Perran-ar-worthal

Local History Group



**Perranarworthal Local History Group March meeting.**

Perranarworthal Local History Group hosted Hilary Coleman and the Red River Singers to an entertaining evening at their March Meeting, entitled “Shout Kernow, celebrating Cornwall’s pub songs” The evening was based around research carried out by Hilary Coleman and Sally Burley and later published as a book and CD. They were prompted to do this when they realised that pub singing was a very special Cornish tradition that seemed to stop at the Tamar. Some songs seem to be very specific to certain areas, and this was noted in the 1950s when the song collector Peter Kennedy travelled in Cornwall.

The evening started with the Red River singers singing “Little Eyes” which is always considered a very Cornish Song, however the roots of it come from the USA minstrel singers and it has derived from the song “Little Liza”. Another song, “Lily of the Valley”, was brought to Cornwall from the United States by the Jubilee Singers. The members of this group were of African American slave origins and the money they earned helped the education of the descendants of slaves.

Cadgwith has a long tradition of singing at the Cove, with it is own “Cadgwith Anthem” (“The Robbers Retreat”). There is a worn patch on one of the wooden beams in the bar where time is beaten as the song is sung.

There are different types of songs sung in the pubs. There has been a huge increase in shanty singing in recent times and Hilary expressed a hope that this would not monopolise other types of songs. It must not be forgotten that there are other types of work songs, for example from the miners and bal maidens. Sankey hymns were also popular.

Hilary asked those attending to guess which Cornish song is the most requested. Various suggestions were made by the audience including old favourites like, “Trelawney”, “Lamorna”, and “Camborne Hill”. Surprisingly the most popular song “ Cornwall My Home” was written in 1997 by singer songwriter and tour guide Harry “Safari” Glasson which has become a modern classic anthem for Cornwall.

The Cornish language obtained official status in 2010 and its popularity has grown helped by Richard Gendall’s compositions in Cornish that were made popular by Brenda Wootton. The Red River singers performed “Kerra Kernow” as an example.

Hilary paid tribute to the pub landlords who encourage singers to their pubs. In particular she mentioned The Countryman at Piece where the Red River Singers gather on the first Sunday evening of each month.

The choir finished with “My grandfather Clock” and “Old Time Religion”

I understand that after the History Group talk the singers decamped to the The Royal Oak, where the locals were regaled with more songs