

DR. BORLASE'S ACCOUNT OF LUDGVAN

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DR. WILLIAM BORLASE at one time intended to write a parochial history of Cornwall, and for that purpose collected a large MS. volume of *Parochial Memoranda*, which is now preserved at the British Museum (Egerton MSS. 2657). Although of great interest and importance, this consists merely of disjointed notes and is in no sense a finished product. But among Borlase's MSS. at the Penzance Library is a systematic and detailed account, compiled in 1770, of the parish of Ludgvan, of which he was Rector from 1722 until his death in 1772. This has never been published, and the present article gives a summary of its contents, with extracts.

The account starts with a discussion of the derivation of the parish name, Borlase doubting the common supposition "that a native saint by his holiness and miracles distinguished it from other districts by his own celebrated name," and concluding that "the existence of such a person as St. Ludgvan . . . may well be accounted groundless." His own view was that the parish was called after the Manor of Ludgvan, which in turn derived its name from the Lyd or Lid, the name given in Harrison's *Description of Britain* (1577) to the stream running through the parish. It is noteworthy that the older Ludgvan people still, at the present day, pronounce the name "Lidjan."

Borlase next gives the descent of the manor, the Domesday LUDUAM, through the families of Ferrers, Champernowne, Brook, Blount and Paulet. The Duke of Bolton, head of the Paulet family, was then Lord of the Manor and patron of the living, and the manor was known as Ludvon-Lez and Porth-Ia, as the town and parish of St. Ives formed a considerable part of it. The manor court had lately been moved from Ludgvan Lees to St. Ives, where the Lord claimed the Town Hall for his own use on court day.

After describing the course of the Lyd from its source among the hills of Towednack to the sea below Marazion Bridge, Borlase gives an account of the parish bounds, which is reproduced here in an abbreviated form with the names unchanged:—

From the sea to Marazion bridge the Lyd divides Glasenith Green in Ludgvan from Marazion, and above the bridge it is the bound to where it receives the waters of Trewall; thence by Trewall water and the east parts of Chivelin to Chivelin bridge; thence by the eastern edges of Trewall Tregyllijowe and Rosvynny Vros to the long lane butting on Trewinnard in St. Erth. Thence north-west round a croft of Rosvynny Vian called the

Island, thence by the north limits of Polgrene up a little old disused lane to a water near the old chapel of St. Thomas on Calorian. Thence north with Rosangrows hedge down the great road to Rosangrows water; thence west past the edge of Calorian to Carges, thence along the brim of Carcorrian butting Lelant to the Lyd, which divides Ludgvan from Lock in Lelant and Necledre and Amalebreh in Towednack. Thence by the Lyd again past a disused stamping mill called Stamps an Teg to a marshy bog called Pol an Hygie north of Castel-an-Dinas downs. Thence by the limits of Castel-an-Dinas crofts butting on Gulval south along the west edges of Treassow Tremenhere Wartha and Woolas and Tregrethen down Tolver Water to the sea at Gobles; thence a mile along the sea to the mouth of the Lyd.

Of the three bridges on the boundary, that at Marazion was repaired by Ludgvan parish and Marazion town equally; that at Chivelin half by Ludgvan and half by Marazion and the parish of St. Hilary jointly; and that at Nancedra (Necledre) by Ludgvan and Towednack parishes equally.

Borlase next describes a most interesting division of the parish into *Morrep* — the low-lying land near the sea — and *Guendran* or *Gueindarn* — the less fertile uplands (Cornish *morrep*, seaboard, from *mor*, sea, and *gunran*, from *gun*, down, moor, *ran*, part). He says that this distinction was made in most parishes of West Cornwall with similar topography to Ludgvan; his elder contemporary Tonkin describes (MS. *Parochial History* at R.I.C. I 460) the Manor of Lanisley in Gulval as extending “from the Moreps to the Gundrons, that is from above the sea to the hills,” and the name “Morrab” still survives as that of part of the town of Penzance above the modern promenade. Borlase states that in few parishes was the division more distinctly marked out than Ludgvan. The bound was a small stream rising at Chellew well and joining Vellanoweth water and eventually the Lyd; 14 tenements west of this formed the Morrep, the remaining 19 to the east, the Guendran. The division was “more noted anciently, when the old Cornish pastimes of hurling and wrestling prevailed, than at present; and in the memory of man the Guendran used to hurle and wrestle against the Morrep, and vice-versa, with as much eagerness, and attachment to their division, as one parish did, and still does, wrestle and hurle against another.”

Next comes a list of the tenements of the parish, with their lords and occupiers, compiled from a rating valuation made in 1755. The largest landowners were the Earl of Godolphin (lord of Truthwall) and the Duke of Bolton. Grist mills are noted at Boskennal, Cucurrian, Carvossow, Truthwall and Vellanoweth (Cornish *melyn*, mill, *noweth*, new), the first two lately erected, the last in ruins, and at Ponschan on Ludgvan-Lees there was a large smelting house with several tin stamping mills. Two hamlets are noted on the “great road” eastwards, Cockwells

(named from the builder of the first house) and Whitecross (named from the ancient roadside cross which at the present day is still kept white-washed).

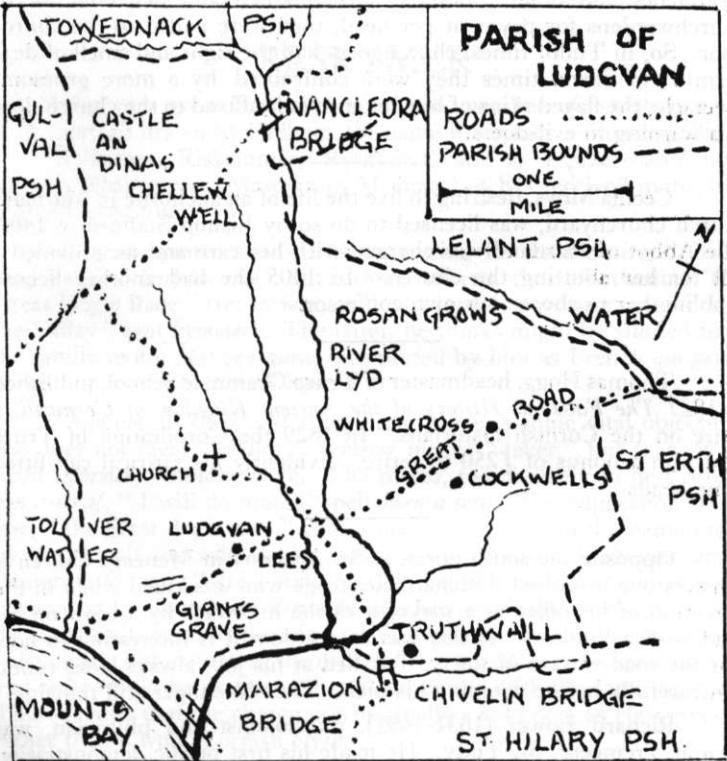
Borlase next describes the church, "neither large enough for the inhabitants, nor lightsome, nor regular," and deplures that 40 years previously a plan to add a south aisle, for which Lord Godolphin had promised £50, had been "by an unhappy division among the parishioners sett aside." He gives a detailed account of the mural painting discovered in the church in 1740, in almost identical terms with his other account from the *Parochial Memoranda* published by W. C. Borlase in 1872 (*J.R.I.C.* XIII 50). The painting included St. Christopher, a mermaid with comb and mirror, a small church or chapel which may represent an early oratory, and a fox being hanged by some geese, which last Borlase interpreted as designed "to shew the parishioners the fatal consequence of depriving the parson of his tithe geese." His account of the painting concludes:—"Such fooleries scarce deserve a place here without apology, much less a place in the house of God; but in times of ignorance, devotion will always be jostled, and disgraced by superstitious, not to say profane, triflings." He mentions ancient chapels at Ludgvan-Lees, Truthwall, Colurrian (St. Thomas' Chapel, or Chapel Tubmas, on the "great road"), and possibly at Trenowin. His own rectory is described as "retired, and well planted round; in itself nothing regular, or handsome; under envy, and just above contempt, but not wholly inconvenient as it has lately been patched and mended." Tradition stated that former rectors had possessed a deer paddock, a rabbit warren, and a porter's lodge.

The antiquities of the parish receive surprisingly little attention. The hill-fort of Castle-an-Dinas is wrongly stated to be on the highest hill in the hundred, and mention is made of a probable further ancient fortification, the traces scarcely visible, north of Tregarthen. He describes the linear earthwork now known as the Giant's Grave, which he believed to have been constructed by Parliamentary forces when besieging St. Michael's Mount in 1646, having been told (*Parochial Memoranda*, St. Hilary) by an aged man named Peter Woolcock that his father had seen soldiers and cannon there, but O.G.S. Crawford (*Antiquity* X 174) and other modern authorities hold that the earthwork is of much earlier date. The only other antiquities mentioned are "some very tall stones erect, formerly in all probability druid deities" at Trementhere Wartha, which place was doubtless named from them (Cornish *tre menhyr*, place of the long stone, or possibly *try menhyr*, three long-stones).

A few miscellaneous notes follow. The income from some charitable gifts was devoted to paying a schoolmaster to teach the catechism, prayers and the three R's in the church gallery, and there was an almshouse at Carvossow. The parish feast was kept on the Sunday nearest to 25th January, the Conversion of St. Paul. There were said to

be more highways in Ludgvan, owing to its position between Penzance, St. Ives and Marazion, than in any other Cornish parish of similar size, and their upkeep was a great burden to the inhabitants, whose diligence had however kept them of late "roomly and in remarkable repair" and an example to their neighbours.

The account ends with a characteristic glimpse in his old age of the author who "having enjoyed the living (through the goodness of God) already much longer than from his natural tenderness of constitution might be expected, concludes that a succession cannot be at any great distance." He died two years later, after half a century's residence and work in a parish which may well be proud of its association with the greatest Cornish scholar of his time.



Map of Ludgvan