



cousin jack

A KIWI FAMILY EXPERIENCE IN PERRANUTHNOE

Words by **Rochelle Sewell**, photographs by **Greg Martin**

Perranuthnoe Beach reminds us of home. Which is a lovely thing when home is some 11,000 thousand miles from here. The jagged coast with its finger-like headlands framing a wide sweep of sandy beach could be found on many stretches of the New Zealand coastline. The fragility of the land facing the rigours of the pounding ocean is another familiar sight. We too are an island nation surrounded by sea. But what we would never see in our home town is the history we find here in Cornwall.

We're a family from New Zealand, who have travelled around Britain with our two young daughters (aged seven and five) for the experience of a lifetime. Critical to our six-month trip were the five precious weeks that we spent in the village where my father-in-law was born and raised. His 50 years spent in the North West of England cannot change the fact that he will live and die a Cornishman. We stayed in our family cottage, adding our New Zealand vowels and intrepid experiences to quiet village life.

From the moment we left the brambled lane and into the village proper, the rich fabric and history of Perranuthnoe was evident. Those who've visited before will know that the village is comprised of stone cottages with lichen dappled slate roofs. Stone walls sit alongside the narrow lanes, which are occasionally interspersed by low picket gates leading to

narrow paths and front doors. In many respects, Perranuthnoe is the same small agricultural village as it's always been.

The village church is a distinctive historical local landmark. St Piran and St Michael Church sits in its glory above the cluster of cottages. Its square turret with its barbican edging and oversized clock face can be seen from some distance away. The pub is distinctive too. Not content with simply being another whitewashed stone public house with an elaborate swing sign and cosy ceilings, someone decided to paint it pink. My five-year-old thought it was marvellous. Her parents enjoyed it too. The food is award-winning and the staff are a perfect blend of professional and old Cornish charm. The selection of beer from independent breweries brings it up to speed with London trends but the traditional flavours are still on tap. It wasn't unheard of for our children to ask if we could go to "the pink pub" for a family outing.

During our time in the UK we learnt a new mantra: "It's not the wrong weather, it's simply the wrong choice of coat." This past year has certainly not been a record-breaking heatwave, and the arrival of storm Ophelia back in October hit the South West with passion. That said, we had the right coats, and as Perranuthnoe is positioned on the South West Coast Path, we were well placed for excellent walks in any weather.

Locals will tell you that the path out toward the end of

Cudden Point and beyond into Prussia Cove is special. Try it at dawn and you may spot grey seals on the rocks below. Then of course there's St Michael's Mount, accessed via a coastal walk toward the west or into Marazion via the A-Road. This magical coastline is full of spectacular places to walk or stop and contemplate. It's dog-friendly, as evidenced by the influx of canine friends to Perranuthnoe in late autumn, but is also a place to spot birds of prey and unique sea birds off the rocky outcrop known by the charming title of The Grebe.

The beach was on offer for us too, even though we deliberately chose to be in Perranuthnoe in October as we were keen to avoid school holidays. The water was a cool 15 degrees Celsius and perfectly accessible with a full wetsuit. Fortunately, we'd packed four sets of neoprene in our suitcases. The rock pools provided hours of fun for our children who love the traditional method of fishing for small blennies using cotton reels and pins for a line. The sand at Perranuthnoe is often dampened by the incoming tide and is perfect for digging holes and constructing sandcastles. For warming up after the beach, we found two excellent cafés serving hot chocolates and coffee. With cold children, it's the little details that count.

My husband recalls milking a cow in the series of white-washed barns in the centre of the village. These days the barns

are occupied by a café, a gift shop, a dog grooming service and two galleries. There's even an artist in residence who's open for visitors year round. It's a bit like having the bohemian artist groove in our midst that's made St Ives so popular for decades, but without the overbearing influx of visitors. It feels like our little secret, especially at this time of year.

During our final weeks in Perranuthnoe, we spoke to everyone from an elderly neighbour to a passing surfer in the lane. And we made it a priority to pull up a stool next to a local at the bar. When home-schooling was over for the day, our children wandered through the fields in their wellington boots and sought friends while they built sandcastles and splashed around at the beach.

We savoured the local vegetables and fresh produce for which Cornwall is known, and we didn't correct our hosts for calling cauliflower a broccoli or swedes turnips. We will forever delight in the West Country accent and traditions. We ate Newlyn ice cream and visited the fish markets at dawn to try species we never see in southern hemisphere waters. And as we made new friends we enjoyed shared meals of authenticated Cornish pasties and cream teas - jam first, then clotted cream on top.

Perranuthnoe, you are our home away from home. We've enjoyed your warm welcome. 