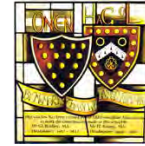


Edward Reginald Richards



Tribute to a True Penwithian



The Eleven Plus exam, hated symbol of segreted tripartite education politicized system, determined whether one is better fit to become a barrow boy, plumber or rocket scientist or a teacher. Three Penzance lads cusp of adolescence studying at the Lescudjack Primary School shaped their later education and lives.

The three Penzance 49ers lads Anthony Edward Pearce (2729) aka Pearcie for short, Brian Leonard Coak (2699) aka Coco and Edward Reginald Richards (2739) aka Vard in September 1949 marched away in our sporty maroon blazers to WW1 army surplus wooden Huts A B C classrooms for the first time at Penzance Grammar School of Davy fame. The huts were later condemned by the headmaster, "These huts are a disgrace to Cornwall".



The two brighter lads Pearcie and Vard indicated they would likely to become rocket scientists as they were studying maths, physics and Chem under Harry Otto, MOT and Bung Waller. The writer was totally anesthetized by 'Tufik's' 1846 Corn Laws repeal and dull English Lit. set books. Coco only came back to life under Charlie Mac's humorous tutelage.

In 1954 the Headmaster after eschewing the sporting achievements said that unequivocally 'school work comes first'. Vard obviously got the scholastic message. It did not deter his sporting achievements.



The Canteen

The more active sixth formers commandeered the hard asphalt just in front of the canteen entrance bounded by the tennis courts fence, Alan Tregenza's French room and the raised area above used for the high jump and put shot. The latter room was often subjected to many balls breaking the glass windows. To avoid punishment the trick was to go to Peak's at Causewayhead

and buy a pane of glass and putty and fix the window oneself. The furious play in front of the canteen slowed down a bit when the girls came from their

school to have their lunch. It was talent time! Unfortunately, the heavy school uniforms hid most of the interesting erogenous parts.

I said before Vard was smart. He joined the Scavengers hockey team to play against the girls at their school field. It was no more than a subterfuge to spot talent and legally ogle the less attired girl opponents showing their knickers under their shorts and dancing duddies. Vard spotted one lithesome maiden whom he fancied.

On the school balcony after singing, "And did those feet in ancient time" Assembly prayer time over, Vard and a little agitated, said to me that the fading afternoon before he and a bird on a 'biology field trip' were stanking around ancient Madron. He said they were walking through a grass field when they heard the sound of horses feet pounding behind them. There were no bovine animals or horses in sight! The pounding of horses increased and louder. He admitted the two got quite scared and simply ran like hell and exited the field sweating! Vard was not of a religious disposition or superstitious. Some years later I read that a battle took place somewhere in the area of the Myn Scryfa in Madron. The church of Landithy was held by the Knights of St. John and possibly there was a battle between Celt clans or Saxons. The writer has never forgotten Vard's strange tale.

In 1954 our new P.E. master Mr. A. 'Calypso' Bolton set about encouraging some summer adventures among the older more athletic lads. Tenting camps and canoeing was suggested. The old trio were cajoled into building canoes supervised by Hank the wood instructor and the P.E. master. Hank knew what he was doing so the keels for two canoes, a single and a double seater were laid down on the gym stage. I do not remember how much effort we put into building the vessels but finally the canvas skin was wrapped around the whale like ribbed structures.

Pearcie agreed to recce a camp site. The chosen site was agreed at a grass patch the end of Trebarvah Lane cliff with access from the Helston Road. Pearcie, of course, had a second interest in Trebarvah Lane. He was courting one handsome PGS maiden from the Lane. The tent camp, grub and gear was already set up accordingly awaiting the launch and our maiden canoe adventure.

Our two new canoes were taken to the slip near the Ross Bridge with our mum's and others eagerly waiting the moment of truth to see if the canoes will float. Vard was first on the water in the single canoe while Pearcie and I commanded the double seater craft. With great gusto we paddled out of the harbour and eager to get around the Mount and Cudden Point to our camp site. The young mariners did not check the Bay weather before hand, of course. It was windy and cold and the fragile craft were taking a bit of water.

Mrs. P. was watching at the lighthouse pier calling, "They will all be drowned!" It was too late for us to return. Mrs. P. ordered the owner of the Busy Bee motor boat to stop us and tow us back to the slip. In view of Mrs. P's emotional state the trio reluctantly allowed a tow back to the slip.

Not deterred we picked better weather to set off again to Trebarvah Lane. We decided to keep between the Mount and Marazion shore in case of trouble we could swim ashore. Again, the nautical trio did not check the tides before leaving the harbour. We arrived at the Mount Causeway to find the tide was out a long way and had to carry the canoes across the sand and causeway looking for deeper water.

Passing the causeway, eventually after much paddling and expenditure of energy we finally went into a narrow sea passage and on to a stony outcrop where the canoes were deposited and into our tents just above. The following halcyon days we canoed to Perrannuthnoe and beached the canoes on the beach to visit the Victoria Inn one of the oldest ins in England for a pint.

One afternoon Pearcie went sparking up the lane but it was quite dark when he was returning to camp. He must have tried to take a short cut and lost his way. We heard his voice calling but he could not be seen. Vard took a torch guided by his voice and worked his way towards where he was shouting. He was told not to move until we can see him clearly. Vard was close and shone the torch at him standing still awaiting further instructions. It is just as well! Pearcie was found standing right on the edge of a disused unseen mine shaft with a great drop!

Pearcie became Captain of the school First XV in 1955 in which I played.



Vard played for the School 1955 tennis team.



Vard became Captain of the school First XI in 1957 of which I was a member.



The rear of the Pavilion

We frequently used the first XI cum XV changing rooms where we could listen to a small radio I hid among the pavilion rafters and guzzle pop bought from the purveyor of pop, Mr. Barnes the groundsman. I always wondered if the little radio was still there when the pavilion was demolished?

Vard and I were also played for the successful Penzance Magpies Minors team. The Penzance Minors soccer team was able to beat many adult local teams including winning the Marazion Cup and thrashing a youth team from Southampton. All but one player Nigel Brockman (who later lost his life in the Penlee Life boat disaster) the rest came from the PGS soccer team. Terry Dann, Alan Thomas, Owen Williams, Michael Greet, Fish Wheeler, Alan Brightmore, Tony Williams, Edward Richards, Brian Reynolds & Brian Coak.

Soft talking Vard had a beautiful head of jet black hair. He looked a real Brylcreem boy in his PGS blazer and tie. After soccer matches at St. Clare often I went back with him to his house in Belgravia Street (the street where I was born) for some supper or to Harold's Fish and Chip shop to see a flick at the Gaiety in Newlyn or the Penzance Savoy, ABC or The Flea Pit.

We worked through our 'O' and A Levels between courting enjoying our sport and fishing at Logan Rock and Pedne Vounder.



We received our school certificates determining whether we would go onto become great scholars or rocket scientists.

The three Penwithians were inseparable at school in and out until small wars from 1950 -1953 leading to lengthening of conscription by two years under the National Service Amendment Act. On nineteen, Pearcie and I received N.S. Commissions in the DCLI both ending up in white man's grave Nigeria serving in the West African Frontier Force.

Intelligent Vard went onto King's College University London and studied for a maths degree. His soccer talents continued and became captain of the University soccer First XI.

Edward went on to teach maths at Essex and Bournemouth. There he succumbed to the charms of warm Lesley where they were married in 1963. They went to Kenya for some African sun where Vard taught maths for five years at the top public school. He was able there to enjoy his favorite game, soccer, and play in tennis tournaments. While there Lesley gave birth to two daughters Cathryn and Sally. From his Cornish roots Vard was always conscious of his natural environment and took every opportunity to go on safari in Kenya. With some Kenyan friends the family even drove from Kenya to South Africa camping out.

Returning to Blighty Vard worked in several countries, Holland, Germany and Brazil as a self-employed computer system analyst.



For thirty-six years the family lived in Clevedon Somerset where I stayed with the lovely couple whenever I was in England on my way to Kernow.



On retirement Vard and Lesley traveled to the antipodes, Americas and other European countries. After the travel excitement he was always happy to potter around in his garden to see his children and five grandchildren.

Vard the quintessential Cornishman and family man logged out permanently on 18 April 2013 and was cremated on 26 April 2013 at Clevedon Somerset.

Greatly missed by all.

Dwy genes - God be with you pard!

Coco

