



CORNWALL

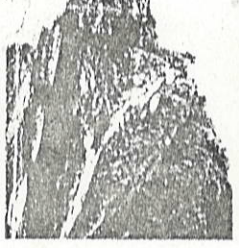
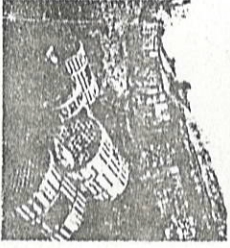


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OF ALL the venial sins, smuggling is generally conceded to be pardonable. Why this should be so is perfectly clear. Apart from objecting to the payment of taxes, every inhabitant of this sea-girt isle is a freebooter at heart — a descendant, perhaps, of the wild Vikings who long ago populated our shores.

This helps us to understand why men and women of otherwise impeccable character and who to all appearances seem assured of a place in Heaven think nothing of undermining their country's economic defences by importing bottles of gin or expensive perfume.

The rugged individualism expressed by smuggling and piracy reached its highest point in the 18th century, and involved a battle of wits between smugglers



Above, the path to Prussia Cove; Land's End past a row of old fishermen's cottages with roofs chained down against the wind.

and excise men in which quarter was neither asked nor given. The intensity of this conflict was determined by the laws of political economy. When William III imposed swinging duties on imports at the close of the 17th century the level of smuggling rose to great heights, but when the duty on tea was drastically reduced in 1745, tea-smuggling became correspondingly less profitable and went out of fashion. Smuggling, like every other type of commerce, is a matter of supply and demand. Illicit free trading has its penalties, however, and those who ran the gauntlet of authority often ended their days as transported convicts or were left swinging from the nearest gallows tree.

The coastal areas of the south-west and west of Britain are still

(Continued from Page 3) black might could discover his location immediately from the size of the pebbles on the shore, since these, due to the action of wind and tide, gradually diminish in size from Portland to Burton.

Devon and Cornwall, though remain the real centres of the great smuggling tradition which was shaped by the character of the country itself. During the 18th century and even later both were unexplored territory, and Cornwall, due to its isolation, was often regarded as a land apart from the rest of the British Isles.

The tourist in modern Cornwall, by retracing the steps of the old-time smugglers, can revive in his imagination something of the lost romance of 18th-century smuggling days. At Brandy Cove, near Ilfracombe, and Lee Bay, near Lymouth, many a running fight took place between the excise officers and the local smugglers, often accompanied by shooting matches.

Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel, was another favourite smuggling centre. It was here during the 18th century that the colourful Thomas Benson, M.P. for Barnstaple, conducted some decidedly unparliamentary activities involving the storage of hogsheads of "duty free" tobacco in the grotto beneath Marisco Castle for subsequent distribution to his clients on the mainland.

The rugged cliffs and secluded beaches near Land's End provided ideal covers for the Carter gang, who made their headquarters at what became known as Prussia Cove. The Carter family saw not the slightest incongruity in fringing their cannon at passing revenue men on week days and dedicating the entire Sabbath to hymn-singing and prayer. Their leader, John Carter, acquired the nickname "The King of Prussia" by which he is best known from his habit as a boy of goose-stepping through the villages in German military style. His brother, Harry, finally saw the light and abandoned smuggling for the Methodist lay ministry, despite which, like everyone else in the community, he remained on the best possible terms with the "free traders".

To the average Cornishman smuggling was a perfectly normal enterprise sanctified by centuries of tradition and upheld by every socially responsible person within the community. Perfectly respectable fishermen's wives conveyed illicit liquor ashore in bladders concealed beneath their petticoats without the slightest sense of doing wrong. At Polperro the common enemy revenue men were so heaped that at first they were unable to find lodgings ashore and were compelled to make their home on an old hulk near the quay.

The innumerable devices utilised by the Cornish smugglers for the purposes of keeping interlopers away included the ruthless exploitation of the ghost lore of Cornwall's haunted coastline. The usual method was to paint the cart containing the smuggled goods white and to muffle the wheels and horses' hooves with strips of flannel so that to an onlooker it had the semblance of a phantom coach. Parson Dodge, an early 18th-century vicar of Talland, who was a renowned exorcist, was once invited by the vicar of nearby Lamreath to investigate a spectral coach which, driven by a demon driver, hurried through the village at night creating great alarm. Dodge arrived on the scene cracking his whip to such effect that the demon driver emitted a shriek of terror, while the coach vanished and was seen no more. It was later discovered that Dodge was in league with a gang of smugglers from Polperro and that the phantom coach was their delivery service.

One stormy night about 200 years ago a ship sank with all hands off Mullion Cove. Afterwards, whenever there was to be a "run of tubs", a procession of phantom fishermen could be relied upon to march at dusk along the cliffs on the road to Helston.

The area of Morwenstow became the scene of an extraordinary series of events in the 18th century, when a terrifying Dane, who later earned the name "Crue! Coppingger", suddenly appeared on the beach during a dreadful storm. Coppingger became the leader of a gang of smugglers who terrorised the neighbourhood and thought nothing of murdering anyone who stood in their way. The old smugglers' roads they once used, which are called even now "Coppingger's tracks", lead to Steeple Brink, where the gang had its headquarters.

The forces of the law finally prevailed and Coppingger and his men were scattered. Their leader, realising that his reign of terror was over, was last seen standing on the beach waving his cutlass until a boat hove in sight. He boarded it and sailed away into the night and was never seen again, while all around him raged a tempest as terrible as that which had accompanied his strange arrival on the coast years before. His end, if such it was, was far more dramatic than the average smuggler, who enjoyed a comfortable and untroubled retirement.

IN BRITAIN.

HOSPITAL BENEFIT RATE INCREASED

THE QUEENSLAND manager of the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia, Mr. K. J. Allison, has announced that private hospital contribution rates were increased from August 1.

Mr. Allison said the new rate as directed by the Minister for Social Security is \$1.25 per week for families and 63c. per week for single persons.