

## **FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS**

AN UPDATE FROM CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S AREA  
REPRESENTATIVES

**AUGUST 2017**

### **THIS MONTH'S STORIES:**



**HISTORIC ENGLAND QUICKLY ON THE SCENE  
TO DEAL WITH DAMAGED ST BURYAN CROSS**

### **Also:**

- **PROTECTION AT LAST FOR HISTORIC CAMBORNE CHAPEL**
- **NEGLECTED FALMOUTH GRAVEYARD GAINS FRIENDS**
- **HOW HEALTHY ARE OUR HILLFORTS?**

On 9<sup>th</sup> August Andrew Langdon and Ann Preston-Jones received the worrying news that a Scheduled Monument near St Buryan had been seriously damaged. St Buryan Parish Council reported that Boskenna Gate Cross, which stands very close to the edge of the B3315 road, opposite the entrance to Boskenna in St Buryan, had been damaged. Andrew writes: *The cross had been fractured at the neck and repaired during the Victorian period and it appears it has taken a glancing blow from a vehicle and the head has been knocked off at*

*the existing joint. The road is narrow and if two vehicles were passing one may have pulled in a little too tight.*

*Examining the remains it is clear that there was little mortar in the joint and the iron pin was corroding, we could only find a very small abrasion on the side of the head and no other damage.*



**Boskenna Gate Cross before the incident**

Ann Preston-Jones (Historic England Heritage at Risk Protection Officer) quickly visited (see first photograph) and arranged for a local farmer on the parish council to collect the cross-head for safe keeping until funds are available to have the cross re-pinned with a stainless steel dowel.



**Boskenna Gate Cross head and shaft**



**The corroding pin at the top of the cross shaft**

Hopefully, this beautiful cross will be restored soon. One cheering aspect of the story is how concerned local people were able to get swift assistance from experts. Thanks to Andrew Langdon and Ann Preston-Jones for the report and photographs.

Adrian Rodda was delighted to learn that the chapel and cell of St Ia at Reen Rocks, near Troon, Camborne, have been Scheduled. The credit for this lies with Philip C. Hills of Camborne Old Cornwall Society. Adrian reports: *it is terribly overgrown and difficult to locate. It lies on the bank of a stream directly opposite the impressive Reen Rocks. The valley is open access land, and the path to it is best found by parking at Treslothan Church and walking back to the road where a gap in the field hedge is marked as a Footpath. This path cuts across a field, then allows you to follow the hedge to your left towards the valley. The path crosses the stream but you should keep on the same side as you accessed and walk upstream. The imposing Reen Rocks will present themselves and just past them you can step across the stream and walk downstream along a terrace. The chapel is on the terrace within an enclosure. It is too overgrown to photograph properly, but when you come upon it you will see that the walls are cleared and visible.*

Adrian hopes to revisit the site during the winter, when it might be easier to take photographs, but in the meantime the following two pictures show the nature of the site.



***On the other side of the stream, just below Reen Rocks, are the walls of a small cell, which probably accommodated the priest.***



***Mounds run down the centre of the chapel with trees growing from them. I do not know if these were originally unexcavated areas of the cover or if these are the dumped soil from revealing the wall.***

Adrian has sent this summary of investigations of this intriguing site:

*This clearance was done by Charles Thomas and local volunteers in 1965. (See Michael Tangye's article in CAS Newsletter 143, February 2017.) They identified a 10th century chapel with internal measurements of 30ft by 12ft and the wall 2ft thick. The doorway is in the W half of the south side. This chapel replaced*

*an earlier one. A cross, which now stands outside Camborne Parish Church, was located inside the enclosure. There was also a record of a holy well, Fenton la. The earliest building that Charles Thomas discovered with walls 5 feet thick is now invisible, being downslope and 6 to 7 feet below the present surface. This may have been the well chapel. A second chapel was built above this one, internally 11ft 9inches N-S by 16ft 6 inches E-W. The third phase chapel enlarged its predecessor by removing the east wall and adding another 14-15 feet to the N and S walls before a new east wall was built. At the west end another 2 to 3 feet was added before the new west wall was built. The roof was of slate with ridge tiles. An altar stone with the inscription LEUIUT IUSIT HEC ALTARE PRO ANIMA SUA (L. ordered this altar for (the sake of) his soul.) was taken from the chapel when it was demolished in 1780 and eventually set up in Camborne Parish Church.*



**Crane Cross or St la's Cross, now in Camborne Churchyard.**

Graveyards are wonderful places. Not only do they tell us a great deal about social history, they are also tranquil refuges for wildlife and people seeking a little break from the noise and bustle of modern life. Ann Preston-Jones has been very impressed with the work of volunteers in a historic graveyard in Falmouth:

*After much hard work recently, the 'Friends of Ponsharden Cemeteries' and Falmouth Town Council have just submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to help with restoration of the cemeteries. The proposed project will re-erect, repair and preserve selected damaged headstones, monuments, boundary walls and provide access, interpretation and seating, while preserving the special atmosphere as a place of quiet contemplation. There is an open day on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2-4 to which anyone is welcome.*

Details of the open day and related events can be found on the CAS website or at:

[http://www.falmouthpacket.co.uk/news/15501454.Discover\\_Falmouth\\_s\\_hidden\\_history\\_at\\_Ponsharden\\_cemeteries\\_39\\_open\\_day/](http://www.falmouthpacket.co.uk/news/15501454.Discover_Falmouth_s_hidden_history_at_Ponsharden_cemeteries_39_open_day/)

Ann's photographs show what a beautiful place this cemetery is. Clearly much work will need to be done to restore the tombstones and surrounding area. However, great progress is being made by an ever-expanding group of dedicated enthusiasts.



***Friends of Ponsharden Cemeteries on site.***



**It is hoped to repair past damage.**



**The Jewish cemetery provides a glimpse into a little-known aspect of Cornwall's history.**

Recently an online atlas of hillforts has been made freely available: <https://hillforts.arch.ox.ac.uk/> . The research was carried out by a team based at the universities of Oxford, Edinburgh and University College Cork, helped by citizen scientists from across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Ireland. Funding came from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Not surprisingly, Cornwall has many entries on this useful site and hillforts are frequently visited by Area Representatives. But what are the challenges facing these imposing monuments? Two sites, Castle Dore near Fowey, and Prideaux Castle (Luxulyan), provide some insight into the difficulty of reaching a compromise between economic land-use and heritage conservation. It should be added that although the landowners of both sites are very sympathetic and interested, they do not farm the land themselves.



**Damage to the rampart at Castle Dore with evidence that the site is used for cattle-grazing.**





**Visitors and animals have caused erosion of the ramparts at Castle Dore over many years but is this site suitable for cattle?**

Prideaux is a very impressive multi-vallate hillfort which was well-situated to command a wide area, including the now-silted Par estuary. It is on private land but was visited by a group from CAS earlier in the year.



**Gorse is a major problem on part of the site at Prideaux but plans are being made for clearance involving professionals and volunteers.**



**Like Castle Dore, the site is used for grazing cattle and the impact can be clearly seen.**

Both Castle Dore and Prideaux are still imposing features set in beautiful parts of the countryside. They both have problems but these haven't been caused deliberately. Farming is integral to the Cornish economy and need not be incompatible with preserving the historic landscape. But how is this to be achieved?

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](mailto:secretary@cornisharchaeology.org.uk) .

Roger Smith, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2017

