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Trumpet Vine

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Submit articles  
electronically in  
Word format and  
photos in JPG format.

**Where Cornwall Comes to an End in Wild Beauty and Antiquity**

*Sandy Welches, MGV 2005*

“Scalloped with golden sandy bays, two rugged, but different, coast lines meet at Lands End.

On one side the Atlantic rolls and pounds upon sweeping surf beaches... and on the other, picturesque fishing villages and harbors are still much as they were when smugglers brought in brandy and other contraband from France and the Channel Islands.

An essentially Celtic land of tiny villages and epic myths, forced to abandon its two most prosperous industries, mining and smuggling, it has quickly developed into a year-round quality tourist destination.”

Thus described in “The London Times” travel section, it accurately describes our recent vacation in County Cornwall, United Kingdom. In the June/July issue of the Trumpet Vine, I described the beauty of a different Cornwall location, the Minack Theater. In this issue, I’d like to share another horticultural and historical gem—**St. Michael’s Mount**.

A recent Bronze Age hoard shows that this small island off the coast of Cornwall at Penzance has been occupied for at least 3,000 years. But the current owners, the St. Aubyns, has only occupied it since 1659—through 12 generations of this titled family.

Photo: [stmichaelsmount.co.uk](http://stmichaelsmount.co.uk)



Today, depending on the tides, the Mount can be accessed by boat or across the causeway on foot. My husband and I were carried over in a boat, having arrived at very high tide. And, if that isn’t magical enough, what we saw when we arrived delighted every one of our senses. From Calla Lilies growing out of the rock to palm trees and massive sub-tropical shrubs, it was a hike to remember. As you can see, you must be fairly fit to climb the steep cobbled walk to the castle at the top, but there are iron rails at different points along the way to grab on to.



Beginning in the 1300s, the Mount was both abbey and monastery, until Henry VIII confiscated it in 1548. After the British Civil War, it changed hands again, sold to the current family for 1,900 pounds sterling. A Victorian East Wing, where the family lives, was added in 1873, and the current Lord St. Levan's grandfather gave the Mount to the British National Trust.

Like many great manor homes in Great Britain, the Aubyn family was given a 999-year lease to live in the castle and is licensed to operate the visitor business. This brilliant arrangement has saved many hundreds of historic properties that would have otherwise fallen into ruin under massive maintenance costs.

The rooms open to the public are steeped in history and contain incredibly valuable furniture and artwork. Family portraits by Reynolds and Gainsborough adorn the walls in rooms with original Chippendale Chairs, made in the 1750s. But the gardens circling the steep rock below the castle speak for themselves. I hope you enjoy the pictures my husband Bill and I took.

