



News from the St. Tudy History Group Research Team

How can someone who was born in April some 425 years ago still dominate our thoughts and discussions in 2024? It seems that no matter what I am doing, Oliver Cromwell, whether it is listening to a quiz, tv, or the radio, is mentioned.

I always like to find the real person behind the stories, and had only previously known a little about Cromwell, and had made my mind up that he was a cruel power crazed tyrant, but had I fallen into the trap of judging him on the writings of historians?

Oliver started life as a commoner. When his father died he was 18, Oliver left the Puritan school he attended to look after his family. He married Elizabeth Bourchier in 1620 when he was 21 years old, and from surviving letters it seems they had a close and loving marriage with nine children who he encouraged and helped in their lives. He suffered with depression in his early 30's, and then had a spiritual awakening. From reading many biographies on him, I have found that he was in fact an amazing fair and broad minded individual, with an ability for organisation, who only seemed to want to do the right thing for England and stuck to his principles.

But, as you know, I always like to find a local connection. Reading the Cornwall Gazetteer on the English Civil War I found, "on the 1st of March 1646, Cromwell and his men occupied St. Tudy to counter any attempt by Hopton to strike north-east from Bodmin and out flank the main parliamentary army approaching from Launceston". But where did Cromwell stay in St. Tudy with 1000 horses and 400 dragoons? Humphrey Nicoll of Penvose and his son, Anthony, were heavily involved in negotiations between the two sides in Cornwall and were supporters of Cromwell. It is highly likely that Cromwell stayed with Anthony Nicholls at Penvose. The Gazetteer then says "St. Tudy's distinguished visitor had a peaceful day. On the 2nd of March he moved to rejoin Fairfax". Looking at his journey as best I can from Penvose, his army travelled past where Trehellis House Hotel is now, pulling over the fleur de lys Cornish stone post which offended him, on their way to Wadebridge to secure the bridge from Cornish Royalists, nearly 400 years ago the medieval bridge was considered so strategically important that Oliver Cromwell came to take it in person.

Oliver Cromwell is not only part of England's history, but more importantly he is part of our St. Tudy history, and will, I am sure, continue to be talked about for the next hundred years!

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