

Cannis

47 The Esplanade, Fowey

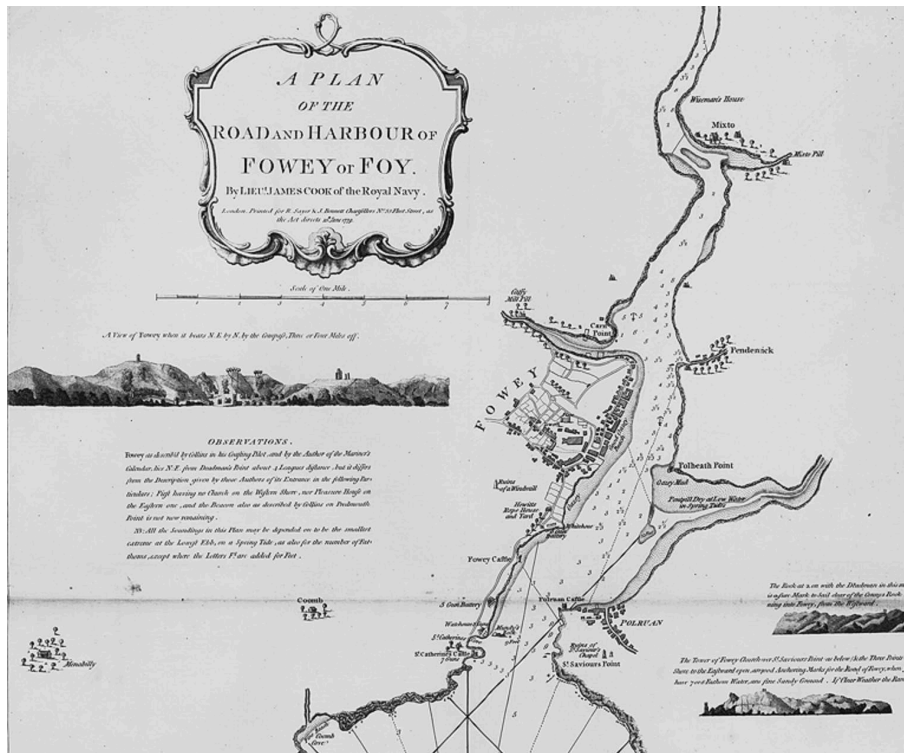


A short history of the house and the Esplanade

A little conceited is Fowey. It is eternally telling you of the fact that the Queen and Prince Consort sojourned awhile there in 1846; and so for some unaccountable reason it has assumed quite an air of Continental superiority.

Royal Cornwall Gazette, 17 May 1894

There are many guides to Fowey, so this history will not repeat them but focus on the Esplanade and number 47 in particular. There has been a church and habitation in Fowey since the 7th century and there are iron age remains at Castledore, but Fowey's natural deep-water harbour led to it being a centre for traded goods, from clay to minerals greatly expanding from the 18th century onwards. Expertise developed in trades of all kinds associated with shipping, from rope-making to smuggling.

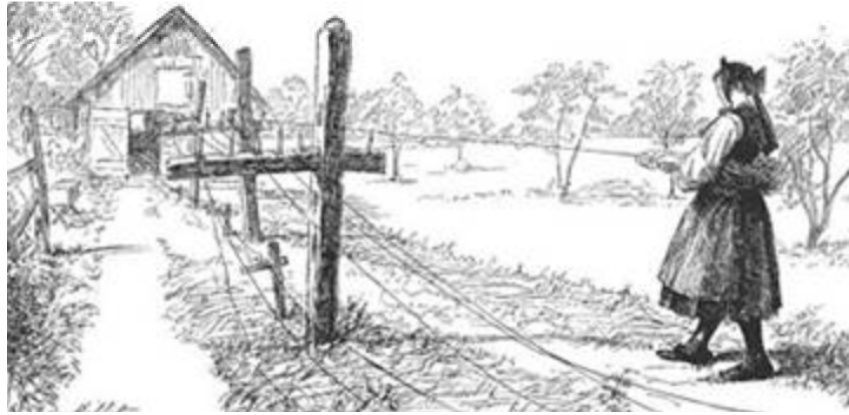


Fowey in 1779

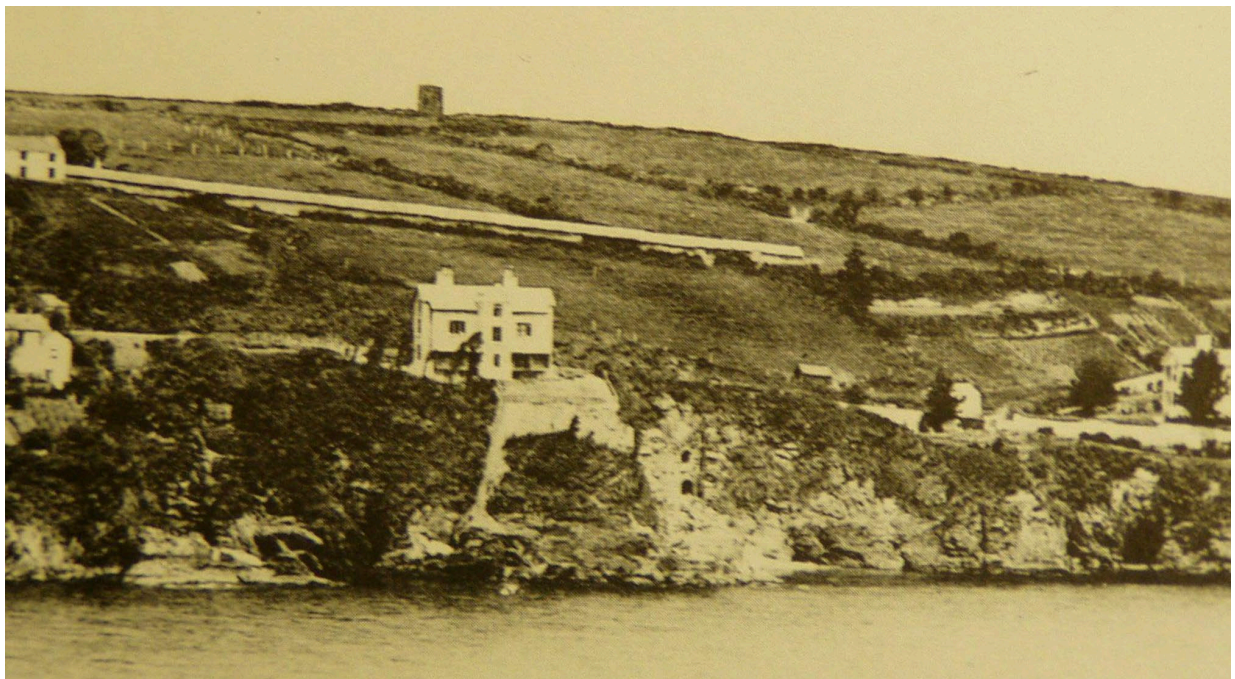


Fowey harbour in 1734

The Esplanade follows the route of an old path towards Readymoney Cove, which had a lime kiln, fish cellars and other industrial uses. The Esplanade, too, was home to a variety of industries, particularly that of ropemaking. There are many references to the road being a Ropewalk: it was long and straight – key requirements for the manufacture of long strands of naval rope.

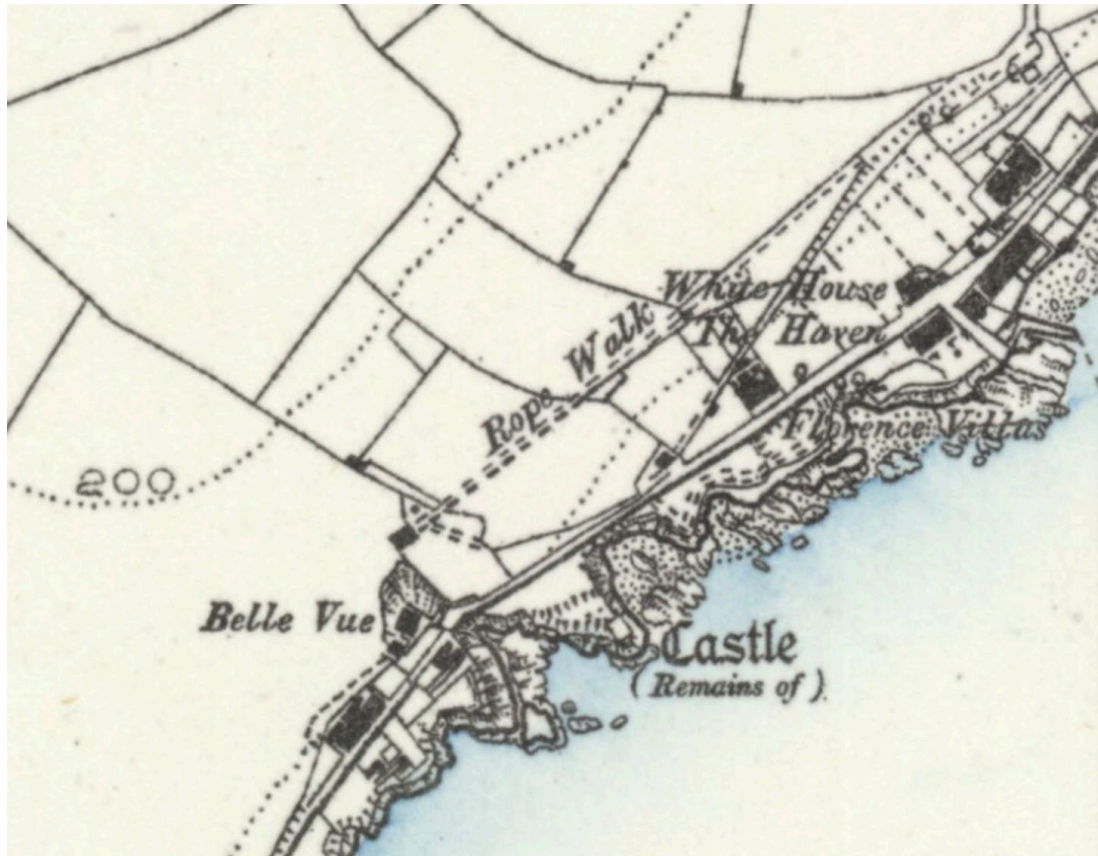


An open ropewalk



Castle Ruan (65 Esplanade) with one of the ropewalks behind

During the Napoleonic Wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Ropewalk was patriotically re-named Military Way, perhaps in tribute to the number of defensive artillery batteries along the route out towards St. Catherine's Castle. These included 6 guns at Whitehouse near Cannis.



The Esplanade in 1881

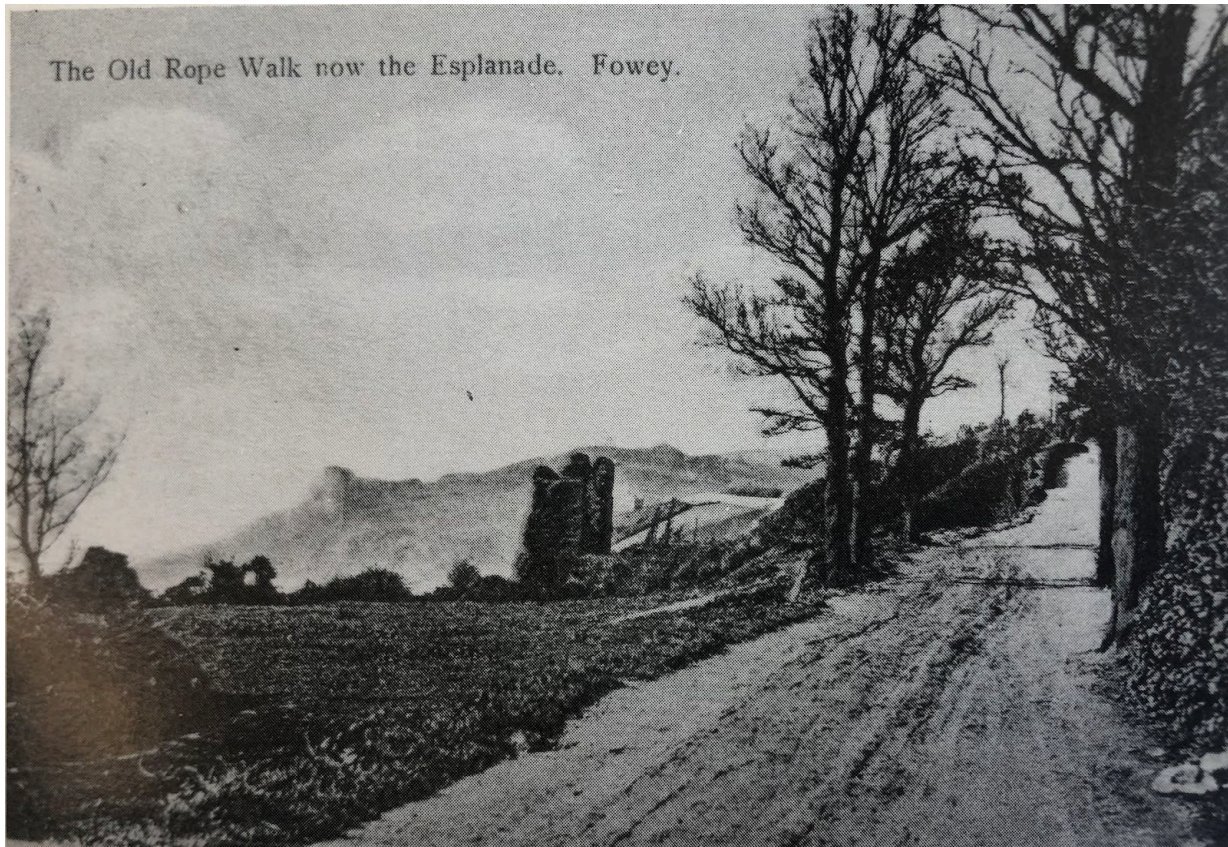
By the middle of the nineteenth century, Fowey was starting to develop as an attractive place for visitors and tourism has played an important part in the life of the town ever since. Originally, they would have arrived by steamer from Plymouth, but later by train, with the railway line laid to Carn Point and later to Caffa Mill in Fowey in 1869. Carn Point, which you can see upriver of the Bodinnick ferry, is now where the china clay ships are loaded. The Old Station Master's House, now converted to residential use, is opposite Caffa Mill car park at the northern end of the town.

By 1860 the burgeoning tourist industry was coming into conflict with older industries associated with seafaring, such as rope-making and there was anxiety that the state of the town, and in particular, the Esplanade, was not attractive to visitors. The West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser, a twice-weekly newspaper (now online as Cornwall Live) recorded that:

*well-dressed visitors walking seawards from the town had to pass through the ropewalk shed risking unctuous contact with greasy tubs, unconscious tarry attachments, or the fall of promiscuous oil drippings accompanied with the whirl and noise of a small manufactory).*¹

The lack of a proper water supply was also a constant theme. The Cornish Telegraph mentioned that '*more than half of the houses of the town were not drained, and that the streets were disgustingly dirty and ill-paved*'² (17 May 1871). A few years later, in 1878, The Western Morning News was pleased to report, under a headline of *Fowey Progressing*, that:

Besides these Public Buildings [the new Board Schools and the Grammar School] Fowey has progressed in the way of private residences and many first-class villas now grace the Esplanade, and possess a lovely view of the mouth of the harbour.³



1905 postcard of the Esplanade with the ruined blockhouse

Sadly, this article was not referring to Cannis, more likely it was the recently-extended Point Neptune near Readymoney Beach (1864) or The Haven (number 61 Esplanade by Whitehouse slip). Point Neptune was built in the 1860s by William Rashleigh, owner of the Menabilly estate, who much preferred living at his new house to living at Menabilly. The Haven was the home of Sir Arthur Quiller Couch or 'Q' who lived in Fowey from the 1880s until his death in 1944. Q wrote many fictional works but is probably best-known for *The Astonishing History of Troy Town*; Troy, of course, being Fowey. Here he entertained a number of famous writers including J.M. Barrie and Kenneth Grahame of *Peter Pan* and *The Wind in the Willows* fame. He was also Commodore of the Royal Fowey Yacht Club.

By 1880, the ropeworks had moved to St Fimbarrus Road and number 44 Esplanade (opposite Whitehouse slip) was built on the site of 'Roper' Thomas's premises. In contrast to the northern end of the town beyond Fore Street, from Passage Street along North Street to Carn Point, the Esplanade towards St Catherine's Castle was for the 'visitors and genteel residents of Fowey'.⁴ In 1882 the Fowey Hotel (now the Harbour Hotel) was built just along the Esplanade from Cannis to add to the numerous lodging houses and hotels already established. By 1887, the Royal Cornwall Gazette noted that:

the Esplanade has been greatly improved by the erection of some new houses and the widening of the roadway.⁵

However, the state of the Esplanade continued to be of concern to those who wanted to increase visitor numbers to the town and in 1892 the Royal Cornwall Gazette recorded:

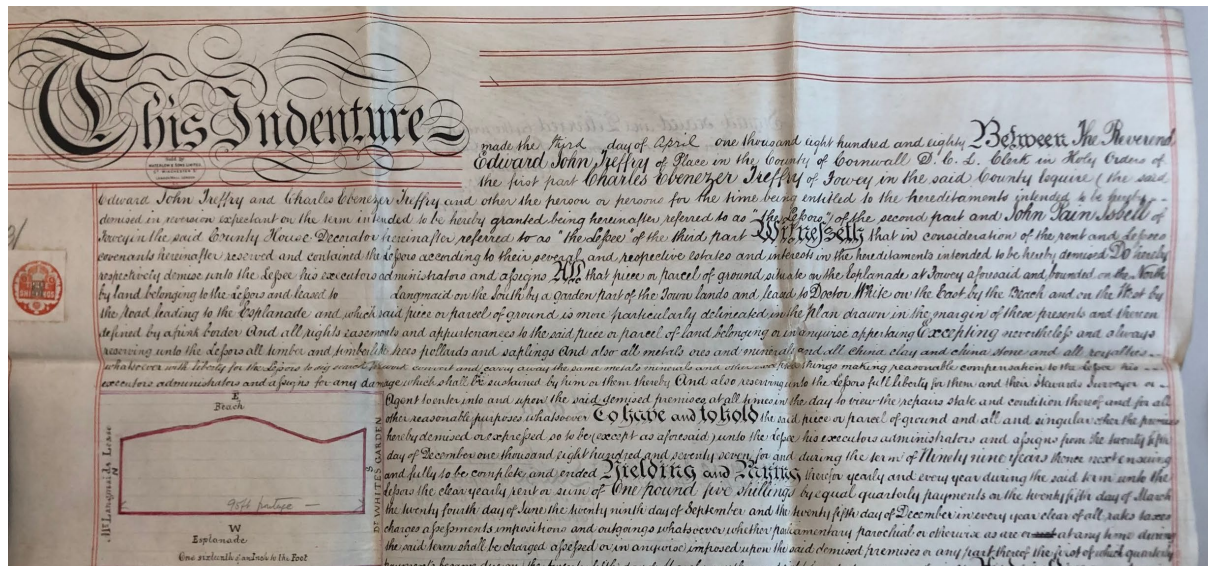
During this last winter attention was called to the state of the streets and the Esplanade, complaints appearing in the newspapers, both from visitors and residents, with the result that up to the present time the streets are "as they were," a condition of things which is not in favour of attracting visitors. After rain it would be difficult to find more muddy streets in any town, as they are so narrow that footpaths are impossible, it ought to induce those who have charge of the roads, and those interested in the improvement of Fowey, to make some great effort to improve them, to make them a little less unlike those in other seaside resorts, and they add to the comfort of visitors, and also to that of the residents who, at present, have the pleasure of paying rates apparently to secure to themselves considerably more than their fair share of mud and discomfort.⁶

Perhaps some of those *interested 'in the improvement of Fowey'* did make some improvements, as by 1894, the Gazette was able to report that *'most of the new houses along and about the Esplanade are now occupied, and various visitors have arrived to spend the winter here.'*⁷ Census records show the population of Fowey in 1891 as 1,515.

The building of Esplanade Terrace

In common with much development in the nineteenth century, groups of houses were built by different builders. Numbers 43, 45 and 47 were built as a group and were originally known as Esplanade Terrace.

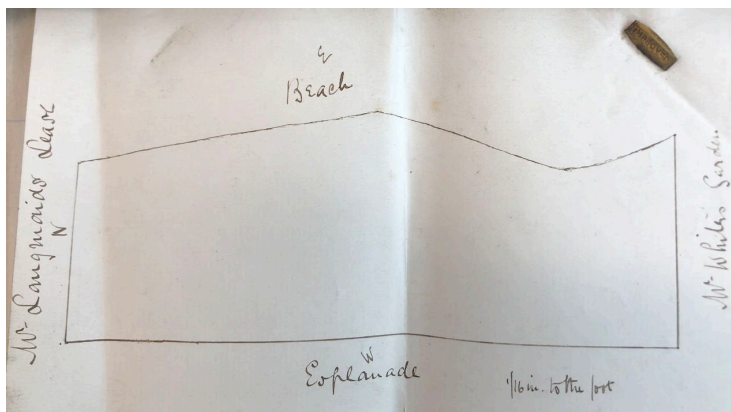
Historic England's listing entry says that the group of three houses were built in the early nineteenth century. This is not correct. The land, like much of the land in Fowey, was originally owned by the Treffry family. The Treffrys have lived at Place House (the name was likely a corruption of Palace) in the centre of Fowey since the fourteenth century and continue to do so to date.



1880 lease to build Esplanade Terrace

By an 1880 title document, Rev Edward John Treffry and Charles Ebenezer Treffry leased a plot of land to the builder John Pain Isbell. The lease lasted for 99 years and was only due to expire in 1979. Under the terms of the lease, Isbell agreed:

at his ... own cost & charges and at an outlay of not less than £700 within the space of one year ... in a good substantial & workmanlike manner & of the best materials erect build ... three good & substantial brick or stone messuages or tenements with the roof of slate or ornamental tile.⁸



Plan showing the plot of land for the three houses, 1880 lease

In a sign that the Esplanade was changing from its old industrial nature, Isbell agreed not to let any *noisy noxious or offensive trade or business* be carried on in any of the houses.



Postcard of Fowey just before Esplanade Terrace was built (dated 1879)

By the early 1880s the three houses were built, one assumes to the satisfaction of the Treffrys who retained the right to approve their design. They were known as numbers one, two and three Esplanade Terrace, following a common theme along the road where there was also Marine Terrace (no.s 11, 12 and 13), Victoria Terrace (no.s 22 – 38) as well as Albert Terrace, Cliff Terrace and Harbour Terrace (originally Ropewalk Terrace) which is still so named and can be found opposite the Crabpot (no.s 70 – 76).

Architectural Features: Grade II listing

There are many grander and older houses in Fowey than those on the Esplanade. However, this group of three are listed at Grade II by Historic England, partly for their group value, but also for specific period features.



At Cannis, the front door is from the late nineteenth century and is likely to be original as is the moulded hood over the door. The tall round-arched stair window at the rear of the house is another attraction, and there are other windows similar to this one around the town.



Cannis



Tall arched window, Albert Quay

The builder



John Pain Isbell was born in 1842 and was recorded as living at 1 Esplanade Terrace (now number 43 Esplanade) in 1893. He was variously described as a painter, decorator and builder, and was clearly an important businessman within the town serving in the 1890s as the secretary of the Masonic Lodge (in Lostwithiel Street). In the 1911 Census, John Isbell, then aged 68, was described as a builder and contractor. He and his wife Harriott who was born in nearby Lansallos, had eleven children, ten of whom survived to adulthood. His premises were in North Street, where, on 26 October 1887, *'about midnight considerable damage was done by a fire'*. (Western Morning News, 28 October 1887).⁹

The people who lived here

Houses of the size and quality of Esplanade Terrace houses were often built for ships' officers and merchants and there were a considerable number of master mariners, working and retired, who were living along the Esplanade in the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Census records were taken every 10 years from 1841 for every household in England, although not all the records have survived. Combined with trades directories, such as Kelly's Directory, they provide details of the inhabitants and their occupations.

Richard Thomas Peake was living at Cannis on the night of 3rd April 1881 when the first census to include the house was taken. Aged 30 at the time, it was noted that he was actually at sea on the merchant ship the Elizabeth Davey on the night of the census. By 1887, still living at Cannis, he was described as the sanitary inspector for the Port of Fowey. He was following in his father's footsteps as Thomas Peake, a retired master mariner, and his wife Eliza were then living in Lostwithiel Street.

The medical and naval theme continued next door at number 2 Esplanade Terrace with Thomas Tuckey, the medical officer of health to the Port. He was a surgeon and also held the post of public vaccinator for No. 3 District of St Austell. At number 1 Esplanade Terrace Thomas Slade resided. He was one of Fowey's Harbour Commissioners at the time.

SCHEDULE.
Prepared pursuant to the Census (Great Britain) Act, 1910.

This space to be filled up by the Enumerator.

Number of Registration District.....	295
Number of Registration Sub-District.....	295-1
Number of Enumeration District.....	1
Name of Head of Family or Separate Occupier.)	E. R. Jenkins.
Postal Address.....	3 Esplanade Terrace. Esplanade. Fowry.

Extract from 1911 Census showing Edward Jenkins living at Cannis

By 1910, Edward Reginald Jenkins, then aged 41, and his wife, Winifred Jenkins, aged 37, were living at number 47. Edward was listed in the census as a carpenter and Winifred is described in Kelly's commercial directory as running 'apartments.' In common with many married and widowed women, she is likely to have taken in lodgers to earn extra income.

By the early 1920s the address Esplanade Terrace was no longer in use and the three houses became known as numbers 43, 45 and 47. Edward and Winifred Jenkins continued to live at number 47 until at least 1939.

In 1948, disembarkation lists show Henry Charles Carter, then aged 44 and a petroleum engineer, returning from Rangoon in Burma with his wife, Prudence Forsaith Carter (aged 36), and their son, John Henry Twynam Carter. Both Carters were returning to the county of their birth and gave their temporary place of residence as with a Mr. J. P. Carter of 8 Tower Park, one assumes a close relation. It is not known when the Carters moved to the Esplanade, but Tim remembers 'old Mrs Carter' living there when he was growing up in the town in the 1970s.

Mrs Carter lived in 47 Esplanade until her death in 2004 when it was acquired by a Manchester barrister, David Friesner. According to The Manchester Evening News:

a judge heard that Friesner *had a property business of almost 20 houses valued at around £7.5 million in 2008, with just under £4 million of mortgages.*

*When the credit crunch began to hit lending institutions that year, his problems began to mount - especially as he had up to £1 million in unsecured loans he had used to finance the refurbishment of properties.*¹⁰

We bought Cannis in 2010 from the bank's receivers and now use the property when it is not let out to visitors.

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Buck's print of Fowey 1734. British Library

An open ropewalk. Shropshirehistory.com

Castle Ruan. Marcus Lewis

1779 map. British Library

1881 map. Ordnance Survey

Postcard of Fowey before Esplanade Terrace was built (dated 1879). Fowey Harbour Heritage Society

Indenture, plan and census extract. Kresen Kernow archives

John Isbell Pain: Ancestry.co.uk

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Endnotes

¹ Spreadbury, I. D p.45

² <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001617/18710517/049/0003>

³ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000329/18780503/070/0002>

⁴ Moncrieff, 1898 p91

⁵ Royal Cornwall Gazette, 6 January 1888. Available at:

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000180/18880106/027/0004>. Accessed 20 November 2019

⁶ Royal Cornwall Gazette, 12 May 1892. Available at:

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000180/18920512/043/0007>. Accessed 20 November 2019

⁷ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000180/18941129/020/0005>

⁸ Indenture dated 3 April 1880 between Rev Edward John Treffry (1), Charles Ebenezer Treffry (2) and John Pain Isbell (3), held at Kresen Kernow archives, Ref TF519

⁹ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000329/18871028/099/0005> 18 Nov 19. Accessed 20 November 2019

¹⁰ <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/local-news/barrister-david-friesner-jailed-for-theft-681668>. Accessed 15 March 2020