



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 25 : NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 2015



Fire! Fire!

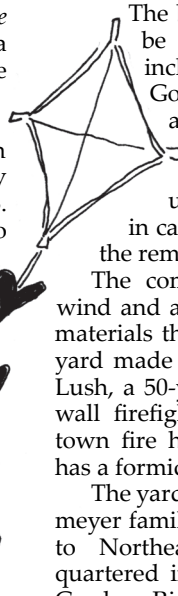
Cornwall made the front page of the January 14th edition of the *Waterbury Republican*. In fact, we were the lead story. The next day we were the off-lead on the front page of the *Lakeville Journal*. But it was not a happy story: a huge fire had destroyed most of the Cornwall Bridge lumberyard.

This was the sequence: A neighbor spots the flames sometime after 11 P.M. on Monday, January 12. Litchfield County Dispatch (LCD) sounds the alarm at 11:23. Cornwall Fire Chief Fred Scoville, who lives less than a quarter of a mile south of the lumberyard, is at the scene at 11:36. By midnight the huge fire had engulfed the big supply warehouse and jumped to the office building on Route 7.

It is believed that the fire may have started in one of several company trucks that were plugged into outlets at the warehouse. But that is just speculation. Four days after the fire, Stan MacMillan, the fire marshal, said that "because of the heavy damage and the fire's extreme heat," he had been unable to determine the cause.

Twenty-one fire companies from as far away as Dover Plains, New Milford, and

Norfolk were called in, mainly for use of their tankers, which shuttled water to the scene. Water, which was the key issue, was pumped into the tankers from the Housatonic at the bottom of Popple Swamp Road and from the brook at Kent Falls.



The blaze lit up the sky and could be seen from many miles away, including the traffic circle in Goshen. And it turned out to be an all-nighter for most of the 31 Cornwall responders, many of whom were at the scene until noon or later on Tuesday in case the wind rekindled some of the remaining hot spots.

The combination of a cold blustery wind and all the treated wood and other materials that make up a typical lumberyard made for a whopper of a fire. Skip Lush, a 50-year, second-generation Cornwall firefighter, said it was the biggest town fire he could remember, and Skip has a formidable memory.

The yard was once owned by the Sandmeyer family, who sold it some years ago to Northeast Building Supply headquartered in Bridgeport. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway said he had been in contact with one of the owners, who said the company would likely rebuild on the Cornwall Bridge site.

—John Miller

Drones in Cornwall

They've arrived: those robotic flying machines that Realtors have begun to use to showcase expansive properties and companies like Amazon and Google plan to use to deliver packages to our front doors. Techies and hobbyists call them UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), but to the general public they're simply drones—a nomenclature indelibly associated with American military strikes in far-off places. The drones that have put in an appearance in Cornwall are of the more benevolent sort, being used basically for remote-controlled aerial photography.

Back in June, Mark Capecelatro launched a UAV from his dock at Echo Rock on Cream Hill Lake. The drone video flyover of the entire body of water and its shorelines can be seen at youtube.com/watch?v=zHpX_r1iTCE.

On the other side of town, Christian Robison of East Granby's Robison Imagery completed in mid-October an aerial video celebration of the Housatonic and West Cornwall's Covered Bridge which can be accessed at <http://vimeo.com/108898490>. Robison's boyhood memories of camping at Housatonic Meadows State Park had

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FEBRUARY 2015

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 ♦ Region 1 BOE 6 pm HVRHS Room 133	3 FULL ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	4 ♦ Region 1 Budget Workshop 7 pm Rm 133 HVRHS	5 ♦ Cornwall Woman's Society 10:15 am Library	6	7 ♦ Winter Hike or Snowshoe 1 pm Trinity Forest ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Winter Film Series: <i>The Magic Flute</i> 7:30 pm Library
8	9 ♦ Region 1 Music Festival Concert 11:30 am CCS ♦ Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	10 ♦ Economic Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Seniors' Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm Wandering Moose ♦ P&Z 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7 pm CCS	11 ♦ Region 1 Music Festival Concert 7:30 pm HVRHS ♦ Budget Meeting 7:30 pm Library	12 ♦ Seniors' Valentine's Day Lunch Noon-2:30 pm Cornwall Inn	13	14 ♦ Valentine's & All That Jazz Dinner Dance 6-9 pm Library
15 ♦ Deadline: March <i>Chronicle Copy</i>	16	17 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	18 ♦ Board of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Dance Movie: <i>The Little Mermaid</i> 7 pm Library ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	19 ♦ CCC 6:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Region 1 Budget Workshop 7 pm Rm 133 HVRHS	20 ♦ Family Movie: <i>The Secrets of Roan Inish</i> 7 pm Library	21
22 ♦ Town Meeting In Cornwall: 1815 Meets 2015" 3 pm CCS	23 ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Library	24 ♦ Region 1 Budget Workshop 6 pm Rm 133 HVRHS ♦ Cornwall Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library	25 ♦ Budget Meeting 7:30 pm Library	26	27	28 ♦ Jessica Jane Artist's Reception 4-6 pm Library

Every Week This Month:

Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Karate, 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall; Men's Basketball, 7-9pm CCS gym ♦ **Wednesdays:** Meditation, 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall ♦ **Thursdays:** Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30-11:30 am Library; Meditation, 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Mah Jongg, 7-9 pm Library; Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ **Fridays:** Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library ♦ **Saturdays:** Skating, 7-8 pm Hotchkiss Schmidt Rink ♦ **Sundays:** Yoga 9-10:30 am Library

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallchronicle.org

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“put this part of the state in a special part of my heart,” and he wanted to be the first to bring to the public sophisticated drone photography images of the river and bridge. Robison invested over a year learning the craft of flying UAVs. His video, using a DJI Phantom 2 quadcopter outfitted with a special custom camera, offers stunning effects. Its highlight may be the drone’s narrow passage under the bridge, nearly skimming the churning waters beneath.

Robison is careful to respect the privacy of individuals and follow Federal Aviation Administration guidelines—an attitude not always typical for DIY drone enthusiasts, who have often flouted the FAA’s as yet unofficial rules. (Congress has mandated the FAA to come up with enforceable regulations before the end of 2015. In their absence and except in communities that have passed local ordinances, the use of drones by nongovernmental agencies or personnel is currently entirely unregulated.)

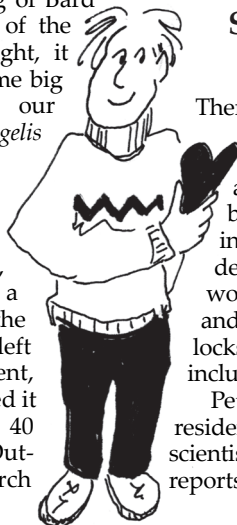
Recently, a more practical application of drone technology involved a visit by structural engineer Jim Grant to the North Cornwall Meeting House a week or so before Christmas. The committee seeking grants to help fund the structural renovation of the church had brought in Grant and historical architect Bill Crosskey to draw up detailed plans for what needs to be done. Grant’s UAV, like Robison’s, also a DJI Phantom 2, made an in-the-air photographic examination of the steeple, thus rendering unnecessary the far greater expense of hiring a power lift required for a human inspection.

Three instances of drone use hardly portend the mass adoption of this advanced technology. Still, venture capitalists are making major investments in very small consumer models at an iPad-like price and more than one tech magazine identified drones as *the* tech gift for dad this past Christmas (and a potential danger to neighbors). And for some sobering perspective on the whole phenomenon there is always the weekly roundup of drone-related news offered on the blog of Bard College’s Center for the Study of the Drone. If Bard’s experts are right, it looks like we are in store for some big changes in the airspace over our heads.

—Paul De Angelis

Wanted: Successor

Way back in 1975 in Cornwall, young Pat and Jerry Blakey had a brilliant idea: Why not keep the hospital bed that Pat’s mother left behind, store it in the UCC basement, and loan it to whoever might need it down the road? Today, almost 40 years later, the Medical Loan Outreach Program of the United Church



of Christ—grown, nurtured, and serviced by the Blakeys throughout these years on a volunteer basis—has become an indispensable resource for innumerable people in the northwest Connecticut area, including the area’s two visiting nurse associations.

This past fall, Pat and Jerry made definite plans to retire by the end of 2014, since an arrangement to continue the program was in the offing. However, this plan fell through. Unable to just abandon what has become an essential service for so many people, from individuals needing walkers or wheelchairs to those needing hospital beds for home care, the Blakeys decided to keep going for the time being.

At their home over tea and cookies, I tried to get a sense of the work involved in running this “storehouse of help,” as one happy recipient aptly called it. There are phone calls requesting equipment or arranging pick up or delivery. Moving equipment out of the church basement and onto the truck can require heavy lifting. Sign-out sheets keep track of who has what and where. More phone calls are required to inquire gently whether valuable items like scooters or lift chairs are still in use or could be returned. All equipment needs to be cleaned and repaired.

The Blakeys spend many hours quietly providing medical equipment for those in need, from the injured to the disabled, from old to young. Once they enabled a CCS student with a broken leg to go on a class trip by providing the needed wheelchair.

Now it is our turn to support Pat and Jerry and ease their tasks until a successor is established. Volunteers are needed to be called upon when Jerry has to move heavy equipment; to help Pat determine whether equipment is still in use (tact and sensitivity essential); and to deliver equipment when pick up is impossible.

Of course, the most important question is: who will take over, so that the Blakeys can finally retire? —Elisabeth Kaestner

Saying Goodbye to the Hemlocks

There’s disappointing news on the hemlock front: when the *Chronicle* last visited this subject 15 years ago, there was hope that the lady bird beetle could, when introduced in large numbers, counteract the devastating effect of the hemlock woolly adelgid, a bug that has infested and is killing large numbers of hemlocks in eastern states, Connecticut included.

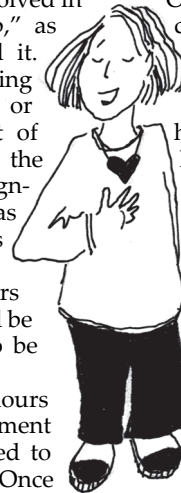
Peter Del Tredici, part-time Cornwall resident and former senior research scientist at Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum, reports that a lot has changed since then.

“The lady bird beetle has not panned out. Treating individual trees or small groups of trees in a garden setting with neonicotinoid pesticides has now become pretty cost effective, but somewhat problematic because the chemical has been implicated in the demise of the honey bee.

“For many years,” he writes, Cornwall was spared the devastation that towns at lower elevations experienced because of its cold winters (temperatures of -4 degrees F can result in 90 percent mortality of the adelgid.) But with climate change bringing warmer winters, “the bug has finally managed to get established in Cornwall and has been doing serious damage to mature trees for at least the past five years.”

Once the trees die, “they tend to fall down within four or five years, which can present a serious hazard for unsuspecting hikers. This is an issue that the town and state will soon have to deal with. And many smaller, less vigorous trees—which represent the forests of the future—are already dead.

“The real issue for Cornwall,” Peter continues, “is that it is tragically losing its magnificent stands of wild hemlocks: Dean’s Ravine, Cathedral Pines, Gold Pines, Ballyhack, etc.—where some trees are over 200 years old. To my eye, many of them will be dead within five years and most within ten to 15. And there’s really nothing to do about it in that time frame except to go out and say goodbye to them while they’re still in reasonably good shape.” —Carol Schneider



Welcome

Oliver Peter Smith Mager
to Camilla and Alix Smith Mager

Goodbye to Friends

Robert Charity
Charles L. Gold
Mary Blair Sams
Wendy Jamgotchian Weigel

Land Transfers

Lawrence A. Kobrin and Ruth F. Kobrin to Jack Brandon Moyer and Salvatore A. Lopes, two parcels of land with buildings and improvements thereon at 8 Popple Swamp Road, for \$487,500.

Unconditional Love

If you own a pet, then odds are good you see your pet as an example of unconditional love. Dogs exemplify loyalty and companionship. Even the aloof cat, eventually choosing lap over chair, is seen as a loving companion.

The pet cupid of the Northwest Corner is our own Little Guild of St. Francis. For more than 50 years, it has been pet

matchmaker for Cornwall and has placed more than 100 dogs and cats in homes in town over the last five years. As the largest no-kill shelter in northwest Connecticut, it adopted out more than 500 pets to families throughout the region over the last two years. With each adopted dog or cat, the available room is quickly filled as members of the volunteer staff actively canvas kill shelters, pulling in animals on the brink.

In 2012, when the state mandated that the town either build an up-to-date animal shelter for stray dogs and cats, or arrange for placement at a licensed boarding facility, Little Guild offered to become the official dog and cat pound for the town of Cornwall at no cost to taxpayers.

The shelter's goals and dreams do not end there. It is focused on expansion. John Guenther, board vice chair, shared one of its near-term goals: to establish an onsite spay and neuter clinic. Its objective would be to provide cost-effective services to the residents of the Little Guild and, ultimately, pets in the community. More plans are on the drawing board. Such ambitions—and day-to-day operations—require funding, and unexpected events can drain the budget. On this past New Year's Day, the shelter was alerted to smoke in the building. Guenther said that it was an unnerving experience as Cornwall's volunteer fire department rushed in to investigate and help ensure the safety of all two- and four-legged residents. The cause of the smoke? A faulty furnace that now must be replaced.

Undeterred by this financial setback, the Little Guild plans to forge ahead with its plans. The shelter's annual appeal is underway. We can expect to see more fundraisers such as the Bunny Williams Connecticut Doggie Cup Run & Wag 5K, held this past fall. Dare we hope for another Paws to Celebrate? It was a great evening of fun.

—Diane Beebe

Happy 275th!

Planning for Cornwall's 275th birthday party began in earnest at a special January 8th meeting called by the selectmen to gather ideas about when, where, and how to celebrate our town. Kate Freygang collected ideas and proposals from individuals and representatives of many civic groups; a committee appointed by the selectmen will sort through the list and develop concrete plans and a budget.

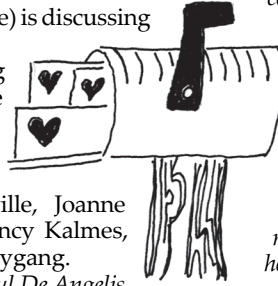
Possible festivities ranged from the idea of a waterborne flotilla down the Housatonic to an open-car antique train ride from West Cornwall to Cornwall Bridge and back (unfeasible for many reasons). Reference was also made to the 250th anniversary festivities that included a major parade and publication of a book of Cornwall writings.

According to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, a consensus emerged about the town organizing a major celebration on the

village green on or about July 4, with events on different days taking place in the other two village centers. Organizations such as the Cornwall Association, the library, the Housatonic River Commission, and the historical society may sponsor separate or concurrent events or projects as they see fit. The United Church of Christ, which shares the town's birthday (in 1740 there was no separation of church and state) is discussing its own contribution.

The formal planning committee appointed by the selectmen on January 20 consists of Todd Piker, Richard Griggs, Ed Greene, Priscilla Pavel, Lynn Scoville, Joanne Wojtusiak, Peter Demy, Nancy Kalmes, Virginia Potter, and Kate Freygang.

—Paul De Angelis



A Hive of Winter Activities

As many of us would like to curl up under a blanket with a good book and a warm drink, there is no such relaxation at 5 Cream Hill Road.

This year's theatrical production is *The Lion King*, with grades 5 through 8 performing, overseen by faculty members Danielle Krueger, Kristi Pramuka, and Alicia Simonetti-Shpur. Tricia Collins leads students in creating the sets. The students will practice, eat, breathe, and sleep their roles from mid-January until the two showings on March 27 and 28.

The first grade is collaborating with the sixth- and seventh-graders on a study of African culture and animals, meant to coincide with *The Lion King*. The students will be presenting their work on Tuesday, March 24, from 5:30 to 6:30 P.M.

Grades six to eight choral and band members are rehearsing with their Region One peers for the Regional Music and Chorus Festival, culminating in an evening show at HVRHS on February 11; see page 4 for details.

The CCS Outdoor Sports Program gives students in grades four to eight a chance to get outside to exercise and have fun learning downhill or cross-country skiing or snowboarding. When the weather isn't conducive to cross country, the kids go ice skating. This year, 60 percent of the students chose downhill skiing, 20 percent, snowboarding, and 20 percent cross-country skiing/skating.

The CCS Quiz Bowl team, under the direction of teacher Will Vincent, is preparing for matches against each of the other Region One teams. Approximately 15 middle school students, all of whom are not afraid to be wrong, practice during and after school. Five matches are scheduled, for late February and into March.

The boys and girls basketball teams practice four days a week and have games on Mondays and Thursdays. The boys have



Letter to the Chronicle

DISPARITY IN CORNWALL

The January Chronicle mentions two interesting figures from Cornwall—a dinner that cost \$250 per person and the fact that 27.4 percent of the 325 children in Cornwall live in poverty. If you would like to do something about this disparity in our midst, consider helping to keep the Cornwall Food Pantry stocked, or send a check to the Cornwall Food & Fuel Bank, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. For information about the pantry or donation hours call Anne Scott, pantry coordinator, 672-0595.

—Anne Baren, Food Pantry helper

a cooperative team with Falls Village called CornVillage. The girls team includes sixth-through eighth-graders and one fifth-grader who participates but not in any games, because of school policy.

—Erin Hedden

The Aristocrats and the Potter

It was certainly an odd social contract that brought together the two families sketched in Jeffrey Jacobson's new booklet on Cornwall's famous "castle." Charlotte Bronson Hunnewell was an orphaned socialite heiress determined to reproduce a touch of a dying European world in a remote corner of Coltsfoot Valley. The predominant impression Jacobson gives of Charlotte is one of eccentricity and isolation: a would-be "aristocrat" who kept everyone but her second husband at a distance, including her own daughter. To her, having an "estate-employed potter" for the elaborate summer chateau she had built in the early 1920s felt indispensable. Though she lived until 1961, she seems never to have made the transition out of the 19th century.

The potter Vincenzo Rondinone and his family, however, sank deeper roots during their 14-year stay in Cornwall. The natural elements that surrounded the pottery studio connected to the castle were inspiring to the Italian immigrant from Yonkers and his son Nicholas: the "basic, fusible clay, the same sort used for so many years by the Italian village potters;" the nearby pond for washing it, and the fieldstone used to construct the building where the pots were created, fired, and dried.

The results of Jacobson's extensive research were recently published by the Cornwall Historical Society as *The Castle: A Love Story*. This 16-page oversized, print-on-demand paperback is available for \$18

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from such online outlets as Lulu, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble (and soon at the CHS itself). Elegantly designed by Dean Potter and packed with well-chosen and well-placed photographs, it provides the characters and settings suitable for a first-rate romantic novel. —Paul De Angelis

Cornwall Briefs

•**Three Cheers** for the Cornwall Conservation Trust. Why, you ask? Well, faster than you can say Housatonic Meadows State Park three times, the trust found the money—around \$750,000—to purchase the 300-plus acres of Trinity Camp Forest so that Charlie Gold’s grandkids and our own can hike the land till their bunions turn south. The biggest financial commitment—more than half—came from the state, and there was generous support from the Housatonic Valley Association and individuals, including one anonymous donor who promised a gift of \$200,000. The trust is now inviting us to become Friends of the Trinity Forest by helping to raise an additional \$45,000 for trail maintenance. (Please see announcement on this page about a planned community hike through the Trinity Forest).

•**Upcoming Budget Meetings:** They begin this month and don’t finish until mid-May. The two meetings this month come on February 11, when the Region One business manager presents his case to the Board of Finance (BoF) and on February 25, when the Board of Selectmen presents the 2015/16 proposed budget to the BoF. All meetings are at 7:30 p.m. in the library unless designated otherwise.

—John Miller

will speak about her walk across Spain on the 500-mile Camino de Santiago. All welcome, refreshments served.

Winter Hike or Snowshoe in Trinity Forest. Meet at 1 p.m. on Saturday, February 7, at the top of Dibble Hill Road (look for orange traffic cones between house numbers 134 and 152). This downhill walk is steep in places, so boots and trekking poles are appropriate. Arrive by 2:30 p.m. at the Wandering Moose for refreshments (non-hikers welcome). Those with energy can hike back up; rides available for everyone else. Please RSVP to hike@cornwallconservationtrust.org.

Community Contra Dance will be held Saturday, February 7, at 7 p.m., town hall. Live old-time music by Still, the Home-grown Band, and calling by Peter Stix. Suggested donation. For information call Jane Prentice at 672-6101.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic on Monday, February 9, noon to 1 p.m. at the UCC Parish House. For information contact VNA Northwest at 860-567-6000 or vnanw.org.

The Region One Band and Region One Chorus, including CCS students from grades six to eight, will present a concert at Cornwall Consolidated School on Monday, February 9, at 11:30 a.m. and again at Housatonic Valley Regional High School on Wednesday, February 11, at 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Senior Luncheon: three courses and fine company at a bargain price on Tuesday, February 10, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Wandering Moose Café. For information contact Bob Potter at 672-6191.

All Cornwall Seniors are invited to a Valentine’s Day lunch at the Cornwall Inn on Thursday, February 12, noon to 2:30 p.m. Cost is \$10 per person. Buffet lunch, music, chocolate...Bring your sweetheart, or meet one there. Hosted by Cornwall Park & Rec. MUST RSVP to Becky by February 5 at 672-4071 or prcornwall@gmail.com.

At the Cornwall Library
The Winter Film Series continues with *The Magic Flute*, 7:30 p.m. on February 7. \$5/ person suggested donation.

Valentines and All That Jazz dinner dance on February 14 from 6 to 9 p.m. Music by Bob Parker’s Jive by Five band. \$25/

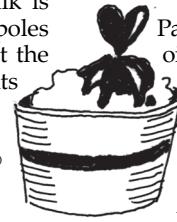
person. Cash bar extra.

Dance Movie: 7 p.m. on February 18. *The Little Mermaid* featuring the San Francisco Ballet. Free, donations welcome.

Family Movie: February 20 at 7 p.m. *The Secret of Roan Inish*. Donations welcome.

Art in Cornwall

Art at the Library: New Works on Paper, by Jennifer Ebner. Works in oil, pastel, and graphite closes February 21. An exhibition of recent paintings, drawings, and objects by Jessica Jane, a Bantam-based artist, opens February 24; artist’s reception on February 28, 4 to 6 p.m.



Applications for a hearing before the Board of Assessment Appeals must be received by February 20. Hearings will be scheduled during March.

“Town Meeting in Cornwall: 1815 Meets 2015,” a performance by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation interpreters, is being presented at CCS on Sunday, February 22, at 3 p.m. See insert for more details.



Donations of Goods and Services needed for Cornwall Child Center fundraising auction in April. Please contact the Child Center for further information: amy.bresson@cornwallchildcenter.org.

A Film Group is being formed for anyone interested in watching, discussing, or making films. All are invited! Contact Melissa Andrews at 672-6173.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH

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Events & Announcements

The Cornwall Woman’s Society will hold its monthly meeting on Thursday, February 5, in the Cornwall Library at 10 a.m. Brenda Underwood, past president of the CWS,

Swami Abhedananda

Learn about his stint in Cornwall and innumerable other gems of local lore by searching and sampling 24 years of back issues on our website. Then help us keep this resource at your fingertips by contributing today.

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