

should not be addressed as captain. Instead, they should be addressed as skipper. This was generally the case until relatively recently in the US East Coast when radio communication replaced horn signals to request a bridge opening on the Intracoastal Waterway.

When the bridge operators talked to commercial vessels, they would know that the master was entitled to be addressed as captain. Unfortunately when talking to pleasure craft, they have no way of knowing whether they were addressing a licensed master, an unlicensed master, a crew or a guest. It was easier for the operators to address everyone as captain.

Things are different in Alaska, British Colombia, Washington, Oregon and California. There skipper is used almost exclusively as the courtesy title over the radio. Why the difference? It is true that skipper is quite acceptable when informally addressing a licensed master at any time, and that Westerners tend to be much more informal than Easterners. However, I think that the different practice is primarily due to so few opening bridges in those waters.

Skipper, by the way, comes to us from Old Dutch schipper, the master of a small trading vessel.

While we're on the subject of courtesy titles, many of the ship's company had very specific courtesy titles, or nicknames. These nicknames were generally for the ship's idlers. An idler was never really idle. Rather, he was called an idler by the sailors because he stood no watches and could sleep through the night. Often the sailors never knew the real names of the idlers

because of the use of these nicknames. If the ship were large enough for more than one idler doing a specific job, all doing that job would share the same nickname. In most cases it's easy to see how the nickname came into use. In others, we have to dig a little.

One of the idlers was the bosun. He was known as Boats. Bosun is a phonetic spelling of bo's'n, the contraction of boatswain. This is one of the very few Sailor Talk we have that originated in English. A swain was a young man, apprentice or assistant. In nautical terms dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the boat's swain was the young man who would do all those tasks that would assist in the efficient operation of the boat. Such tasks included securing the anchor after it has been weighed, dishing out punishment with the cat-o-nine-tails, tying the two hangman's knots, coiling lines and ensuring that sufficient stores were aboard for the voyage.

Wait a minute. Backup for a second. Two hangman's knots? Absolutely. We all know about the hangman's noose. Few know that a second knot was used for executions at sea. The knot was tied about six feet above the noose, leaving a loose bight (loop or bend) of about six feet in length. The noose would be placed about the victim's neck, run up to a block on the yardarm and back down to the deck. Slack would be taken out of the rope. At the appointed time, the crew would haul on the bitter end\* of the rope, running down the deck as fast as they could. When this second knot reached the block at the

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\* Bitter end: Post of wood or iron to which cables, ropes, etc are made fast.

yardarm, it would automatically capsize and free the loose bight. With six feet of slack suddenly in the rope, the victim would drop. Upon reaching the end of that six feet, his neck would be instantly broken by the sudden jerk of the noose on his neck.

Okay, back to the idlers.

The sailmaker was known as Sails. The ship's carpenter was known as Chips. The ship's blacksmith (and as steam power was added in the mid 19th century, the ship's engineer) was known as Blackie for the coal soot generally covering his face.

Sails often had crew to assist him in his work. Carol Hasse, a sail maker in Port Townsend, Washington, told me the favorite phrase of the sailmaker. It was 'a stitch in time saves nine'. The meaning was clear to the assistants. If they sewed fewer than the required nine stitches per inch, Sails would make them take out all stitches for that inch and again go for the required nine. On some ships it had an additional meaning. For every inch without the required number of stitches, Boats would lay nine stitches on the poor sailor's back with the cat-o-nine-tails.

The ship's cooper (maker of casks) was known as Coop. He would break down every cask for storage when its contents were consumed, and would later reassemble it for filling when the opportunity arose. Because he could work wood (making the barrel staves) and metal (making the barrel hoops), Coop would assist Chips and Blackie on larger vessels and do all their tasks on vessels too small for a cooper, a carpenter and a smith.

The ship's cook was called The Doctor, or

simply Doc. The Doctor was easy to find on board ship. He was noticeably heavier than the rest of the crew. Now you know why Snow White instantly knew the name of the fat dwarf, and why a modern day cook will 'doctor up' the food. Why was the cook called The Doctor? That's one I've been unable to find. If you have that answer, please pass it on to me.

While we're on the subject of The Doctor, have you ever boned a chicken? Would you believe that 'to bone...' actually started out as Sailor Talk? 'To bone' means to scrounge everything except the 'bare bones'. A bosun named Bone served on the flagship of Admiral Cornwallis from 1793 until about 1801. He was particularly adept at 'acquiring' ship's stores from other vessels to make good his deficits, building up quite a surplus towards the end of his tour. As the bosun was departing the ship for the last time, Admiral Cornwallis was said to remark, "I trust, Mr Bone, that you will leave me my bower anchors."

Here's another one for you. The Doctor had a perquisite. He could keep any fat that he could skim off the top of the kettles when cooking the salt beef. He sold the skimmed fat to the ship's purser. Originally that fat was used to make candles. Later it was also used to make the grease that was used to protect the spars from rain and spray. The skimmed fat was called slush. Doc's perquisite was known as his slush fund.

Our last idler was Doc's assistant. He was known as Soups. Along with helping with the preparations and the cleanup, Soups had the very specific job of apportioning the food, frequently some sort of soupy concoction, to the crew.

# Mably Diary 1850 - 1950

## Part 3

*Polzeath WI and Trebetherick WI merged in 2008 to form Trebetherick and Polzeath WI. In the archives of Polzeath WI was a handwritten scrapbook based on a Mably family diary covering the period 1850 to 1950. We believe that the scrapbook was prepared for a WI competition but we are not really sure. It makes fascinating reading and we have decided to serialise it in Link. The photographs are scanned copies of those in the scrapbook. We have not changed the spelling, punctuation or grammar - what you read here is exactly as per the handwritten version. This material is copyright and must not be reproduced elsewhere without the prior permission of the Link Committee and Trebetherick and Polzeath WI.*



### 1890

A Golf Club was started at Rock with nine holes.

For the birth of her youngest our labourer's wife got a maternity bag, which she had to return after 6 weeks. The contents of the bag were: 1 Sheet, 2 Bedgowns, 12 Napkins, 2 Flannels, 3 Bands, 4 Shirts, 2 Daygowns and 2 Nightgowns

*St Enodoc Golf Course at Rock - the first Club House.*

Wool is down to 7½d (3.1 pence) a bag. There are not many flocks of sheep left on the farms now.

In Polzeath a new Chapel is opened on ground opposite the Court house where for 8 years services have been held.

Our blacksmith Williams in St Minver has added another prize to his collection for his implements at this year's agricultural show.



We can now go daily to Wadebridge from Rock in a horse drawn bus run by the Blake brothers. Mr Chynoweth from Trelawder Farm who had come home from South Africa started a Cricket Club in the Parish.

### 1891

March 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>. We had a terrific blizzard. Snow blocked all roads. That evening Sir Lewes Molesworth, Unionist candidate, spoke at a meeting at Tredrizzick. The road to Wadebridge was impassable so he had to spend the night just outside Tredrizzick with his Agent at the cottage of Miss Mably.

The road to Wadebridge was only open on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

In November the new Vicar and his wife the Rev and Mrs Chase arrive.

### 1892

Nine more holes were added to the Golf Course.

### 1892

I helped the Vicar's wife to make up parcels for the poor of the Parish. Each parcel contained

*The 7<sup>th</sup> green at St Enodoc Golf Club.*

½lb Tea or 3 pounds of beef or a Crossover, or 2 hundred weight of Coal was given or a red flannel jacket or 2/6.

The first mechanical binder was used by Mr Simmonds of Roserro. He used it only for a couple of years as it used wire for binding and this proved to be dangerous for cattle.

Mr Treleaven takes over the delivery of mail from the blind postman.

### 1893

January 4<sup>th</sup> My husband went to the Bellringers Supper at which 18 were present, they had

12lbs of Sirloin of beef  
A leg of Mutton  
2 ½lbs Rumpsteak pie  
2 Dishes of Potatoes  
1 Dish of Carrots  
1 Dish of Cabbage  
2 Plum Puddings  
1 Jelly  
18 Mince Pies  
Coffee  
8 Oranges  
Pipes and Tobacco



## 1893

In May we had an enjoyable outing to the Choir Festival at Truro. A pair which took competitors to Wadebridge was there exchanged for 4 greys and Truro Cathedral was reached at 12.30 p.m.

After the singing, tea was served to 1,000 East Cornwall choristers at 6 p.m. in the Market House, and the return journey was started at 7.15 pm.

Horses were again changed at Wadebridge, and the party reached St Minver at 11.15 p.m.

Visitors seem to start coming to the Parish for the Summer holidays. We have a very dry Summer, and Hay and Corn have been bad.

In July 45 farmers had a big dinner at the Temperance Inn.

The Vicar tells me that he has started a Parish Magazine between November the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> thousands of Herrings are caught at Rock and sold at 1/3 (one shilling and tree old pence - about 6 new pence) per hundred.

A new Organ is installed in St Minver Church.

In July my son buys the new attraction cap of Cherry and White of the Cricket Club from Mr Frost for 1/-.

On December 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday morning the Ferry boat from Rock to Padstow sinks with the loss of 2 lives.

The register of St Minver School shows 148 Pupils.

## 1895

January and February we have Snow and frost for several weeks, consequently it will be a bad year for crops.

In the Spring, Tredrizzick School again enlarged.

In the Autumn our first Football club of boys of the Village is organised.

On June 20<sup>th</sup> we all go to the house-warming party of the Perceval Institute, St Minver. The building exclusive of site has cost £500. The bands of St Teath and the Duke of Cornwalls light infantry played the whole afternoon and



*The Temperance Inn.*

evening. Nearly 800 sat down to an excellent tea in a large Marquee.

In December our first hospital nurse comes for 3 months. Labourer's and their families can be nursed free of charge.

## 1896

Mr Sanford from St Minver house opens the Waterworks which he says have cost him £200. He has laid on Water from the stream by the Vicarage Orchard to a tank in the centre of the Village opposite the Temperance Inn.

January 15<sup>th</sup>. We go to the first concert in our new Perceval Institute. Previous concerts had been held in the loft over the Stables at the Vicarage.

## 1896

Sunday School treat in July when 99 children went in 6 wagons to Polzeath.

After attending a Flower Service at 1.45pm at St Minver Church the children piled into the Wagons.

Lovely weather. Mrs Chase told me they had:

- 240 Splits
- 35lbs Saffron Cake
- 3lbs White Cake
- 4 ½ dozen Sponge Cakes
- 2 Loaves.





*Polzeath as seen about 1896..*

150 Visitors came to the Parish of St Minver this summer.

On June 22<sup>nd</sup> we celebrated Queen Victoria Golden Jubilee. The day opened with a gloomy sky but soon the Sun conquered and we had Queen's weather, about 6 – 7 hundred partook of the excellent meal provided free to all Parishioners.

Sports for men, lads and maidens caused much amusement and considerable profit to the winners. At 10 o'clock a great Bonfire shot forth its flames. It was a wonderful thought that

thousands of similar fires were at that moment girding the Empire with a circle of flame. After this we had fireworks and only came home towards mid-night after a wonderful day.

### **1898**

January. Mrs Sanford places 2 lamps at the top of the Village of St Minver.

We hope to get some new Cottages, since many Cottages in St Minver have only one or two Bedrooms.

A Methodist School Hall is opened at Polzeath. Last week I sent away one guinea for which I

*Old Polzeath showing the 'Tin Tabernacle' - the Methodist school hall.*



received:-

- 1 Wadded quilt – double bed size chintzy covered
- 1 Cotton quilt
- 1 Coloured Blanket
- 1 Pair White Blankets
- 2 Pillow cases
- 1 Pair best Sheets
- 1 Pair Cheaper Sheets
- 1 Bolster case
- 2 Towels.

I am very pleased with all these articles.

The children went to see the first steam life-boat at Padstow the 'James Stevens'.

### 1900

We now regularly read the Cornish Guardian. Coal is 15/- a ton at Rock Harbour

April 11<sup>th</sup> A terrible tragedy has occurred, the life-boat 'James Stevens' capsized while endeavouring to save the lives of the crew of the 'Peace and Plenty' from Lowestoft. Eight of the crew of the Life-boat lost their lives.

In 1900 Druscilla wife of William Mably takes over the Diary from Joanna. Unfortunately she does not seem to have made many notes.

The Vicar's wife told me that she had to buy some more Blankets for the Blanket club, from which our labourers wives receive loan of Blankets for the Winter months, from the end of October to the end of April.

*Lower end of Rock Road. This picture was captioned 'Rock Harbour opposite Padstow.'*



*Padstow Harbour.*

### A Harvesters Drink.

Put 6 tablespoon's fine Oatmeal or course Oatmeal ground like flour into a basin, mix it with cold water like a cream, add 6 tablespoons of white sugar and the juice of 1 Lemon.

