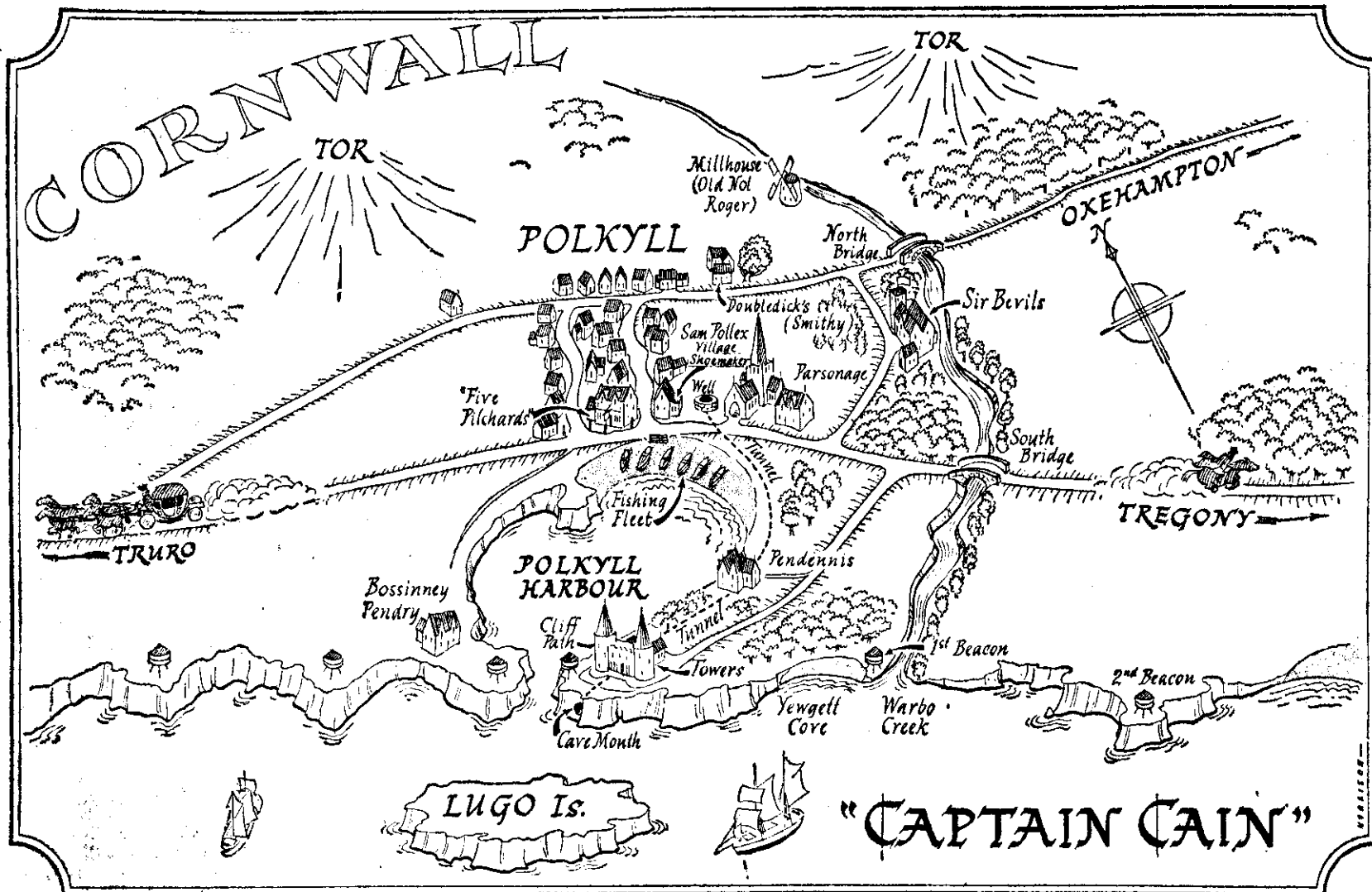




HERE, for young (and older) listeners, who will be following the adventures of Roger Carlyon in the new ZB Sunday evening programme "Captain Cain," is a map of the Polkyll district which should help them to keep their bearings as the story progresses. Based on material supplied by John Gundry (who wrote the story), it shows all the buildings, beacons, roads and natural features that figure in the programme. Even a couple of spot-heights have been included—after all, it would be a pity to spoil a good map for want of a ha'porth of tor. "Captain Cain" begins at 2ZA on June 21, at 6.30 p.m.; at 2ZB on June 28, 6.30 p.m.; at 3ZB on July 5, 6.0 p.m.; and at 4ZB on July 12, 6.0 p.m.

The Wooing of the Storekeeper

Amongst acquaintances and friends, the surname, with the appropriate prefix, is used only at the first meeting and only then before the second beer or second cup of tea. Thereafter the Christian name or nicknames is adopted.
—E. H. McCormick.
"Listener," 24.4.53.

THE local storekeeper had been introduced to me as Mr. Riley. I in turn had been formally presented as "Mr. Graham who lives along the road." And for the first six months our relations on this basis were steady and unembarrassed. There was no impulse to urge us to intimacy. We had met as strangers and there was a great deal of exploratory work to be done. I had still to show myself a desirable customer; he had still to prove himself an obliging storekeeper. And so we circled around each other like two wary and watchful wrestlers, waiting for an opening. Did this Mr. Riley charge higher prices than other grocers? Was this Mr. Graham a man who allowed his debts to pile up?

At the end of the first six months the air was clearer. Doubt and suspicion had lifted. Severely formal though it remained, our acquaintanceship had survived the acid test of everyday buying and selling. I had not been short changed and I had never been told to like or lump. Mr. Riley's particular brand of tomato sauce. I had in response paid my

A footnote to a "Listener" controversy, by DESMOND STONE

bills regularly and made my complaints politely.

"That last lot of bacon, Mr. Riley."

"Yes, Mr. Graham?" Nothing had been alleged and nothing admitted.

"I think perhaps it may have been a little saltier than the week before's."

"M'm. Yes, now you come to mention it, I believe you may be right. I'll have a nicer piece for you this week."

"Thank you, Mr. Riley."

"It's a pleasure, Mr. Graham."

A number of such incidents had passed off smoothly. Most times, as when I was given brown bread instead of white, or a large packet of a well-known breakfast food instead of a small one, I had said nothing. And where self-respect demanded a murmur of remonstrance, I had cut fuss to a minimum.

Mr. Riley had been none the less co-operative. He had ordered my bread when I had forgotten it and he had sold me goods when the law forbade it.

"Do you think . . . is it possible . . . would you mind," I stumbled on, "giving me a book of tissues."

A smoker himself, Mr. Riley knew desperation when he saw it on a Sunday.

"On this occasion, yes, I can," he said.

"I'm very grateful."

"We don't as a rule, Mr. Graham. But I don't mind doing it for you."

Thus we began the second six months with relations soundly established. We had passed unscathed through the searching test of periodical tobacco shortages, frenzied Friday rushes and the tramping in of mud on a freshly-swept floor. Now a new note was introduced. Warmed by a surreptitious whiskey and a common drainage problem—how many feuds and friendships have begun over a faulty drain?—we began to seek some less formal mode of expression. As neighbours looking into each other's backyard, the strictly businesslike relationship of storekeeper-customer seemed hardly adequate any more. Yet "mistering" each other had been a habit for so long that the transition to Christian names seemed to be more than we could manage.

It was Mr. Riley who first breached the barriers. We were already in unanimity about the weather and we were solidly agreed that the "good old days" were the best. Now we were to find

more common ground in the state of the nation.

"Things are going to the pack, Mr. Graham," he told me one day. "All this talk about paper money is bad."

Though it was my own shortage of paper money I found hardest to bear, I felt he was undoubtedly right and promptly said so.

"I couldn't agree with you more, Mr. Riley."

Carried away a little and rendered momentarily incautious by my enthusiastic support for his views, he became dramatically intimate.

"Do you know, Bob," he began . . .

I don't think he realised what he had said. In the warmth of an expansive moment, he had dropped the prefix unconsciously. But there it was—the old inflexible formality had been breached and our whole relationship was subtly altered. Pleasurably surprised and embarrassed, I struggled to reciprocate. "His name's Max," I told myself. "You should use it now." But his Christian name died with a rattle in my throat and I turned away with nothing accomplished. Some stronger incentive was needed yet.

The next day found me in the shop with firmer resolve. Pink-faced but determined (continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, JUNE 19, 1953.