

Where else could this be?



- ▶ Very distinctive landscape
- ▶ Sense of belonging
- ▶ Sense of difference
- ▶ Contribution to Cornish identity

The answer to the question in the above slide is 'probably nowhere'. Cornwall has a very distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of difference. The picture is of a Cornish Engine House near St Agnes. Around 3000 Engine Houses were built to house Cornish Engines in Cornwall and west Devon. Compared to Cornwall, a small number can still be seen in Devon, and some were 'exported' to far flung places like Australia, Spain, South Africa and Mexico, but these are much fewer in number and more often than not inland. The chances of seeing an Engine House on the coast like the one pictured above anywhere other than Cornwall are slim indeed.

The Cornish Engine was designed in 1812 by the Cornish engineer and inventor Richard Trevithick, who, incidentally, had been responsible eight years earlier for the world's first locomotive-hauled railway journey between Merthyr Tydfil and Abercynon in South Wales. Its main function was pumping water from a mine, usually a tin or copper mine, enabling extraction to take place at depths further underground. It is rather ironic that at more or less the same time as the Cornish language was ceasing to be a distinguishing feature of Cornwall, its place was being taken by another distinctive symbol, and one with an even longer tradition behind it. Given the proximity of the timescales, it could be said that the one took over where the other left off.

Although, at first glance, it might not be obvious why a people's identity may be based on particular industries, there are many examples of this phenomenon. It does, after all, quite literally reflect what they do from day to day. Given Britain's prominence in the industrial revolution, it should come as no surprise that it contains several examples of industry-based identities. There are, indeed, many parallels here with the South Wales coalfield, which maintained a very strong sense of Welsh identity while simultaneously witnessing the decline of the Welsh language. Clydeside, similarly, had a very strong link to shipbuilding. As Philip Payton notes, '*In Cornwall, glasses were raised to the toast 'fish, tin and copper'*' (p. 198), as strongly regionalised identities took hold based on an area's industries, which, it must be remembered, not only included those working in the industry itself, but everyone else connected to them via family links or supply chains.

The Cornish Mining Industry



- ▶ Dates as far back as c. 2000 BCE
- ▶ Mining widespread by medieval times
- ▶ Longstanding traditions in both tin and copper mining
- ▶ UNESCO World Heritage Site

Tin mining in Cornwall dates back to the Early Bronze Age (c. 2000 BCE) and was well established by 1000 BCE. Evidence taken from the larger tin mining areas suggests that extraction continued uninterrupted for some 3000 years, and this is supported by historical references such as those of Pytheas of Massalia who gives an account of the exchange of tin between Cornwall and the Mediterranean in the fourth century BCE (Buckley, p.3). Tin mining was widespread in Cornwall by the Middle Ages, mostly in opencast mines, which then developed into the underground mines of more recent times.

Tin is not the only metal mined in Cornwall however. It also has a strong tradition of copper mining. In the eighteenth century in particular, copper mining grew rapidly to such an extent that by 1770 *'Cornwall had become the biggest producer of copper in the world by a wide margin'* (p. 15). The following nineteenth century was a golden era for Cornish mining, and Cornish miners were well respected and in demand internationally.

Such was the influence of the tin and copper mining industry in this part of the world, that *The Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape* is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This small area of the south west peninsula of Great Britain, in the early nineteenth century, produced two-thirds of the world's copper, and the remains of this industry's innovation, as visually reflected in its landscape, are what is being celebrated here. UNESCO's own website notes that *'Cornish technology embodied in engines, engine houses and mining equipment was exported around the world'*.

As well as metals, China Clay mining was a huge industry in the area around St. Austell (the largest in the world in the nineteenth century) which led to the creation of white 'mountains', called the Cornish Alps, the result of clay being tipped in the surrounding area.

Image: The Levant Mine and Beam Engine, a National Trust Property within the St Just area of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Cornish Abroad



- ▶ Significant diaspora in Australia, South Africa and the Americas
- ▶ Cornish mineworkers introduced rugby to South Africa and football to Mexico
- ▶ Cornish Carol Choir in California

Expertise in mining has led to many Cornish people taking their skills abroad, with notable populations in Australasia, South Africa, North America and South America. Wherever they went they took their traditions with them, including introducing rugby union to South Africa and football to Mexico.

A Cornish diaspora established itself in South Australia based upon the growing copper mining industry there, and by 1865, about 40% of the entire state's population was made up of people of Cornish descent, a figure which still stands at 10% today. One part of the state, the Yorke Peninsula, became known as 'Little Cornwall' and the largest Cornish festival in the world outside of Cornwall, the Kernewek Lowender (Cornish Happiness) was first held there in 1973. It is still held there today for a seven day period every other year, and the event now attracts some 40,000 visitors. Traditional dancing and the consumption of Cornish pasties and ales are all very popular. Cornish Australians across the country now total about 750,000, which is larger than the population of Cornwall itself.

In South Africa, Cornish miners went to utilise their expertise, not for the extraction of tin or copper, but instead for diamonds and gold. The 1880s in particular saw large numbers emigrate to South Africa to such an extent that about a quarter of the Transvaal's white population was Cornish. The numbers were so large that they had an effect on the communities they left behind, leaving them desolated. However, the outbreak of the Second Boer War in 1899 saw many of them return home.

North America has its own (smaller) 'Little Cornwall' in the Pachuca area of Mexico, while Grass Valley, California celebrates St Piran's Day on March 5 every year and is home to a Cornish Carol Choir. All of these overseas communities are directly linked to the Cornish mining industry and the great demand for the skills of Cornish miners.

Image: A Cornish Engine House in South Australia

The Cornish Fishing Industry



- ▶ Records go back to the 16th century
- ▶ Lucrative exports to the Mediterranean
- ▶ Cured fish in days before refrigeration
- ▶ Still an important industry today

Alongside the Engine Houses of the mining industry, Cornwall's fishing villages and their harbours must be considered another iconic image of the Cornish landscape. These are scattered all along the coast and are of various sizes, but some of the larger fishing ports include St. Ives, Padstow, Newlyn, Penzance, Falmouth, Fowey and Looe.

Although fish have obviously been caught off Cornwall since time immemorial, it was in the sixteenth century that fishing can be said to have developed into an 'industry'. Records from this time are clearly kept of fish being exported to ports on the west coast of France and around the Mediterranean. Before the days of refrigeration, fish were preserved or 'cured' by salting or pickling, and, since the Tudor period, pilchards have been salted, pressed and packaged for sale across Europe, with lucrative markets in southern European countries, in particular Italy. Hake was also shipped in large quantities and is recorded as being exported to Nantes from 1570 (Smart, p. 3). Other important species which have been fished off the coast of Cornwall include herring and mackerel. The different seasonal availability of mackerel and pilchard shoals meant that work could continue virtually all year.

By the seventeenth century, shipping fish to an overseas market was a risky business, with pirates from North Africa taking both fish and fishermen to Algeria and Morocco. These pirates, known as 'Turks' were brazen enough in 1626 to kidnap 100 fishermen from Looe harbour and demand ransom for them all (Smart, p.7). The middle of the nineteenth century saw huge numbers of fish being caught, with 122 million pilchards exported from Cornwall in 1847, while the twentieth century saw greater diversifying.

Once upon a time there were 'Pilchards' (*Hern* in Cornish), today there are 'Cornish Sardines'. These, by the way, are both names for the same fish. 'Cornish Sardine' is a recent and protected name which can only be applied to fish caught within six miles of the Cornish coast, and subsequently landed and processed either within Cornwall itself or in the nearby Port of Plymouth, thus providing another aspect of Cornish identity in the current century. Unlike mining, fishing is still very much alive in Cornwall. Newlyn, in fact, has a greater number of registered fishing vessels than any other port in the UK.

Image: Padstow Harbour (courtesy of Mick Knapton)

Cornish Food and Drink



Cornwall has some very well known dishes and beverages, many of which are related to the mining and fishing industries of the previous slides. Due to geographical proximity and similar occupations, some of these are shared with neighbouring Devon, albeit with their own distinctive, and sometimes rival, varieties. Besides the 'Cornish Sardine' mentioned earlier, the Cornish Pasty and Cornish Clotted Cream also have protected status.

Pasties are of course intimately associated with Cornwall, despite being of uncertain origin and also common in Devon. Although variations exist, the classic (and legally protected) Cornish pasty consists of diced or minced beef, onion, potato and swede contained within a crimped pastry exterior. To be labelled 'Cornish' the crimping must be around one edge in a 'D' shape, and not across the top.

Dairy products are also of enormous significance, especially the clotted cream used to make Cornish fudge and ice cream, or liberally spread on scones with jam in a cream tea. To be Cornish, these must be added in the right order, with Cornwall putting the cream on top of the jam, while Devon does the reverse. Cornish Brie and Yarg ('Gray' spelt backwards) are popular, albeit relatively recent, cheeses.

Stargazy pie is a specifically Cornish dish originating in the Mousehole area. It is made with baked pilchards (or alternatively herring or mackerel), eggs and potatoes, topped in a pastry crust. Crucially, the fish heads must be left on and protrude through the crust pointing skywards. At a slightly higher culinary level, Cornwall has two 'Celebrity Chef' fish restaurants a few miles apart on its north coast. Heavy Cakes (similar to Welsh cakes) are a traditional dessert, and Saffron Cakes for special occasions.

Traditional alcoholic drinks include various ales, cider and mead, although none of these are unique to Cornwall.

A three day Cornish Food Festival was held between 2004 and 2017 and attracted 40,000 people in its latter days, but this has been put on hold while organisers look for a more suitable venue.

Images: Left: Stargazy pie with 'Cornish Sardines' looking skywards before baking (courtesy of Zangar). Right: Cornish Pasty and Cornish Cream Tea Scone (with the cream on top of the jam!)

Cornish Political Parties



- ▶ Mebyon Kernow (Sons of Cornwall)
- ▶ Established in 1951
- ▶ Politically positioned on the centre-left
- ▶ Rejects status as an English county
- ▶ Campaigns for a Cornish Assembly

Mebyon Kernow's website describes it as 'a progressive left-of-centre party in Cornwall....striving to build a confident and outward-looking Cornwall that has the power to take decisions, directly affecting the people of Cornwall, locally.' As per Polydore Vergil's four part division of Great Britain referred to in Unit 3, the party argues that Cornwall is one of the four nations making up the island, and its main objective is to establish a National Assembly for Cornwall. Mebyon Kernow translates as the 'Sons of Cornwall', but it also uses 'The Party for Cornwall' as a slogan.

The party was founded in 1951 at the Oates Temperance Hotel in Redruth. It laid out seven main objectives, all related to the promotion of a distinct Cornish culture and identity. Its first Chair was Helena Charles, and its most famous former member is no doubt the novelist Daphne du Maurier.

It currently has four Councillors on Cornwall Council and fifteen town and parish Councillors. As MK has no MPs, it is sometimes given a helping hand by Plaid Cymru who, for example, laid down an early-day motion in the House of Commons supporting devolution for Cornwall following the collection of 50,000 signatures in favours of the establishment of a Cornish Assembly. Similarly, Andrew George, Liberal Democrat MP for St. Ives between 1997 and 2015, was a member of MK before joining the Liberal Democrats, and a founder member of the Cornish Constitutional Convention. He became the first ever MP to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen in Cornish.

In 1975, one faction of the party, led by Dr James Whetter, split to form the *Cornish Nationalist Party*, with a view to promoting a more right-wing agenda based on ethnic, rather than civic, nationalism. The current party leader, Andrew Hawke, is its only elected member at any level, sitting as a councillor on Polperro Community Council. The CNP is more akin to a pressure group than a full political party as things stand. In 2007, the British press reported on threats made against 'English occupying forces' (including 'celebrity chefs') by an organisation calling itself firstly the *Cornish National Liberation Army* and then the *Cornish Republican Army*. Mebyon Kernow's Dick Cole responded by expressing disappointment that the press had reported widely on the actions of a handful of dubious individuals, yet ignored the 50,000 signature petition for a Cornish Assembly a few years earlier.



Above we see some symbols of Cornwall. The Cornish Chough (bottom left) is a traditional symbol of Cornwall to such an extent that Cornish people were themselves sometimes called ‘Choughs’. Its distinctive features are its red beak and feet (image courtesy of Snowmanradio).

Not all symbols are visual. *The Song of the Western Men* (or *Trelawny*), sometimes described as the Cornish National Anthem, was written in its current form in 1824 by Robert Stephen Hawker, who was widely regarded, and publicly noted, as an ‘eccentric’. The chorus goes *And shall Trelawny live? Or shall Trelawny die? Here's twenty thousand Cornish men Will know the reason why!* The plaque in the top left (image courtesy of smalljim) commemorates Hawker. The song itself is thought to be based on earlier folk songs.

The standard of the Duke of Cornwall (top centre) contains fifteen gold circles on a black background in a ‘red snooker ball’ pattern. Its origin may lie in the fact that black and gold were also the colours of the kings of Dumnonia, not to mention, of course, the colours of the Cross of St David of Wales.

Cornish tartan, much like its Welsh and Breton equivalents, is a recent invention of the mid twentieth century based on the mistaken assumption that for something to be ‘Celtic’ it also needs to be ‘Kiltic’. Although not a genuine tradition, it does no harm and has recently become popular (as indeed it has in North America). The one shown above (top right) is the registered Cornish National Tartan featuring various Cornish colours. Black and white represent the Cross of St. Piran, black and gold the Duchy of Cornwall, red the Cornish chough, and blue the ocean. Black and white are also the colours of the Breton flag

Hurling the silver ball and Cornish wrestling, the former similar to the *cnapan* in Wales and the latter to Breton wrestling, have their own characteristics which make them distinctively Cornish. They are sometimes labelled ‘national sports’ of Cornwall as a result. Many Cornish symbols belie their Brittonic origins, and are shared with Brittany and Wales. Shared origins, however, are a feature of many peoples, including the Bretons and the Welsh themselves, and this should on no account detract from the specifically Cornish way in which they later developed.

Cornwall's Flag and Patron Saint



- ▶ St Piran's Flag
- ▶ Increasingly seen
- ▶ Saint's Day on 5 March
- ▶ Celebrations held across Cornwall
- ▶ Failed attempt to make it a bank holiday

The most instantly recognisable symbol representing Cornwall today is no doubt St Piran's Flag, which is a white cross on a black background. It is known from at least the year 1838, with various (unproven) claims pushing it back another 700 years to the crusades. .

Piran was a fifth century Abbott of uncertain origin, although some equate him with the Irish saint Ciaran (sometimes Anglicised as Kieran). Piran/Ciaran is actually an example of the P-Celtic/Q-Celtic linguistic split in action. Legend has it that Piran was thrown into the sea by Irish kings but floated across the water to Cornwall where he landed at Perranporth (i.e. Piran's Port, with Perran being an alternative Cornish spelling of Piran).

Piran has been adopted by tin miners as their patron saint, and is also recognised as the predominant patron saint of Cornwall (Michael and Petroc being the other two). It is, after all, Piran's flag which is acknowledged as 'the Cornish Flag' and can be seen on car stickers and flying from flagpoles across Cornwall, including those of churches and the buildings of Cornwall Council.

His saint's day is on 5 March. Originally a tinnerns' holiday, over the last century or so it has grown in popularity into either a 'national' or 'county' day, depending on your point of view, with some seeing St Piran as being the Cornish equivalent of Saints Andrew, David, George and Patrick etc. Parades or celebrations of some kind are regularly held in communities across Cornwall.

Nine town councils now give their staff a day off on St Piran's Day, but a petition to apply this across Cornwall in the form of an official bank holiday failed to gather sufficient signatures. Nevertheless, it remains a popular tradition, both inside Cornwall and across the diaspora.