

A CHILD'S WAR IN CORNWALL

'THE VOICE OF A SCHOOLBOY'

John C. Harding

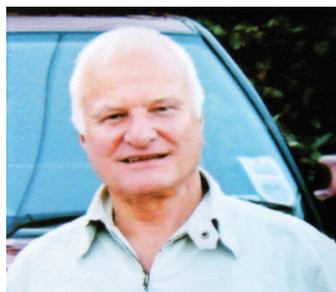
John Harding was just eight and a half years old when war was declared in 1939. His is the 'Voice of a schoolboy' in this remarkable memoir of an idyllic childhood spent in Cornwall against the background of the dark clouds of war.

Moving from Bristol to Plymouth in what has been described as 'England's darkest hour', he, together with his mother, brother and sisters, experience the horrors of the Blitz, as a result of which – joined by their father – they move to the remote and seemingly peaceful region bordering the Fal estuary in Cornwall.

For a young boy the estuary, creeks and countryside, with its woods and fields offer a paradise for exploration. Befriending local children and fellow evacuees, they discover the delights of messing about in boats which provided them with a perfect environment.

However as the war progresses it intrudes more and more into their lives and the importance of Falmouth as a strategic port attracts enemy aircraft attention. The build up of American men and equipment in preparation for the D Day landings, provide the youngsters with a unique opportunity to see, and share history in the making.

In *A Child's War in Cornwall* the author describes the rural idyll that was Cornwall in the 1940s against the background of World War Two. His fond memories of those times provide a fascinating glimpse of times past and heart-warming reminiscences of a most fortunate childhood.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John C. Harding philosophy is 'a man with many hobbies has many friends'. John has many friends. His hobbies include marine painting, astral navigation, collecting scientific instruments, photography and wildlife gardening.

John's interests are UFOs, naval history, steam engines, aviation history and electric clocks.

He lives in Exmouth with his wife Pat.

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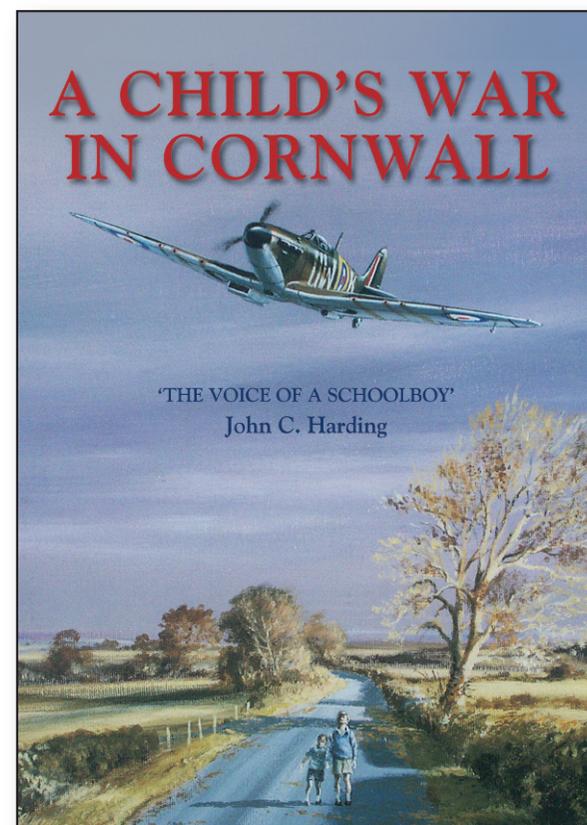
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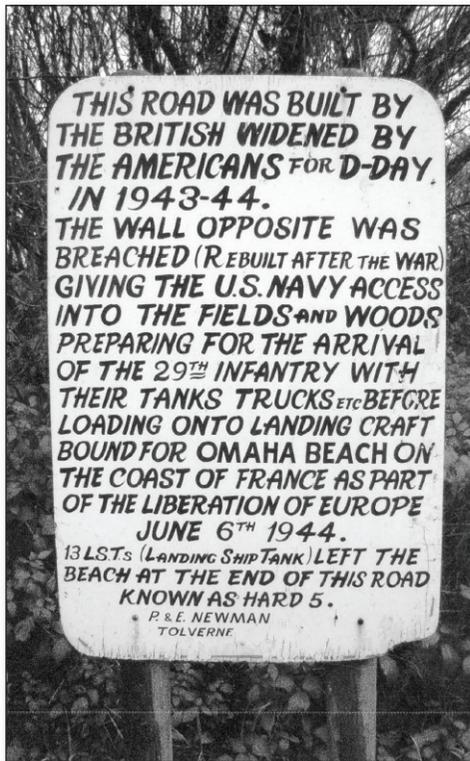
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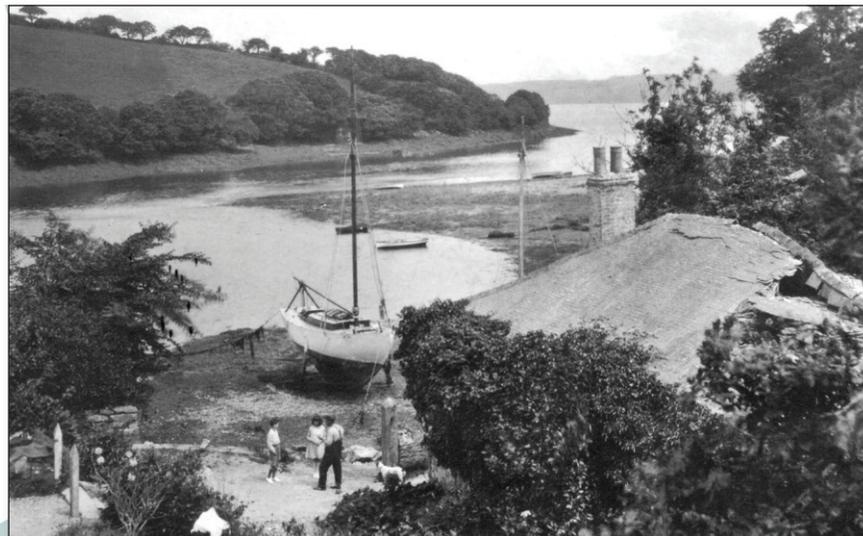
On 3 September 1939 at Burnham-on-Sea. Back row: June, Gran and Mary. Front row: 'the gang', first left Anne, Bob, John and Jean.



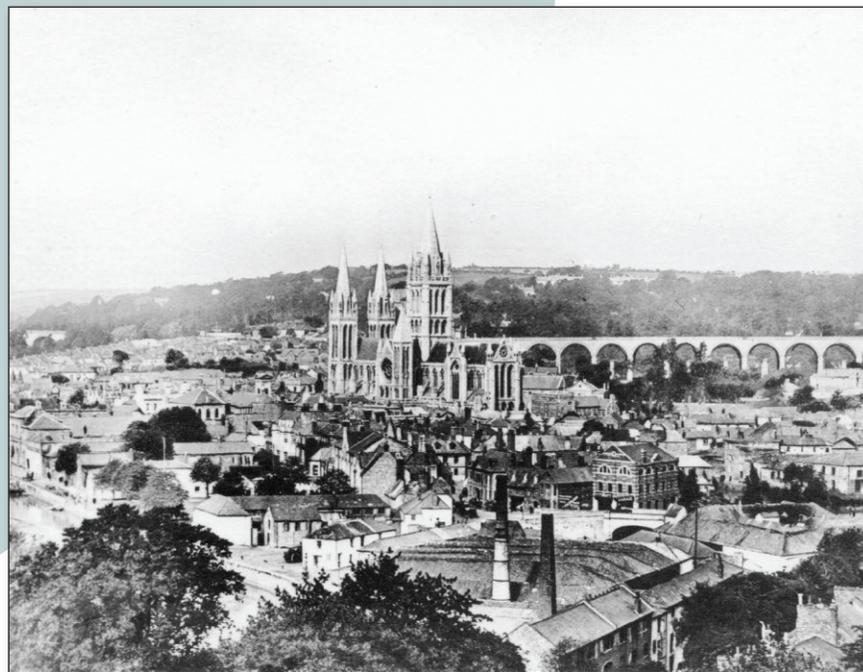
Inside the HTP motors factory in Truro showing the large numbers of people employed in the repair of aircraft.



A sign on the road down to Tolverne, a reminder, to all who pass.



Church Road, Mylor c.1930



Truro as it looked during the author's youth.

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Step Helen - the 'Bent' shed.

Step Helen, near Fardour Castle, as it looks today.

The view that greeted me on the following morning had been visited in my memory, when I began to walk round again. The sea had once over Church Heath to a calm and unbroken light. The view stretched from the distant light-house and the English Channel beyond right through the dunes, along the coast to the westward tanks stretched down to the water's edge. Many years of sea had looked on the surface of the water, along tanks, then nothing again, looking down the beach. A sign had been marking the way to the Channel.

Beyond Helen's Highway out of sight lay Tolverne, where better harbours were already being built, but the sea was the same. The water was the same, the wind was the same. In some ways we would be, but not in others. However, there would be many things that were new to come. We would grow from children into young men, and then into men when we would be called upon to do as adults do. I had, repeated repeatedly, that our character would be marked by history, a close proximity to nature and the sea.

There were no hospitals at Restrop point then, even if there had been we would never have found them, we did not know where we were. Dad had received medical training in the RAFV, he applied a treatment called 'hot slabs', as everyone's hand the lighter with the great care, my mouth was not to be opened.

Mary and her mother Miss Constance, and I had had for me - and I remember her as if every time in the following years. 'I don't want to go to the Cookhouse, please don't let me go.' She had kept an account of it all that night, I often think of it as a child's war.

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Example of a double-page spread.