

## CHAPTER 4

### CORNISH CONSCIOUSNESS

In this chapter we set out to identify evidence related to the group consciousness of the Cornish in the period before the 1860s. In pursuing this we move from the image of the region and its inhabitants to the other aspect that, according to Paasi (1986), makes up the regional identity – the consciousness of the region's population. Regional consciousness cohered around symbols and can thus be viewed as part of Paasi's stage of symbolic shaping. However, an important element in regional consciousness is the construction of boundaries between the group and those outside. This boundary creation helps shape the group and is, for Paasi, part of the territorial shaping of a region. The argument in this chapter is that, while containing some ambiguous dimensions, the territorial and symbolic shaping in this period was a crucial stage in the longer-term development of a Cornish territorial identity. This identity can be viewed as a form of ethnic identification which established certain symbols that took on greater significance later, in the twentieth century. In this sense, we begin to restore some continuity between Cornwall's 'industrial' and 'post-industrial' phases and to challenge those perspectives that see few connections across the economically depressed years of the late 1860s and 1870s.

#### ***A self-opinionated people***

A clear pride in being Cornish had emerged by the 1850s. Increasing interest in 'eminent Cornishmen' in the early nineteenth century was one indication of this local patriotism. A correspondent to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* in 1811 wrote:

I have been highly gratified (in common, no doubt, with every Cornishman who is alive to the honour of his native county) at perusing in your late

papers the substance of the scientific lectures of our excellent countryman Dr [Humphry] Davy (*RCG*, 16th March).

Asked what reason there could be for producing the *Cornish Magazine* in 1826, the editors responded that 'in the County of Cornwall there existed much talent, indigenous as one may say to the soil (witness the names of Sir Humphry Davy, Woolcott, Opie, Borlase, Polwhele etc., etc.)' (anon, 1826). And even the uncompromisingly dour Methodist journal, *The Cornish Banner*, ran a series of 'sketches of eminent Cornishmen' in 1847 (*The Cornish Banner*, January 1847, 201-205).

As Everitt points out, a gentrified 'county' or 'local' patriotism was not uncommon in the early nineteenth century (Everitt, 1979). But how deeply did this gentry patriotism spread? Francis Harvey, writing in the 1860s in South Africa as an emigrant from the engineering centre of Hayle, leaves us in no doubt about his allegiances:

Confessedly an enthusiastic lover of my own dear Cornwall, I am proud of the opportunity to justify the manifold excellencies of our 'one and all' 'Tre, Pol and Pen' men against the unworthy attacks of ignorant accusers ... [against] ... England's first, best county! (Harvey, 1867, 33)

Francis Harvey was perhaps a special case, remembering Cornwall from a distance of space and time. But this pride was also reflected in the glee of the postman who brought the news to John Harris, the Camborne poet, that he had won the Shakespeare Tercentenary Prize in 1864: 'We have beaten them all! Hurrah! Hurrah! The barbarians of Cornwall are at the very top of the tree!' (Harris, 1882, 92)

Merivale's close observation of the Cornish left him in no doubt. The Cornish, he wrote were:

considerably self-opinionated ... the thorough Cornishman's respect for his own shrewdness and that of his clan is unbounded, or only equalled by his profound contempt for 'foreigners' from the east ... this feeling increases ludicrously in intensity as we advance further west (Merivale, 1857, 316).

This was not just a factor of peripherality, feelings of Cornishness heightening with distance from England. For the geography of this identification reflected the geography of mining, with the areas where industrialisation had progressed furthest being those areas with the greatest intensity of feeling. This suggests, as we saw in the previous chapter, that there was a correlation, if not necessarily a direct causal link, between industrialisation and expressions of Cornish identity. The centrality of mining is also illustrated in Henwood's discussion of the phrase 'out of the world, and down to St. Ives'. This, he explained, meant 'literally out of the mining world (the "world" of the Cornish)' (Burt, 1972, 316). In contemporary internal representations of Cornwall, mining was central and fishing peripheral.

Territorial loyalty was much more than an abstract allegiance to an imagined community. It could have repercussions for its members in terms of group solidarity and instrumental aid. Cornwall's peninsular geography had led Carew to suggest in the late sixteenth century that the Cornish gentry were all 'cousins', with a strong sense of kinship and complex inter-marrying binding them together (Carew, 1811, 179). However, in 1822 Polwhele reported in a letter that 'yesterday, in a conversation respecting "Cornish cousins" ... we observed with regret, that the fellowship of affectionate kinsmen was now almost done away with' (Polwhele, 1826, 721). This would seem to suggest that the interconnected bonds of kinship and geography among the gentry were weakening. Certainly there was an increased tendency for the sons and

daughters of the very wealthy to marry outside Cornwall after 1775 (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Location of marriage partners of Cornish greater gentry families (%)

	Cornwall	Devon	elsewhere	N
1675-1725	40	35	25	20
1725-1775	73	7	20	15
1775-1825	45	9	45	22
1825-1875	50	4	46	24

*Source:* based on Polsue, 1867-73.

However, in the mid-eighteenth century there had been a sharp decline in marriages involving families residing in Devon. In the first 50 years of the industrialisation period, 1725-75, the marriages of the greater gentry actually became more endogamous, perhaps reflecting a consolidation of mineral rights in this period as deep mining for copper grew rapidly. It was only after the 1770s, by which time Cornwall had emerged as a specialised mining region, that more partners were sought from further afield. Wider social contacts then replaced the limited interaction with families just across the county border that appears to be the norm in pre-modern Cornwall (see Duffin, 1996, 30-31).

Nevertheless, around 1836 Hugh Tremenheere, himself born in Bath and brought up outside Cornwall, could still be surprised when, 'not long after joining the western Circuit' he was visited by William Arundell Harris when at the Launceston Assizes 'reminding me that we were Cornish cousins'. Tremenheere was introduced to others as of 'good Cornish stock' (Tremenheere, 1885, 26). This might suggest that lineage was deemed important when defining group boundaries. And it was not just the landed class, who, in cultural terms, were hardly distinct from their equivalents across the Tamar by the nineteenth

century, who valued their particular lineage. The mining population, wrote Henwood, had a 'certain pride of ancestry, a boast of descent, and a veneration for heirlooms ...' (Burt, 1972, 220).

There is evidence, too, that a sense of companionship on 'ethnic' grounds existed among the smaller gentry. For example, in 1812 Richard Polwhele received a letter from his son who was at Calcutta. There he had met a Captain Stevens from Penzance: 'Captain Stevens, as soon as I was introduced to him as a Cornishman, shook me by the hand, and you cannot conceive how glad he was to see me ...' (Polwhele, 1826, 650). For Stevens, who insisted that the young Polwhele lodge with him rather than at a Calcutta inn, being from Cornwall clearly had a special meaning. Furthermore, Stevens had been living in India since 1785. The role of exile was here producing a conscious self-identification.

Such identification was not limited to the landed classes. Similar responses can be detected in the same period in people whose origins were in the working classes. Most of the limited evidence about self-identification in this chapter comes from men; women on the margins are usually even more invisible. But territorial identities are also gendered identities. It was the male underground miner rather than his female counterpart on the surface who became the referent of Cornishness; 'Cousin Jack' bound the imagined community together. In constructions like this the space for women became unstable (for an example of the intersections between gender and territorial identity see Morris, 1996). In this context the story that Walter White recounted about Mary Kelynack (a Cornish woman who walked to the Great Exhibition in 1851) may be significant in suggesting the self-identification of Cornish working class women.

Burnard, struck by the expression of character in her face, requested leave to take her bust. She replied, with a hearty laugh, 'Oh, bless your heart, my dear! If you be a Cornishman you may do what you like with

me; for I'll stick up for the Cornish as long as I've a drop of blood left in my body! (White, 1855, 204).

Note that the context for this tale is set by a trip to London. For it was when away from home that the territorial identity was more likely to be articulated.

Samuel Drew, born the son of a tin streamer and smallholder near St. Austell in 1765, began work aged eight years as a buddle boy in a stream works and was later apprenticed to a shoemaker. Drew became a Methodist and a respected writer on theology and history. His writings betray no particular sense of Cornish identity until 1819. But in January of that year he took a post as an editor of a magazine at Liverpool. It is then that, in a letter home to his wife, he refers to his Cornish identity. On refusing to acquiesce to his employers' wish for him to work a twelve hour day he wrote 'I would rather stand on the ground of honour than suffer the independent spirit of a Cornish author to wear a shackle'. In similar vein, he reported a sermon he had given where the crowd, 'many of whom came, I suppose, to hear a Cornishman' (Drew, 1834, 272). Whether they did or not must remain in doubt but the important thing here is that Drew felt that they did. Here, he was using his identity as Cornish to represent himself and other people's reactions to him.

Meanwhile William Lovett, the Chartist, recounts how, at almost the same time, in 1821, he migrated from Newlyn to London. He at first moved within a circle of fellow Cornish acquaintances: 'one evening on my return to my lodgings I met with three countrymen, carpenters by trade. They were, however, strangers to me, but coming from the same county, we soon became acquainted' (Lovett, 1876, 20). Here, ethnic bonds were being utilised to ease the transition to new communities, these no doubt reinforcing and interacting with other networks based on family, kinship and neighbourhood (see Hareven, 1991).

Lovett also represented himself in 'Cornish' terms even when involved in what historians might term an aspect of class conflict. When cheated by an employer, this proved 'a little too much for my Cornish blood (and) was repaid by a blow that sent him to a respectful distance' (Lovett, 1876, 23). Both Drew and Lovett were defining themselves with reference to their territorial identity in their early days in exile and this despite their well known religious and class identities respectively. The bonds of ethnicity and a broader regional consciousness had, through migration, made people such as Drew and Lovett more conscious of their Cornishness in ways not possible or relevant at home in Cornwall. In this, their response was similar to other migrating ethnic groups: 'to be Welsh in Wales was unremarkable: to be Welsh in Liverpool was to be visible, and to be conscious of that position' (Jones and Rees, 1984, 34).

Clearly, the explicit sense of Cornish identity would vary from individual to individual. For instance, Humphry Davy in his writings rarely referred to his Cornish identity in the sense that Drew and Lovett did, although he wrote romantic poems about Cornwall (see Davy, 1836. And see Burall, n.d., where there is much evidence of Methodist and English self-identification but no mention of Cornwall). Nevertheless, self-identification as Cornish had a wide social currency by the 1810s and provided one possible identity that Cornish people from differing social groups could adopt. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, this group identification was of striking instrumentalist benefit in networks associated with the emigration process (see Payton, 1999).

***County identity, national identity, regional identity?***

Spatial identities sometimes become enmeshed in disputes over the appropriate label to give them. The Cornish identity is particularly prone to this; its hybridity has produced a number of concurrent contemporary descriptive labels, including county, regional, ethnic and national identity, used both by insiders and outsiders. However, the question of what label we give it is one which takes on more significance in the late twentieth century than it did for early nineteenth century contemporaries, who just identified themselves as Cornish. Cornish nationalists might note with some relish the observation of Wilkie Collins in 1850: 'a man speaks of himself as Cornish in much the same way as a Welshman speaks of himself as Welsh' (Collins, 1852, 70). Collins was describing the same intensity of feeling that Merivale had noted. However, this does not imply an all-embracing Cornish national consciousness. When we turn to the writings of other insiders we find a telling absence of explicit references to 'nation'. While eighteenth century writers occasionally apply the term 'nation' to the Cornish (see Borlase, 1758, 304; Pryce, 1778, preface), there was little reference to 'nation' or 'nationality' as such in the first half of the nineteenth century. That had to await the self-conscious articulation of Cornishness associated with the Cornish Revival at the very end of the nineteenth century (see the work of novelists such as Lee, 1898).

As we have seen, place and ethnic identities are often associated with stereotyping an opposing 'Other'. The nature of this 'Other' can, perhaps, tell us something about the labelling identity. For instance, people in Redruth might identify themselves in opposition to the 'Other' in the neighbouring town of Camborne. At a very different scale, the emergence of both English and British nationalism in the eighteenth century has been linked to the stereotyping of a French 'Other' (Newman, 1987; Colley, 1992, 368). So, who did the Cornish define as the 'Other'? At one level the term 'foreigner' was used for stranger;



'the description of a non-Cornish person as a "foreigner" continued to be standard practice in Cornwall' (Payton, 1992a, 92. And see Burt 1972, 231). But this use of the term can be seen as the older dialect meaning of 'non-native, unfamiliar, strange' as well as 'person of a different country', 'country' here referring to something closer to the French concept of 'pays' or the Welsh 'bro'. Indeed, this use of the term 'foreigner' was hardly unknown in dialects east of the Tamar.

While the common use of 'foreigner' was too vague and contained insufficient stereotypical attributes to be useful, there are two clear candidates for the Cornish 'Other' at this period - Londoners and Devonians. The opposition to Londoners is splendidly articulated by Francis Harvey who ascribed the 'West Barbary' myth to Londoners:

Thus truly 'the one and all men' even in play were true and faithful. These 'West Barbary Barbarians' and 'not of England', as many scapegrace, evil-minded Cocknies have derisively in their stupidity, falsely named us, were, thank God! too sternly honest and noble, to learn the vile strategy, or imitate the viler doings of their slimed accusers. As superior in the moral sense to their weak brained revilers, as in the might of their muscular arm, to those mere distortions of humanity, creeping and limping in debased Cockneydom (Harvey, 1867, 35-36).

Whilst 'other inland traducers' may also have contributed to these false images of Cornwall, Harvey's spleen is reserved for this one named group, Cockneydom. Harvey was not alone. Polwhele echoed this antipathy to Londoners: 'these London tradesman are of all vulgar cockneys the most vulgar ... the present race of illiterate prigs and coxcombs' (Polwhele, 1836, 101). In contrast to this, Devonians came off rather more lightly, being viewed merely as 'savage', 'brutal' and 'muleish' by Harvey, their sins crystallised by the Devon style of wrestling, which allowed 'the cruel and barbarous usage of unmanly "kicking shins" ... so

long a disgrace to Devonians' (Harvey, 1867, 30). Devonians were seen as backward and slow, in contrast to the scheming and altogether less trustworthy Londoners. However, the important aspect of this is that 'the Other' was represented by groups within England and not 'the English' as a group. In this context the Cornish identity resembled that of Lancashire and Yorkshire, sharing a conventional provincial suspicion of Londoners in particular, along with a competitive attitude to their near neighbours (for the north of England see Joyce, 1991, 293-294 and Hewitt and Poole, 2000, 134).

Writers such as Harvey, however, were aware of other possible representations of Cornwall that did not apply to English counties. Cornwall was sometimes represented as 'not of England'. Harvey himself strongly rejected this as a production of outsiders. And yet at times, feeling marginalised by metropolitan opinion, Harvey came close, in his own confusing way, to accepting this labelling and reversing it:

it is a fact that in Cockneydom, and may be elsewhere, where other blunderers have grown up, Cornwall the brave and truly great, has been of mere slander called 'West Barbary' and 'not of England'; well be it so, Cornishmen can well afford to smile at all this slang and stupid malignity; may be, Cornwall may justly be proud, as being in all her history, in her internal priceless worth, and in the glorious elements with which she has served and aided, and honoured every valuable interest of the nation; of being in truth, if 'not of' yet superior by far to England, if really 'not of it' (Harvey, 1867, 29)

Here lay a tension which is still observable within the Cornish identity. Cornish patriotism was expressed in a sometimes intense fashion in the mid-nineteenth century but existed alongside a British or English nationalism. Harvey, for example, began his autobiography with an account of Cromwell's expedition against the Irish in 1649 (Harvey, 1867, 1). His Cornishness was

'nested' within a Protestant, constitutional English/British nationalism (cf. Herb and Kaplan, 1999). Cornishness and British nationalism were not contradictory; in fact the former could appear to be a building block for the latter in these years. As an instance, at a meeting in 1819 the Mayor and inhabitants of Truro resolved that 'as true Britons, and, especially, as "the faithful Cornish", we are determined "one and all", to support the just prerogative of the Crown, and the authority of the Government; standing firm in defence of the throne and of the Altar' (Polwhele, 1826, 584).

So what are we left with? The Cornish, revived by industrialisation, with their own discourse of peculiarity, expressed an assertive self-consciousness by the second quarter of the nineteenth century. But the Cornish identity at this time could be interpreted as a regional identity that operated in a symbiotic relationship with an English/British identity rather than as an ethnic identity in opposition to a civic identity at a larger scale (cf. Brace, 1999). In some respects, for example in the popularity and themes of dialect literature, this was an identity closer to the emergent cultural identities of the industrial regions of Northern England than the residual and socially conservative county identities of Southern England. That said, there were certainly elements of the latter in Cornwall, particularly among the gentry and inscribed into their institutions. Nevertheless, the intensity of self-identity noted by contemporaries, allied with certain historical symbols (see below) and with material processes such as overseas emigration, always had the potential to produce something much more than a county identity - even though Cornwall was locked into and partly constituted by that particular administrative local government framework. Moreover, what made the Cornish identity fundamentally different from English regional identities was an underlying ethnic component, albeit an ethnicity that, at this time, did not produce territorial political demands (for the tension

between cultural and politico-territorial notions of identity in Scotland, Wales and Ireland see Pittock, 1999, 123-128).

What this and the previous chapter have so far emphasised is the dialectical nature of the processes of identity formation. The self-images of Cornish people were being constructed partly within more global discourses. The 'West Barbary' image was one originating from outsiders, although re-constructed by insiders as opposition to their own self-imagery. 'Industrial civilisation', adopted by Drew and many others, shared a cultural content with broader narratives of progress that were to become dominant by the mid-nineteenth century. Pryce's work on Cornish mining can be seen as part of the emerging scientific discourse of the later eighteenth century. The increasing interest in superstitions can obviously be linked to a Romantic discourse. Finally, we have also seen how articulations of Cornishness were often subject to 'interference' from a more dominant English/British nationalism. However, this does not mean that Cornish people and the early nineteenth century Cornish identity were passively structured by these more general processes. They made choices, they contested those discourses, they negotiated their own sense of identity, they articulated their perceived place in the world. One way they did this was by writing their history.

### ***The Cornish and their history***

In the nineteenth century there emerged a multitude of historical and archaeological societies that, in turn, reproduced 'provincial pride, identity and consciousness' (Dellheim, 1982, 58-59). People looked to the past for their sense of stability and continuity as contemporary society underwent profound change. History, therefore, provided groups with a sense of their own identity. Sometimes this could be more than that local identity buttressed by the collection of parochial trivia so beloved by the Victorian antiquarian. History,

according to Smith, was the tool by which intellectuals provided 'maps' for ethnic groups, grounding their sense of distinctiveness around common historical memories and myths. For Smith there are two aspects to this process of intellectual production, the creation of myths of landscape, or 'poetic spaces', and myths of history, or 'golden ages'. In the first, monuments were naturalised and treated as a part of the special nature of the territory. In the second, moral exemplars of the ethnic past illuminated the present and provided inspiration for the future, something towards which the ethnic group might struggle to re-attain (Smith, 1991, 65-70, 91, 127).

Brunn (1992) agrees with Smith that ethnic/national histories have emphasised golden or heroic ages which he contrasts with periods of decline, associated with rule from outside the territory or by another ethnic group. For Brunn, history performs a number of tasks in the process of ethnic formation, uncovering the obscured history of 'history-less' peoples, creating solidarity and inspiring the people to its 'glorious' task. He also distinguishes between two sources of historical consciousness. First, there is the collective, unreflective - we might add 'folk' - memory of the group and second, the deliberate intellectual reconstruction of the group's past, a construction then popularised by the intelligentsia: journalists, novelists, painters, poets and politicians. This second source is the most important in raising the group's consciousness of themselves. These ethnic or national histories have also to be written as counter-histories in direct competition with dominant views of the past which render state-less peoples also 'history-less' by projecting present political arrangements into the past.

How was the Cornish past employed as a component of the transformed modern identity? Did it also have its intellectual constructors and 'golden ages'? Morrish identifies the three 'fathers of Cornish history' as Carew, Borlase and

Polwhele (Morrish, 1983, 249). The writings of these three and those of Samuel Drew (Hitchens and Drew, 1824) were influential in transmitting representations of Cornwall's past to mid-nineteenth century readers in Cornwall. A crucial constituent of any self-respecting ethnic history is an idea of a common and distinct origin for the group as a whole. All of the above writers identified a common origin for the Cornish. Borlase wrote of the 'Cornish Britons', who, fleeing before the Saxons, 'retired into Wales and Cornwall' and then into Brittany (Borlase, 1769, 40). Polwhele plagiarised this from Borlase and added that the 'inhabitants of this island ... were dispersed before the Saxon conquerors, they retired into Wales and Cornwall, and thence into Bretagne ...' (Polwhele, 1806, 25).

A second constituent of ethnic histories is a clear sense of boundary between the ethnic group and others. For Borlase the early Cornish were seen in clear opposition to the invading Saxons: 'there was a national enmity betwixt the Britons and the Saxons', which Athelstan recognised by excluding the Cornish from east of the Tamar and making

the Tamar their future boundary, which has ever since been so accounted ... from this time therefore we are to consider Cornwall under the Saxon yoke ... the Cornish Britons ... maintained a perpetual struggle against the Saxons for the full space of 500 years (Borlase, 1769, 42-44).

Drew echoed this interpretation in his account of the

fierce contentions which subsisted between its [Cornwall's] ancient inhabitants and the rapacious Saxons ... so tenacious were the British tribes of their ancient inheritance, that they disputed the encroachments of their invader, and defended their hereditary rights against them for several centuries' (Hitchens and Drew, 1824, 12).

Indeed, Drew constructs the tenth century incorporation of Cornwall into the Kingdom of Wessex in recognisably nationalist terms. This was:

both fatal and final to the independence of the Cornish. This, amidst all the struggles that Cornwall made to preserve her liberty untainted, and that her enemies made to rob her of that inestimable jewel, this was the era of the first subjugation of the Cornish by the English' (Hitchens and Drew, 1824, 725).

However, the clear boundaries drawn by Cornwall's historians between Saxons and Cornish in the first millennium were much more ambiguously constructed in relation to the Cornish and the contemporary English of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At times the Cornish were defined by their historians as not English, 'surrounded [sic] as they are by the sea, and reckoning themselves as it were of another and different nation from the English' (Borlase, 1758, 304). But for Drew the centuries that had followed the 'first subjugation of the Cornish by the English' had seen 'both the vanquisher and vanquished ...blended together in one undistinguished mass' (Hitchens and Drew, 1824, 2). And by the eighteenth century the English were no longer those Saxon 'barbarians' of old. Instead they had been civilised by the Normans, to become altogether more cosmopolitan and cultured and, as Polwhele described them, 'friends of literature' (Polwhele, 1806, 35). For writers from the gentry-clerical class a desire to stress their Norman roots and the influence of an English historiography (that to some extent had confined the Saxons to England's 'dark ages' and hybridised the racial origins of the 'English') combined to blur Cornish/English opposition by this time.

However, as the nineteenth century unfolded, the Cornish began to be viewed more explicitly as 'Celts'. Borlase had used the term 'Celt' in the eighteenth century but included within it Scythians, Celtoiberians, Teutons and Germans, all descended from Gomer, a view of 'Celtic' descent common in the later eighteenth century (Kidd, 1999, 51-52). Nevertheless, Borlase also clearly identified the Cornish, along with the Welsh, Bretons, Cumbrians and Gaels, as

'ancient Britons ... one and the same people, as to origins' (Borlase, 1769, 11). By the 1850s the term 'Celtic' was being used again in the narrower sense proposed by Lhuyd and Pezron a century and a half before. Thus Merivale described the Cornish as 'Cornu-Britons, that small but strongly characterised Celtic people' (Merivale, 1857, 302). While Merivale used the term 'Celtic' in a descriptive way, the Reverend W.S.Lach-Szyrma, himself born in Plymouth and the son of a Polish emigré, went much further. He argued in the 1860s that the Cornish were a distinct 'race', 'no contiguous counties in England contain populations so entirely distinct in race from one another as Devon and Cornwall ... The Cornish ... are mostly Celts' (Lach-Szyrma, 1869, 8). For Lach-Szyrma newly fashionable ideas of racial distinctiveness plus Cornwall's linguistic history made the Cornish far closer to the Welsh and Bretons than the English. Here were the beginnings of that Cornish Celtic revival that was to re-construct a more explicit common myth of descent. Here also are the local echoes of mid nineteenth-century notions of 'purer', racially based identities. Such notions were to lead to a racialization of the English as having common Anglo-Saxon roots in the 1890s (Heathorn, 1995, 402-405), a move that of course opened up the space for Celtic 'racial roots' for the other peoples of Britain.

By emphasising Celtic and non-English origin myths, intellectuals in Cornwall can be seen as having constructed a common memory, but its popularity was limited at this stage. Edward Spender, managing director of the *Western Morning News*, repeated in the 1860s the, by then, common view of Celtic origins. But he went on to suggest that the popular descent myth 'a generation ago' stated that the racial origins of the Cornish could be traced to the Phoenicians, despite Borlase's explicit rejection of this in the 1760s (Borlase, 1769, 13). Spender added that this descent myth was 'untrue', although the 'Kelts (sic) undoubtedly had an oriental origin', spoke 'a tongue of Aryan origin, and ... worshipped the



same gods as the Fire and Sun worshippers of the East' (Spender, 1870, 126-127)!! Here we have an amalgam of a popular myth of southern or eastern European origin, new views of Celtic origins and the romanticism that was later to envelop the Cornish, creating its own mists of confusion. This representation of Mediterranean origins had two popular variants. The first believed that the Cornish were one of the lost tribes of Israel, a view reinforced by mis-readings of Cornish place-names like Marazion. The second claimed that the Cornish were of Spanish descent; there were many descendants of settlers from southern Spain 'at a very remote period' (Spender, 1870, 126). This latter was also based on a mis-reading of Cornish language surnames like Pascoe, Jago or Jose.

Francis Harvey's writings also suggest that the popular myth was not exactly coherent;

"Cornish boys" and "one and all men" terms certainly telling of their nobly bold, and truly united clanism, and sure sympathy, were familiar household words, and every true Cornishman prizes these exclusive titular rights, as valued reliques of the peerless men, who, of all England baffled and nobly withstood the ancient aggressive forces of the north, causing the defeated marauders, when leaving our shores discomfited, and hopeless in their grief, to exclaim "they are only waille," (foreigners), hence "kornu-waille", the horn in the sea, possessed by the foreigners; ... (Harvey, 1867, 29).

In this narrative the English of the ninth and tenth centuries were apparently displaced by the Danes. The latter, actually allies of the Cornish in their battle against the English at Hingston Down in 838, had become their enemies. Regional patriotism had here re-structured its past from within a master narrative of English nationalism, a process that was later to cause some despair among twentieth century Cornish revivalists.

Whereas Celtic origins myth co-existed and competed with a popular Mediterranean origin myth, it is instructive to note what became accepted much

more quickly. In 1825 Robert Stephen Hawker published anonymously his *Song of the Western Men*. This song, popularly known as 'Trelawny', caught on rapidly and was accepted by Davies Gilbert and other writers as a genuine seventeenth-century popular song. Within twenty years it appears that the song had become the Cornish anthem, although penned by a high Church Devonian who was, like Lach-Szyrma, born in Plymouth, and who was based at Morwenstow, in the far northern periphery of Cornwall (see Brendon, 1975, 56-57). It commemorated a fictitious near rebellion when the Puritan Bishop Trelawny was imprisoned by James II in 1688. Fictitious or not, Trelawny quickly became a Cornish folk-hero. By the 1850s it could be said, by a Cornishman, that the Cornish:

are particularly proud of their parentage, to a degree almost rivalling that of the Welsh, and refer to King Arthur and Trelawny as demigods and patterns of virtue and patriotism. The soul stirring patriotic and favourite song of 'Trelawny' is still sung by them (Henwood, in Burt, 1972, 220. See also *The Cornish Banner*, January 1847, 203-205).

The creation of the Trelawny myth can also be seen as creating a possible 'golden age', combining vague memories of the Cornish rebellions of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (and the Cornish military victories in the 1640s) with the Protestantism that was a feature of the nineteenth. The embarrassingly Catholic and anti-Protestant aspects of the Cornish revolts were avoided by the simple device of realigning Cornish sixteenth-century rebelliousness with Protestantism and projecting events of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onto a later period. There were other potential 'golden ages'. For example, King Arthur, mentioned above, suggests a period of quasi-independence before the tenth century. (The time lapse between the tenth and the nineteenth centuries was no real impediment, as the examples of other 'golden ages' show; Macedonians looked to the golden age of the Bulgarian tsars in the ninth and tenth centuries and the Irish looked back to early Celtic kingdoms (Brunn, 1992,

333).) Indeed, the period before 1050 became an implied 'golden age' during the long campaign for a separate Cornish diocese that began in the 1840s and culminated in the 1870s. Morrish (1983, 260) suggests that this historical argument had a 'community appeal'. But the appeal lay not in the details of the historical argument but in its connection to a more generalised desire for Cornish distinctiveness. A sense of identity was here seeking out distinctiveness whilst, at the same time, it was itself created by distinctiveness.

The Chartist missionary Duncan had in 1839 lamented that the collective folk history of the Cornish people was extremely limited :

The people have no dreams of the past - no historical epochs to fall back upon, calculated to light the torch and inflame the soul anew for the battle of liberty. They never fought, bled, or died for liberty ... (cited in Jenkin, 1982).

In fact, there were plenty of historical epochs to choose from but they all lay on the far side of two major historical divides that, to some extent, cut the Cornish off from their history. These were first, the language shift in mid and west Cornwall from Cornish to English during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and, second and possibly more important, the divide produced by industrialisation. Industrialisation produced a way of life structured by Methodism and mining plus an associated identity with a dominant ideology of progress. It was a difficult project to match this new self-representation with the potential 'golden ages' that Cornwall's history presented.

At the same time, however, while collective memories were dim and shifting, the Cornish as well as the non-Cornish middle classes, in particular clerics, were assiduously re-creating history for this 'history-less' people. For instance, John Wallis, Vicar of Bodmin from 1817 to his death in 1866, reprinted long accounts of the rebellions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, pointing out 'how

Cornishmen were mixed up with the stirring events of those unhappy days'. He went further, arguing against administrative centralisation 'on behalf of a County which once had almost regal privileges' (Wallis, 1847, 15, 129-156, 124). The argument that Cornwall's constitutional history, the Duchy of Cornwall and the Stannaries all gave it a special constitutional position was echoed in the Lysons' *History of Cornwall*: 'by its royal privileges, and the retention of its ancient language, Cornwall still continued nevertheless to retain some semblance of a distinct sovereignty' (Lyson and Lyson, 1814, iv).

Here then we have the outlines of a distinct group history produced by an intellectual class. Golden ages in the late seventeenth century and before the eleventh century, special constitutional privileges, a shared 'Celtic' origin and quasi-mythical folk heroes, all combined by the 1850s to make up a consistent group history. This seems different only in content rather than form from other emerging 'ethnic/national' histories of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Morrish points out how the vigour of the historical arguments employed to advance the case for a Cornish Bishopric was much stronger than elsewhere (Morrish, 1983, 259). In other places, as Morrish also recognises, such views of history were the basis for claims of nationality. While Morrish's own preference is to describe the Cornish arguments as part of a 'county loyalty and identity' (Morrish, 1983, 256), rather than as a national identity, there seems no particularly good reason for this, other than the course of subsequent history and Cornwall's administrative status. This could itself be viewed as the result of historical and geographical contingency, the incorporated territory of Cornwall being just about the right size to be administered as one 'English' county.

An alternative view is to see the myths of Cornish history as the latent resources for a sense of nationality (which it did become for some people later in the nineteenth century and for many more in the second half of the twentieth)

but which did not emerge in an explicit form in the period we are discussing. At this time there existed certain material difficulties that constrained the emergence of a 'Cornish nationalist' view of history. Principal among these must be the nature of social class forces in Cornwall. Industrialisation had produced a dynamic class associated with mining and related industries, in the increasingly respectable mine captains and entrepreneurs. However, there remained a social gulf between this predominantly Methodist group and the Anglican clerical antiquarians and historians who were writing and re-writing Cornwall's history. Industrialisation also meant that there was no very obvious 'period of decline' with which to contrast the so-called 'golden ages'. The disaffected middle classes, who appeared to be at the vanguard of ethnic consciousness elsewhere in Europe, are difficult to identify in the Cornish context.

Therefore, while boundaries had been produced and various symbols of distinctiveness created, the Cornish identity remained essentially regional in expression. Cornish intellectuals looked for certainties in the face of industrial change in the same way as some of the middle classes in the industrial cities of the North of England were doing. At the same time other social groups gained their self-identity more from Cornwall's role in industry and mining than from its remote past, although, as we have seen, there were popular myths of a common origin and popular historical folk-heroes. Nevertheless, the work of Cornish historians in this period did produce and reinforce views of the past that helped to structure a sense of difference and these were themselves overlaid by a wider turn to Romanticism later on in the century. In the long run, these representations proved more resilient than the way of life based on the economic region. The latter succumbed to a changing global division of labour that was to shatter the base of Cornwall's regional self-confidence but the identity remained, to be transformed and transmitted by future institutions. But this is to jump too

far ahead. First, we must identify some of those institutions which had such a crucial role in producing and reproducing the Cornish identity that was emerging in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.