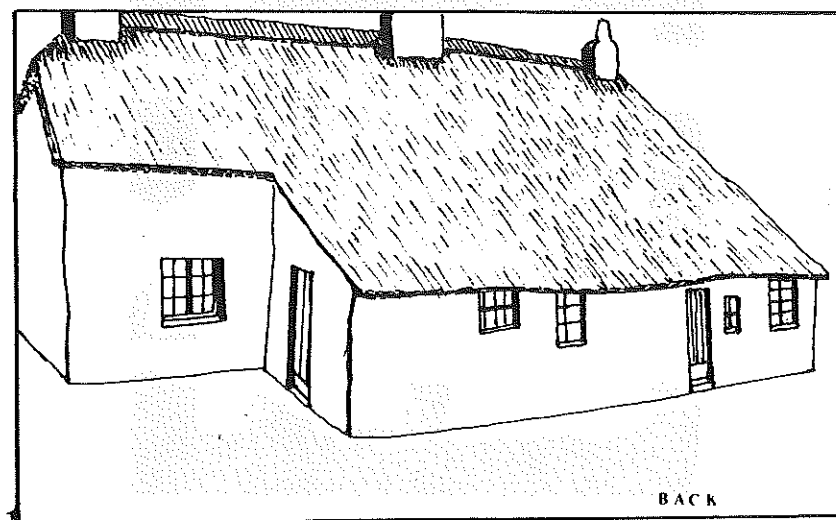
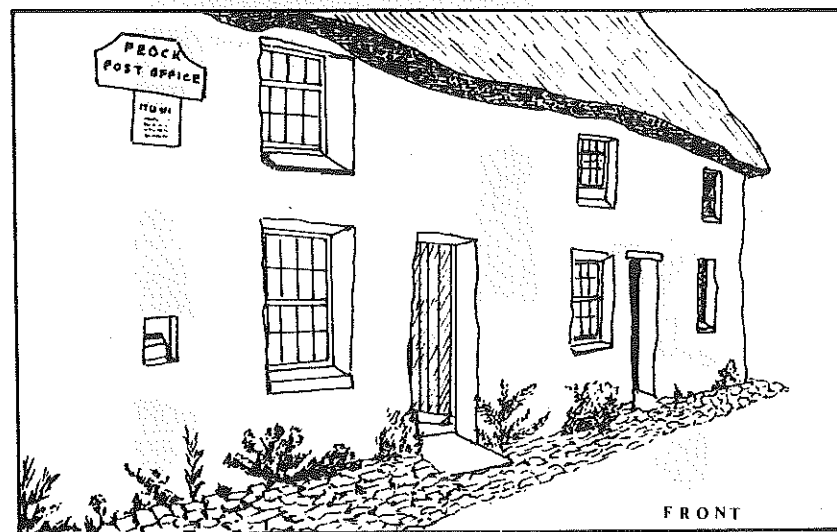


PEOCK POST OFFICE c 1903



## ONE COTTAGE AND ITS LAND

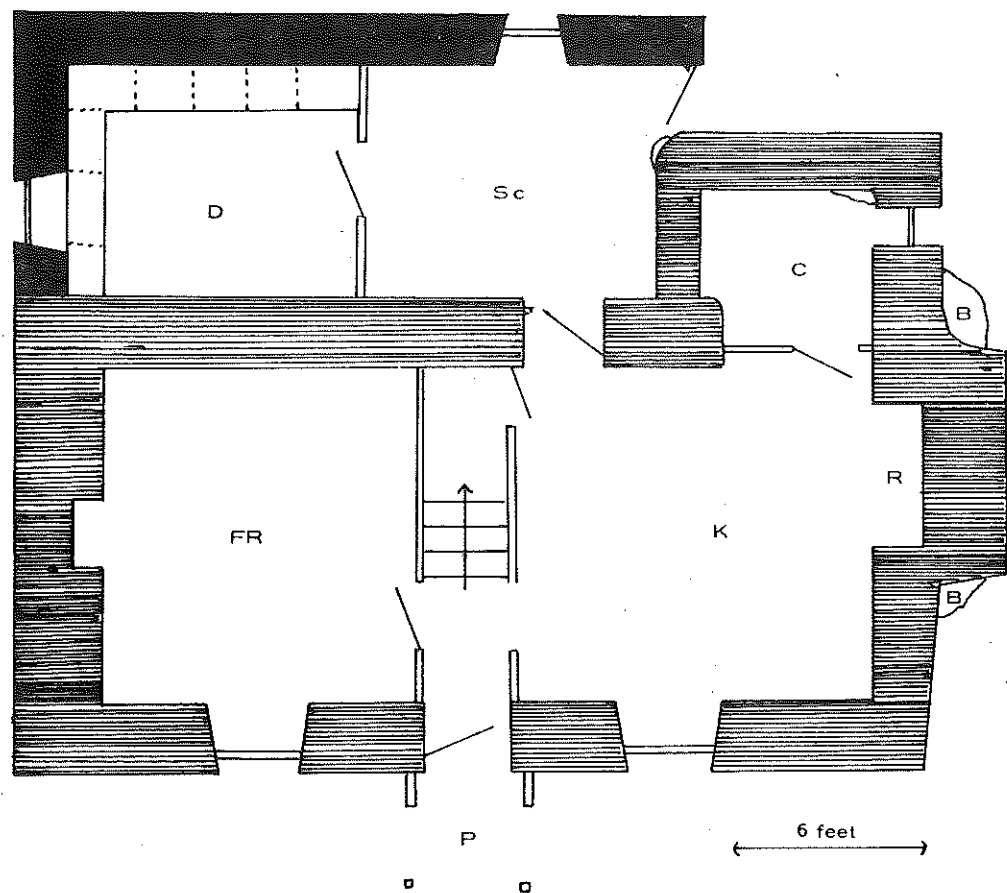
Algarnick 1900-1976

When we first saw Algarnick in 1938 it was a typical example of an unmodernised small-holding. There were eight acres of land sloping gently to the southwest, divided into eight fields of varying size and separated by Cornish hedges covered by brambles and blackthorn, with many untrimmed holly trees growing on them. At the bottom, on the far side of a little fast-flowing stream, were two heavy clay, partially waterlogged moors and another small moor completely covered with willow trees and very marshy, from which clay had been dug to make the cob to build the local cottages. The other fields were down to grass. Mr and Mrs Harris who owned it, had lived there very happily since 1919, brought up their family and were then nearly seventy. Mr Harris, when questioned about the land, described it as 'grateful', responding rapidly to any top dressing of manure.

The cottage was typical; two rooms downstairs with very low ceilings, two bedrooms, a slate-shelved dairy and scullery in the back lean-to, which had a door into the yard only 4 ft 6 ins high! In 1919 the roof was still thatched but this had been replaced with long sheets of thick corrugated asbestos. The open porch protecting the front door was held up by two posts from a wooden four-poster bed. The bedrooms still retained their low plaster ceilings. At some time, before the Harris's bought it, the front of the cottage was said to have fallen out and had been rebuilt in stone. The long lintel over the downstairs windows and front door is a length of old railway line. To keep the cob dry the cottage was faced with cement, lined off to represent rectangular blocks and whitewashed.

The water supply was from a 26 foot-deep well in the yard. This had a granite surround with a wooden trap door down which a bucket on a rope was dropped and hauled up by hand. Drainage was non-existent; there was a 'sentry-box' type of earth closet in the shrubbery beyond the cottage.

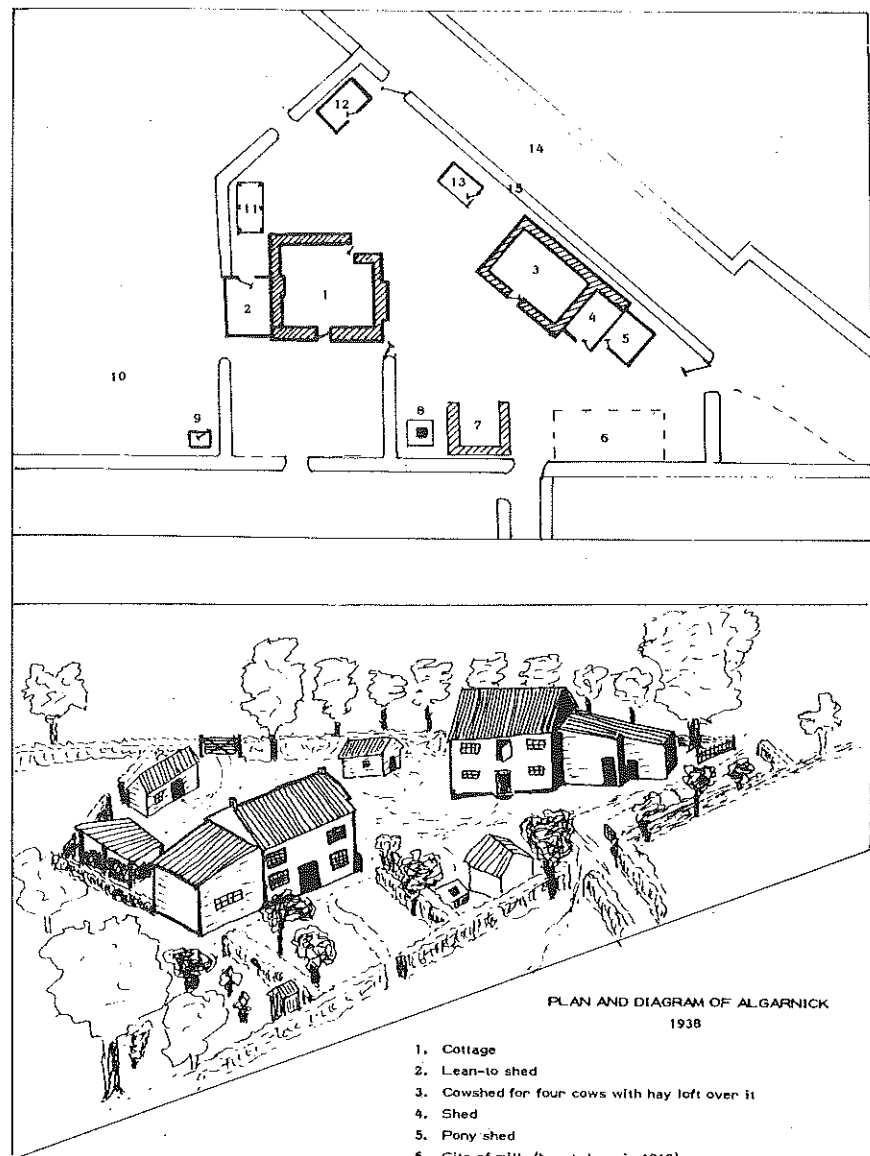
The small front garden was full of flowers, including 23 rose trees, some of which were ramblers. There were tall trees to protect the buildings from the southwest wind and along the roadside to the east. Mrs Harris was a keen gardener with 'green fingers'; she remembered the various Chapel festivities from which she had returned with small pieces of the floral decorations to grow in the garden and shrubbery. On the window sills indoors she had a wonderful collection of tall geraniums, which obscured most of the light but flowered magnificently. Lighting was by oil lamps and candles and cooking was



- D Dairy
- Sc Scullery
- FR Front room
- K Kitchen
- R Cornish Range
- P Porch
- C Cupboard
- B Natural boulders

Original walls

Later, single-storey lean-to



PLAN AND DIAGRAM OF ALGARNICK  
1938

1. Cottage
2. Lean-to shed
3. Cowshed for four cows with hay loft over it
4. Shed
5. Pony shed
6. Site of mill (burnt down in 1919)
7. Shelter for cart
8. Well
9. Earth closet
10. Trees and shrubs
11. Cover for hay
12. Shed
13. Hen house
14. Road
15. Hedges

done on the Cornish range, which kept the cottage warm and dry. The shrubbery included a well-grown rhododendron 'Pink Pearl', a pink laburnum, a Snowball tree, Daphne mezereum, skimmia, Solomon's seal; the ground beneath was a carpet of snowdrops.

The furniture in the kitchen included a long table in front of the window, a high glass-fronted cupboard against the opposite wall (so high that the beams had been slightly cut away to accommodate it), some wooden chairs, a Windsor arm chair for Mr Harris and a black horsehair sofa against the wall by the stairs which both had colourful cushions. In the 'front' room there was a round central table with a chenille cloth with bobble fringe, a harmonium and several chairs. Apples were laid out on the floor and covered with newspaper. Upstairs there were double beds in both rooms and because Mrs Harris was almost bent double with spinal trouble and could not reach up to cupboards, the clothes were laid very tidily on the floor under protective paper.

The entrance to the yard was nearly 7 ft 6 ins wide, adequate for their pony and trap, but difficult for any lorries delivering goods to us. The yard was of well-brushed, hard-packed shale, non-slip for animals and sufficiently well drained not to become muddy. In places it had been cobbled; we had it cemented to make it easier to maintain.

The cow house was the biggest building in the yard; made of cob with large stones as a footing, it looked like a derelict cottage. It was cement floored and whitewashed inside. It was divided by a wooden partition giving space to tie four cows and for hayracks. Above was the hayloft, reached by steep open wooden stairs. Above the door on the ground floor was another door through which hay could be pitched up from the yard. All the shedroofs were of galvanised iron which kept out the wet. The pony shed was just inside the gate; the bottom 3 ft were cob and the upper part of rather ancient wide boards. It was divided by a wooden partition, one side for the pony and the other for harness, etc. The remaining sheds had wooden walls and were not rainproof. At the far end of the cottage was another dilapidated lean-to of wood and galvanised iron and near this was a high roof supported by tree trunks, under which the hay was stored. Poultry roamed the yard and had their little shed on the bank opposite the back door. There was wire netting on all the garden hedges to keep them in their place. In three of the fields there were long low sheds made of galvanised iron with wooden doors and earth floors, where the pigs were kept.

This holding with its livestock, a large vegetable plot, and an orchard, had been almost self-supporting; surplus

butter, cream and pigs were sold. There was a rack on the lower side of the beams in the kitchen for the home-cured bacon and ham. Mr Harris also did outside work to bring in cash for clothing and fuel; he told us he had sometimes walked as much as eight miles to a job.

They had planted about a dozen 'boughten' apple trees in 1919 and had added to them with grafts from friends' trees, for which Mrs Harris grew the stocks from apple pips. They knew the name of each variety and the range was from early August eaters and cookers to keepers which lasted until after Whitsun. In the past they had been well cared for, pruned and the trunks whitewashed, but by 1938 they were overgrown by brambles and loganberries. The lane which ran through the centre of the holding was also covered by brambles and gorse with just a 'cow width' track down the centre. When we cleared these we planted shrubs, usually grown from 'borrowed' cuttings in their place. It was this overgrowing that convinced Mr and Mrs Harris that it was time to retire, as they could not care for the land in the way that they considered it should be done.

Before 1919 the Pengellys had rented the holding from Lord Falmouth. According to local reminiscences they had traction engines, wagons and a threshing machine and did contract work. When we ploughed the fields against the road, we found traces of coal ash in the corner nearest the cottage and were told by a neighbouring farmer that the threshing was done there for farmers who brought their corn to the machine. There was also a mill to grind corn and the concrete base of the three-storey wooden building remained just inside the entrance gate until a few years ago; it had four one-foot-high, inch thick, almost unruined iron screws embedded in it where the engine had been bolted down. Mr Michell told me it had been acetylene-powered and was started by a sort of treadmill; as a boy he had helped to get it going. The mill burnt down about 1918. Outside the front gate, where the Garden Shop now stands, there was a wooden shed over a long board-covered inspection pit and this was where the traction engines were repaired. This shed was taken down and re-erected on Devoran Quay where it was used for log cutting. Sometime in the 1920s, Mr Claude Stanbury, who then lived with his aunts at Avondale, brought his corrugated iron shed from the corner of Mr Cowlings lane and erected it as his carpenters shop until he retired. Eventually a speeding car failed to take the road bend and demolished it in 1971.

Between the mill and the repair shop were the engine sheds; they had disappeared long before we got there and we used the space for compost, making it with grass grown on any untilled land and anything else we could acquire, such as road verge trimmings and the thatch from Miss Burrow's cottage

(The Beeches) when her roof was stripped and tiled. She was terrified that if the thatch was burnt it might set fire to her property.

We were commercial flower growers and in 1938 were renting a house and eight acres of land in Gweek. A friend invested in Algarnick on our behalf and lived in the cottage. During the war years we worked the land in both places. Under war regulations we grew potatoes, broccoli and other vegetables but were allowed to keep two acres for flowers. These brought in a handsome profit, daffodils selling at up to sixpence each; because clothes and sweets were rationed, flowers were almost the only available luxury. As a result, when our lease at Gweek expired in 1944 we were able to buy Algarnick and Miss Foreman moved into Truro. In 1938 water was brought into the cottage by means of a hand pump over the well and a storage tank in the yard, the dairy was transformed into a bathroom and lavatory and a cesspit dug for the drainage. A bath meant 150 strokes of the pump handle to get the water up to the tank from which it flowed down and was heated by a boiler round the fire of the Cornish range; we did not find this satisfactory and replaced the range by a small Ideal boiler. We were quite happy to use paraffin for lighting and cooking until electricity was connected in the late 1940s; then we had a quarter horsepower electric motor attached to the pump handle and 'the ghost' did the pumping.

In the autumn of 1945 the ex-cowshed fell down, having given a few preliminary rumbles which gave us time to remove all the wooden broccoli crates, etc., which were stored in it. We had to secure the permits to buy concrete blocks and timber to replace it; the galvanised iron was treated with bitumen and reused on the roof, whilst most of the cob was piled just outside the front gate to make a loading platform and the stones from the foundations made a rockery.

The other wooden sheds were coated with thick layers of tar obtained from the then-existing Penryn gasworks, and the least watertight wall was replaced by thin corrugated iron sheets scrounged from the Baldhu rubbish dump to which they had been consigned at the end of the war. They were probably originally parts of ex-army huts.

At Gweek the ploughing and preliminary cultivation had been done for us by a local farmer with horses, but, as there were no suitable horses in the Carnon Downs area we had to invest in a small Ransome caterpillar tractor, a plough, and discs and harrows. As part of their war effort, Farm Industries conveyed the tractor free of charge between the two holdings whenever they had an empty lorry going in the right direction. We also had several small machines, a Rototiller, a general-purpose Autoculto, an Allen grasscutter

and a three-wheel tipping truck, the last two being essential for compost making. With the help of one man, we grew anemones, wallflowers, polyanthus, daffodils and iris as the main flower crops, with strawberries in the summer which were sold locally.

The flowers were bunched, stood overnight in water, packed and sent to market in either London or Sheffield, from about September to May. There they were sold on commission, which is a gamble in which only the grower loses! During the somewhat hectic few weeks of the daffodil season, our friends rallied round and bunched 'piecework' in the long wooden shed at the back of the cottage on the site of the hayshed. This had been a deep litter house belonging to a neighbour; we bought it, dismantled it and with the help of Mr Stanbury, the carpenter, four of us carried each section in turn on our shoulders along the road. (Have you ever tried carrying something like this when someone has cheerily put your terrier on top and he decides to come and lick your ears?)

The dilapidated lean-to at the end of the cottage had to be rebuilt before we could use it. When we were planning it, a large, strong, wooden door was brought to us by our employee and his father. It was hidden under a load of hay on a pony cart and we were requested to repaint it immediately. I suspect it came from a derelict mine building and they could not bear to see it wasted.

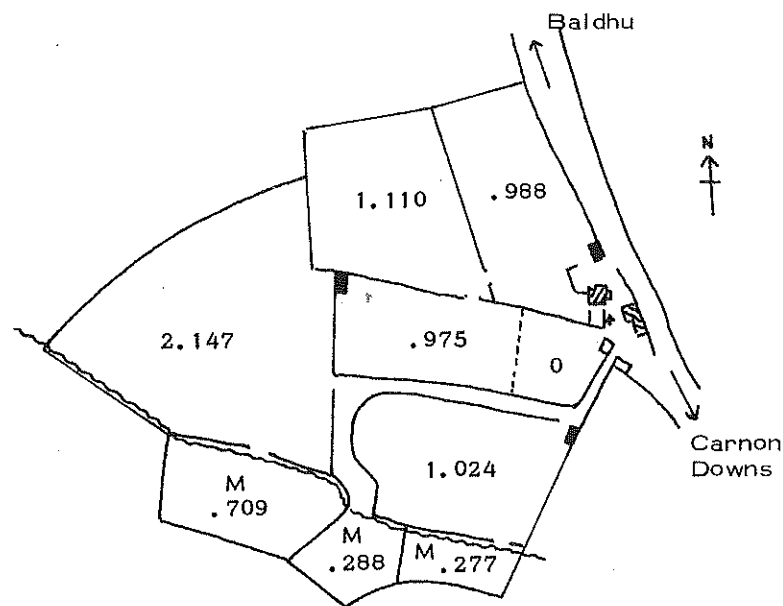
By the early 1950s, building restrictions were being relaxed and we had sufficient money to rebuild the back of the cottage and add two more bedrooms. Demolition showed that the cement-washed, small, slated roof of the back lean-to must have been self-supporting, because the joists, which were made of four inch tree trunks with the bark still on, had deteriorated to powder and crumbled away when touched. As the back of the cottage is cob, it would not take the weight of an additional building, so the new portion had to be free standing. The bedrooms were supported on cement block pillars with reinforced concrete lintels and the inside pillars were let into the cob wall. Because of the building regulations, the new part is loftier than the old, but we kept it as low as possible.

We were fortunate to have young men working for us who had been brought up on cottage smallholdings and had the skills of the mason, the carpenter and the mechanic, as well as those connected with cultivation; their forefathers had probably built their own cottages and broken in the land. Their attitude was, 'let nothing be wasted', so useful bits of wood were stored, old windows saved, in case they could be used in a shed. Once, when we were short of pots in which to stand bunched daffodils, our man arrived with a couple of dozen, gallon, paint

cans threaded on string and slung round his shoulders. With the rims removed, the old paint burnt out and a coat of black preservative to prevent rusting, they made excellent upright containers, far better than the sloping-sided ones which we had bought.

We retired when increasing production and transport costs threatened to make small-scale flower growing unprofitable, so Algarnick has again changed its use and is now the Garden Centre.

FIELD PLAN SHOWING ACREAGES



M	Moor		Cottage
O	Orchard	+	Well
	Pig sheds		Sheds
	Stream		Cow and pony sheds

## MEMORIES OF DEVORAN WHEN I WAS A BOY

The following extracts are taken from the memories of John Sims, written by him in 1943 at the age of 82 years. He was born in Devoran in 1861 and later moved to Truro where he ran a brush factory.

"I will start from the mouth of the river where the ships came to unload their cargoes. There were American ships with timber in bulk and ships from Norway with timber for the mines and small sailing vessels and steamers with coal and other cargoes. The coal was unloaded and some put into flat-bottomed barges and poled up the river to Perran Foundry. The names of the steam boats were Morfa, Augusta, Ogmore, Effie, Netherton, John Brogdon and Bains. The sailing vessels were Margaret Mine, Eliza Bain. The tugboat Pendennis would tow up four boats at a time; other tugboats were called Effort, Lioness and North Star.

At John Stephens' ship building yards they built boats, barges, tugboats and sailing vessels; sometimes I would get aboard a vessel and be launched out to sea, it was grand fun for men and boys. Falmouth harbour looked like a forest with the masts of sailing ships. At the end of the quay they built a two-masted vessel; I think it was called The Pordia and was built by Mr Hugh Stephens and his sons.

There was a sail loft where they made sails and nearby were the stables for the horses of the Railway Company. There was a workshop for the making of trucks, stores for timber and saw-pits where the timber was cut into shapes for the building of vessels. At the end of the timber yard was a large pond for slushing the river. There was a viaduct down on the quay and trucks were shunted down on the viaduct full of copper ore and ingots of tin which were loaded on to ships and taken to Wales and other places. The empty trucks were taken to the coal dumps and loaded with coal for the mines, the tin-works, vitriol works and arsenic works. Horses pulled the trucks up to where the trains started.

Now I will come to the engine sheds and wagon and smithy shops. Mr Henry Arthur was foreman of the engine shed, Mr Woolcock of the smith's shop and Mr Treskerris of the wagon shop. Mr Jury and his sons worked the saw mills and Mr Millet was the engine worker.

There was a railway from Devoran to Point worked by horses. There was a tin smelting works at Penpol and a lead works at Point. The lead works had a very tall stack and it was built square (1). I have seen the blue-grey smoke come out