

**THE WEST BRITON AND  
ROYAL CORNWALL GAZETTE  
TRURO, CORNWALL, ENGLAND  
27 AUGUST 1959  
(page 13)**

**WHY DO THEY ALL HUDDLE  
TOGETHER IN ST. IVES?**

**New Book On Art Colony Recalls  
Former P.R.A.'s Question**

Sir Alfred Munnings was an old man when he died, but no one in Cornwall can ever think of him as old. Painting at Tre-warveneth, singing in the studio, concocting his highly deceptive punch, riding into farmyards, jumping hedges on foot, chatting with the farmers at the Western in Penzance—such are the memories of the older people who knew “A.J.”

[ . . . ]

Well, why do they all huddle together in St. Ives? “A.J.” might put the question again were he alive to read “Britain’s Art Colony By The Sea” (George Ronald. 21s. net), by Denys Val Baker, who lived after the war in the St. Ives area and at Penzance, Sennen, and St. Hilary. Judging from the title and presentation, this well-illustrated and gaily attractive book is intended mainly as a souvenir for St. Ives visitors. It may also have a souvenir value for some of the residents, for Mr. Val Baker tends to focus on the early post-war period. Whose face is that in the centre of the frontispiece? When did we last see it bent over a sculptor’s chisel on The Island?

This constant interest in a passing phase which has already passed will puzzle the tourists when they begin to enquire for artists who left the town years ago. It is less odd to those of us who know that Denys Val Baker founded “The Cornish Review” in 1949 and afterwards moved back to London. What he has done is to write a book based on the St. Ives which he knew at that time. Some readers are going to find it strangely out-of-date despite the later information that has been added.

## **"SENSE OF EVIL"**

The innocent tourist is promised his guinea's worth as early as the second page of the text where he finds the author writing of the "sense of evil" in the Cornish atmosphere—and of the practice of evil as well. "It is generally supposed that even in recent times black magic meetings have been held in Cornwall. The late Aleister Crowley, infamous meddler in the realms of magic, is said to have visited West Penwith on many occasions to conduct black masses."

Aly, lass, fine goings-on down here if you ask me. Bohe-myans, Black Magic an' all . . . Shall we disappoint the readers of the "Sunday Terror" and "Britain's Art Colony By The Sea" by telling them that Crowley's absurd rites were practised by only a few people, hardly any of them resident artists and none of them connected with St. Ives? Crowley's henchman in Cornwall died in 1935. I knew him quite well and once spent a Christmas Eve with him. The only Black Mass I can remember was completely spoilt when everyone present turned tail and ran in sheer panic. Crowley came down after the war with a green-eyed girl whom I briefly met in London, and it was rumoured that some intellectual half-bakes were chalking pentagrams on the studio floor. But I would not consider any of this important or interesting enough to be mentioned at the beginning of a book on the art colony at St. Ives.

[ . . . ]