

BOOK REVIEW

From the Highlands & Islands to west Cornwall: the life and times of a Reluctant Aristocrat

I'VE YET to see one. One may have already been written; but if not there should be an anthology of 'Coming to Cornwall' stories. The how and the reason why for coming. Every 'incomer' has a circumstantial tale to tell.

Some came first to train for the D-day landings then returned and settled after that war. Some came to be artists, poets and writers. Denis Val Baker's *The Sea's in the Kitchen* perhaps being the all time classic as an 'arrival novel'. Some like the singer/songwriter Donovan Leitch came, with his pal Gypsy Dave to be beatniks in St Ives. Everyone has a greater, or lesser story to tell but the variety of experience often astounds.

Among the aforesaid many Scots settled in St Ives and west Cornwall after WWII. This was by virtue of the fact that a commando training unit stationed in the town actually came under Scottish Command. The how and the why of that is yet another story.

Before them, there was the same familiarity between local fishermen coming into contact with Scottish lasses from the herring fishery. These girls packed the catch as the Scottish fleet followed the shoals around the UK coast from north to south each year.

None of these Scots were in any way aristocratic, although Mrs Jean MacDonald-Clarke – a direct descendant of the chiefs of Clan MacDonald, who resided in Carbis Bay for some years, could perhaps have claimed aristocratic links, pre the Jacobite rebellion!

LIFE-STYLE

Pomp and circumstance, banquets and balls, might be assumed conventional fare in the life of Scottish aristocrat Sir James William Guy Mackenzie, 5th Baronet of Glenmuick. But, a tad 'reluctant' about that life-style his unconven-



GUY MACKENZIE with some of his renowned guitar collection. The Internet has been a boon to the collector who also makes video interviews with his guitar heroes. However, he's a drummer. Guitars are not an instrument he plays.

tional life saw him take no predestined path, although he remains proud of his family's achievements and his heritage.

A Reluctant Aristocrat: Assorted Memories of my Unconventional Life by Guy Mackenzie is his look through his life which took him through a series of experiences which, extraordinarily could be described as 'iconic moments' in the history of his times, and the places.

While Guy might, at times, have been on the edge of high class scandal – his cousin was the murdered Josslyn Errol, played by the actor Charles Dance in the film *White Mischief* – and rubbed shoulders with his aristocratic peers, he's happier behind his drum kit or interviewing one of his guitar heroes.

The real 'aristocracy' for Guy is that of Rock 'n' Roll after being present at the now legendary Beatles' concert at Stowe School in Buckinghamshire on April 4th 1963.

GUITARS

It might not be 'unconventional' for people to collect guitars but it is certainly most unusual to collect these wondrous 'axes' if you don't even play them! With well over 200, some legendary, Guy, a semi-pro rock drummer and sometime promoter is simply obsessed with them. Guitars he feels are for musicians, which he doesn't regard himself as, while drums are for 'making a noise' and he's happy with that!

Before discovering our own 'scene', most of us '60s kids had a longing for America.

Cultural influence came with television and Rock 'n' Roll in the mid-1950s, not to be diluted until December 1963 when The Beatles told the Yanks *I Wanna Hold your Hand* and America braced itself for the 'British Invasion'. We wanted to cruise down past 77 *Sunset Strip* comb our hair, or flipping it, like Edd Byrnes' character *Kookie* in the series, then get our kicks on Route 66. Perhaps, then, it's not all that surprising that the unconventional heir to a Scottish baronetcy should be attracted to America, all things



APPROPRIATE: as a developer Guy specialised in restoring derelict buildings and bringing them back into service while respecting the vernacular of traditional Cornish architecture as these before (right) and after (above) photographs of Wheal Buller in Kerrier illustrate.



'hair' (wigs not exempted!) and – the road. It was pretty conventional to dream of that mythical road trip along the legendary Route 66 but pretty unconventional to actually do it, selling hair products as you went. Guy did this, chicks and all!

ROYAL DEESIDE

Guy's memoir takes us from Bal-later on Royal Deeside, to Calgary on the Isle of Mull through adventures in London, across America until, eventually he came to west Cornwall. Here, he became a property developer and a local councillor in Kerrier.

Here I must confess an interest. In assisting Guy with his book we found that at different times and for different reasons we had both frequented the same locations in Scotland and Cornwall. I spent several good holidays on the sacred Isle of Iona, sea kayaking around Mull and reconnected with my love of Scottish folk music at Calgary and in Tobermory.

I knew the often gnarly 'scene' around the derelict cottages Guy developed at Treen having been a

sometime regular at Gurnard's Head Hotel from the mid-'60s.

The pub lies in the heart of Cornwall's main sea-cliff climbing area and while climbers often come across naked couples 'in flagrante delicto' on remote cliff tops, I have yet to experience a performance as graphic as Sir Guy did on the climbers' bouldering (and nudist beach) of Pedn Vounder.

From the Highlands and Islands of his Scottish homeland to Swinging Sixties London, then getting his kicks on Route 66, somehow Sir Guy found his way to Cornwall – Wow! What a story.

A Reluctant Aristocrat: Assorted Memories of my Unconventional Life ISBN 978-1-7398890-4-3, B5 paperback, 144 pages, colour throughout; is published by the St Ives Printing & Publishing Company price £12.99. Available through the 'stivesnews' website, the *Times & Echo* shop.

Also search 'Guy Mackenzie' or 'Guy Mackenzie guitar collection' to find a large variety of videos online about his guitars and interviews with his guitar heroes.

Toni Carver



FAMOUS GUITAR: Guy pictured with his Blue Moon guitar originally made for the band Showaddywaddy which he briefly reunited with the band when they visited Falmouth on their UK tour in 2010.