

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

An update from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives for
July 2017



No, it's not a real postcard. But it's pretty typical of the scenes chosen by professional photographers. Such pictures of historic towns, harbours, houses, industrial sites and the countryside attract visitors, house-buyers, or business-people looking to re-locate to Cornwall. As a result, huge amounts of money come to the county, indirectly providing jobs and underpinning the local economy. This view of Polruan reflects many centuries of human activity. The Historic Environment Record shows that in the area shown, monuments, buildings, ruins, fields and findspots from the Bronze Age to our own times can be detected. This rich, time-deep landscape is what makes Cornwall's settlements and countryside special, not just for visitors but for the Cornish (by birth or by choice) too. As the Cornwall Local Plan says: *Cornwall's outstanding and distinctive historic environment is an important irreplaceable resource that contributes to our economy, tourism, education, culture and community*

identity. So, it's worth investing in, isn't it? There are many amateurs who study, monitor, and help conserve our historic environment, like the CAS Area Representatives, for example. But volunteers cannot do this alone. A strong core of professionals is needed. Cornwall is lucky in having dedicated people, working for a range of organisations, like Cornwall Council, Historic England, English Heritage, the National Trust and many others. But they are few in number and over-stretched, especially in the public sector. Without them, our knowledge and understanding of local heritage would be greatly reduced; sites and buildings would not be monitored, protected from harm or conserved. Only politicians can restore funding to adequate levels but maybe we, as members of the public, should speak up for our archaeologists, heritage-officers, archivists, buildings experts, museums officers, site-staff, librarians and other professionals in the heritage sector. As custodians of Cornwall's heritage, they contribute to our economy and our way of life. Without them, how can Cornwall retain its distinctiveness? Cornwall Council is working with a wide range of local organisations to look after our distinctive heritage and culture. For more information, go to:

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/historic-environment/heritage-kernow-ertach-kernow/> . But, if you feel strongly that our heritage merits proper investment; why not tell your local councillor or M.P.?

Sometimes, features that our Representatives report on may not look that special, yet are in fact really important. Take, for instance, this peat deposit at Porthcurnick, near Gerrans, visited by Sheila James as part of the Coastal Access survey. It is, in fact, prehistoric, and, in terms of the environmental evidence that it may contain, is invaluable in helping us to get a more rounded understanding of life long ago.



Meanwhile, in the east of the county, Brian Oldham is trying to solve another mystery and would appreciate information, if anyone can help. He writes: *The two granite mileposts [see below] are a feature in the garden of a house in Liskeard. They were brought to my attention by a friend who came across them while canvassing during the last General Election. They were in place when the current owner moved in; she was told they were recovered from sites near to the house.*



The options are the Liskeard & Caradon Railway [LCR], the Liskeard & Looe Union Canal [LLUC] and the Liskeard & Looe Railway [LLR]. The LCR has been discounted as their mileposts were distances from Buller Quay, Looe, the first being at 7 and 1 half miles. Further up the LCR line where distances on mileposts are from the Rillaton Depot, most are still in situ and of a different style to our newly found pair.

The LLUC is a difficult one as mileposts are not referred to in any of records available, and would they still survive from 1828 and all the upheaval involved during the construction of the railway? An even more unlikely option considering the pristine condition of the garden ornaments.

LLR next; a visit to each of the five possible sites listed on the HER proved disappointing; obstacles included road traffic, trains, trees, undergrowth, marshland and private land. The result is the photo of a very modern GWR 4 milepost.



A copy of the 1909 GWR survey of the LLR before they took over has been ordered to get more information, but if anyone has any suggestions as to where these mileposts came from please let me know. Please don't say you have some in your garden and they're for sale at your local Garden Centre!

Our Area Representative for Tintagel, Joe Parsons, has been approached by a member of the public concerned about the planning application by English Heritage to build a bridge at Tintagel Castle from the mainland to the Island in order to replace the steps that are currently used for access. He referred it to CAS Trustees to consider and their response to the proposal on archaeological grounds can be seen elsewhere on the website.



Over the next year Area Representatives will be paying particular attention to medieval features in the landscape, in addition to their normal site checks. Ann Preston-Jones and Andrew Langdon will be leading a training day in the Bodmin area on 10th September. While checking various sites out in preparation for this day, there was some good news. Respryn Bridge has been repaired by CORMAC and is looking better now than it has for a very long time. However, threats remain. While we were there a lorry approached from the Lanhydrock end (see below), possibly following a satnav route. It could have been disastrous but fortunately the driver saw the problem in time. He took

instructions from a passer-by and reversed. However, it was one indication of how vulnerable the bridge is despite the repairs.



Lastly, Cornwall Council and Cornwall Heritage Trust have submitted their Stage 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Luxulyan Valley Restoration Project. If this is successful, much of the money will be spent on the Treffry Viaduct (see below) but there will also be funding to restore the leat system and to undertake a range of work to improve the historic and natural environment of the Valley. The decision is expected in September.



While on the subject of the Treffry Viaduct, it should be mentioned that Cornwall Heritage Trust also maintains other important sites around the county and has a wonderful website (<http://www.cornwallheritagetrust.org/>). The section with educational resources is worth looking at even by those of us who are, shall we say, a little more mature in years!

Area Representatives would love to hear from fellow CAS members, and the general public, about any feature of the historic environment in their parishes, whether a new discovery, something causing concern, or even just to answer queries. If you have any concerns, or new information, about any archaeological feature, please contact the Area Representative for the parish. If you do not know who that is, just look at the inside back cover of the latest journal, *Cornish Archaeology 54*, or contact our secretary, Sophie Meyer, at: secretary@cornisharchaeology.org.uk.

Roger Smith, 1st August 2017