



# BritClub News

Vol 25 Issue 1



## A MESSAGE TO THE MEMBERS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear all,

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2025 and special thanks to Olga for volunteering to take on the responsibility as Newsletter Editor, and thanks also to outgoing editor John.

This is a special year for the BritClub, it's our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In fact, it was October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2000 when a group of Brits, led by Sandra Cherry, met in the British Corner Shop and decided to form the Sarasota British Club. The shop was closed several years ago when Sandra retired but the Tripadvisor page is available, and you can still read the great reviews !

Sandra is still a member of the club and is now Director Emeritus. Shona Burtner, Audrey Sweeney and Ria Prowling were among the original members and still are with us so congratulations to all of them. Sounds like a great opportunity for a party !

Our membership today stands at 113; we had 14 new members join last year and we have 4 already this year. Under our Club Bi-Laws membership is available to "anyone of British heritage or with an interest in British Culture". A total of 56 members – half the total number - have joined in the last 3 years. Sorry to bore you with numbers but I am a retired accountant after all.

Looking ahead to this year, we shall be having our popular monthly luncheons usually on the last Friday of each month. We shall also be having a midweek evening social each month. So, keep an eye on your email in-boxes for the invitations.

The British Club will be coming out to support the Highland Games on Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup> with a tent in the Cultural Village. There will be a table, a couple of chairs for the weary and our club's banner adorning our location. We also have an opportunity to join the Caledonian Club for a Valentines Day luncheon on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

We are always open to suggestions from members for activities and if anyone has a community clubhouse that could host us, please let me know. I want to thank the Board members for their hard work and David has submitted a detailed report on our activities last year. We shall keep moving the club forward, but it all depends on your continuing support.

Best wishes, Peter Stokes, Club President.

### ***Words from David, our Vice President:***

Hi everyone! It's been a while since we were able to publish a Club Newsletter but herewith what can be regarded as an End of Year report card! For much of the year, we had our usual last-Friday-in-the-month lunch at a variety of restaurants in Venice/Sarasota/Bradenton/Palmetto locations. Participation varied largely depending on time of year but tended to average some 20 plus folk. Thanks to Linda for her hard work in putting the lunch program together.

Absent any noteworthy monarchical activities, we had no special events to celebrate; hopefully, King Charles III will recover from his cancer diagnosis to continue what we believe is a highly popular reign; we also hope that Kate makes a full recovery from her cancer to fully resume her royal duties.

Total membership currently stands at 113 and many of the new members are much younger than the "Old Guard". The AGM in May reinstated familiar faces to the Board, with Peter continuing as Club President, David as VP and Membership Secretary, Olga as Treasurer and Christine as Secretary, with other Board members including Paul, Linda, Stewart, John and Stevan. Stevan is usually accompanied and aided by his young son George, a most fitting name for a Brit Club member!

We ask anyone interested, to join the Board, several of the existing members have been in their positions for several years and fresh blood would certainly be welcome.

Remarkably, the area was hit by two hurricanes in less than a month, Milton being probably the worst of the two. It was an unnerving experience to have to go through and one not to be repeated. So far as we know, few members suffered really serious damage; the Turners who spend a lot of time in the UK lost their condo in Venice and the complex they were in may not be rebuilt. It seems that they will not be returning to the US. They have been part of SBC since 2016 and will be missed - but have agreed to keep in touch and will continue to receive any communication sent out by the Club. We wish them both well in the coming years.

That all having been said, the year closed on a positive note. In October, we had a very well attended lunch at PF Chang's with a crowd well over 30. Our traditional celebration of Guy Fawkes went even better, with getting on for 50 participants, and an exceedingly good night was had by all. Chef Roger did us all proud - he has already been booked for a repeat performance next year! Peter came up with what he claimed to be a simpler quiz to last year's, and the Royal Toast was followed by the "Remember, remember" poem dedicated to Mr. GF. The evening celebration concluded with a display of sparklers and a sterling rendition of "God Save the King".

The weather was kind to us despite being a tad blustery, but everyone coped adequately. Hardy Brits!!

Somehow, we managed to forget the ritual of burning the guy, so he'll get a reprieve till next year.

We ended the year with our Christmas Party, we changed venues and timing but with still the traditional British Christmas Fair. We gathered at the Stoneybrook Golf and Country Club on Sunday, December 15th for a buffet lunch rather than our usual evening dinner/dance. We are delighted to say, this year, that the lunchtime event enticed more members to attend but also to stay and socialise longer. Also, the cost was a reasonable \$35 per head, to include all food, tips and a (limited!) choice of alcoholic drink on arrival ;Feedback from members attending the lunch was overwhelmingly favorable, in respect of the venue and the quality of the meal.

This year it was decided that there would be a more limited raffle and the sterling efforts of Roger and Vivienne Michels in selling the raffle tickets yielded some \$500, an absolutely wonderful achievement! Thanks to those members who generously donated to win food hampers, wines and a free haircut/shampoo (courtesy of the Yellow Strawberry salon on Lakewood Ranch) also, to those who contributed the prizes. We are delighted to advise that the proceeds of the raffle will be donated to "Feeding Empty Little Tummies" (FELT) a non-profit organization dedicated to "feeding the most needy - homeless and food insecure - students one back-pack at a time". It currently provides for 1,450 students from 66 schools in Manatee County; more information can be obtained at its website "[feltinc.org](http://feltinc.org)" or through Facebook.

Looking to 2025, apart from plans to repeat what was clearly a successful Christmas Party and our ever-popular Guy Fawkes BBQ, the Brit Club will be celebrating its 25th anniversary and we propose to mark this notable milestone. Further details will be forthcoming as soon as possible - so keep an eye on your emails! We will also , on a trial basis, be reinstating the evening social get togethers at some local hostelry. Younger members are still gainfully employed so taking time off to attend a lunch is often difficult for them. Evening activities, even if it's just a meet for a few drinks and or a meal, gives an opportunity to enjoy what the Club has to offer. The first of these took place at Brew Life Brewing on January 16th.

One of the reasons for the lack of a Newsletter in recent months has been the lack of content apart from reports on lunch meetings. Members were encouraged to submit short articles that might be of interest. Such articles were forthcoming for a while but then dried up - so, to enable a more continuous Newsletter production, you are again encouraged to send in something that you feel might be appropriate. It could be an experience on an interesting cruise (cruising seems to be increasingly popular these days), a hobby or unusual interest, specific reason for coming to and/or settling in the US, interesting work experience, places visited etc. - the only condition would be that insertion will be at the discretion of the editor!



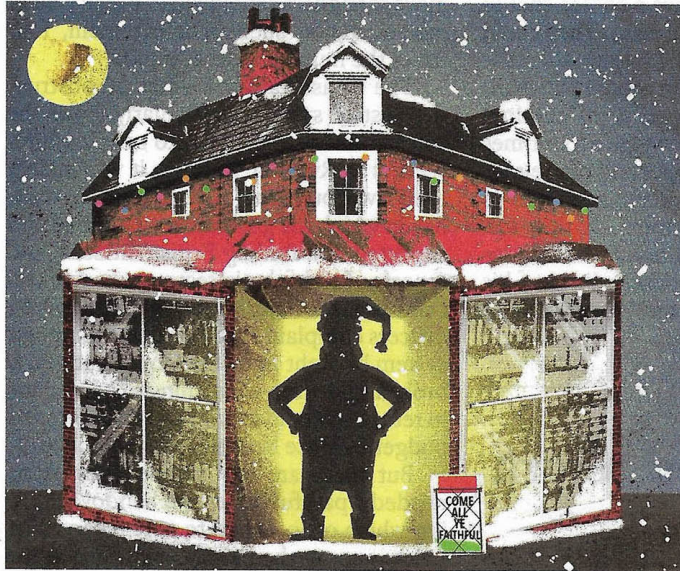
***The following is a contribution from Colette Penn:***

***“Britain’s corner shops will never die”***

***by Bagehot***, published in The Economist, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

## BAGEHOT *The eternal Bossman*

*Britain's corner shops will never die*



FOR A FEW weeks every December, Denmark Hill Food & Wine is transformed from a corner shop in south London into Santa's grotto. About 250 parcels are scattered about the poky shop, beneath Pulp Riot hair dye, bottles of Ribena, tea bags and condoms. Big packages are stuffed into overflowing sacks; small ones are arranged neatly in requisitioned shopping baskets. It is mid-morning. Another 250 packages are due at 1pm.

Becoming a gonzo post office is only the latest shift in the evolution of Bossman, a name (originating in London slang) for those who run a small shop in Britain. Corner shops have become the high street of last resort. Post offices and banks have retreated, leaving the fiddly tasks of paying in cash and collecting parcels or benefits underserved. Bossman has filled the gap.

It is these services that have helped Britain's 35,000-strong independent corner shops stay alive. Parcels are only one part. Customers of online-only banks, such as Monzo, can deposit cash wherever there is a PayPoint, a British payments company that works with corner shops. Benefits can be paid out in cash via corner shops in the same way. About 4m households—roughly one in seven—are on pre-payment gas and electricity meters, meaning they have to schlep to a shop whenever it runs out. Bossman is happy to offer almost any service, provided enough customers buy a can of Diet Coke on their way out.

Corner shops have always moulded themselves to fit British society. When supermarkets first emerged in the 1950s, they began to steamroller small shops. They were kept alive by arrivals from Punjab and Gujarat, who leapt at the opportunity to swap factory work for the chance to work for themselves. Corner shops went from producing politicians such as Margaret Thatcher, a former prime minister, to politicians such as Priti Patel, a former home secretary. Strip out race and the story of the *petit bourgeois* made good is a corner-shop constant.

What Bossman stocks tells a story, too. Corner shops thrive via a cocktail of convenience and vice. Once the staple business of corner shops was cigarettes, alcohol and newspapers, alongside pornographic magazines, with black dots delicately placed over nipples. Now, amid the ramshackle piles of parcels that adorn eve-

ry other shop, adverts for vapes have replaced posters of the Marlboro Man. American-style candy does well. So does Monster, an energy drink that competes with Red Bull via the ruse of selling itself by the half-litre. At the same time, fresh produce now takes up more shelf space. Bossman will provide whatever someone needs whenever they need it, whether milk and pornography back then or a lump of ginger and a pint of Monster today.

Bossman is in the right part of the market. Convenience commands a premium. Trip frequency is growing (now just under three times a week) as is basket size, says Lumina Intelligence, which researches the sector. The "treat mission"—a fantastic piece of jargon—is on the up. Forget the lipstick effect, when women splash out on affordable luxuries in a downturn. Bossman benefits from the Tony's Chocolonely effect: if people cannot afford a night out, they will splurge £4 (\$5.10) on the lurid Dutch chocolate to eat in front of the telly instead.

Parcels will become only a more significant driver of footfall, and not just at Christmas. Evri, a delivery company, now drops 180m parcels a year into shops, or 22.5% of all its deliveries. Each packet earns a shop 30p or so. The hassle is worth it. Some handle a few hundred a week; others manage thousands. A lot of people have to run a calorie gauntlet at the till.

Shoplifting may be at a 20-year high. Yet inside any corner shop is a testament to man's better nature, with thousands of pounds' worth of parcels, containing everything from children's toys to subtly packaged iPhones left unstolen. The Post Office has become a byword for bureaucratic malfeasance, wrongly accusing hundreds of sub-postmasters of theft, as well as poor service, with package collection available for a few hours per day, whereas Bossman is open from dawn until the dead of night. Bossman Britain is a vision of a high-trust society.

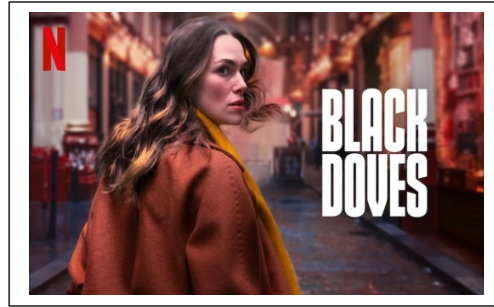
For years, the big grocers have attempted to muscle into the convenience sector. Bossman has held almost steady. Independents still account for 71% of all convenience stores. About half of them have their own brand. The other half are franchises such as Nisa, owned by the Co-op, or Londis, owned by Tesco. If you cannot beat Bossman, join him. After all, Bossman has tools that Tesco does not. Encouraging staff to work overnight can be expensive; cajoling family members to do the 4am shift, or doing it yourself, is cheap. Bossman economics are different.

### Cornering a market

The life of a Bossman is not all rosy. Rises in the minimum wage and employer national-insurance contributions will hurt. Government is increasingly fussy. A ban on the sale of cigarettes to anyone born from 2009 onwards will in time cut an already depleted moneymaker. Single-use vapes, another cash cow, are to be nixed. A ban on teenagers buying energy drinks is mooted. From this perspective, the future looks grim.

Yet Bossman will prevail. To see how, pop down on Christmas Day. Bossman will be busy. Searches for "convenience store" peak during the festive week. Parcels must be returned (one year, PayPoint clocked a parcel return at 6.30am, suggesting an emotional start to festivities in a corner of Merseyside). Perhaps the money in the boiler has run out. Maybe *someone* forgot to buy milk. Bossman will be there. Someone has to be. ■

**Media Matters**, By Paul Wilkinson.



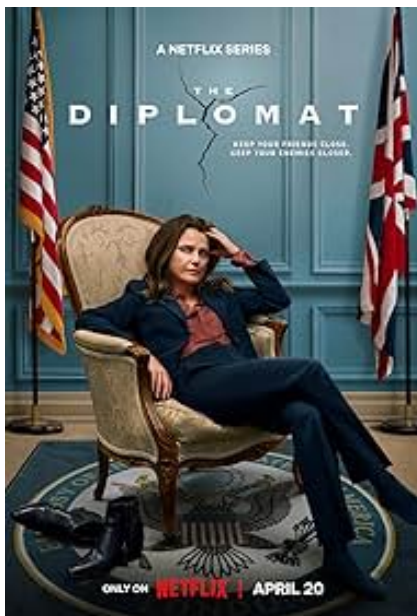
It's been a while since I have updated readers with our viewing tastes, so here are some recommendations for you, based on the apps for which we are paying.

## Netflix

I recently upgraded our account to the premium Hi-Def video and sound, and I think it is worth the extra \$7 per month if you have a good tv and surround sound system. Good new movies have been lacking, of late, but we enjoyed ***In the Heart of the Sea***, a seafaring spectacle loosely based on the Moby Dick story. We watched ***It Ends With Us*** in order to be updated with the Hollywood legal fiasco between the two stars. ***Afraid*** was a good Sci-Fi artificial intelligence tale.

***That Christmas*** was a fun British animated tale, but ***Wallace and Grommit Murder Most Fowl*** was disappointing.

***Black Doves*** was an excellent series starring Keira Knightley and is definitely worth watching as was the second season of ***The Diplomat***. We also enjoyed the arctic period adventure ***The Terror***.



## Amazon Prime



There is a lot of good stuff on this channel, and we particularly enjoy the additional subscription service of **BritBox** for our favorite classic comedies, *Dad's Army*, *Rising Damp*, *Hi de Hi*, *Porridge*, *Yes Minister* and *'Allo 'Allo*. Some of these come with warnings that the show was created in a bygone era when social norms were different from today's!!! There are endless episodes of *Escape to the Country* if you are looking for a taste of home.

By the time you read this, the new series of *Reacher* will likely be available. I am a big fan of Lee Child's books and love the tv show. (BTW, the audio books are great too!).

## Apple TV



I read recently that this service has a 'small but devoted audience' and that new shows are added "at a snail's pace". While this latter statement has some merit, there are some outstanding shows here. Foremost among them is *Slow Horses*, with a spectacular performance by Gary Oldman. (BTW, the audio books are also fantastic)

Other shows we rate highly are *Silo*, *Ted Lasso*, *Bad Sisters*, *Bad Monkey*, *Foundation*, *Presumed Innocent*, we could not engage with *Severance* or *Dark Matter*,

## Max



I am enjoying the new show *The Pitt*, an emergency room drama in which the patients are the stars, and some of them don't make it!

## FUTURE EVENTS

### **February Pub Night:**

On Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at Shakespeare's English Pub, from 5:30 pm and on...  
Address: 3550 South Osprey Ave. Sarasota, 34239

### **February Luncheon:**

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup>, location to be announced ; please check your emails for details.

### **Invitation from the Suncoast Scots:**

**2ND ANNUAL**  
**Suncoast Scots**  
**Highland Games**  
**& Celtic Festival**

FEB 1, 2025  
8:30AM - 6PM  
Sarasota County Fairgrounds

- PIPING & DRUMMING
- ATHLETICS
- LIVE MUSIC
- VENDORS, FOOD, & MORE!

**CELTIC JAM**  
**FRI | JAN 31**  
Gates open at 4:30pm with  
music beginning at 5pm  
(Ticketed Event)

SCAN ME!

For More Info visit: [suncoastscots.com](http://suncoastscots.com)

**Invitation from the Caledonian Club:**



*Caledonian Club of Florida West hosting*

# Frugal Day

## Buffet Luncheon

*at Venice Golf and Country Club*

**FEB** | **11:30-2:30PM**  
**14** | 250 Venice Golf Club Drive  
Venice, FL 34292

**Social time is 11:00am | Luncheon from 11:30-2:30pm**  
**Price is \$25 (OPEN SEATING)**  
**Credit Cards Only for Alcoholic Drinks**

Checks made out to Caledonian Club of Florida West and mailed **only to Mary Ellen McMahon**, 2375 Arugula Drive, North Port, Florida 34289. Deadline for responses is Feb. 10

**Bring one signed Valentine card to the event.**

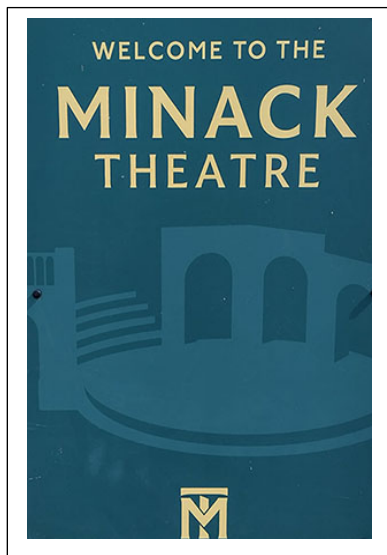




***A visit to the proms:*** by Peter Stokes

Imagine for a moment being surrounded by flag waving people, dressed in patriotic outfits, cheering to the rousing sounds of the orchestra playing Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance". With flags flying in the fresh sea breeze ... wait a moment, this can't be the Royal Albert Hall !

It is the proms, but these are over 300 miles away from London, hanging on the edge of a sheer cliff overlooking the English Channel in beautiful sunshine. Welcome to the Cornish Proms at Minack Theater with seats literally carved into a cliff face on the southwest coast of Cornwall.



Admittedly we were very fortunate with the weather - mind you, wind and rain rarely put a damper on the show at the Minack - or so I'm told. This unique theater location has been in operation for over 90 years and is literally a hidden gem in the English cultural scene.

I found out about it by pure luck while browsing the internet prior to our September holiday to Cornwall. The only way I could buy tickets in time was to have a friend in the UK telephone the box office to buy the tickets for me and email them. Driving to the theater is even more of a challenge down those single-track roads that scrape along the sides of your car. Fortunately, we were driving a rental car, so it wasn't my paint. Timing your drive is key, for if you go too early, you'll find your way blocked by a long stream of cars coming towards you trying to leave. But it is all worth it !

The theater was originally built, or should I say "hewn" out of the granite rock face by Rowena Cade with help from her gardener Billy in the early 1930s and it has been improved and expanded over the years since

It is a remarkable place, albeit not so comfortable unless you bring your own cushion, along with the champagne and miniature union jacks. The climb up and down the steep steps is not for the faint of heart or weak kneed, so use your own discretion before deciding to try it. Actually, the best seats are down at the bottom because you can sit on some soft grass in-between the rock.



So, if your travel plans to the UK include a trip to the southwestern corner, I really encourage you to arrange a visit to the Minack Theater. Their website and box office can be found at: <https://www.minack.com> and it has a Wikipedia page. For Olga and I, it truly was the highlight of our UK trip last September.



## From your editor:

Firstly, I'd like to give thanks to the members who have contributed to this edition with special big thanks to our outgoing Newsletter editor John Burdette.

## A bit of Cornwall for you

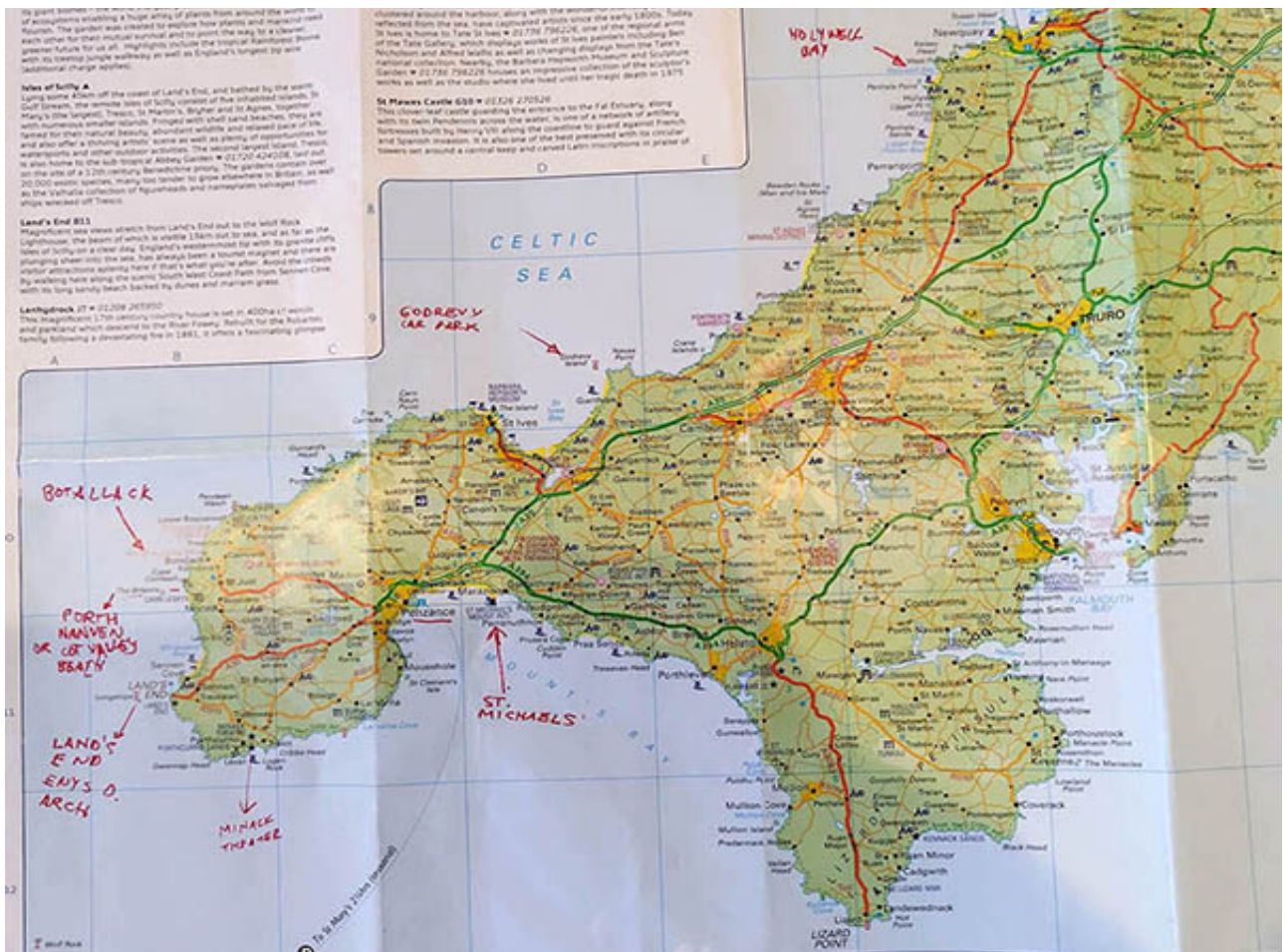
Dear friends, it was a great pleasure for me to visit the Southwest corner of England for the first time. I was born in Argentina in a subtropical area of dark red soil, full of rivers, waterfalls and luscious vegetation; needless to say, I love my native land.

After marrying Peter here however, I realized that there is room in my heart for a lot more; he is always telling me stories and teaching me about the British Isles and England in particular.

I have seen more tv programs of British culture, history and wildlife that I can count.

The more I learn, the more I love, my favorite: nature.

Last year we decided to spend one week in Cornwall and after serious research we wrote in the map a few places to visit. We set base in Penzance.



## Carnewas at Bedruthan



The local Astronomy Club getting their telescopes ready for the night sky. Very knowledgeable and friendly people who welcomed everybody and let us to peek through their lenses.



*We and other photographers trespassed the allowed line for the public, climbed the wall, hiked a bit more and shared our stories while enjoying this view during the Golden Hour.*



*And finally, the glorious setting of the sun!*

**Porth Nanven**



Known by the locals as Cot Valley Beach , it is not the easiest place to find, being located at the very end of a narrow minor road from the village of St Just. The beach is covered in large, beautiful oval boulders that resemble dinosaur eggs.

At low tide, a small stretch of sand can be revealed and out to sea are a couple of small islands called The Brisons.



*A visit during the early afternoon...*



*...Went back again in the evening, although we were not alone.*

By the time it got dark, it was cold, windy and not so easy to find our way back to Penzance. Peter had enough of climbing walls and crawling on large rocks just to see a pretty sunset; from that moment, the only place we went to in the dark was the pub!



*The clouds reminded me that when you cannot keep coming back every day to take the shot you dream of, just do what you can with what you've got today and enjoy the moment.*



## ***Land's End***

Land's End is the most westerly point in England right down on Cornwall's South Coast. Close to the entrance there is a tourist complex with a large pay and display car park. From the car park we saw a group of people walking away taking the coastal path, we followed in that direction and after walking for a few minutes we started seeing the incredible beauty of this part of the Cornish coastline.

There are old stories and legends about this landmark, but I was completely taken by what my eyes were seeing ahead of me, and when I turned around , there they were: the Enys Dodnan rock arch and the Armed Knight little island.





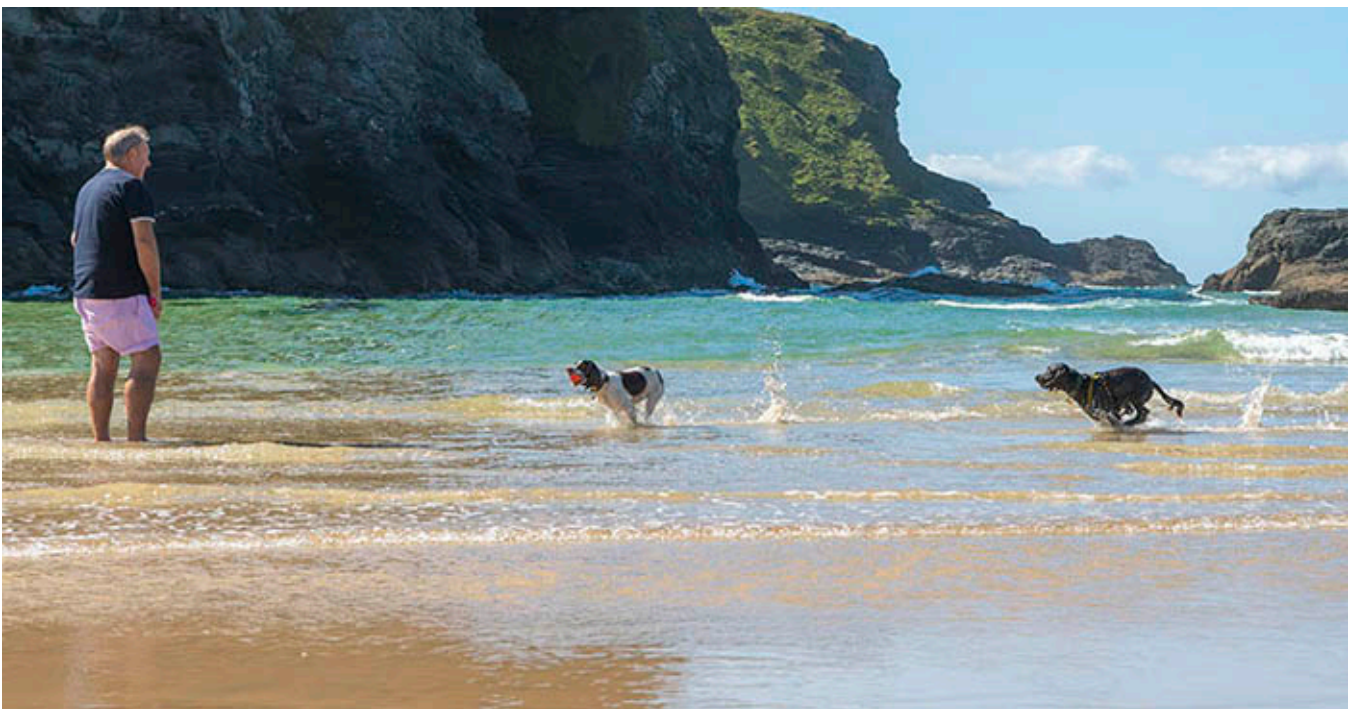
*Leaving the buildings behind, the view of this rugged coastline.*



*A closer view of the Enis Dodnan rock arch and the Armed Knight behind.*

### ***Watergate Bay***

This extensive beach is set just about three miles north of Newquay and is a long stretch of golden sand backed by high cliffs. Many surfers and families come to visit, most people bring their dogs along and play joyfully in the water. The lifeguards of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution patrol the beach a good part of the year including weekends during the cold weather.



***Close to home:***



*Photo by Peter Stokes.*

January and the first week of February are a good time to see the manatees gathering in places with warm water; this morning (Jan 28<sup>th</sup>), Peter and I took a 40 miles drive to see them at the Manatee Viewing Center of the Tampa power station.

If you feel like doing the trip, just go on I-75 heading North, take exit 246 towards Apollo Beach and in a few minutes you'll be there. Don't worry about the parking, it is free and there are two overflow parking lots; from there, you can walk the paths to the visitor center or take the complimentary golf cart ride.

Please visit our website: [sarasotabritishclub.com](http://sarasotabritishclub.com)

If you want to contact us, send an email to : [sarasotabritclub@gmail.com](mailto:sarasotabritclub@gmail.com)

*Your Newsletter Editor, Olga*

### **Sarasota British Club name badges**

Please obtain Club badges directly from ***Sarasota Trophy, 6601 Superior Ave, Sarasota, FL 34321.***

***Phone 941 921 4339.***

- \$15.50 plus tax for badge with magnet
- \$15.50 plus tax for badge with pin (no magnet)

Badges can be collected in person (Mon.– Fri. 8.30 – 5pm, Sat .9 am – noon) or shipped to your home for an additional charge.

## **SARASOTA BRITISH CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2025**

President	Peter Stokes
Vice President	David Welch
Secretary	Christine Green
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Treasurer & Newsletter	Olga Stokes
Director at Large 1	Paul Wilkinson
Director at Large 2	Linda Mercurio
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