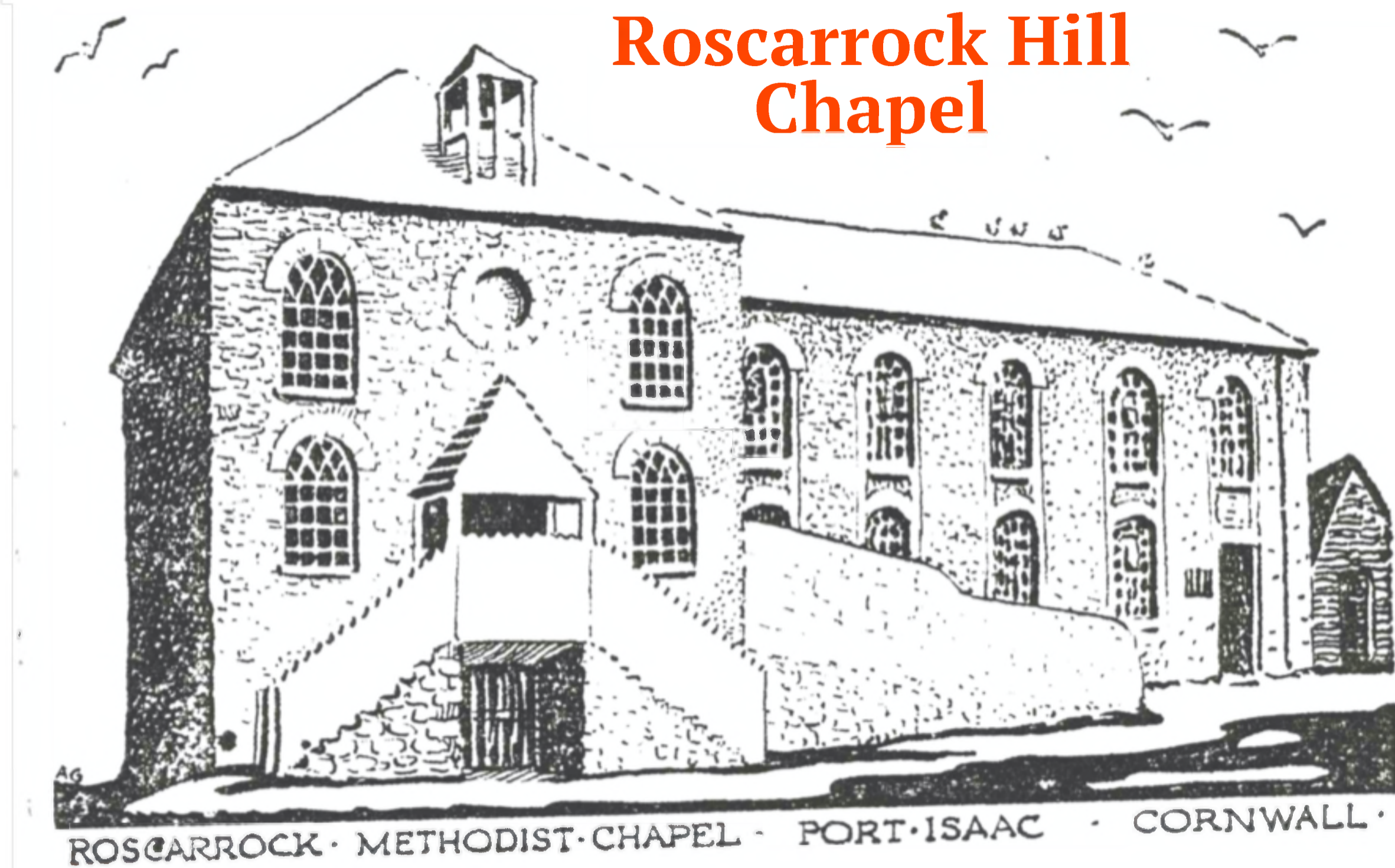


“You were either Church or Chapel!”

and there were two Chapels to choose from ...

Roscarrock Hill Chapel



“A simple slate Methodist Chapel and Sunday School in the Georgian tradition hangs over the harbour and is the prettiest building in town.”

John Betjeman

Records show that there have been Methodists in Port Isaac since at least 1748. So many that there were two places to go to worship, the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at the end of Middle Street - the Chapel in the Valley - and the Roscarrock Hill Chapel.

In 1836, Thomas Rosevear, Mark Guy of Roscarrock and Thomas Phillips, a Port Isaac fisherman, took out a long lease on two fish cellars at the bottom of Roscarrock Hill. The existing Chapel was built over these cellars and became the place of worship for the Port Isaac Methodist Society.

It had a poor reputation,

“a cold dead place”

“one of the most unpromising in the circuit.”

It was not until three years later that this reputation changed. A midnight Watchnight Service in the early moments of 1839 influenced some of the fishermen and people of Port Isaac and instead of their usual swearing, quarrelling and drunkenness the fishermen turned to hymns of praise and at seining time their

“...melodious voices could be heard singing hymns as they hauled their nets.”

Within a few years the Chapel was thriving with a congregation of more than a hundred worshippers. Warwick Guy became leader of the society and was the instigator of a new church adjoining the existing one. Land was purchased for £100 and by June 1869 a new Chapel was ready for opening, the old original premises being made into a Sunday School ... Sunday services were held at 11am and 6pm and children attended 10am Sunday School.

The building was lit by small oil lamps and the inside was simple and sombre; the women would sit on one side and the men on the other. The front and central pews had end doors and these were pay seats; a bench rent of three shillings a year was charged with the money going to the upkeep of the Church. The remaining seats were free.

United Methodist Free Church, PORT ISAAC.

The Members of the aforesaid Church, have pleasure in announcing the following SERVICES in connection with the

Opening of their New Chapel.
On SUNDAY, June 27th, 1869.

THREE SERVICES

Mr. J. HABLEY
OF ROCHDALE.

In the Afternoon at 4 o'clock, an ADDRESS will be given to Sunday Scholars, Teachers, and Parents, by

MR. JOHN ASHWORTH
(Author of "Strange Tales from Humble Life," of ROCHDALE; who will also preach on the evening of 28th inst.)

On the following TUESDAY, June 29th,
MR. ASHWORTH will preach at 11 a.m.

LUNCHEON will be provided at One o'clock p.m. During the Afternoon

A BAZAAR
A PUBLIC TEA will be provided at 4 p.m., and in the Evening MR. ASHWORTH will deliver

A LECTURE,
SUBJECT, "Young Women, Wives, & Mothers." Chair to be taken at 7 o'clock.

On WEDNESDAY, June 30th,
MR. ASHWORTH will again deliver LECTURE, SUBJECT, "Young Men, Husbands, and Fathers."

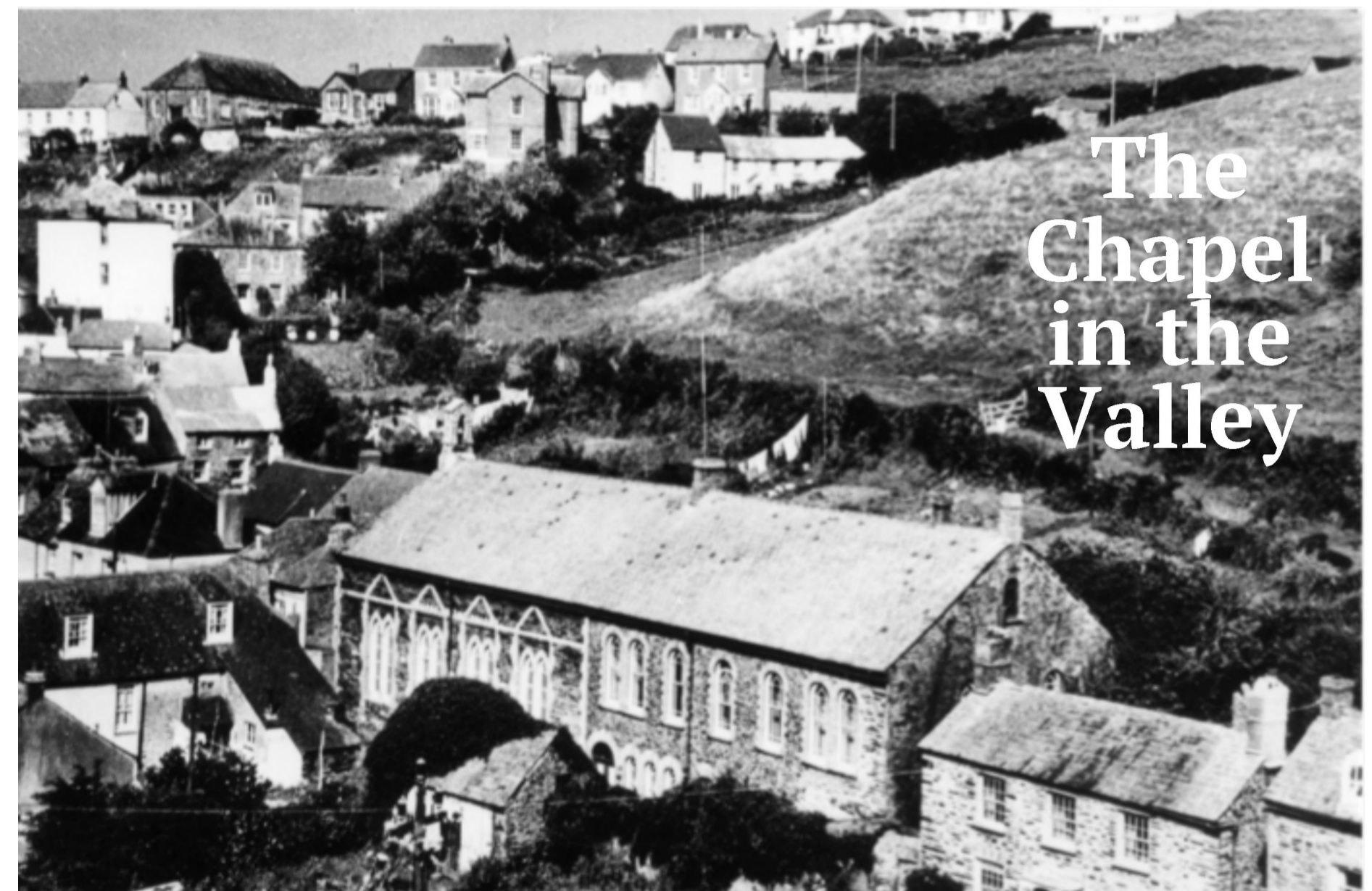
A PUBLIC TEA
will be provided at 4 p.m. In the Evening

A PUBLIC MEETING
will be held at 7 p.m. Mr. ASHWORTH will deliver the Lecture, and Mr. HABLEY will preach at 8 p.m.

On SUNDAY, July the 4th,
TWO SERMONS
MR. J. JENKIN, OF ST. COLUMB.

COLLECTORS will be made at the close of each Service, in aid of the Building Fund.
It is desired the services be attended. - ORGAN BY THE LONDON AND WEST'S TUBE. - LONDON BY GULLY & CO. WAREFIELD, Printer & Bookbinder, FINE STREET, CARLISLE.

George Steer recalled the 1930s and 1940s, “... the Chapel was still functioning with large congregations, a flourishing Sunday School and a very good choir. Mrs Tucker was the organist, flanked by Jennie Hills and Susie Sherratt. ‘Gran’ Sherratt was a true Christian, knew all the words of all the hymns in the Methodist Hymnal and provided the splitters (bread rolls), jam and cream for Sunday School treats. There was intensive rivalry between ‘Scarrock Hill Methodists’ and the Wesleyans. Both Chapels were in opposition to St Peter’s Church, that establishment being seen as the place of worship for ‘bettermost’ folk.”



It is thought that there was a chapel on Middle Street in 1750 following a visit to Port Isaac by John Wesley. In 1831 the Port Isaac Methodist Society had eighty-seven members, a strong congregation and a thriving Sunday School. Everything seemed to be going well until 1835 when a storm broke out about the governance of Methodism in the local Camelford Circuit to which Port Isaac belonged. One side argued that Methodism should remain autocratic as it had been under Wesley. The other side felt it should be more democratic and under the leadership of Thomas Rosevear of Boscastle.

The majority of Port Isaac Methodists openly rebelled against the old order and joined the Methodist Association (later to merge with the United Methodist Free Churches). It was quite an uprising and a group of the Port Isaac reformers took over the Chapel on Middle Street, refusing to let the Superintendent Minister in and “hooting him through the town”. The loyalists eventually managed to reoccupy their Chapel but not before the reformers had removed the bell and candelabra for their new Church.

These tumultuous events are the reason there were two Methodist Chapels in Port Isaac - the Wesleyan Chapel at the end of Middle Street and the Roscarrock Hill Chapel for the United Methodists. By 1839, the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at the end of Middle Street, the Chapel in the Valley, was built.



“I was a member of Janet Townsend’s ladies choir and we sang in public for the first time in 1968 in a concert in the Chapel in the Valley. The guests of honour were the Trevisco Male Voice Choir, probably the most famous choir in Cornwall at that time. They were 65-strong and sang four sets of three songs. We were twelve in number and sang two songs, a small masterpiece by Mozart - the Ave verum - and a love song, Sing Lullaby.”

Kathie Carney