

## **The Churches of Far West Cornwall - Trail 3. St Uny Lelant; St Erth; St Felicitas, Phillack; St Gwinear.**

Monday 1st Aug 2016

Not every summer day in Cornwall is a beach day! – in fact this one was very wet, all day. We packed a lunch bag and headed off in the car to ‘do a few churches’. The Diocese of Truro, together with the North Cornwall Heritage Coast and Countryside service publish ‘**Church Trails in Cornwall**’ – a pack of information cards covering most churches in the area, which are extremely useful when visiting. They are on sale in some churches.

Our first church on Trail 3 is dedicated to **St Uny, at Lelant near St Ives**, which overlooks a golf course and the Hayle estuary. The church is medieval and entirely built of granite. Parts of the nave arcades are Norman, but all of the windows are Perpendicular in style. In about 1150 the church was given to Tywardreath Priory; later the priory sold it to Bishop Bronescombe of Exeter. In 1272 Bishop Bronescombe appropriated it to Crediton collegiate church and the cure of souls became a vicarage. In the late 15th and early 16th-centuries the vicars of Lelant resisted the demands of the inhabitants of Towednack and St Ives for rights of sepulture in those places. When this was conceded in 1542 the vicars moved their residence to St Ives where they remained for three centuries. An early reference to the church is in 1170, when Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, referred to "The Church of Saint Euni". The feast of St Uny is observed on the first day of February. Like many other churches in Cornwall, St Uny's has a copy of a letter from King Charles thanking the people of Lelant for their support during the English Civil War.

William Worcester in his account of travels in Cornwall in 1478 records that St Uny, the brother of St Herygh,

was buried at the parish church of St Uny near the town of Lelant, and that his feast day was 1 February. According to him Uny and Herygh (patron of St Erth) were the brothers of St Ia, patron of St Ives (St Ia was an Irish princess who evangelised part of Cornwall).

Lelant was the centre of Euny's missionary work and the focus of the cult after his death.



A rainy day – the church of St Uny in Lelant.



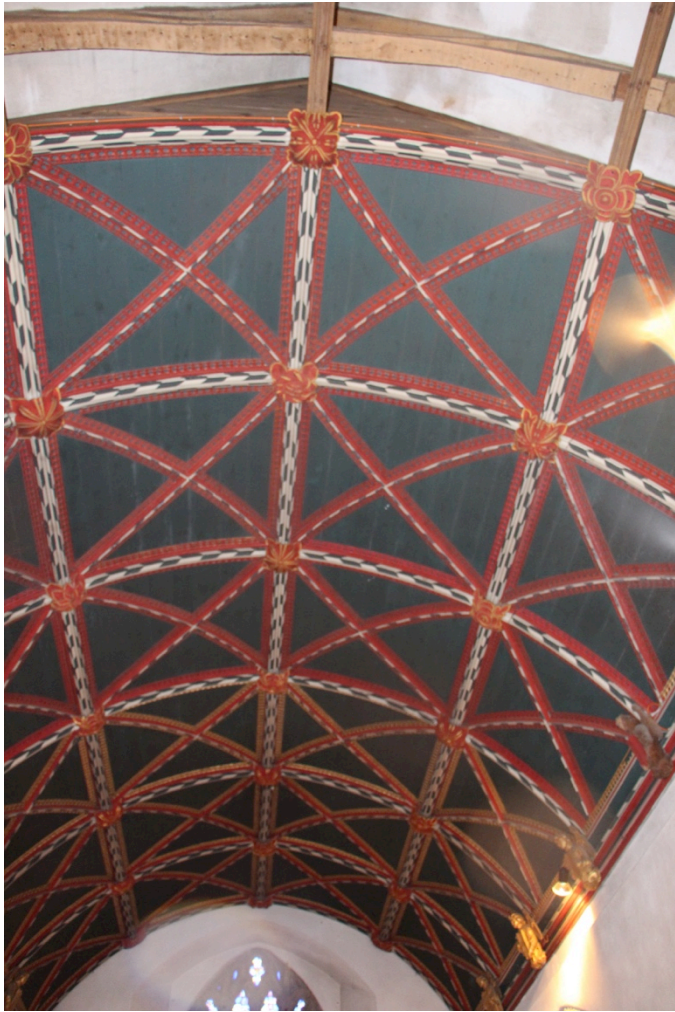
**Magda at the porch of St Uny, Lelant.**



**A primitive cross in the churchyard of St Uny.**



**An unusual sundial featuring 'Death' portrayed as a skeleton at St Uny, Lelant.**



The superb painted roof bosses and timbers at St Uny, Lelant.



Stained glass in the East window at St Uny – featuring four Cornish saints: St Uny, St Anta, St Ia and St Winwaloe. It is said St Anta had a chapel on the rocks at the entrance to Hayle River. A church dedicated to her is in Carbis Bay. Winwaloe was a 5<sup>th</sup> century saint born in Cornwall.



**St Uny Church is in a prominent position above the dunes to the West side of the Hayle estuary, and overlooks the estuary to the east and the open sea to the north. There is a golf course close to the church.**

Another 'blank' after we left Lelant – unfortunately the church at **St Erth** was closed to visitors due to a wedding that afternoon. St Erth is where visitors change trains on the main line to Penzance – a branch line connects them with St Ives. The porch was decorated with flowers in readiness for the service. However as with Gulval, there were some attractive features to see in the churchyard.

**St Erth** takes its name from **Saint Erc**, one of the many **Irish saints who brought Christianity to Cornwall** during the Dark Ages, and the village is at the old crossing point of the River Hayle. The church is 14<sup>th</sup> century and was restored in 1874.



The noticeboard at St Erth.





Wedding flowers decorated the entrance porch at St Erth in readiness for a wedding.



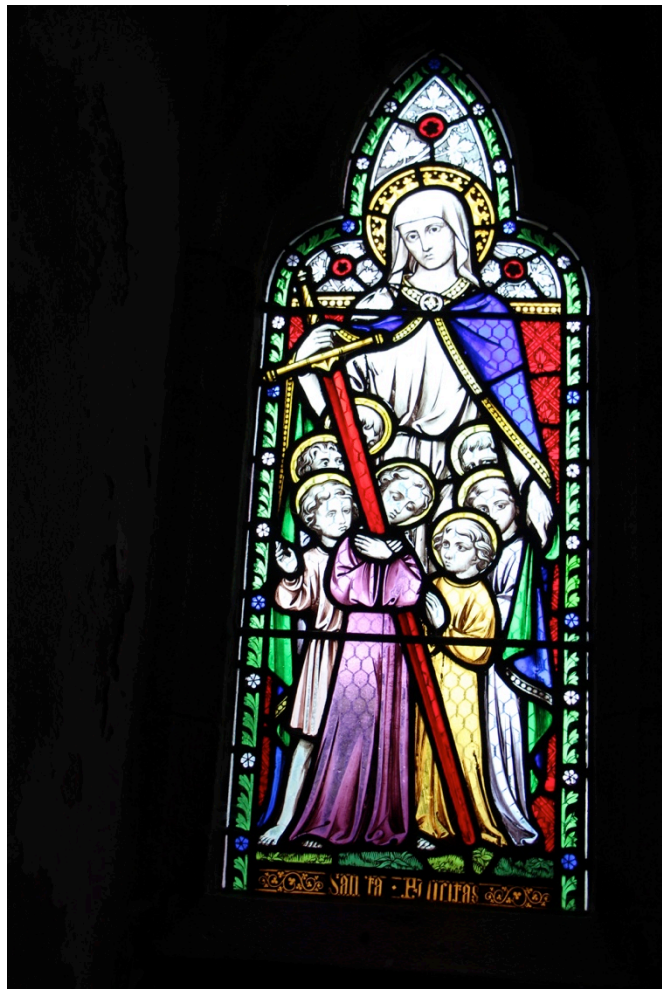
A cone-shaped stone in the St Erth churchyard.

We drove on to **St Felicitas at Phillack**. The church dates from the 12th century. The tower is 15th century. It was rebuilt between 1856 and 1857 by William White and re-consecrated on 12 May 1857.

**St Piala**, who gave her name to Phillack, first landed in the Hayle estuary from Ireland. The church has a 15<sup>th</sup> century tower; it was enlarged and substantially rebuilt in 1856-57.



We encountered another 'coffin rest' stone, part of the lych gate at St Felicitas, Phillack.



Window commemorating St Felicitas.



The nave at St Felicitas, Phillack.



Behind the altar, the reredos depicts Christ making Himself known in the breaking of bread.



The font dates from the Norman period, although it contains later embellishments.



The ornate rood screen at Phillack.



**A modern addition at St Felicitas – a wooden lectern with strikingly inventive design.**



**An interesting memorial at St Felicitas, Phillack to Alexa Grace Dignes la Touche and her sister Dorothy McLeod Dignes la Touche. John David Dignes La Touche was an Irish ornithologist, naturalist, and zoologist.**

Our final church on Trail 3 was **St Gwinear at Gwinear**. The church reflects the wealth of previous centuries – the area was a centre first for copper, then for silver and tin mining.

**Saint Gwinear** was a Celtic martyr, one of only two early Cornish saints whose biographies survived the Reformation. The *Life of Gwinear* was written in the early 14th century by a priest named Anselm, and has sometimes been printed among Saint Anselm's works.

Born in Ireland with the Irish name of Fingar, he was converted to Christianity by Saint Patrick and after spending time in Brittany went with 770 companions to Cornwall, landing at Hayle, where he was martyred by King Teudar. Saint Gwinear was said to have died with his followers by being thrown into a pit of reptiles.



The church of St Gwinear at Gwinear.





Starlings in the church porch at St Gwinear. Many churches have some form of netting to prevent birds entering the church itself.



**A very luxurious children's area at Gwinear.**



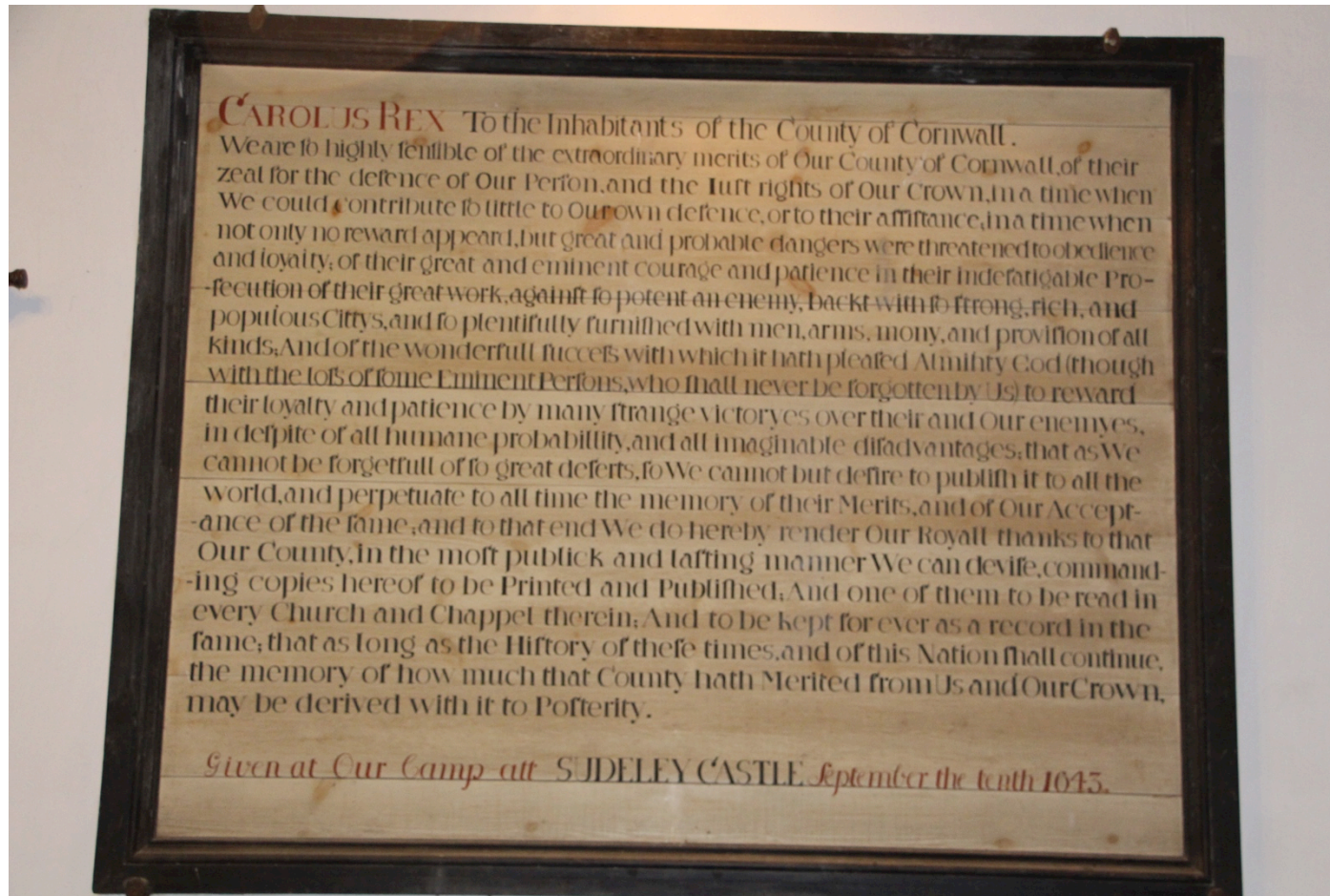
**Another example of an elaborately timbered roof at Gwinear, resembling an inverted boat.**



The altar and east window at St. Gwinear. The 19<sup>th</sup> century stained glass depicts the Crucifixion.



**A very attractive Lady Chapel area with unusual altar and colour-coordinated chairs!**



In common with many Cornish churches, St Gwinear has an illuminated address mounted on a wall from King Charles I, in thanks for the support given to him by the County during the English Civil War in his struggle against Parliament.



The organ at St Gwinear.



Elaborately carved pew benches at St Gwinear.

**Martin and Magda Jones**

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**14/8/16: First draft. Article to be updated later with more detail.**