

In my research, I have come across a Reverend W A Houston Collisson who was a sort of "pop star" of his day, not a combination you would think of as being harmonious with his religious work.

Apparently before he came to live in St. Tudy, he was quite a famous song writer, organist and comic opera singer, actor and composer. He was born in Dublin and went to school with his lifelong friend, Mr Percy French, who also became famous for composing and entertaining, and wrote and performed with Reverend Collisson on stage. He was assistant to Reverend Bridgewater, and lived at Wetherham for three years – 1898 to 1901.

I was lucky enough to find a book he wrote on his travels in Ireland about eight years later. He said "I am writing a book about Ireland, so I must not say too much about Cornwall", but some of my dearest friends are in that delectable Duchy. My farewell to St. Tudy was one of the most trying experiences of my life, and I went away knowing that I left behind me many true friends, who regretted my departure as much as I regretted leaving them. Can I say more? The parishioners presented me with a purse of sovereigns and every possible expression of esteem, regard and affection. When I said "good-bye", I cried steadily from St. Tudy to Exeter as the train bore me away to my new home in London.

He also tells a story about Stafford Button who was a servant at Wetherham at the time, and also a principal boy, who just a few years later went to fight in WW1 and luckily survived.

I wonder if memories of the St. Tudy men, who shortly afterwards became soldiers, influenced him in his future endeavours to raise money for the war charities? He had raised "quietly and unobtrusively" around £30,000, equal to £1,349,000.00 in today's money at the time of his death by doing concerts all over England.

He collapsed and died just after taking a requiem in London for his lifelong friend, Percy French, who had died the previous week in Ireland. It shows how much he was loved, as Percy's widow came down from Dublin to attend Reverend Collisson's funeral, days after her own husband's, bearing in mind that travelling such distances was not such an easy task in the 1920's.

Reverend Collisson was described in newspapers all over England as "*the funniest man in England*", and I know from a number of articles I have read, that he put on various entertainments in the village, so I can see why he was so popular and so missed when he left St. Tudy.