

# NEW EDITION

# THE GREAT CORNISH FAMILIES

A HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR HOUSES

Crispin Gill

Fierce independence, a collective determination and a conviction in their individuality, sets the Cornish people apart. In his poem *Song of the Western Men*, Parson Hawker celebrated the anger felt in the county in 1688 by supporters of Bishop Trelawny who was unjustly imprisoned in the Tower by King James. The song is still sung with pride and passion as the 'Cornish National Anthem', encapsulating the indomitable spirit of the Cornish character and their instinct to protect their own.

Along with the Trelawnys, each of the principal Cornish families has its own fascinating story which forms part of the rich heritage of Cornwall confirming its distinctiveness from its neighbours. *The Great Cornish Families* relates the history of twenty-two families, their houses and estates, and describes within the context of national history the part each has played in the politics, commerce and the arts of their day.

Great Cornish Families is dedicated to that great historian and man of letters, Dr A.L. Rowse, himself pre-eminent among the sons of Cornwall, and who was instrumental in persuading the author to undertake this much-needed book upon its original publication. Here, presented in a new edition, is an accessible study of the vital role played by the great families of Cornwall in shaping the affairs of the county and the nation, studying their ups and downs; their great men and women as well as the odd black sheep.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

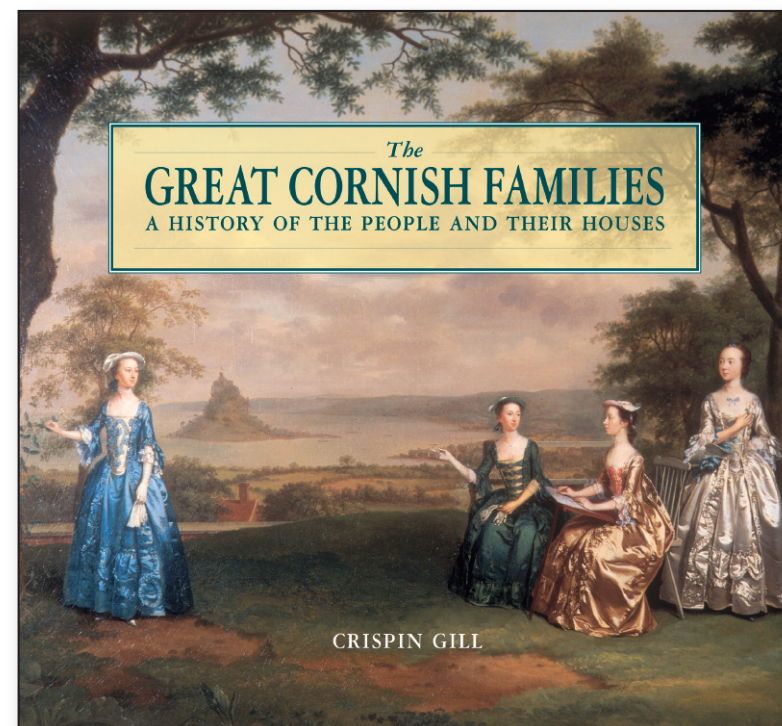
The late **Crispin Gill** came from Cornish stock, although he was born and educated in Plymouth, and from school went straight to the editorial staff of the *Western Morning News*, of which he was Assistant Editor for over twenty years. During his lifetime he produced many books on of which *The Great Cornish Families* is among the most enduring.

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Lanhydrock in the great fire of 1881.



The Grenville Room at Prideaux Place, Padstow.



The Great Hall at Cotehele.




The Eliot family in 1746, a Reynolds' painting, with Richard Eliot and his wife sitting on the right of the group but with their son and heir Edward, who was to become the first Lord Eliot, dominating the painting in his red coat.



Trerice, the home of another Arundell branch; now a National Trust showpiece.

GREAT CORNISH FAMILIES



Sir John Molesworth, the sixth baronet, and the first in succession in the county MP for Cornwall.

James Mill's son, the even more renowned John Stuart Mill, the editor. It was the mouthpiece of the philosophical radicals. Among other things it attacked transportation, supported the views of Gibbon Wakefield on populating colonies and urged home rule for them. None of this endeared Molesworth to the Cornish Whigs, so in 1837 Molesworth found another Parliamentary seat, in Leeds.

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MOLESWORTH

Molesworth had pursued a number of ladies in his time, always meeting with rejection. He did not stand for Parliament in 1841, spending his time at home and in pursuit of the widow of Temple West. She had made her debut as a singer at Drury Lane in 1827 under the stage name of Andalusia Grant and married four years later. Sir William became her second husband in 1844.

The next year he was back in Parliament, but having again fallen out with his Cornish neighbours, stood for Southwark and held the borough until his death. On the formation of Lord Aberdeen's government in 1851 he joined the Cabinet as First Commissioner for Works. In July 1855 he was further advanced as Colonial Secretary, but died in October of that year. He left Pencarrow to his widow, the Drury Lane singer, who lived on until 1888, a well known member of London Society who was described as resident of Eaton Place, Pencarrow and Tivert.

Apart from left-wing politics and the ladies, Sir William's other great passion was for rhododendrons and unusual plants. As Commissioner for Works he was in charge of Kew Gardens at the time of the great botanical explorers, and his brother also sent plants and conifers from New Zealand. By the end of the century Pencarrow had specimens of all but ten conifers known to the western world. Between 1830 and 1840 he wrought many changes in the gardens of Pencarrow, and established the Italian and American gardens.

Sir William and Andalusia had no children, so the title passed to his cousin, the Rev Hugh Henry Molesworth (1815-62), rector of St Peter's Minor. This sixth baronet again died childless and his brother, the Rev Paul Molesworth (1821-89), vicar of Clapham, became the tenth baronet. The title passed to his son, Lewis William Molesworth (1855-1912). This baronet, the eleventh, was the first to live at Pencarrow for thirty-four years. He revived old family traditions, becoming High Sheriff in 1899 and being MP for Bodmin from 1900 to 1906. But he died without children.



Pencarrow, the Palladian-style Georgian house of the Molesworths of St Aubyn

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Example of a double-page spread.