

Hebrew Connections in Cornwall Penzance Police Buttons



John Burnet

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The following comes from THE KINGDOM DIGEST, May 1996,
and is by John Burnet of the KINGDOM HERALD, Sydney,
Australia.

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE LOVELY DAYS which are carried for all time in the memory of the traveller who has had the good fortune to see England in the early summer. London, with all its joys and sorrows, traffic and tragedy, we soon lost to sight and mind, as the fast travelling train carried me on my way to Penzance, the place made famous in comic opera under the title: "The Pirates of Penzance."

Past fields and meadows alive and ablaze with beautiful flowers, acres and acres of such splashes of colour that they defy and beggar description, while for the last fifty miles of the journey the train passes through an avenue of rhododendrons in full bloom. This beauty has to be seen to be appreciated.

Then, with much puffing and panting, as though the iron monster were a thing alive, the train draws into the platform of Penzance, and we are at the very end of Old England. With eyes eager to see more of their wonderland, all the passengers alight from the train, agog with great anticipation.

Mount Bay, St. Michael's Mont, Mousehole, Lands End, and much more than space allows to tell, all these with the old township of Penzance itself, were the attractions I had come to see.

The main street of Penzance attracted my attention because of its most unusual name - namely, "Market Jew Street." Such an uncommon name

arouses the inquisitive interest of the tourist, and when you ask: "Why the name?" in the history of the answer there is unfolded a remarkable story.

Here is the story: About the year A.D. 27 Herod was the Tetrarch in Palestine. He was married to the daughter of Aretas (this same Aretas was the king of Arabia). Herod lived happily for many years with his wife, till such time as he was summoned to Rome by the Emperor Tiberius. While in Rome he fell in love with his brother's wife, and to her he proposed marriage. She consented to his proposal on condition that Herod get rid of his wife.

On his return to Palestine, Herod's wife managed to hear of his intentions, and fled by way of Macherus (the outpost of her father's dominion) and handed on by one general to another, she reached her father's headquarters. When Aretas heard of Herod's deception, he immediately declared war on Herod, and as Macherus was then the fortified gateway from Arabia to Palestine, it is here we find Herod.

Now, in the Gospel written by Mark, chapter 6, verse 21, we read the following: "With Herod were the lords, chief captains, and chiefs of the estates of Galilee." No doubt the army was encamped on the hill round about. Herod, so to bolster up the morale of his generals (even as is done today) was entertaining them in his magnificent palace with a banquet.

Across the palace, and connected by a stone causeway, was a prison, and in one of the dungeons John the Baptist was held as a prisoner. He had been thrown into prison by Herod for preaching against him, because he had married Herodius (his brother's wife). Herodius took exception and offence against John, and demanded of Herod that John be arrested and imprisoned. So here we find them this night - Herod and his officers having a banquet, while in the prison John awaits the day of his release.

The banquet is over, and the wine is being handed round, and while these men are discussing the possibility of war, and most likely wishing they were back in their own homes, to the surprise of all there suddenly rushes into the banquet hall, Salome, the daughter of Herodius, who performs a dance. Herod with a brain half-stupefied by much eating and strong wine,

was both surprised and delighted, and at the end of this extra-ordinary exhibition he asked Salome what gift she would like from his hand - even to the half of his kingdom.

Salome hurried from the hall to consult her mother (Herodius), and the latter told her to ask at once for the head of John the Baptist. Herod was shocked and grieved at such a request, but to keep his promise a guard was sent to the keeper of the prison, and immediately John was executed and his head, on a silver charger, was brought to the king. This gruesome trophy was handed to Salome (who stood waiting), and she ran with it from the hall and gave it to her mother.

History goes on to say that Herod was defeated in the battle, but Aretas, later on, was stayed by Vitellius, one of the Roman generals in Palestine at this time. The story of the death of John the Baptist, at the hands of Herod, spread like wildfire through the land, and even far beyond it. At that time in Jewish history dancing was an offence in itself, but to dance before a company of half-intoxicated men was something too shocking to be tolerated.

Even the men who may have been unwilling spectators of the unholy drama were up in arms in indignation. Also was the shocking fact that this woman was a princess. This was sufficient to inflame the populace, but to think that the whole performance had brought about the death of the prophet was too much.

The prophet who had preached a new gospel of the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth, the coming of the Messiah, and the remission of sins by repentance and baptism. No wonder that the thousands of people who had journeyed down to the river Jordan to listen to this new messenger of truth now proclaimed their displeasure in no uncertain measure.

Pilate, the Roman governor of Jerusalem, was not willing to tolerate further disturbance. He should have had five legions in barracks, and already there was more than enough unrest in Judea. Most likely he had had a heart talk with Herod over this affair and more than likely he also sent for Joseph, the rich tin merchant of Arimathea, who had ships trading

to far-away Albion (Britain), bringing to the Palestinian port of Jaffa cargoes of the shining metal.

Tradition has it that of the popular agitation and bitter hatred which was calling for the putting to death of Salome, the outcome was the smuggling of Herodius' daughter on board one of Joseph's trading ships, on which she was carried to the port of Penzance, and as far as we know, there she lived till the end of her life.

We can quite readily understand that the girl herself and the officers of the ship would be most anxious to keep the dance and its sequel a secret, but as sailors will talk, it was quickly noised abroad as the reason of the woman passenger. So the drama of the dance which culminated in the beheading of John the Baptist must have fascinated the people of Penzance to the extent that today every policeman in this borough of Old England has stamped on the buttons of his coat the head of John the Baptist on a charger.

You can well imagine the surprise of the sergeant of police in Penzance when I told him I had come all the way from Australia, and had come to his town for the express purpose of obtaining two buttons carrying the strange device of John the Baptist. He was a great fellow, and when I called at the station later in the day, he most graciously gave me two buttons, one taken from the front of the coat and the other from the sleeve. You can rest assured that these buttons are among some of my treasured possessions, as is also a small china bowl, which displayed with pride the Borough motto with a circular blue band, which surrounds the silver charger on which is depicted the head of John the Baptist.

Now the point which I wish to stress is that boats were plying from Palestine to Britain not only at the time of Christ, but even in Solomon's time, when tin was carried from Cornwall to use in the adornment of the temple. Yet today we have many so-called wise ones who shake their heads with much misgivings when they are told that after the people of Israel had ceased their wanderings on the continent of Europe, they finally settled in Britain. The evidence of migration goes back centuries before this, even to the time when the nation of Israel was in exile in Egypt for

it is most patent that some of the Tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe) had journeyed to Albion. For Stonehenge, with Woodhenge, along with the setting up of the colleges of the Druids - are clear indications of a worship that was practised ages ago in Canaan, but had lost its clear conception of Jehovah through contact with the multi-religions of Egypt.

It is said that even today, when tin is to be smelted in England, a chant is sung - something about "Joseph was a tinner."

I was very sorry to say 'farewell' to Cornwall, the county as hard as granite, so different to Devon, which seems so warm and soft. But the sun and the people one meets in Penzance are quite warm enough to be appreciated. The name of the main street viz., "Market Jew Street", is fully understood, for it evidently led from the town to the village of the Jews, who had set up a market for trade, hence "Market Jew", or the street that led to the Jews' market.

It is my good fortune to be able to look on my souvenirs of this place and go back in memory to this little city by the sea, that one time saw the ship of Joseph, the tin trader of Judea, bring to its shores Salome the girl known to all the world as the indirect, though perhaps quite unwilling, cause the death of the forerunner of Christ.

Many folk hold the opinion that for the Israel nation to journey across Europe and find their way into Britain was something impossible. Again, for the prophet Jeremiah to reach Ireland from Egypt could not be accomplished, or for a little band of people to leave Palestine in a small boat and journey to Spain, and thence to Ireland.

Why people stumble over these facts fills one with astonishment, for only just previous to the last war, a man named Dwight Long sailed from America in a 32 foot ketch-rigged boat, travelled thirty thousand miles and was on the voyage for 5 years. He visited Canada, Cook and Fiji Islands, New Zealand, Australia, New Guinea, Singapore, India, Aden. The Holy Land, Malta, Gibraltar, and thence to England. If one man could accomplish a complete trip around the world, tell me what is so astonishing or impossible in the journeys from Palestine to Britain of the nations called

Israel? Boats, the sea, the winds, and all other elements are the same in this our day as they were a thousand, or ten thousand years ago.

Metal badge with the Penzance town crest embossed on the front.

Record Number: PEZPH : 2001.42

Identification

Title: --

Full name: Borough Of Penzance Police
Uniform Button

Production

Person: manufacturer : Firmin and Sons,
Ltd

Date: unknown



Notes:
metal badge with the Penzance town crest embossed on the front.

However, you can believe it or question it, but the fact still remains that every policeman in Penzance bears testimony to the coming of Salome to England, and the borough Council is very proud of its coat of arms, which portrays the head of John upon the silver charger.

(Our thanks to Alan Campbell for supplying the above to us)

Penzance; Holy Head

To follow on from the above, I have to add a little story of my own. I currently work for a private Residential Home at Connor Downs. A couple of the elderly residents there, come from Penzance, and one day, when talking generally, a lady by the name of Meta, told me that above the door of a building at the top of Market Jew street, is a carving (in stone) of the head of John the Baptist.

I had forgotten about the above article, which Man had sent us just after we moved here, but I was intrigued by what Meta had said. I asked her to explain just where this carving was, and the next time that Allan and I went to Penzance we made a point of looking for the carving. I had asked myself on the way, how would we know it was John's head that was

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depicted? But when we saw the carving, it was quite clear, because the head was depicted on a plate or platter.

Not having seen a police man while wandering around Penzance, I cannot, tell you if the buttons on the uniform still depict John's head, nor have I noticed whether his head is still portrayed on the Council's coat of arms - but both these queries will be our next quest! And we will let you know.

We have a photograph of the carving above the door, and can vouch that it is still there.

The story of Salome coming to Cornwall is most interesting. What is also interesting is that the name "Penzance" means Holy Head. Because this is Cornwall, one generally presumes that any name with 'head' in it, refers to 'headland' - but in this case, who knows! Does it refer to the story of John the Baptist, and did Salome indeed come to Cornwall? Jackie.



Market Jew Street Penzance

