

Recording of Jori Ansell, made at Gwinear the 18th March, 2008

Recorder: Rod Lyon

First Part - Reading: 'Moy a Hwedhlow a Uthekter' by Myghal Palmer. The First Story

Second Part - Free Conversation

Transcript.

RL And now Jori, I want to ask you about Cornish, so, I will start by asking you, why did you learn Cornish?

JA I started to learn Cornish more than 30 years ago now. I was interested in languages in the main. I learnt French, German and Latin in school, and in my school there were two teachers who used to speak in Welsh, and for many years I wanted to learn Welsh to know what they were saying, and when I came to Cornwall I thought that I would learn Cornish, and also I found my family name in the book 'Cornish Names' - the book by Gunwyn.

RL And how do you make use of Cornish everyday?

JA Well, I write some Cornish - always there are translations to do; there are small translations through the Partnership and because I have been a professional translator for many years, I am still getting them through e-mail or the post to do. I speak Cornish more over the telephone these days, but also there a lot of meetings etc., and there is a chance to speak Cornish in many ways.

RL That was the problem - I can remember in the early days when I was learning Cornish, and wanted to speak more... ah ... the worse thing for me is to use the telephone, because I don't have a chance to use my hands - that's the problem, I must think in Cornish and use it without any signs.

JA Yea, yea, that ... that is the thing, I believe that that's the last thing when learning every language, to use the language on the telephone, because one doesn't have the opportunity to wave the hands or anything about, or smile - and ... it's the only spoken language. Yea, I ... I speak a lot of Cornish on the telephone.

RL In your opinion Jori, what's the future of Cornish, and have you any dreams concerning the language?

JA Well, I would like to see Cornish used across the whole of Cornwall as the language of the community, it's a sign of acknowledgment and self-acknowledgment of Cornwall, and also - also - I believe it's the key to open the door to the history and place names and the heritage of Cornwall the young ones above all.

- RL It's all tied up together isn't it, the heritage, place names, the language, every - everything....
- JACertainly...
- RLCertainly yea, yea....
- JA That's the way to open that door.
- RL What did you do in the Cornish revival at the start Jori?
- JA At first, going to learn the language, accepting to be a bard of the Gorsedd, and then I became a member of the new group 'Dalleth', which was founded around 1980 I believe, to help families who wanted to bring up their children in Cornish, and I was treasurer for that group, and gradually I became more involved in the language movement, and became a member of 'Kowethas an Yeth', and the Board etc., and bit by bit I did more. Teaching also.
- RL In those early days, can you remember other people who were learning Cornish at the same time as you?
- JA In the same class well, there was John King, he was a friend of mine, and John learnt quickly and became very fluent - only occasionally is in Cornwall now... and who else in those days - there were some who learnt before I did, a group like Graham Sandercock, etc. - Wella - learnt perhaps five or six years before me, and then I remember Paul Holmes and I coming to your house to try chatting Rod, and that was a start to trying to truly speak the language, and also after the class in Cornwall College, we used to go in the pub opposite, in the 'Basset Arms' for a 'Yeth an Werin', and there many people there, Morwenna Jenkin, Loveday Jenkin, Ian Williams, Bernard Deacon, and ...
- RL ... Kathy Biskeen ...
- JA Kathy Biskeen yea, there was a good crowd of people there, Jan Williams, Maggie Casson, etc.
- RL Yea, very interesting those days. What was the obstacle to you in the past when you started to learn Cornish?
- JA Well, I recognised at once that Cornish was different from other languages - I learn French etc. in the first place, and I saw that there many linguistic differences with mutations at the start of words - completely different from the languages I had learnt before. But I continued satisfactorily with that, perhaps slowly. There was a difficulty with the class, because there weren't many students it was necessary for Len Orme, the teacher, make use of two rooms, one for the first and second grades, and another room for the third and fourth, and he was walking between the two rooms, and perhaps we were left for half an hour without a teacher, and that was very difficult....,

especially when we were advanced. He had to spend a part of his time with the first grade. But John and me and David Oates spent half an hour or more without a teacher - we had to try and work out things for ourselves, without a teacher - that was difficult enough, but, easy to understand the reason.

RL Yea, that was a problem. Well, I started learning in my own house, did you do the same Jori, or did you start in a class?

JA No, I started in a class. When I decided to learn, I went to see Dick Gendall, who used to live near to us, and he said, well, go and see Len Truran, because he has books. I went to see Len, bought books, and he said well, there's a class in Cornwall College with Len Orme, and I enrolled there.

RL Yea, it's strange. I remember now Dick Gendall, living close by, and I went to see in the first place, and had good advice from him ... and he said the same thing he set some lessons for me - very, very difficult for me - "Good God, I shall never learn this language!" - but I did eventually. With respect to learning, well, every language, but Cornish above all for us, would you like to see children in school learning Cornish?

JA Oh yea, surely, that is the root of the movement, truly. The difficulty over the years has been that there wasn't Cornish in schools - all the Cornish is taught in evening classes, to middle-aged people in fact, and it is imperative that we base the language in the community by teaching it in schools. There is no other way, we have learnt that from Wales, from the Isle of Man, and that is the only way to plant the language in the community.

RL And, finally Jori, what is the best way in your opinion, for people to speak Cornish fluently - what is the best way?

JA Well for me, I learnt Cornish over three years in those days - oh, there wasn't a fourth grade, but after succeeding in the examinations, I wasn't fluent at all, and the way for me was to go to a 'Yeth an Werin'. Perhaps that was because there was some beer as well! That was a chance for me to try and start to say something, and for me that was the key to open the door to speak fluently. After a start, it wasn't too bad, I was able to go to the 'Pennseythen' and the meetings, and speak more and more. That was the beginning for me, the 'Yeth an Werin'!
