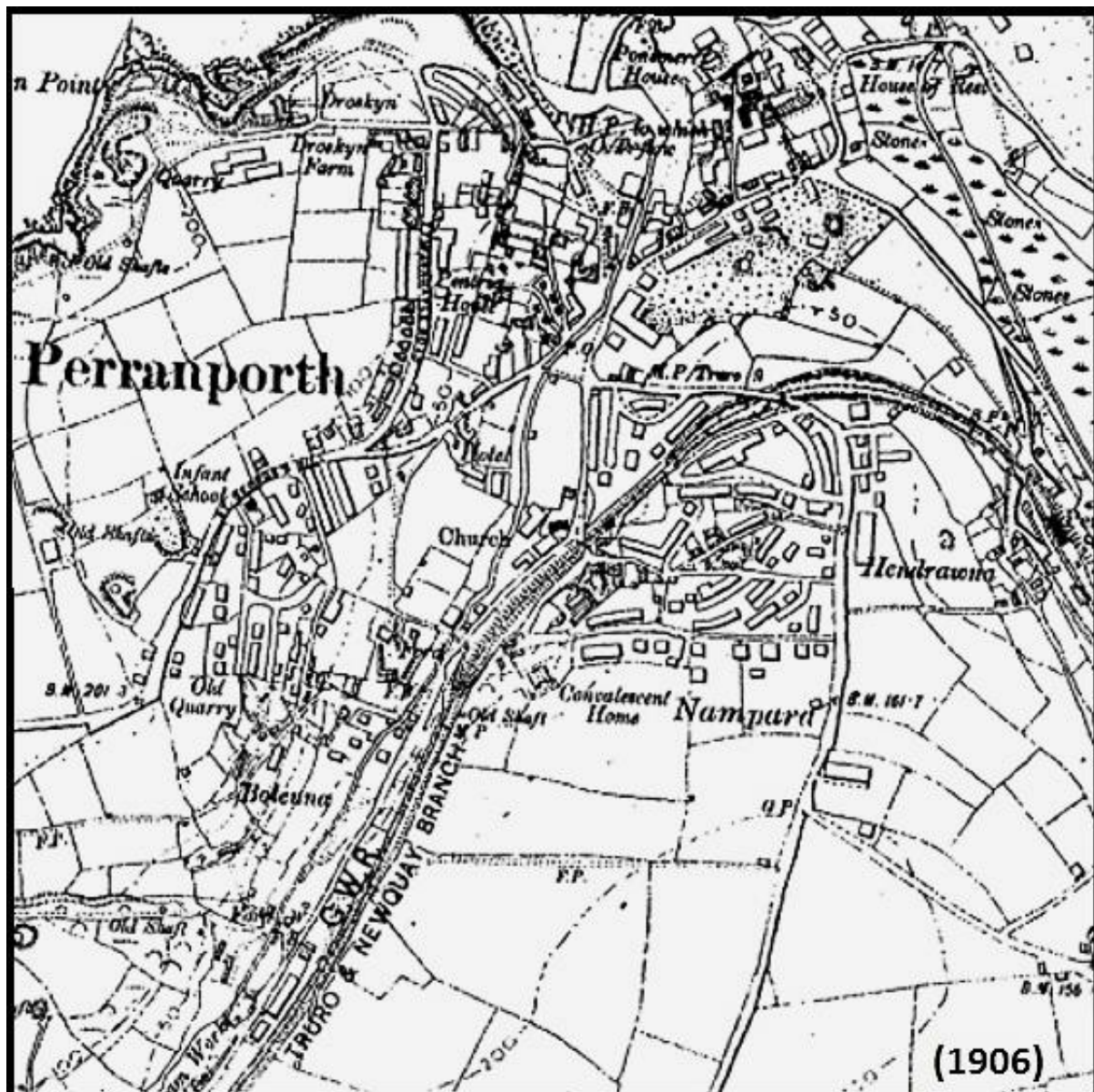
### **(3) Names**

In this case accounts are both consistent and familiar: the surname of young WG's "best friend", a non-smoking, non-drinking, strict Wesleyan village chemist called Ridley Polgreen<sup>11</sup> prompted Poldark, a name imaginary but easily imagined not so. Both Demelza and Warleggan are Cornish hamlets (see page six), located half a dozen miles either side of Bodmin. Nampara and Hendrawna bordered old Perranporth, Clowance, near Helston, is the historic family home of the St Aubyns and Cuby a small parish near St Austell.<sup>12</sup> Will Nanfan, Hugh Bodrugan, Charlie Baragwanath, Nick Vigus, Kerenhappuch Smith and Ezekiel Scawen are all examples of names unearthed by WG during his extensive reading of Cornish history.<sup>13</sup> But though characters tend to be born before being christened – Ross, Demelza and all the Warleggans certainly were – such is not always the case. For sometimes, WG tells us,

*a name comes into one's mind before there is a character attached to it at all. Such a one is Tholly Tregirls [Tregirls another Bodmin Moor hamlet] who appears for the first time in The Black Moon. The name existed in my mind for several years before it began to take on the rudiments of the character who finally emerged.*<sup>14</sup>

### **(4) Characters**

WG has often confirmed what anyone might well surmise – that his characters are seldom drawn slavishly from life but are more likely to comprise, rather, an unparsable amalgam of traits and characteristics observed through a lifetime's study of his fellow man.<sup>15</sup> Which is not to say that family, friends, acquaintances or chance-met strangers may not provide the raw template on which he builds. It is well documented that a



Above: a map of Perranporth in 1906 showing adjoining hamlets Nampara and Hendrawna, since swallowed up by the town.

Next page: Demelza is a small community lying just to the north of Goss Moor National Nature Reserve. Warleggan, on the southern edge of Bodmin Moor, consists of about a dozen houses, a church and a chapel. WG wrote in *Poldark's Cornwall*:

*The last time I was there was in mid-June* [of 1982, with his wife, as the page from St Bartholomew's visitors' book confirms]. *A cold south-easterly wind was blowing wet fog over everything, and I would not have fancied straying more than twenty yards from any beaten track...*





4th June 82	S Woolley	Walthamstow, Essex.	
4th June 82	M. Bécune	18 Forde Park Newton Abbot	a lovely and peaceful church.
		Devon	
4.6.82	Barbara Beane	18 Forde Park Newton Abbot.	A step back into history
"	James "	" " " " "	peaceful
5.6.82	Peg Osborne	London SW15	
6.6.82.	J+C Beeton.	Newcastle upon Tyne.	
6.6.82	J.L. HUSSEY.	Sutton Scotney W. in Dorset.	
6.6.82	E. An. Seddell	Sutton Scotney W. in Dorset.	
6-6-82	Simon Kerpster	Liskeard, Cornwall	!
6-6-82	Nick Brown	Liskeard, Cornwall	!
7-6-82.	MARYKES GROSS	PROBUS, CORNWALL.	
7.6.82	J+C HOWARTH.	Embrey, Skipton N. Yorks.	
7-6-82	De H. Pany	Piddleham Vicarage, Dorchester	
9-6-82.	MRS A. Sains	Tallerton Notts	
10.6.82	J + 2 family	EXETER	
10/6/82	Sarah Hardie	London	
10/6/82	Kieron Lynch	London SW5.	
10/6/82	Winston Graham	Swanage	
10/6/82	Jean M Graham	Sussex	
11/6/82	John U. dell	MIDHURST SX	
11/6/82	RALPH. UDELL	COCKING SX	
12th	Victoria	Wickham House Lanchester	
13/6/82	Siegelmann	Munich Germany	
13/6			
14-			
14			

The steady trickle of visitors to this obscure country church attests to the popularity of *Poldark*



CHEAP AND EXPEDITIOUS TRAVELLING.

*Every Day, (Sundays excepted),*

TO AND FROM LONDON AND REDRUTH IN 21 HOURS,

BY THAT VERY SUPERIOR FAST OMNIBUS,

**THE "FAIRY,"**

**W**HICH leaves Plymouth on the arrival of the London Train in the Morning and arrives in time for the Evening Mail Train.

The FAIRY starts from the New Market Inn, Bedford Inn, and Globe Hotel, *Plymouth*, at Seven o'clock in the Morning; Prince George Hotel, *Stonehouse*, ten minutes after Seven; Royal Hotel and Fountain Inn, *Devonport*, at half-past Seven; New Inn, *Torpoint*, at Eight; London Inn, *Liskeard*, at half-past Ten; Talbot Hotel, *Lostwithiel*, twenty minutes before One; Kellow's Omnibus Office, *St. Austell*, at half-past Two; White Hart Inn, *Truro*, at half-past Four; arriving at the Red Lion Inn, *Redruth*, at Six in the Evening.

The FAIRY leaves the Red Lion Inn, *Redruth*, at half-past Six o'clock in the Morning; White Hart Inn, *Truro*, at Eight; Kellow's Omnibus Office, *St. Austell*, at Ten; Talbot Hotel, *Lostwithiel*, at half-past Eleven; London Inn, *Liskeard*, at Two in the Afternoon; New Inn, *Torpoint*, at half-past Four; Royal Hotel and Fountain Inn, *Devonport*, at a quarter before Five; Prince George Hotel, *Stonehouse*, at ten minutes before Five; arriving at the Globe Hotel, Bedford Inn, and New Market Inn, *Plymouth*, at Five in the Evening.

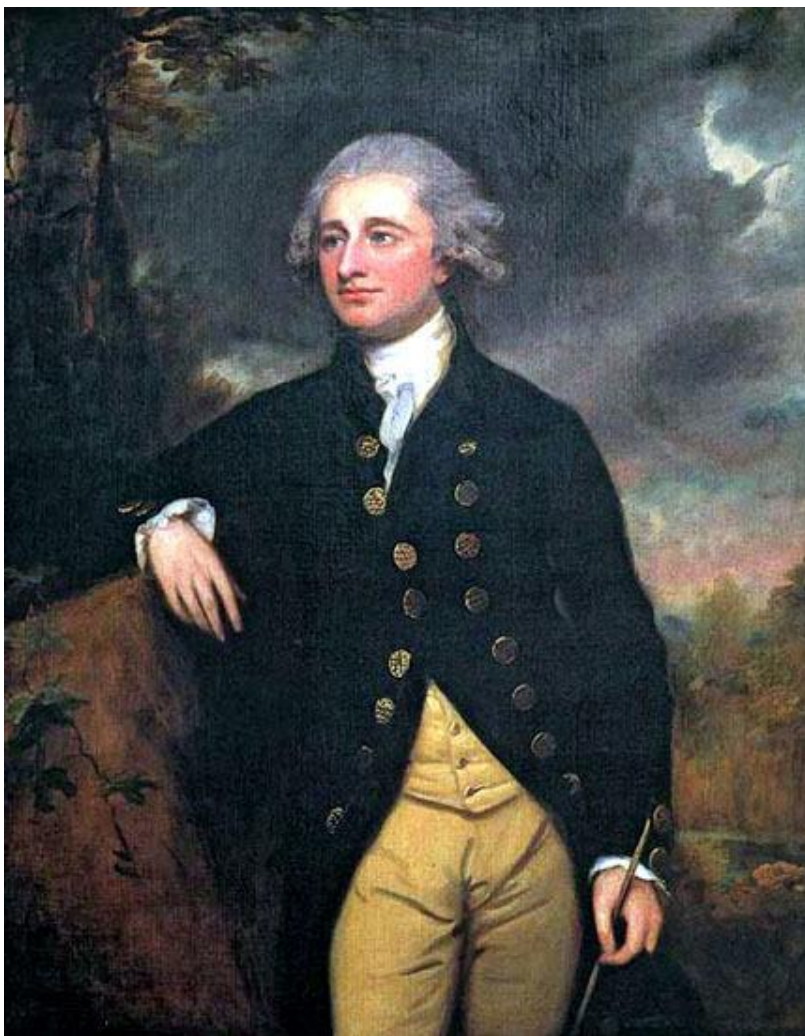
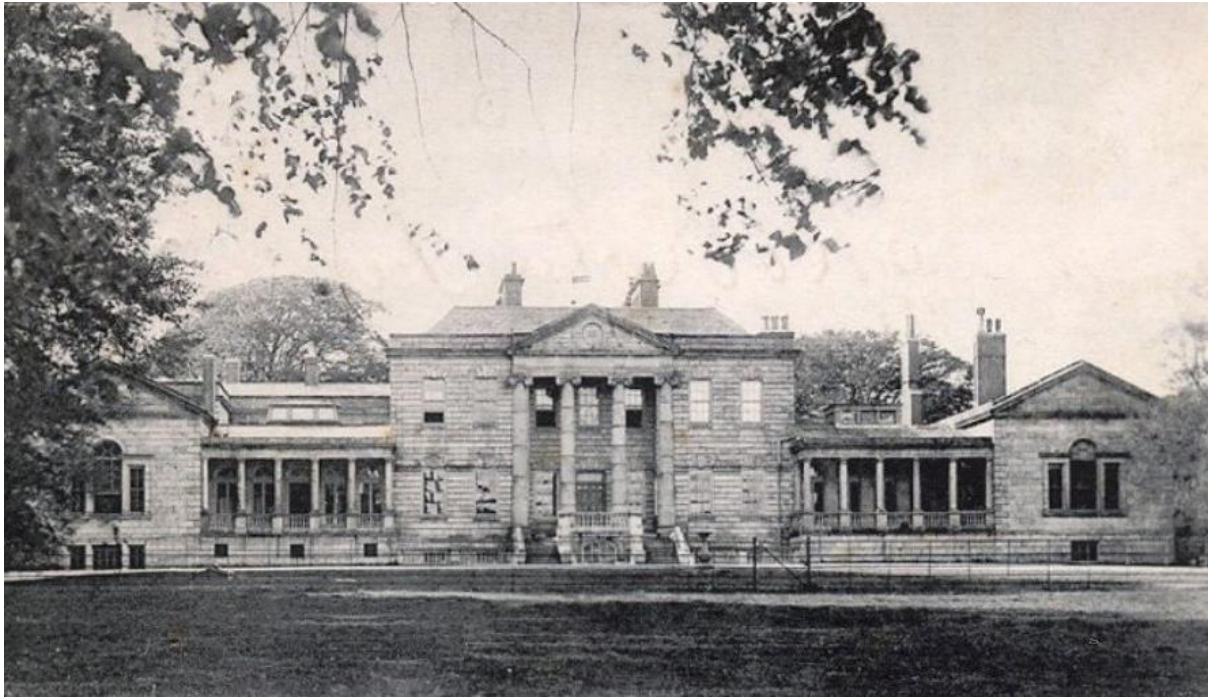
W. B. KELLOW, the proprietor, fully sensible of the liberal support he has received from the Gentry and Commercial Public generally, in establishing the principle of a cheap, expeditious, and comfortable conveyance between Cornwall and Devon, takes occasion to return them his best thanks, and begs at the same time to assure them that no efforts shall be wanting on his part to carry it out to its fullest extent; for which purpose he has recently purchased new Omnibuses, constructed on the safest principle and with all the modern improvements in lining, ventilation, &c., &c.

W. B. KELLOW's VANS leave *St. Austell*, for *Truro* and *Plymouth*, daily as usual.

*St. Austell, October 24, 1849.*

That WG chose the Kellows to run his fictitious stagecoach company was no coincidence – this ad is from the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of 16 November 1849





Above: Carclew House near Mylor was bought by William Lemon (1696-1760) circa 1739 and, with the help of his architect Thomas Edwards, substantially improved. In 1799, his grandson, also William (1748-1824; left; on whom WG modelled George) began to develop it further. Sadly, Carclew was destroyed by fire in 1934.



train journey shared with a young flying officer early in the war<sup>16</sup> gave him his Ross:

*He was tall, lean, bony, scarred, withdrawn but pleasant, heavy lids over eyes of that pale blue that doesn't flinch at much. He was, he said, convalescing after a crash: broken leg, couple of ribs, scratch on his face: lucky really. Just waiting to pass his fitness test; any day now. A quiet man but tense, purposeful. A vein in his neck; a sort of high-strung disquiet. I took in everything I could about him, knowing, knowing this was to be the man.*<sup>17</sup>

To Demelza WG's wife Jean contributed "her vitality, her resilience, her warmth that made so many people care for her, her ability always, always to find pleasure in small things"<sup>18</sup> and more. The couple's son Andrew confirms that "at least in part, Jean is Demelza"<sup>19</sup>. The colourful Jud is an amalgam of two acquaintances or three, depending on which of several accounts you read<sup>20</sup>, the Warleggan family have their historical equivalent in the banking and smelting Lemons<sup>21</sup> of Carclew, Falmouth, with William Lemon (1748-1824) the basis for George.<sup>22</sup> As to George's idiosyncratic character, you might expect its creator to be discreet; to play the "total composite / pure imagination" card. In 1978, however, when asked by an American journalist whether his Poldark characters were based on real people, he replied:

*Elizabeth and George are based on people I knew. Most are composite characters. ... There are exact parallels to Elizabeth and George, but no one is exactly parallel to Ross.*<sup>23</sup>

That must have started some inner circle speculation. He confirms in *Memoirs*, 2.4 that Ben Carter (son of Jim) was another based on a specific acquaintance. But while it is inevitable that observed characteristics from life will appear among the panoply of his motley cast (because from where else can a writer's experience derive?) good fiction – unless deliberately written with an ulterior motive<sup>24</sup> – eschews mere reproduction:

*Of course it's very fine to talk of drawing your characters from life – but although it's an essential part, by itself it is*

*simply not enough. When you describe an acquaintance – or draw a sympathetic portrait of a friend, or an unsympathetic portrait of an enemy, you are merely doing a good job of reportage. And a novelist's job is not to report, it is to create ... A good writer mustn't merely describe, he must beget.*<sup>25</sup>

That creation, that act of begetting, empowers the author, as reportage or biography does not, not merely to duplicate or copy life but to improve upon it, to enhance and embellish it, to reimagine it and thereby lift it from the prosaic and profane into something, in capable hands, altogether extraordinary, thus worth his readers' time. It can be argued that to eschew the banalities of life involves as much potential risk as reward: indeed, the Poldark novels are dismissed by some as too lightweight, for lacking grit, for their specious oversentimentality (though in this regard the TV adaptations are surely more guilty than the books). WG himself conceded that his characters' tendency to live more in sun than shadow proved "as far as critical acceptance goes ... of great detriment."<sup>26</sup> But the enduring popularity of his work attests convincingly to its consistently high quality. Then again, he was always his own worst critic. Late in life he wrote poignantly and sincerely:

*If I had my time again I would wish for little different, except to be a better writer.*<sup>27</sup>

The myriad, teeming cast of his tumultuous saga – his magnificent Regency adventure – collectively proclaim him rather good already.

## **(5) Geography**

The West Country backdrop of the novels is an effective synthesis of the real – Truro, Bodmin, Redruth, Launceston, Falmouth, Penzance, St. Ives, Plymouth and Exeter are all on the map – the thinly disguised – St Agnes as St Ann's, Carclew as Cardew<sup>28</sup> etc – and, naturally and inevitably, the imagined:

*West Pentire ... and the headland that juts out beyond it making the western claw of Crantock Bay, and the further*

*bay beyond of Porth Joke ... helped most to make up a composite picture of ... Nampara. Nothing, of course, is exactly right ... The north coast – and Nampara and St Ann's and Sawle – are all composite pictures giving the right impression but seldom keeping to exact topographical detail. Hendrawna Beach is more like Perranporth Beach than Crantock Bay. Wheal Leisure is not where it really was – in the centre of Perranporth village – but out near Wheal Vlow, beyond Flat Rocks, and Nampara is most like an old manor farm in the parish of St Endellion, miles to the north.*<sup>29</sup>

According to one local resident, the physical description of Wheal Leisure in the books corresponds closely to another Perranporth mine – Cligga Head – which, in contrast to most others in the vicinity, remained operative until 1944 (and thus accessible, together with its workforce, to WG).<sup>30</sup>

*Where north coast topography is concerned I use a little licence: for instance, the original of Mongoose House is not in Mongoose village. Trenwith House is further east than one would suppose and is partly modelled on Trerice. Bolingey River was known in the 18th century as Mellingey River (and) Sawle (is) a village partly based on old Perranporth.*<sup>31</sup>

## **(6) Events**

Again, imagination is assisted and verisimilitude added by leavening the fiction with incidents and action based on documented historical events. (The same, of course, applies to the introduction into the narrative of real-life personalities such as George Canning, Goldsworthy Gurney, Richard Trevithick, the Bassets, the Boscawens and more.) So, among numerous examples: Dwight being called to attend Caroline's dog and his removal of a small fishbone to cure her "morbid sore throat" are events related by Sir William Fordyce (1724-1792) in his 1773 book *Putrid and Inflammatory Fevers*; Jim Carter's fate and the description of Launceston Gaol, where he dies, are sourced from *Wesley's Journal* and John Howard's *State of the Prisons* (1784 edition); the two shipwrecks and riot at the end of *Demelza* come from a contemporary (1778) account; the Bodmin election procedure described in *Jeremy Poldark* is factually accurate; so, too, the



Camborne riots and their sequelae and the run on Pascoe's Bank as described in *The Four Swans* and *The Angry Tide* respectively. The details in *Warleggan* of smuggling and the particular way in which Ross confounds Captain McNeil are based on authentic source material, as are the stage-coach robbery in *The Miller's Dance*, conditions in the French POW camp at Quimper (*The Black Moon*) and so on.<sup>32</sup>

One of the reasons why WG looked with such disfavour on the first (1975) BBC TV series of *Poldark* was that it concluded with an event – the burning down of Trenwith by miners evicted from their homes – that, whilst dramatically legitimate, *had no precedent in Cornish history*.<sup>33</sup> Such was his wholly commendable zeal for fictional truth.

## **(7) More on sources**

The multiplicity of sources used by WG to inform himself sufficiently well to write as he did will never be fully known – however, a modest few have been documented, either by him (see above; also *Poldark's Cornwall* and *Memoirs*) or friends who served his cause, and others can be speculated upon with a greater or lesser degree of confidence.

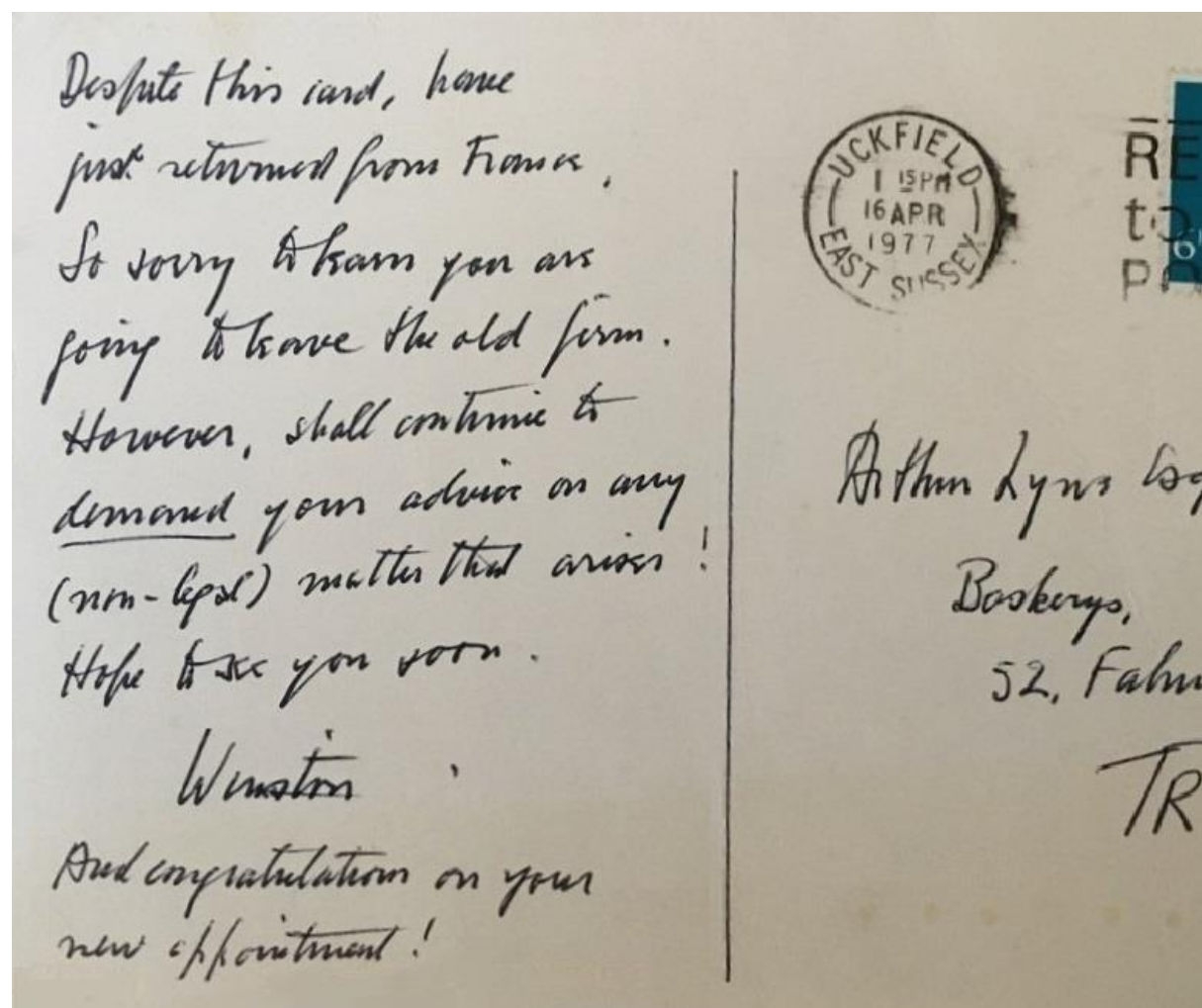
**Arthur Lyne** (1913-2009) was born in Launceston but lived in Truro from a few months old. He joined Truro solicitors Nalder & Son straight from school in 1932, became a partner in 1942, the firm's senior partner in 1964 and retired in 1977, aged 63. Additionally, he worked as a County Court Registrar part-time from 1963 and full-time from 1977.

Whilst WG lived in Cornwall, Nalder & Son were his solicitors – they legally transacted his name-change in 1947 – and it was probably through this professional association that he and Lyne first met. But, work aside, Arthur was a dedicated student of the history of Cornwall in general and Truro in particular – a subject of abiding interest to the Poldark author too, of course – so, that a friendship between the two flourished and endured is hardly surprising.

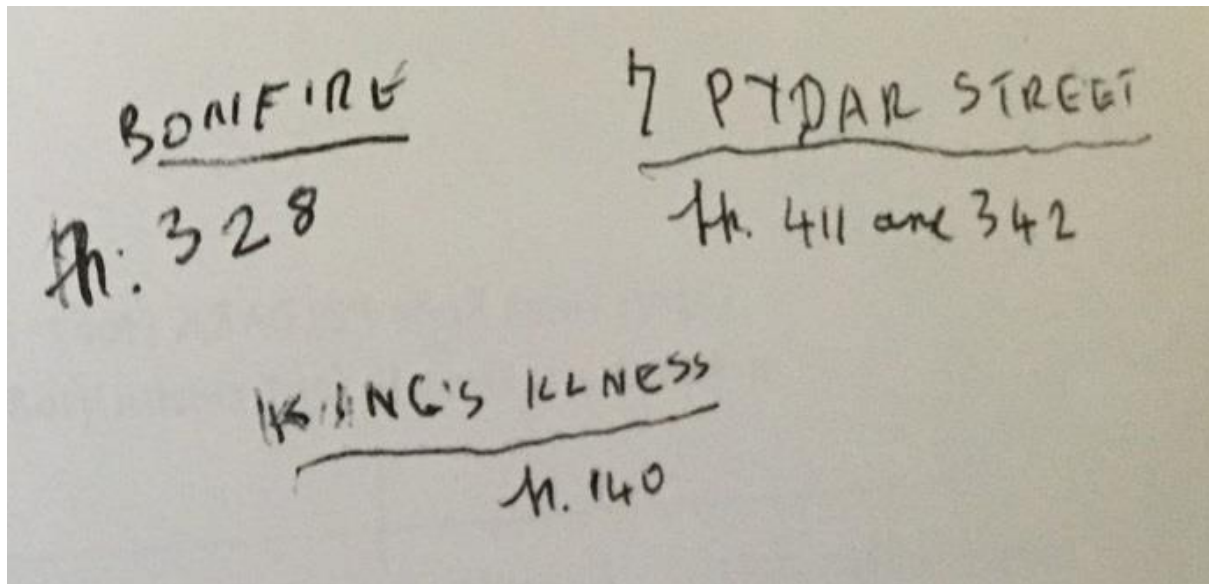
During a long life, Arthur Lyne was both secretary (for forty years!) and later President of Truro's Old Cornwall Society; President of the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies; secretary of the Royal Institution of Cornwall;

vice-president of Truro Cathedral School's Old Boys Association, barded by the Cornish Gorsedd in 1958 and, from 1965 to 1995, master of ceremonies at the annual Four Burrows Midsummer Eve bonfire. *Around Truro in Old Photographs* (Alan Sutton, 1992) was compiled by Lyne using images drawn from the archives of the Royal Cornwall Museum.<sup>34</sup>

WG gifted inscribed copies of several novels to Lyne. A lengthy *Tumbled House* dedication (See [SOURCES](#), page 26) confirms the solicitor's help with legal aspects of that text "from its inception right through to the finished article" and Lyne's signed copy of *The Sleeping Partner* (1956) was probably given for the same reason. Concerning Poldark, a letter from WG to Lyne dated 29 June 1974 in which the author answers a query from his friend about Truro's Powder Street (see [LETTERS](#), page 17) no more than hints at common interest. But more convincing evidence of the help Lyne gave the Poldark author is also to hand. First, on the occasion of Lyne's retirement from Nalders in 1977, WG sent this postcard:



"[I] shall continue to demand your advice of any (non-legal) matter that arises!" he writes. Then, in 1981, after WG had inscribed "with love" a copy of *The Stranger from the Sea* to Arthur and his wife Vera, these notes were added, presumably by Lyne, to the rear end-paper:



The numbers refer to pages of the novel – thus on page 328 we find a detailed description of the Midsummer Eve bonfire at which Sam says a prayer and a reluctant Caroline is persuaded to be Lady of the Flowers, all surely based on information provided by Four Burrows Bonfire master of ceremonies Arthur Lyne. A little later in the novel, WG introduces Barrington Burdett, a young notary who "had only recently put up his brass plate in Pydar Street" (page 342), with the address given more fully on page 411 as "7 Pydar Street". For all of Lyne's forty-five years at Nalder & Son, the firm's address was 7 Pydar Street, Truro. WG's use of it is *not* historically accurate, since Nalders was not founded until 1822 and did not come to occupy 7 Pydar Street until 1857.<sup>35</sup> Rather, it is a sly tip of the hat to his friend and helper Arthur Lyne. On page 140 Dwight and Ross discuss the health and prospects of King George, whom Dwight has lately been called to see, but the relevance of this passage to WG's association with Lyne is not known.

In *Poldark's Cornwall* (Bodley Head, 1983) WG tells readers that "Nampara ... means 'The Valley of Bread'" (page 195) and once again documentation discloses the agency of Arthur Lyne. For in a letter to him dated 8 July 1977 Fred Harris writes:





To Arthur & Vera  
from  
Winston  
with love.  
19:10:81

(i) Arthur Lyne, year unknown  
(ii) From Arthur's copy of *The Stranger from the Sea*

I promised you ... to ask about the name NAMPARA. Now Oliver Padel [[a University colleague of Harris's specialising in Welsh and Cornish Studies](#)] gives this interpretation:

NAM = Nance = valley

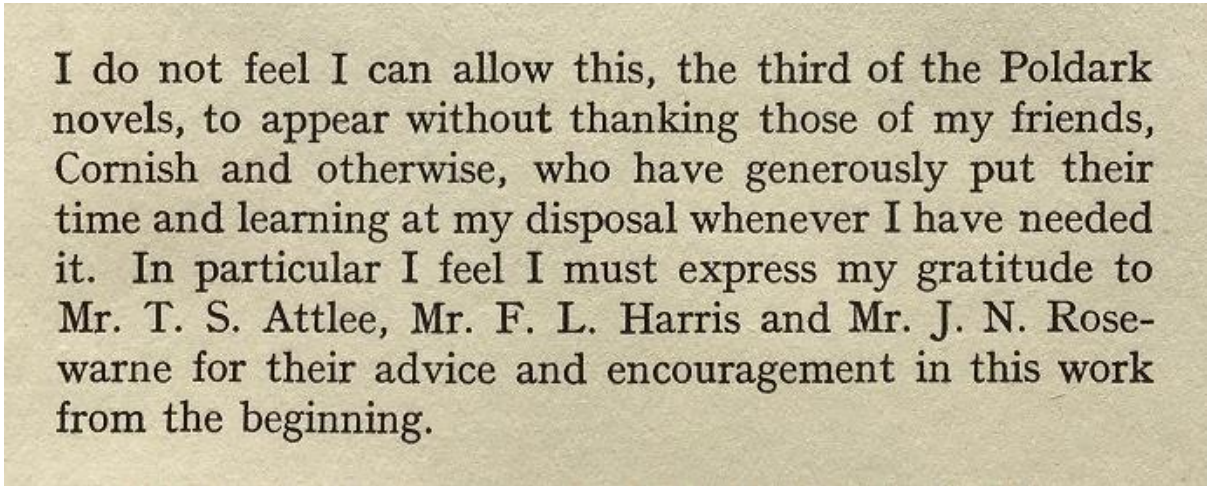
PARA = Bara = bread

So, I suppose, Bread Valley – valley of bread ... ..

*I'm sending a similar note to Winston.*<sup>36</sup>

\* \* \*

The first (Ward, Lock & Co., 1950) edition of *Jeremy Poldark* includes this Author's Note:



I do not feel I can allow this, the third of the Poldark novels, to appear without thanking those of my friends, Cornish and otherwise, who have generously put their time and learning at my disposal whenever I have needed it. In particular I feel I must express my gratitude to Mr. T. S. Attlee, Mr. F. L. Harris and Mr. J. N. Rosewarne for their advice and encouragement in this work from the beginning.

and there's Fred Harris popping up again. For more on him and T. S. Attlee, see [WEA](#) and [ATTLEE](#). But what of J. N. Rosewarne?

**John Noel Rosewarne**, born in Truro on Boxing Day 1899, was a remarkable man – a businessman of wide-ranging interests but ill-suited to his calling, whose sharp mind, happily stuck in the past, barely acknowledged that there might be a future.<sup>37</sup> He never married, never wrote a will and it was not until he received one as a retirement gift that he owned a television set. He was passionate about the history of Cornwall, a subject on which he frequently lectured at Old Cornwall Society events and elsewhere. The basic Austin A40 he drove was fitted with a metal tube on the roof to hold the projection screen he would use on these occasions. He was President

of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, a governor of Truro School and, for many years, Warden of Truro Cathedral's Guild of Lay Assistants. At one time Chairman of the Cornish Language Board, he was made a bard of the Gorsedd of Cornwall in 1932.



[John Rosewarne \(1899-1972\)](#)

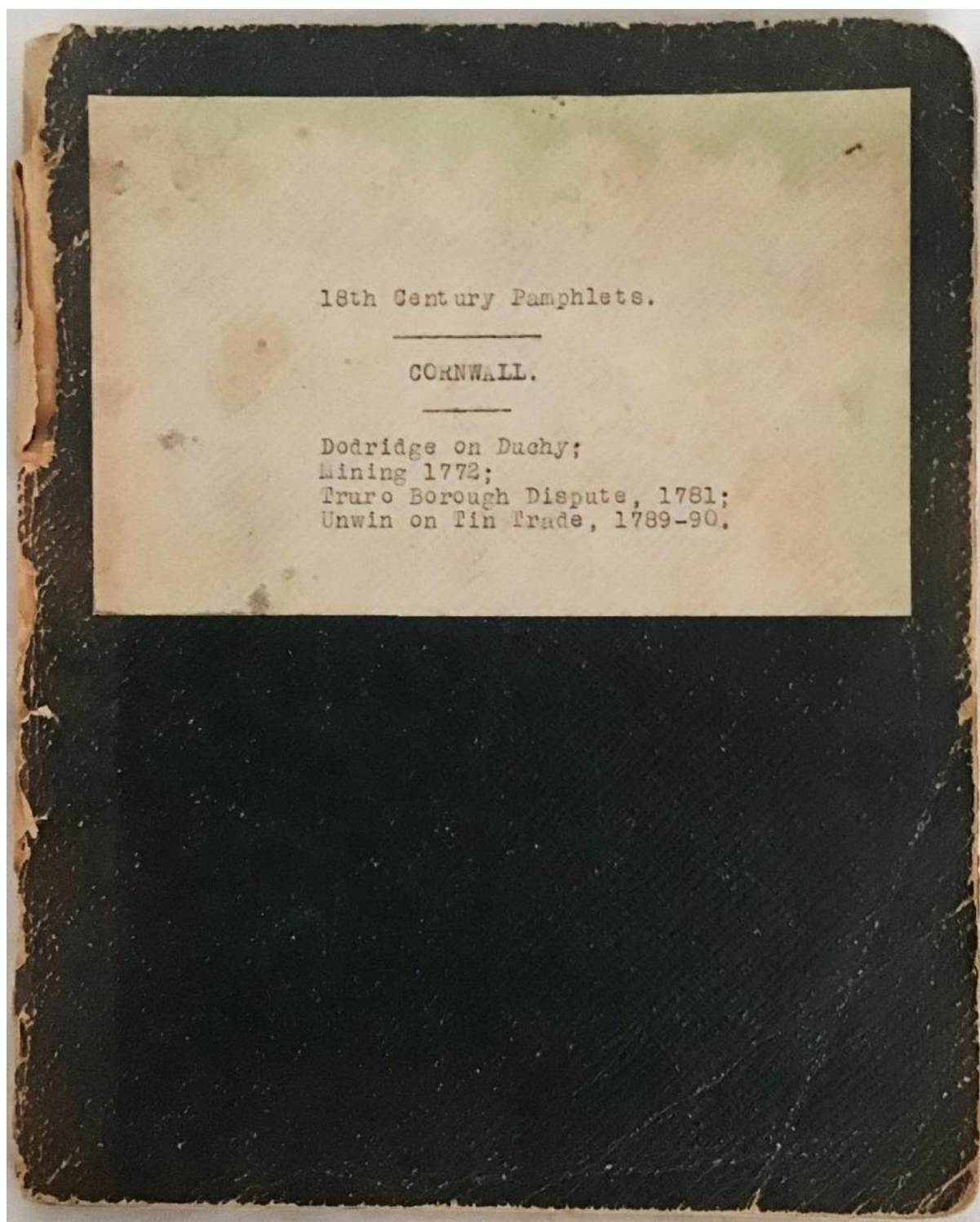
WG had an uncanny knack of ferreting out men well-placed and more than willing to assist him in his literary endeavours; of these, John Rosewarne was surely one. Both were Perranporth residents, which is perhaps what first brought them together, or possibly it was Toc H, of which both were active members. Both, certainly, were bibliophiles; John never passed a bookshop without going in and, whenever possible, talking to the owner. His private library was one of the finest in the West Country and, whilst the arrangement of its books might appear haphazard, he always knew just where to find the one he wanted and the quotation he required, whether about miners, agricultural implements, Celtic history, the niceties of Christian theology or, indeed, almost anything else.

John was a big, gentle, humble, rumped man, slow of speech but with a keen intellect and jolly smile. When he died one evening whilst baking bread, the loss to Cornwall's community and the bodies with which he was associated was considerable. Though the precise nature of his contribution to *Jeremy Poldark* is not known, that he was generous enough to make one is something for which all Poldark readers are in his debt.



\* \* \*

In the late thirties or early forties, WG painstakingly filled 104 pages of the **notebook** below (now held by RCM, Truro) with handwritten excerpts transcribed from pamphlets, letters, notices and other documents dealing with mercantile, political and social aspects of eighteenth-century Cornish



life. The most obvious direct Poldark source, *An Answer to A Narrative of some late Transactions concerning the Borough of Truro ...* describes how, through the 1770s and early 1780s, the abuse of power in the administration of the Corporation of Truro by Lord Falmouth, its Recorder, led to increasing unrest among its members; it also "excited the attention of the public" and provoked "various reports". When Deputy Recorder Henry Rosewarne eventually moved to resist Falmouth's despotic dominion, rumours "injurious to [his] reputation" were circulated: that, whilst working to bring down the Recorder, he "deceived him by keeping up an appearance of friendship"; that after he was elected a burgess of Truro, he undertook in writing to promote Lord Falmouth's interest; that he "made professions to Mrs. Boscawen"; and that he was "bribed ... to oppose Lord Falmouth" by an increase in his Vice-Warden's salary. The unnamed recipient of a long letter from Rosewarne dated 1 January 1781 reproduces it and one other, and also adds comments of his own, in order to shed light on a thoroughly murky business:

*[Thanks to the Recorder's actions] the borough of Truro ... was levelled to the lowest degree of infamy, and was prostituted with as much openness as if the members of the corporation were a set of low wretches who sold their votes to the best bidder, without regard to honor, reputation or conscience ...*<sup>38</sup>

All of this scenario, with little changed other than some names, is reprised in *The Four Swans*, Book One.

Cornwall is seen as somewhere favoured by Nature:

*In [Devon and Cornwall] ... there is found great quantities of Tin, the purest, best and most plentifullest in Europe; by reason whereof, it hath ever been accounted one of the Staple Commodities of this Kingdom and of good Estimation in Foreign Regions ...*<sup>39</sup>

*The County being Environed as it is by the Sea, and having the advantage of good Harbors, Nature seems to have designed it for a flourishing Trade; and the more, because*



& assigned as a reason, that the boro' of Tins was an expensive borough, & that he must pay for a new burial ground & a new workhouse! The Recorder had not contributed a farthing to the workhouse, & as to the burial ground, it was built by subscription, to wh. he subscribed only thirty guineas. — Indeed, he gave the inhabitants of the town part of the land for the new burial ground, to the value of abt. fifteen pounds, & permitted them to open a quarry, & draw the stones both for the workhouse & burial ground, but this was no more than I had before offered the inhabitants for my quarry. What an insult therefore was it to the corporation, to attempt to palliate his conduct, under a pretence that the borough of Tins was an expensive borough?

<sup>The Recorder's intentions for the election</sup>  
[This] came out because some of the Recorder's confidants didn't keep the secret. — & "the only

Part of the litany of complaint against Lord Falmouth's venality, with the details concerning the burial ground and workhouse all faithfully reproduced in *The Four Swans*, 1.8. See all of the notebook [HERE](#).

*that Land not only abounds with the best Tin in the World, and the greatest Quantities thereof, but the Sea affords it the best Fish also ...*<sup>40</sup>

but lamentably devoid of trees:

*Though this subterraneous fuel [i.e. coal] has not yet been discovered to be a native of Cornwall, yet such is its portableness, that we are enabled to procure it from Wales at a cheaper rate than common firewood ... When we behold a wide and barren waste, extending itself throughout the whole mining district of this county, without a tree to intercept the fury of the wind, we have no reason to commend the prudence of our ancestors in thus depriving their demesne of its necessary shelter...*<sup>41</sup>

We learn that smelting thrives in Wales due to an abundance of local coal; the existence of a cosy copper-buyers' ring (or "combination") is broadly hinted at, with any effort to launch a rival concern "sure to be attended with an association of the old ones, in order to defeat it" – as Ross and his fellow Carnmore investors learned to their cost in *Demelza*.<sup>42</sup>

Miners existed at the bottom of a harsh pecking order, beneath owners, venturers and brokers, with their often abject plight recorded thus:

*Hon. Sirs ... I am lately returned ... from the mining parishes in Cornwall, where I have been witness to the greatest imaginable poverty and distress, insomuch that I have seen women gathering snails in order to make a broth for the support of their families ...*<sup>43</sup>

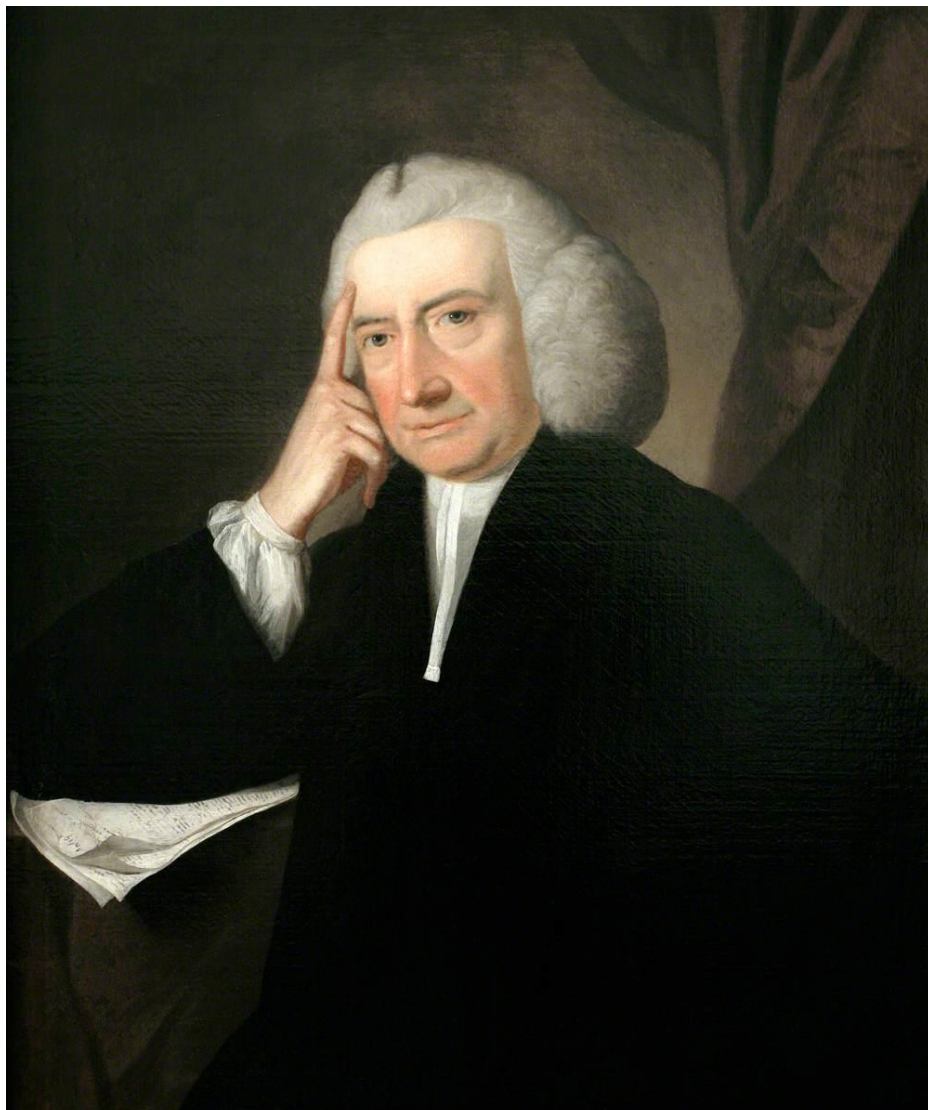
WG transcribes pages of statistical tables documenting the fluctuating price of tin, which both war and keen competition from the Dutch for export markets tended to depress. A great deal of labour went into the drafting of this notebook, with but little of its content ultimately used. The author's dedication to his calling was extraordinary.

\* \* \*



WG's **background reading** whilst researching is known to have been very extensive, but *who* and *what* did he read? In addition to those few texts cited above, some other probabilities spring to mind, albeit no more than the tip of a huge undocumented and unknowable iceberg:

(i) Cleric, social historian, geologist and naturalist **the Rev. Dr. William Borlase (1696-1772)** published *The Antiquities of Cornwall* in 1754 (second ed. 1769) and *The Natural History of Cornwall* in 1758. According to Bert Biscoe, long-serving President of Truro's Old Cornwall Society, Borlase's writing "shines through the historiography of the Poldark novels".<sup>44</sup>



Dr William Borlase by Allan Ramsay (1713-1784)

(ii) A Redruth-born Oxford graduate (M. A., B. Litt), **A K (Alfred Kenneth) Hamilton Jenkin (1900-1980)** published *The Cornish Miner – an Account of*

*his Life Above and Underground from Early Times* (George Allen & Unwin) in 1927. A look at the content of chapters III and IV confirms their centrality to WG's interests:

### III: ABOVE AND UNDERGROUND, 1500-1800 . . . . . 83

The First Underground Mining – Seventeenth-Century Methods – Beginnings of Copper-mining – Introduction of Gunpowder – Prospecting by Adits – Water-Wheel Pumps – The Coming of Steam – Boulton and Watt in Cornwall – Underground Work in the Eighteenth Century – Old-style Tin-dressing – The Use of Water Power – Methods of Tin Smelting – Privateers and Tin Ships – Copper Smelting in Cornwall

### IV: VARYING FORTUNES OF THE MINER, 1500-1800 . . . 122

Economic Features – Classes of Tinnerns – "Sweating" the Elizabethan Miner – Prosperity under the Commonwealth – Starvation Times – Feasts, Fights and Other Recreations – Early Adventures and Capitalists – Leasing of Mine-Setts – Payment of Men, by Tribute and Tutwork – The Tinner in Health and Sickness – How a Tinner Lived – Wrecking Propensities – Corn Riots – Stannary Companies – The Worst Depression Known – Pewter Going Out of Fashion – Intervention of the East India Company – Trevithick Versus Boulton and Watt

In the early thirties, Hamilton Jenkin produced four more titles in quick succession: *Cornish Seafarers: the Smuggling, Wrecking and Fishing Life of Cornwall* (Dent, 1932; including detailed descriptions of seine and tuck-netting for pilchards and their export to Italy), *Cornwall and the Cornish: the story, religion and folk-lore of 'The Western Land'* (Dent, 1933; with sections on the introduction, ready acceptance and profound influence of Methodism and the state of the roads), *Cornish Homes and Customs* (Dent, 1934; with passages on the use of shod oxen as draught animals and Corn Riots of the Eighteenth Century) and *The Story of Cornwall* (Nelson, 1934). All would surely have proved palatable to the young would-be author and local history student. In all probability, then, A K Hamilton Jenkin was another important primary source. Mr Biscoe concurs: "I guess that [WG] will have known A K Hamilton Jenkin, and he most definitely read AK's published works – the evidence is throughout the novels."<sup>45</sup>



A K Hamilton Jenkin by Leonard John Fuller, 1950

(iii) **John Hubert (Jack) Trounson (1905-1987)**, another Redruth native, was one of the twentieth century's leading authorities on Cornish mining and the greatest exponent of its future potential. He had an unparalleled ability to marshal a wealth of detail on the past working of mines and use it to point to places where minerals might still be worked at a profit. A leading member of the Cornish Institute of Engineers, the Cornish Mining Development Association, the Cornish Chamber of Mines, and the Trevithick Society, few have done more to preserve the county's industrial past and promote its future prosperity.<sup>46</sup> The work he published in the early 1940s will surely have proved invaluable to WG's researches, although whether the two ever met or corresponded is not known.

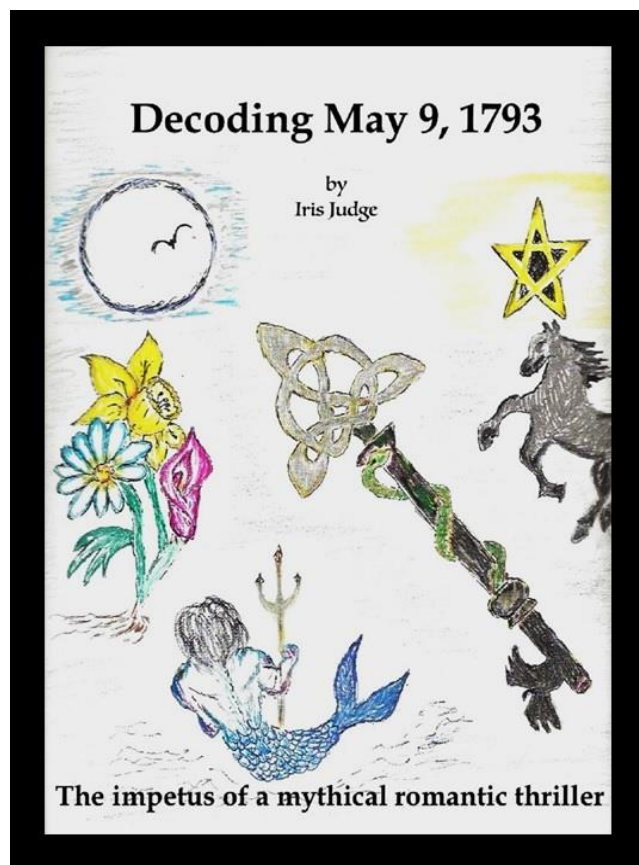
\* \* \*



## "Life is an illusion"

This simple, four-word sentence is spoken by Ross to Elizabeth on the night of 9 May 1793 during their pivotal meeting at Trenwith which led to the conception of Valentine – *but it is also spoken by WG to his readers, telling them very plainly that "There is more to this fiction than meets the eye."* In a remarkable book entitled *Decoding May 9, 1793* (independently published, 2020; see review [HERE](#)), Iris Judge demonstrates clearly that the characterisation and plotting of the novels is influenced by (among much else) **Celtic/Cornish folklore, classical mythology and the Bible**.

Arguably she overstates her case – for instance, in this same scene, WG tells us that "far in the distance, communicated to an inner ear, was the sound of the sea." I take that as reaffirmation that the night was very still



and that Ross's senses, in his keyed-up state, were heightened; she sees in it confirmation that Ross's late father Joshua, who stands for Neptune, king of the sea, is not only present in the room but orchestrating all that happens there. The meteor Ross notes on his way into Trenwith, she believes, is a sign that Joshua is about to return to life as Valentine, who will prove to be the most powerful magician in the entire saga.

Despite such extravagance (and there's much more of the same), there is an underlying logic to some of her arguments which is

hard to resist – for example, that the character and destiny of Francis are closely linked to those of Tantalus, son of Zeus; her deconstruction of Caroline's character is also arresting. That these venerable sources were used as blueprints around which WG slavishly plotted and encoded his work is hard to accept; that they acted as one among numerous influences on him, however, is not.



## Rise of the press: the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* and *West Briton*

In 1985, WG confirmed to David Clarke that **newspapers** were helpful in researching Poldark, with one reservation:

*Newspapers are a useful source of information, but when I was writing the early books the only contemporary newspaper was the Sherborne Mercury. It was printed in Dorset and the man who delivered it to Cornwall was known as a 'Sherborner'. He used to bring the post as well. But now that the story has reached 1810, I've caught up with the West Briton and Royal Cornwall Gazette.*<sup>46</sup>

The first newspaper to be published and printed in Cornwall was launched in 1801 as the *Cornwall Gazette & Falmouth Packet*, then relaunched two years later (after its proprietor had served a spell in debtors' prison) as the *Royal Cornwall Gazette and Western Advertiser*. Then, on 20 July 1810, the first issue of the *West Briton & Cornwall Advertiser* appeared (four pages for 6½d, its high price due to a lack of paid advertisements and the cost of printing). Thus, as WG suggests above, with the exception of its first six months, the period (1810-1820) covered by the last five Poldark novels had two local organs of record to document its every facet – and that they represented diametrically opposed interests and were pitched at different audiences was all to the researcher's benefit.



When the *West Briton* was launched, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* was being published in Truro under Royal patronage with strong financial backing from the Tories – it stood, in other words, for the *status quo*. But the upstart newcomer was a radical or *Reform* paper, founded by liberal Whigs with the support of many Methodists all dissatisfied with the established

order and anxious to see a gradual and reasoned shift towards social and parliamentary change. Thus the *Briton* strove to stress and the *Gazette* gloss over the inequalities of privilege and property; of opportunity and wealth which constituted the reality of Cornish life at that time. The rivalry between the two – entrenched, ever bitter and occasionally vitriolic – endured until 1951, when the *West Briton* incorporated its competitor and the two became one.

WG's novels deal with all strata of society, so both titles would have served his cause – but, because the *West Briton* was more sympathetic to the lot of the down-trodden and dispossessed, whose plight would otherwise pass unrecorded, its archive must have proved an especial boon. The upper classes are portrayed principally as oppressors. As the owners of mineral and agricultural wealth, along with the merchants and professional men of the newly-risen middle classes, they are involved in virtually every commercial activity in the county. It is the capital they amass – the wages the poor are not paid – which goes into the development of mines, ports, railways, canals and an improved road network; into education and charitable institutions. In addition, as the representatives of law and order – lord lieutenants, grand jurors, magistrates – they make frequent appearance. In the latter capacity, in particular, they meet the common people on their own level, clapping the drunk and disorderly into stocks, dealing with riot and mutiny, selecting parish constables and overseers of the poor, supervising the prisons and lock-ups, the vagrants and paupers.

It is against this wide if sometimes shadowy backdrop of upper and middle class influence, prosperity and elegance that the real drama of early nineteenth century life in Cornwall – red-blooded, crude and vigorous – is enacted in the *West Briton's* pages. Week by week there comes to life not only the familiar figures of working miner, farm labourer and fisherman, but a new and quickening, more mobile population which has hitherto largely escaped the historian's mesh: beggars and ballad singers; witches and wizards; conjurors and charmers; counterfeiterers and convicts; slavers and their merchandise; highwaymen and footpads, to list but a few. All emerge in the round. They are perhaps uglier than imagined, stunted and deformed by inadequate diet, marked or disfigured by disease, mutilated by war or by the ignorance and indifference which denies them safety in their ordinary pursuits, and all work-hardened and aged beyond their

years. What historian or writer would *not* be keen to access such a portal into the long-lost past?<sup>47</sup>

So, with the help of this invaluable testimony, an era is evoked and scenes peopled – but what stories did WG discover buried in the yellowing pages for his motley company of characters to enact? Though it is beyond the scope of this study to give a chapter-and-verse answer (even assuming such a thing could be done), here is a brief taster:

On 24 August 1810, the *West Briton* reported the resolve of a meeting of the High Sheriff and others at Bodmin Assizes to recommend "the expediency and propriety of providing a lunatic asylum, or house for the reception of lunatics, and other insane persons within [Cornwall]". In *The Stranger from the Sea*, 1.7, we learn that Dwight in the same period is "pressing ... for some reasonable hospital for the mentally deranged to be built in Cornwall, perhaps in Truro."

In *The Miller's Dance*, 1.6, WG makes no attempt to hide his source: "I was reading the *West Briton* Saturday. It is a useful paper, like," says Stephen, who then hands Paul a cutting headed "Penzance Lifeboat For Sale". The actual report, in the *West Briton* of 27 March 1812, under the headline "PENZANCE LIFEBOAT SEIZED FOR DEBT" recounts how the vessel, "which several years ago cost 150 guineas ... was on Monday last taken in distress for rent and sold for twenty guineas" – the very sum Stephen pays for the boat in WG's story, before sailing it round to Plymouth and selling it on for eighty pounds.

The *West Briton* is namechecked twice more in Poldark IX, first by Paul who in 1.6 we find drafting an advertisement for inclusion in the paper to announce a reduction in his father's stagecoach routes and then in 2.7 by narrator WG:

*The harvest in England was the best for years, and as the time of the election came on a comfortable glow lay over the farmlands of which England was still largely composed. Not that prosperity or discontent made much difference to the election, for the days [of fair elections, of change] that the West Briton dreamed of were not yet come. [Nor would*

soon – *The Representation of the People* aka *Reform Act* would not be passed until 1832.]

In *The Loving Cup*, 1.8, we learn that gossip in Truro was of shipping news, the price of tin, next week's music festival at the Assembly Rooms, the bad harvest and *a Society for the Prosecution of Thieves just formed ... under the patronage of Mr Paul, the mayor* – words lifted almost verbatim from a paragraph in the *West Briton* of 16 July 1813

and so on.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **(8) Return #1**

WG had sketched out a few characters before the war, then during it wrote and rewrote chapters – some "nine times"<sup>47</sup> – of what would become *Ross Poldark*. Towards the book's completion he realised his story could not be told in a single volume, and so, through the post-war years, one became two, three and eventually four. In 1977 he said:

*The first four books were not, as is generally supposed, sequels of one another but one very long novel which broke off at convenient points. The end of the fourth book ... was the end of the tale.*<sup>48</sup>

*I felt that this was the end of what I had to say.*<sup>49</sup>

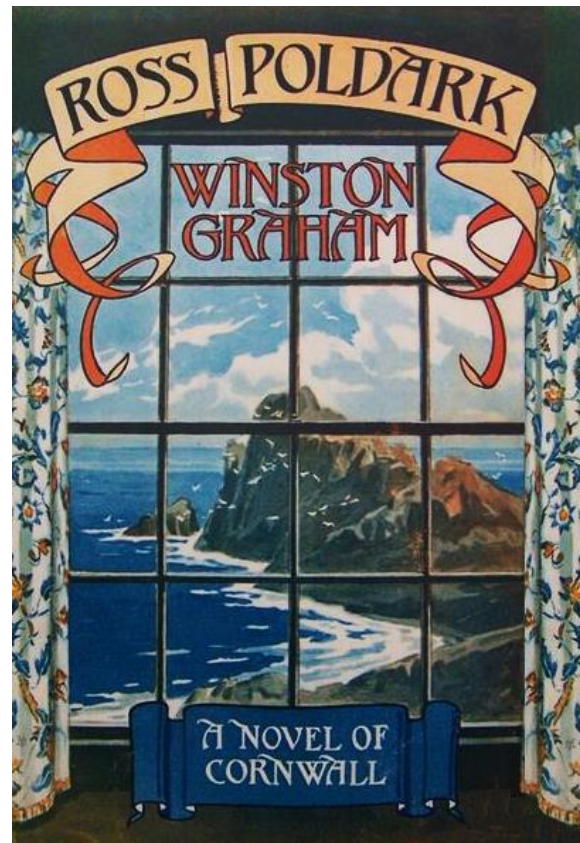
And, for eighteen years – a period that saw him established, in his own estimation, as "the most successful unknown novelist in England"<sup>50</sup> – so it was. Tackling a sequel, "with all the dangers of repetition and staleness"<sup>51</sup> held no appeal. But, even after so long, the letters asking for more Poldark continued to come and he found himself, future secured, children grown, by now geographically estranged from Cornwall in leafy Home Counties Sussex, unaccountably wondering what became of Ross and Demelza; of Elizabeth and her son. So, after advising his accountant that he was returning to "non-profit making activities,"<sup>52</sup> back to Poldark it was. Though it took some time for him to rediscover the story's distinctive style and tempo, "after a few months the momentum came back [and] the charac-



ters ... sprang up around me."<sup>53</sup> He also found, as before, that, once begun, his burgeoning story could not be contained within a single volume<sup>54</sup> and so *The Black Moon* (1973) spilled over into *The Four Swans* (1976) and *The Angry Tide* (1977) to bring this next phase of his endeavours to a close. When asked soon after completion of these three titles whether there would be any more, he replied:

*I doubt it ... Certainly I finished the last feeling that this was the end of all I had to say.*<sup>55</sup>

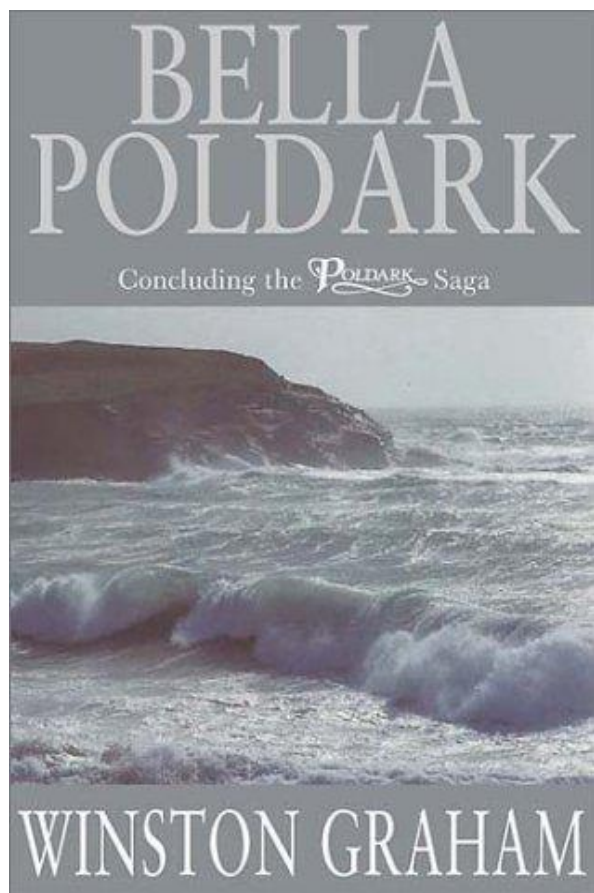
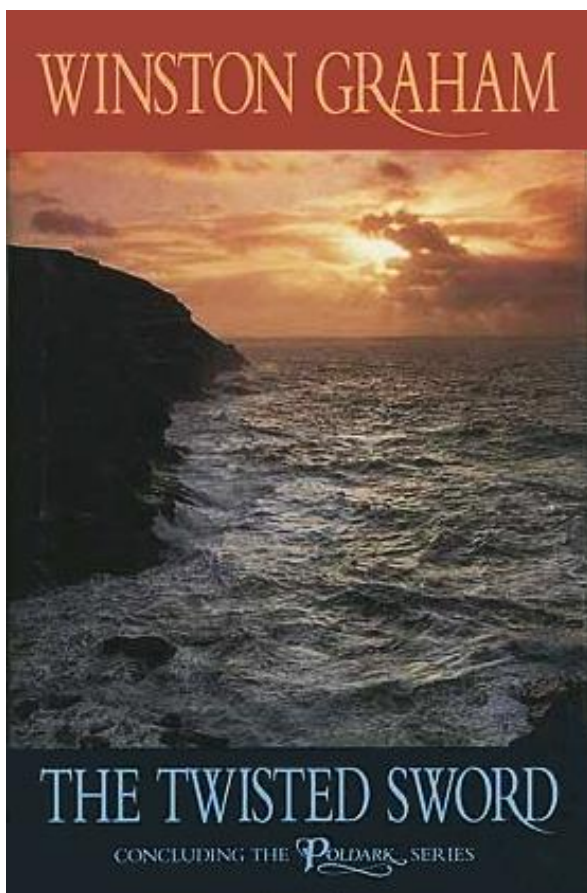
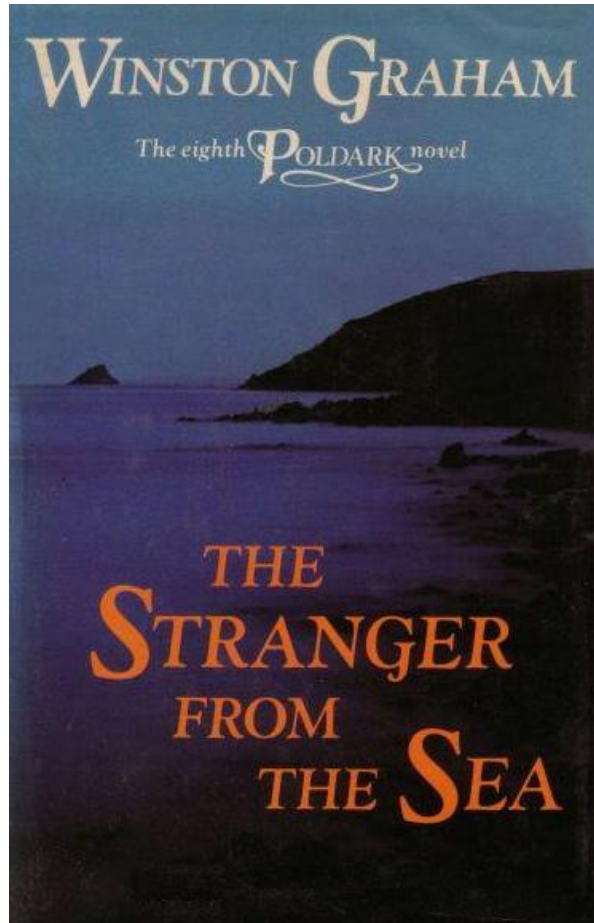
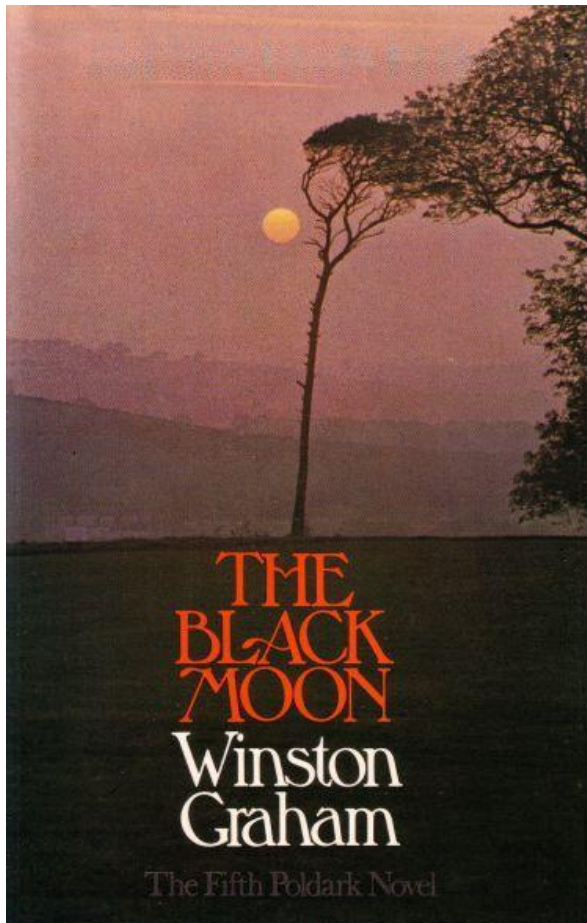
(It is perhaps worth noting that WG's return to his saga had nothing to do with film or TV interest in adapting his work for the screen. By the time final agreement was reached to produce the first four books for television, *The Black Moon* was finished and *The Four Swans* underway.<sup>56</sup> Fortuitously, what this second sequence of books *did* allow was two BBC series (I-IV then V-VII) rather than one.)



(1) The seed-merchant: Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928)

(2) The first (Ward Lock, 1945)

Below: First return (1973) / Second return (1981) / XI (1990) / Last (2002)



## (9) Return #2

Though the three second-sequence Poldark novels were published sequentially by William Collins, WG did not focus on them exclusively. During the period (1971-1977) of their writing he also published *The Spanish Armadas* (1972), a short story called *The Circus*<sup>57</sup>, *Woman in the Mirror* (The Bodley Head, 1975) and perhaps even began work on *Shadow Play*, which premiered at Salisbury Playhouse on 19 October 1978. Then, once the three Poldarks were done, he doctored 1944's *The Merciless Ladies* for republication in 1979 and tinkered with his play (retitled and restaged in June 1979) – but still Ross, Demelza, George and the gang would grant him no rest; their siren call for him to take up his pen for a third go round irresistible.

When he returned to the story in 1971, events in Cornwall had moved on just seven weeks (from Christmas Day 1793 to St Valentine's Day 1794), allowing the writer to pick up the same themes and storylines played out by essentially the same cast of characters as before: placing him in territory, then, once back in the groove, quite familiar. This time, however, in making a second return, he chose to move the story on not seven weeks but ten *years*, which required a reimagining / winnowing of existing characters alongside the introduction into a previously unvisited era of a passel of new ones – all in all, considerably more of a self-imposed challenge (or "stimulus" he might say: "what makes one write")<sup>58</sup>. And so it proved, with another effectively realised three-book sequence – *The Stranger from the Sea* (1981), *The Miller's Dance* (1982) and *The Loving Cup* (1984) – emerging in short order.

Although the story had now reached another natural stopping point, *The Loving Cup* gives no hint of finality: indeed, its jacket blurb states "*The Loving Cup* concludes – for a time – the Poldark saga", which suggests a publisher getting wise to his author. When asked in 1987 whether the series would go any further, WG replied:

*Well, there's one more I can write but I don't think I'm going to write it yet. I do feel at the moment it's a good thing to have a change.*<sup>59</sup>



So clearly, Poldark XI was, by then, already in his mind and, after a major time-out for *The Green Flash* (1986) plus the diversion in 1988 of *Cameo* (i.e. 1942's *My Turn Next* rehashed), in 1990 Chapmans published *The Twisted Sword* <sup>60</sup>, proclaimed, as *Warleggan* had been thirty-seven years before, "The final Poldark novel."<sup>61</sup> In 1991, John Dunn pitched its author the same, tired "All done?" question. His response:

*After [The Twisted Sword] one would have to take an enormous start again, with all the characters beginning something fresh. There are obviously a lot of loose ends left, but then loose ends exist in any family, whether it's fictional or real, and it seems to me that this is about the time when I should suitably draw it to a close.*

But tellingly, he also conceded that, even by the time of 1981's *Stranger from the Sea* (book VIII), Poldark had become for him an "addiction".<sup>62</sup>

## **(10) Adieu**

Addiction or not, the nineties passed with no further additions to the canon (although a further three non-Poldark novels appeared, each better than the last) and, as the millennium turned with WG in his 92nd year, a last hurrah seems increasingly unlikely. But, game, undaunted, perhaps driven in spite of himself, still he wasn't done. Come 2002, come *Bella Poldark*, even with an associated short story to help launch it,<sup>63</sup> and this time, *really* (almost) the end, as he was soberly and candidly aware:

*This is the third time [after [Warleggan](#) and [The Twisted Sword](#)] it has been positively the last Poldark. Well, this is positively the last because I shan't live to write another.*<sup>64</sup>

He told Simon Parker:

*After I finished ... The Ugly Sister I thought it was about time to stop writing altogether. Then one day I started to think about the Poldarks again. I had an idea and wrote a few lines, not intending to take it any further, and then I wrote another few lines and gradually got more and more*



*involved, although, unlike the previous books, I didn't quite know where it was going ... For the last 26 months I have lived and breathed Poldark again so that at times it was more real to me than my own life ... The book was almost entitled Valentine, the name of the book's dominant male figure, and even went to the publishers under that name. But I woke at about four o'clock one morning and realised it was no longer a book about Valentine, but about Bella. I had become fascinated by her story ... There aren't going to be any more.*<sup>65</sup>

It was indeed, his last novel, Poldark or otherwise and an impressively accomplished leave-taking for one of his extreme age. But *still* he was not quite done, for the following Spring, a short but sweet tale called *Meeting Demelza* popped up in Volume One of a contemporary Cornish writing magazine called *Scryfa* (Giss 'On Books, 2003). Four months after that, WG passed away, otherwise, one suspects, he would be industriously scribbling still. His choice of "luxury" when he appeared (garnering publicity for *The Angry Tide*) on *Desert Island Discs* – "a large number of exercise books and ... Biro's" – certainly suggests so.<sup>66</sup> Then again, make what you will of this frank but rather sombre exchange:

Susan Hill: *Do you still enjoy writing?*

WG: *No, I never have. It's like the lunatic banging his head against the wall. Nice when it stops.*

SH: *What do you enjoy? The working it out ahead?*

WG: *I enjoy having done it.*<sup>67</sup>

which puts his lifetime's commitment to his craft in an even more exemplary light. The RIC Graham Archive in Truro<sup>68</sup> holds one unpublished Poldark story – a coda to *Bella* in fact – called *Christmas at Nampara 1820*. And that's your lot. But what a lot. What an achievement. What a legacy. As the man said: "A proper chap, he was."<sup>69</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

## (11) Isn't that ...

WG's "addiction" to Poldark extended even to the screen. Though he took no part in the production of the BBC's first (1975) TV series, he was closely involved in aspects of the second and, perhaps not surprisingly, was talked into "doing a Hitchcock" i.e. making a token screen appearance. In a mid-season episode he was cast as a yeoman farmer (shown in costume on page 36) and even given a line of dialogue – *Mornin', Zur!* – which, he vouchsafed to Terry Wogan, "not even Olivier could have done better."<sup>70</sup> The scene was shot but the episode ran long and his cameo ended, sadly, on the cutting room floor. Undaunted, in the season's last episode the producers tried again and, as just-wed Drake and Morwenna leave the church, there he is – though without dialogue this time – planting a courtly kiss on the cheek of the bride. Which, somehow, is just as it should be.

\* \* \* \* \*

## NOTES AND SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of a Private Man*, Macmillan, 2003

<sup>2, 8, 25</sup> *The Craft of the Historical Novelist* in *The Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, New Series, Volume VII, Part 4, 1977. Concerning WG's comment about "novels I had read", in *The Independent* of 11 July 2003, Jack Adrian suggested that "The entire [Poldark] sequence owed a good deal to John Galsworthy, as well as Hugh Walpole, whose chronicles of "Rogue" Herries and his tempestuous, swash-buckling Lakeland family and descendants stretched from the 1730s to the 1930s."

<sup>3, 9, 50, 53</sup> *Woman* magazine, 10 December 1977

<sup>4</sup> [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org)

<sup>5</sup> With thanks to excellent detective work by RP at poldark.activeboard.com who first identified the story with the help of Berlin's Sudermann Society and then acquired a translation.

<sup>6</sup> As 2. In 2002 WG told Valerie Grove (*The Times*, 7 May) that the move to Cornwall was lucky for him because "how could I have written stories about Southport?"

<sup>7</sup> *The Western Morning News*, 16 March 1948

<sup>10</sup> The first sentence of WG's introduction to his wife's *Poldark Cookery Book*, Triad / Granada 1981



Yeoman farmer, waistcoat buttons awry

<sup>11, 12, 17, 26, 29</sup> *Poldark's Cornwall*, The Bodley Head + Webb & Bower, 1983

<sup>13, 14, 31</sup> *Redruth County Grammar School Souvenir Magazine 1907-1976*, in the 1974-1975 pages

<sup>15</sup> Exceptionally, he concedes in *Report to Writers* (undated, RIC archive), the three principal characters in *Night Without*

*Stars* (1950) "derived plainly from people [I] met and, as it were, docketed." Elsewhere he notes that *The Riddle of John Rowe's* Professor Crabtree is a close pen-portrait of his school principal A. F. Fryer.

Consider, too, the case of the Lynns in 1944's *The Merciless Ladies*. WG was close at the time to Tom and Kathleen Attlee and, on visiting their home, Leory Croft, would be "intrigued by what [he] found there". Many years later, one of Tom's granddaughters happened to read WG's book and, among its minor characters, recognised her grandparents:

The most noticeable characteristics of Dr Lynn were his height, his long jaw and his disreputable appearance ... When he had occasion to go walking on the road he was frequently mistaken for a tramp ... He had a certain amount of hair in those days, though even then most of it grew round his ears. His eyes were very keen and small and grey, his mouth wide with the lips narrow and clever, his voice deep and rather low, and he had a cultured accent which went oddly with his clothes.

The most striking characteristics of Mrs Lynn were her height, her long jaw and her disreputable appearance. Husband and wife were, in fact, sometimes taken for brother and sister. But Mrs Lynn was proportionately taller for a woman, and her untidiness in a woman was more noticeable. She had blue eyes, of a startling vivid blue, wispy fair hair and a very high colour. Her voice was high-pitched and less attractive than her husband's. To see these two strange long-legged creatures gardening together like angular scarecrows, and conversing in English as it should be but seldom is spoken, was a study in the incongruous I was then too young to appreciate.



*The story had opened with a visit by a schoolboy to this family, and went on to mention other recognisable features of the Attlee household: the lack of domestic help, the piles of books, the cobwebs, the cracked crockery, the candle stumps and even that "the house was lit by gas produced from a private plant in an outhouse, which Dr Lynn tried to keep in order." Mrs Lynn, it was said, took a few special pupils in advanced Greek. Of course, the development of the story was not true to the lives of the Attlees, but there is no denying the origin of some elements of the setting.*

From *With a Quiet Conscience – a Biography of Thomas Simons Attlee (1880-1960)* by Peggy Attlee, Dove & Chough Press, 1995.

For "twenty years" from 1937, WG ran all of his manuscripts past Tom "for criticism and encouragement" and the RIC archive holds a number of long and closely written letters Attlee penned in response. It would be interesting to know what he made of *The Merciless Ladies*.

<sup>16</sup> *Memoirs* states "the first year of the war" and *Poldark's Cornwall* "just after WWII". Since the first draft of *Ross Poldark* was started well before war's end, the former is more likely.

<sup>18</sup> *Meeting Demelza, Scryfa*, Volume One, 2003, with additional shared traits named in Book Two, Chapter Four of *Memoirs*

<sup>19</sup> *Poldark's Cornwall*, Macmillan, 2015

<sup>20</sup> In 1976 (as 2 above) it was "one-quarter from a Lancastrian I knew as a boy and three-quarters from a Cornishman I knew as a young man". By 1987 (as 11) it had become "three men I knew, one Lancastrian, two Cornish". Then again, on *Wogan* (BBC1, 1 February 1988) it was one "particular man I used to watch going to the pub every night..." with the truth, of course, that *everything* goes in and the characters come out. As he said to Arthur Pottersman (*Argosy*, December 1967): "I have simply been living,

and that contains a lot ... *Everything* is grist to the mill, *everything* is accumulative."



*Poldark*, 2.13 (BBC1, 1977): WG with hat and cane

<sup>21, 54, 55, 56</sup> *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Four

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Graham to Mariella Frostrup, *Open Book*, BBC Radio 4, 14 September 2008

<sup>23</sup> Joan Geoghegan, *Nashau Telegraph*, 24 June 1978

<sup>24</sup> W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) is one example of an author who enjoyed drawing scurrilous but readily identifiable pen pictures of those he wished to slight (ref: *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham* by Selina Hastings, John Murray, 2009)

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication to this writer, dated 2 August 1999

<sup>28, 47</sup> "Between the Lines", *Cornish Life*, January 1985

<sup>30</sup> Colin Brewer to this writer

<sup>32</sup> *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Eight / *Poldark's Cornwall*

<sup>33</sup> *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Five

<sup>34</sup> Lyne biographical sources: Findmypast; *Cornish Guardian*, 6 April 1967; *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser*, 7 April 1977; 8 February 1982; 21 September 1995, *West Briton*, 5 November 1998

<sup>35</sup> *West Briton*, 5 June 1997

<sup>36</sup> Thanks to Pam Stevenson for kindly sharing images of this and other documents. WG gave signed copies of *The Sleeping Partner*, *The Tumbled House* and *Poldarks VI-XI* to Arthur Lyne and one of *Poldark's Cornwall* to Ruth, his sister.

<sup>37</sup> Biographical information and photos on pages 6 (bottom) and 17 from Philip M. Hosken – with thanks

<sup>38</sup> *An Answer to A Narrative of some late Transactions concerning the Borough of Truro, Containing a Letter from the Vice-Warden of Cornwall to a Friend. And also some Remarks.* (London, 1781)

<sup>39</sup> *An Historical Account of the Ancient and Modern State of the Principality of Wales, Duchy of Cornwall and Earldom of Chester by Sir John Dodridge, Knight* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1714)

<sup>40</sup> *The Proposal for Raising the Price of Tin and Copper* [Gough, *Cornwall* 14, Printed 1697]

<sup>41, 42</sup> *An Address to the Gentlemen of the County of Cornwall on the Present State of Mining in that County with some Observations on the Tin and Copper Trades* (London, 1772)

<sup>43</sup> Letter dated 23 September 1789 from N. Donnithorne to E.I.C. [[the East India Company](#)], London

<sup>44, 45</sup> In a letter to this author dated 6 August 2022

<sup>46</sup> [exeterpress.co.uk](#)

<sup>48</sup> "Rise of the press" principal source: R. M. Barton's *Life in Cornwall in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Bradford Barton, 1970); Penwith Local History Group's *A Challenger to the Gazette* (online, undated) was also helpful

<sup>49</sup> *Memoirs*, Book One, Chapter Five

<sup>51, 68</sup> *Desert Island Discs*, BBC Radio 4, 26 November 1977

<sup>52</sup> Widely cited e.g. Grove interview, *The Times*, 7 May 2002

<sup>57</sup> Ted Harrison interview, 22 December 1977

<sup>58</sup> Author's Note, *The Four Swans*, Collins 1976

<sup>59</sup> In *Winter's Crimes* 6, Macmillan 1974 and elsewhere

<sup>50</sup> *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Eleven

<sup>61, 69</sup> WG to Susan Hill on *Bookshelf*, BBC Radio 4, 26 February 1987 – and what sangfroid from one almost eighty!



<sup>62</sup> In *The Times* of 7 May 2002, Valerie Grove said of WG that he "researches like a detective"; yet, though having mugged up ophthalmology for *Night Without Stars*, insurance loss adjusting for *Fortune is a Woman*, scintillation telemetry for *The Sleeping Partner*, safebreaking for *The Walking Stick*, professional boxing for *Angell, Pearl ...*, perfumery for *The Green Flash* and so on, all of those books wear their learning lightly. But *The Twisted Sword* (like George Eliot's *Romola*, which Henry James said "smells of the lamp") allows the bones of its underpinning research (concerning, this time, the Battle of Waterloo) to peep a shade too plainly through its meat.

<sup>63</sup> I seem to recall those words on *Warleggan's* jacket. That of *The Twisted Sword* is equally explicit: "concluding the



Poldark series", "the last novel of the Poldark saga" and "a brilliant finale." All wrong!

<sup>64</sup> *The John Dunn Show*, BBC Radio 2, 27 June 1991

<sup>65</sup> *The Horse Dealer*, a story featuring Jud Paynter published in three parts on 23 April, 30 April and 7 May 2002 in *The Western Morning News*

<sup>66</sup> To Charlie Lee-Potter on *Open Book*, BBC Radio 4, 9 June 2002

<sup>67</sup> The *Living Cornwall* section of *The Western Morning News*, 14 May 2002

<sup>70</sup> The Graham Archive is held by the Courtney Library of the Royal Cornwall Museum, the Royal Institution of Cornwall, River Street, Truro, TR1 2SJ

<sup>71</sup> St Winnows resident Mr Stephens, quoted by Lesley Thornton in *Radio Times*, 10 September 1977

<sup>72</sup> *Wogan*, BBC1, 1 February 1988, with Robin Ellis (see screenshot on previous page). Both WG and his wife Jean made separate cameo appearances in *Poldark*, Series Two – for a screenshot featuring Jean, see [IN PROFILE \(PART TWO\)](#), page 225.

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