



News from the History Group Research Team

Well, here are some things I thought I would share about customs and sayings, and how they came about from the 1500's.

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and they still smelt pretty good by June. However, since they were just starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide their body odour, this became the custom of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all their sons, then the women and finally the children, last of all the babies. By that time, the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it, and so this is how the saying "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" came about.

The roofs in St. Tudy were thatched before slate and they had an open wooden frame underneath for support. It was the best place for animals to keep warm, so all the small animals like cats, dogs, mice and bugs all lived in the roof. When it rained the thatch became slippery, and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof, hence the saying "it's raining cats and dogs". I am not fully convinced on this one though!

The floor of the common houses were made of dirt, hence the saying "dirt poor". The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way, - a "thresh hold".

Sometimes people could obtain pork, this made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "bring home the bacon". They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and "chew the fat".

Bread was divided according to status, workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the "upper crust".

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days, and the family would gather around to eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up, thus holding "a wake".

And all of this would have gone on in St. Tudy in the 1500's. There is still evidence of people keeping and salting pigs, thatched roofs in Thomas Rowlandson's painting of St. Tudy, and we know that ale was drunk here too - a tradition that still carries on today!