



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 20 : NUMBER 7 AUGUST 2010



## What? Baird's? For Sale?

A retail business in a small town like Cornwall survives through flexibility, good customer service, and very hard work. In August 1975, for example, 32 Cornwall businesses were listed as sponsors of a *Lakeville Journal* supplement about Cornwall. Thirty-five years later perhaps half are still in operation, nearly all under new ownership and new names. Only three of those listed, Baird's General Store, Hall's Garage and Cornwall Bridge Pottery, have been continuously family owned—in Baird's case, for 38 years and two generations.

Cornwallians were alarmed, therefore, when a rumor that Baird's was for sale—had been sold!—swept the town. Would it join the small food markets that have closed in West Cornwall, Kent, Goshen and Sharon? Happily, K. C. Baird, co-owner with his brother Tom, says that there is no basis to the story. An unsolicited offer was made, he said, but "it's no longer an option." Would the brothers ever sell Baird's? K. C. quoted his father, Ed, who liked to say, "It's always for sale," and "If the price is right, here's the key." K. C., who gave up an accounting career for the 80 to 90 hours he puts in each week at Baird's, said, "I love the store." Tom has never left Baird's; his loyalty speaks for itself.

The general store has stood at its current location since 1934. It was constructed of Dudleytown lumber for Harry Breen, whose family had been Cornwall Bridge merchants since the early 19th century. When the concrete bridge opened in 1930, creating a new town center, Breen moved his enterprises up from the railroad tracks. In 1940 he sold the groceries and coal business to his assistants, Spencer Monroe and Howard O'Dell, Jr., and the hardware to Ralph Sandmeyer. Monroe bought O'Dell out in 1950 and ran Monroe's General Store until 1972.

Enter Ed and Barbara Baird, who moved from Long Island to Sharon with their eight children—K. C. is sixth and Tom eighth—to buy and run their first grocery store. In the 1970s it was still a true general store, selling clothes and other non-food merchandise.

Demographic changes in Cornwall and the surrounding towns, and the availability of huge Torrington stores, have led K. C. and Tom, who took over in 1998, to adapt to a convenience store model, though they offer considerable individual service. Weekend-ers, for example, can call or email during the week and find their orders at their house, in the refrigerator, by Friday night. Late risers can have weekend newspapers saved. There are plans to expand the deli department to offer cooked meals—a whole chicken,

say, to order. Customers will be relieved to know that the shelves, ominously bare in recent weeks while the possible sale was in the works, are being restocked.

What does the future look like? K. C. noted that Cornwall Bridge stores are 100 percent occupied and that local commerce has held on during the economic downturn. He looks forward to more new home building and other construction, since lunchtime business from contractors is critical to Baird's and Northeast Builders' Supply in particular. Meanwhile, Baird's customers can breathe a huge sigh of relief. —Julie Schieffelin

## Wanna Buy A House?

"Are we there yet?" is the question kids whimper on too-long car trips. It might also apply to what's been happening, or not, in Cornwall's housing market. In last year's *Chronicle*, I reported that 2008–2009 saw only three houses sold here. Well, that's what has happened again in 2009–2010, according to Assessor Barbara Bigos.

On a more positive note, Barbara says that while Cornwall's housing market still seems frozen, she is beginning to see signs of thaw in Salisbury (where she is also the assessor.) Barbara views the Cornwall inventory of houses for sale as "not huge." She also feels that too many would-be sellers are holding

(continued on page 2)

## AUGUST 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library Agricultural Commission 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	3 Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	4 Water Games & Potluck Picnic 6 P.M. Library	5 Creative Writing Class 1 P.M. Library	6 Rose Algrant Art Show 5-8 P.M. CCS	7 CCT Guided Trail Walk 10 A.M. CHS Cornwall Bridge Guided Tour 10 A.M. Rose Algrant Art Show 10 A.M.-5 P.M. CCS Community Contra Dance 7-10 P.M. Town Hall
8	9	10 P&Z 7 P.M. Town Hall Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	11	12 Creative Writing Class 1 P.M. Library Grumbling Gryphons Party & Performance 6:30 P.M. Town Hall	13	14 Plant Walk & Book Signing 10 A.M. Farmer's Market Motherhouse Canning Workshop 10:30 A.M.- 1 P.M. Local Farm John Leich Reading & Signing 4 P.M. Library
15 Deadline: September Chronicle Copy	16	17 Cornwall Day at Lake Compounce 11 A.M.-8 P.M. P&Z Cluster Zoning in CT 7 P.M. Library Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	18	19 Creative Writing Class 1 P.M. Library	20	21 CCT Guided Trail Walk 10 A.M. Peter Del Tredici, Author 4 P.M. Library
22	23 ZBA 8 P.M. Town Hall*	24 Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	25	26	27	28 Cornwall Historical Society Talk & Tea 2 P.M. Opening Art Reception 4-7 P.M. Wish House
29	30 CCS & HVRHS Open	31	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> <b>Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym.</b> <b>Wednesdays: Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Tai Chi, 6 P.M. Call 672-0064 for location;</b> <b>Women's Basketball, 7:30 P.M. CCS.</b> <b>Fridays: Jam Circle, 11 A.M. Library.</b> <b>Sundays: Meditation, 1-2 P.M. Call Debra for location, 672-0229.</b>			

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

out for too-high prices. As an example, she cites a house she appraised at the "peak of the market" at just over \$750,000. Now it's for sale at an unrealistic \$900,000.

To get another view of our current housing situation, I spoke with First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. He was succinct, though not upbeat. He told me he knows of too many houses that are "vacant-vacant"—where the owners have been unable to sell but have moved elsewhere anyway.

At Northeast Builders' Supply in Cornwall Bridge, I asked senior manager Aileen O'Hara how the economic situation affects local builders. She told me some builders here feel that so many existing houses are on the market, new construction may not recover for "four to five years." She said some builders may be looking forward to winter when at least there will be snow plowing to do.

Priscilla Miller of Bain Real Estate in West Cornwall confirmed that the housing market here is still in the doldrums. She noted that, in the past, many potential buyers in Cornwall were New Yorkers flush with bonus money. For now, that source seems to have dried up.

Given the state of our housing market, there are a lot of owners trying to sell. One indicator is the many "for sale" signs you see as you drive around. Another comes from the website Realtor.com which posts information on houses for sale in each of Cornwall's three zip codes. Currently, this website lists 47 houses for sale here, exclusive of the Warren houses that are also located in zip code 06754. Properties listed on this website range from a high of \$3.675 million for a four-bedroom on Warren Hill Road in Cornwall Bridge to a low of just under \$300,000 for a three-bedroom on Smith Place in West Cornwall.

On a final note, in case you wonder what will happen next year when state law requires Cornwall to do a full-scale property revaluation, so is assessor Bigos. There are so few sales here, she worries, that it will be very difficult to set a realistic ratio between house values and assessments. That ratio helps determine what state aid we get. Barbara says she asked the state to let her delay revaluation but was turned down.

Sorry, folks, I don't seem to have any good news this year—unless you're looking to buy a house in Cornwall. If you are, there are lots of good bargains to be had.

—David A. Grossman

## New Day at CCS

When CCS opens Monday, August 30, for the new school year, students will learn and faculty will teach inside a new security cocoon. Anyone who wants to enter the school will be buzzed in, or not.

The Board of Education voted in May to

install a \$10,740 system provided by TEC Control of Torrington. The physical changes include a new keying system for all exterior doors at the school and for camera surveillance at the main entrance. Three monitors will be watched by staff with access to the entrance buzzer.

The new technology replaces the "Visitors please report at the Main Office" voluntary controls of past years. *Chronicle* stories last spring reported the heated arguments for and against the new procedure.

Reports from other schools in Region One which have similar routines indicate that after an initial period of getting used to the new system, students, faculty, and staff adapted and ceased to notice. The new security measures became the norm.



—Lisa L. Simont

## About This Issue

We have edited the August issue of the *Chronicle* for a number of years now. As in past Augusts we are including a poem by a local poet. We also like to think of August, with the Rose Algrant show and the gallery openings hereabouts as Art Month, and to celebrate we are including a visit with one of Cornwall's many artists. The year 2010 marks the *Chronicle's* 20th anniversary and to mark this we are republishing a letter ostensibly by I. C. A. Tusker but actually by the *Chronicle's* longtime vice-president

and editor Spencer Klaw that first appeared in 2003. You may have noticed that the appeal for money that has appeared for as long as we can remember in the lower left-hand corner of the *Chronicle's* last page is missing this month. While we appreciate the excuse of the editor-in-charge-of-making-people-feel-guilty-so-they'll-send-money ("It's hot," she said.), we want to remind people that the *Chronicle* always needs money, so go somewhere cool (check out the Library—it's air-conditioned and they have a lot of interesting books there) and write a nice check so the *Chronicle* can stay in business.

—Hendon Chubb and Susie Ott

## A Visit with Amy/Amelia

Let's celebrate this year's Art Month by visiting one of Cornwall's many good artists, Amelia de Neergaard. Amelia makes what you could call sculpture, but her materials are largely taken from the natural world. You won't see bronze or marble in her Essex Hill Road studio but outdoor things like twigs and seed pods.

"Twigs fall on the ground, birds fly through the air, fish move through the sea," she says and much of her art is about movement seen in the stillness of her work. On a table in her studio she is working on a new piece. Twigs are laid out; they have been

there for more than a day as she studies them and moves them about to achieve a random effect that is anything but random. And then there are her statues, ambiguous female figures constructed with paper that she makes herself over wire metal frames.

After art school in California (where she worked with the well-known feminist artist Judy Chicago) she spent a number of years in New York. Fifteen years ago she moved to Cornwall. It was a hard transition. "For five

years I would almost feel like crying." But the quiet, contemplative life she found in Cornwall, quite different from the New York art scene, has turned out to be quietly nourishing. She still goes to museums and reads art magazines, but she doesn't miss the day-to-

day intensity of life in the city.

If you're a kid you know Amelia as Amy Buck, the children's librarian at the Cornwall Library. She started working in the Library as an antidote to being alone. She likes the contact with people and she likes working with young people. One of her favorite activities is her pre-school reading groups. At the beginning of the year it is often hard to teach the kids to sit still, but she seasons the books with singing and craft work related to what they are reading so by the end they are quiet and even rapt.

A balanced life: Amy on some days and Amelia on others. A good life.

Full disclosure: I own three of Amelia's pieces and wish I could afford more.

—Hendon Chubb

## Welcome

Isabel Sadie Lewis to  
Davina Piker Lewis and Josh Lewis  
Schuyler Wyatt Thompson to  
Bethany and John Thompson

## Land Transfer

Bonnie Sue Bevans to M. K. Alisdairi and Jessica G. Alisdairi, land, buildings, and improvements thereon at 52 Dark Entry Road for \$520,000.

## Primary Primer

Often Cornwall seems to be its own removed and special world. However, periodically politics, a popular conversation topic, provides more—an opportunity for action—to go to the Town Hall and vote.

On August 10, Tuesday, the polls will be open from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. for registered voters of the Democratic and Republican parties. All voting will take place in the Town Hall, with ballots for each party to be marked and placed in the opti-scan machines. For those unable to vote in person at the Town Hall, absentee ballots are available during office hours (9 A.M. to noon, 1 to 4 P.M.) from the Town Clerk.

Persons who are not registered, or are registered but unaffiliated, may register and declare a party during open hours at the Town Office until Thursday, August 5. The



cutoff for anyone wishing to change party affiliation for this primary was three months prior to August 10, and so too late now.

On the ballot will be candidates for state offices: governor, attorney general, secretary of the state, etc.; state senators and representatives; and U.S senators and representatives in Congress. —Jayne Ridgway and Virginia Potter Registrars of Voters

**Lichen**

I stain your stone walls, encrust the bark on your maples, scrawl on the rusted fender of your abandoned pick-up. I survive the desert, the arctic tundra, on sidewalk. I am the first to inhabit the barren places of the earth. Imagine what it is to be bound to granite, to penetrate pockets of air between its crystals, to freeze and thaw for centuries, flaking the rock, creating a thimble of dust. You, who are born and live and die while I grow a few inches across the names on your gravestones, you know nothing of such faithfulness.  
—Marie Prentice

**Railroad Square Café**

It's in the same space near the West Cornwall Railroad Station where Dan Evans sold his baby back ribs and pulled pork until last year. Now building owner Sue Kochman of New England Catering has opened what she calls "a gathering place where people come for coffee and homemade pastry and hang out." The Railroad Square Café is open for light breakfasts and lunch on Friday and Saturday (9 A.M. until 3 P.M.) and on Sunday from 11 A.M. until 3 P.M. It is not for those seeking a hearty breakfast a la Wandering Moose (pancakes, French toast, corned beef hash, eggs Benedict). The food is all homemade:

muffins, croissants, killer brownies, a daily quiche, and then interesting sandwiches and salads for lunch.

The café is a big attractive space, available for parties after 3 P.M., and has Wi-Fi, which means, I'm told, it's wired for patrons to use their laptops while sipping coffee and chewing on a bagel.

Sue said she and husband, Gregg, will soon be moving back to Cornwall from Sharon and living in an apartment above the restaurant.

Add the Railroad Square Café to Cornwall's other eateries: the aforementioned Wandering Moose, RSVP, the Cornwall Inn, and the deli counters at Baird's and the Berkshire Store.  
—John Miller

**A Plea for Writers and Artists**

The *Chronicle* is always looking for new writers and artists. If you have a possible story

**Letters to the Chronicle**

**CORNWALL PERFORMERS**

In all my years of reading and enjoying the *Chronicle*, I have never before written a letter to the editor. But currently something so momentous is about to occur that I find myself breathless at my computer. Sharon Playhouse is putting on a production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma*, one of my favorite shows, and it turns out that no fewer than four of our Cornwall neighbors are in it. They are Russ and Becky Sawicki, Dave Cadwell, and John Miller. Can you possibly think of missing it??? The dates are August 5 to 22. I'll be taking attendance.  
—Joy Gould Boyum

**CORRECTION**

My letter in the July *Chronicle* explaining the 10-mil land program needs an addendum. The omission of two key sentences left the final paragraph flapping in the breeze. Here are the missing words that will make the mentioned "50-year period" and "huge tax increases" more clear. "After staying in 10- mil for 50 years the land and standing timber are revalued at their market value, not actual use. The owner pays 10 mils on this value for the next 50 years."  
—Jean D. Bouteiller

**SLOUCHING TOWARD CORNWALL**

I was thoroughly persuaded by your excellent article on mountain lions [by Hendon Chubb] in the *Cornwall Chronicle*. We all see what we want to see, as demonstrated by the Loch Ness Monster legend and the case of the Abominable Snowman.

However, I wish to inform you that on a sunny morning late last spring—June 18, according to my diary—I saw a mastodon in the pasture in back of my house. When it saw me, it raised its trunk and emitted a sound which in volume and timbre

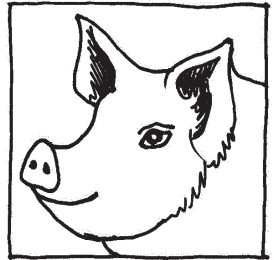
reminded me of the old Queen Elizabeth about to depart from Manhattan for Southampton. My visitor did not appear aggressive though he did raise his gleaming tusks, which according to my best estimate measured 14 feet long and were about 12 inches in diameter at the base. He then lumbered off in to the woods, knocking down several ash trees and a large white birch as he went.

Some of my friends have suggested that what I saw was not a mastodon, but simply an ordinary elephant. However, this creature was much larger than the largest known elephant. My best visual estimate is that he stood 14 feet high at the shoulder. I was able to apply a tape measure to his footprints, which measured 19 inches by 13.5 inches. I am familiar with elephant footprints from my years of research in Kenya and Tanzania, and those were no elephant prints!

Sincerely yours,  
I. C. A. Tusker, D.Phil.Oxon, F.R.S.  
—Spencer Klaw, from the year 2003

**FIRST SOLAR HEATING, FIRST HOT TUB**

In the mid '70s we bought a vinegar tub from John Welles to make a hot tub and with John's help constructed a primitive solar heater for it, pumping water onto the roof, where it drained back toward the tub between two sheets of plastic. It heated up for just a few weeks in the summer. One Saturday we had a hot-tub party. The oldest guest was Fred Yutzler of Yutzler's grocery. When people urged him to take off his clothes and have a dip, he said, "I've had my bath for the week." Cornwall's first solar heating and hot tub.  
—Nita Colgate and Hendon Chubb



idea, discuss it with one of next month's editors, who are listed on the masthead. If you'd like to be on the list of contributing writers and artists, who can be asked to do an article or a set of drawings for an upcoming issue, talk to Lisa Simont at 672-2659.  
—The Editors

**Cornwall Briefs**

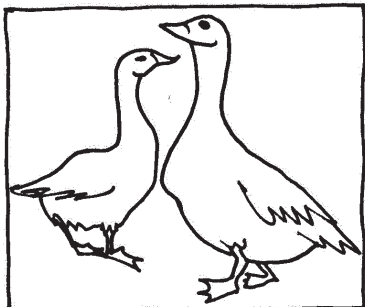
- Park & Rec.: Last month we mentioned new office hours (9 A.M. to noon on Mondays and Wednesdays), a new phone number (672-4071), and email, prcornwall@gmail.com, and now there is a website, cornwallparkrec.org. Park and Rec. is rockin'!
- Hammond Beach: It's been 20 years since a town beach was created out of land generously given by the late Roxana Ham-

mond and built by local craftsmen who donated their time. And the Town Office reports that use of the beach is up, not surprising what with all the 90-plus days we've been having this summer.

- Twenty-one local businesses have so far benefited from STEAP Grant funds made available to spruce up facades and storefronts. The latest and perhaps most striking change is the waterfall and plantings added to the front of the Hitching Post Motel by owners Jack and Anju Patel. What's next? Dave Samson says that we might think about an arch over Route 7 and a sign saying "Gateway To Cornwall." Others say "nonsense, the arch belongs at the top of

Cream Hill Road!"

• Answers to Cornwall Trivia: 1) Jim Sheffield is NOT a member of the Scoville family. 2) 1995 was the year cable came to Cornwall. 3) The crow that terrorized West Cornwall was named Princess. 4) That skating rink was built behind the West Cornwall Firehouse. 5) Sarah Jenny and Tom Wolf are Gold cousins. 6) Richard Griggs did NOT run against Gordon Ridgeway for first selectman. 7) The late Spencer Monroe was never the town's first selectman but he did serve several years as a selectman. 8) Steve Scoville was once the CT State Champion Tractor Driver. 9) The Hurlburt family has been in Cornwall longer than the Golds, Harts, or Scovilles. 10) Joan LaPlaca was CT's first female fireman. 11) Yale and Vassar faculty founded the Yelping Hill Association. 12) And it was folks from New York Cornell Medical Center who created Dark Entry Forest off Warren Hill Road in Cornwall Bridge. —John Miller



**Cornwall Conservation Trust Guided Trail Walks** for families, especially friendly to young hikers, on August 7 at the Rattlesnake Preserve (park on Rattlesnake Road two-tenths of a mile from the intersection of Cream Hill Road) and on August 21 at the Hart Farm Preserve (turn right at white sign three-quarters of a mile down Cherry Hill Road, park in mowed area). Walks begin at 10 A.M. and last

about 45 minutes, canceled if there is heavy rain or thunderstorms. Contact Kristen Bedell with questions: 672-6014. Maps at [www.cornwallconservationtrust.org](http://www.cornwallconservationtrust.org).

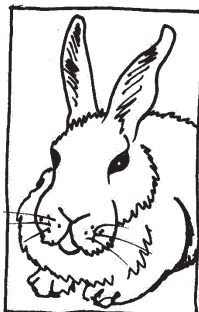
**Cornwall Community Contra Dance** with Ann Banks calling and Still, the Home-grown Band, playing. At the Cornwall Town Hall on August 7 from 7 to 10 P.M. Suggested donation: \$3 each child, \$5 each adult. For more information, call Jane or Jim at 672-6101.

**Cornwall Library:** Saturday, August 14, at 4 P.M. John Leich will read and discuss his new book, *Harry Graf Kessle: Faces and Times, An Annotated Translation*.

Saturday, August 21, at 4 P.M. Peter Del Tredici will speak about his latest book, *Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast*. Books will be available for signing.

#### Motherhouse Activities.

**Canning Workshop:** August 14, 10:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at Local Farm. Learn how to preserve food in glass jars. Work as a group to prepare fresh produce and go home with a few jars so you can eat local all winter long. Cost is \$35 per family. Potluck lunch. Must pre-register; contact Debra Tyler at 672-0229.



**Park & Rec. Events:** Cornwall Day at Lake Compounce, Tuesday, August 17, from 11 A.M. to 8 P.M. (rain date Wednesday), \$22, children three and under no charge.

Learn circus skills with Matica ([maticarts.com](http://maticarts.com)), August 16 to 20, 9:30 A.M. to noon, Town Hall.

Summer baseball for kids going into third to fifth grades, Mondays from 7 to 8 P.M. at CCS field.

For all information and reservations call Becky at 672-4071 or email [prcornwall@gmail.com](mailto:prcornwall@gmail.com), with your name, phone number, and number of tickets to reserve. There is still room for fall soccer players on all teams.

**Plant Walk:** Saturday August 14. Peter Del Tredici will be leading a Plant Walk through West Cornwall along the railroad track in conjunction with his recently published book *Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast*. The walk will start at 10 A.M. at the Cornwall Farm Market and will conclude with a signing of his book.

**Cluster Zoning:** P&Z will present Fran Armentano, town planner for Granby, on August 17 at 7 P.M. at the Library in a talk on the best cluster planning in CT. He will address land preservation issues left unresolved in the new Town Plan.

**Art in Cornwall:** The Wish House will host an opening reception for Nan Bevans' art show titled *Multi Media*, on Saturday, August 28, from 4 to 7 P.M. The show will run through October.

At the Cornwall Library, Sara Wight's cool photographs of ice and snow will continue on display through August 21. Beginning August 24, Robert Cronin will show recent abstract paintings.

All artists are welcome to enter Lady Audrey's Gallery's new art competition, Summer on the River. Closing date for entries is August 22. Details may be found at [www.ladyaudreysgallery.com](http://www.ladyaudreysgallery.com).

Catherine Karpf's artwork is showing at the National Iron Bank.

**The Cornwall Child Center** programs for children one to five, as well as the afternoon Club K program for ages five and six, start Monday, August 30. Before school and after school care between 7:30 A.M. and 5:30 P.M. is also available for working parents, with a flexible 42-week schedule. Call the Cornwall Child Center at 672-6989 or email to [cornwallchildcenter@yahoo.com](mailto:cornwallchildcenter@yahoo.com) for information and registration forms. Website: [cornwallchildcenter.org](http://cornwallchildcenter.org).

## Events & Announcements

**The Rose Algrant Art Show** will be held on Friday, August 6, from 5 to 8 P.M. and Saturday, August 7, from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. at the Cornwall Consolidated School. (See insert.)

**Cornwall Historical Society:** Saturday, August 7, at 10 A.M. Guided tour of Cornwall Bridge: Dody Clark-Wolfe and Connie Gomez will describe the changes brought about by the railroad, the iron industry, and the 1930 cement bridge. Meet near Cornwall Electric and the National Iron Bank.

Theater Workshop for high school-aged students Friday, August 13, to Sunday, August 15. No prior preparation or study needed. Given by Cornwall resident and actor Tom Walker and two colleagues of the Living Theatre. Participants will learn acting techniques based on the society's Foreign Mission School exhibit. Free except for a \$15 snack/drink charge. Reservations required. For more information and to sign up, phone Michele Musto at 672-0505.

A talk by John Demos on his book to be published in 2011, *The Heathen School – A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic*, will be given Saturday, August 28, at 2 P.M. Tea and cookies will be served.

**Grumbling Gryphons** 30th anniversary celebration, Thursday, August 12, 6:30 P.M., Town Hall. (See insert.)

## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

### AUGUST ISSUE

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### SEPTEMBER ISSUE

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