FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

AN UPDATE FROM CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY’S AREA REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 2017

THIS MONTH’S STORIES:

• CORNWALL’S HERITAGE AT RISK
• A TALE OF TWO CHAPELS
• ANCIENT BRIDGE ADDED TO H.E.R.
• AREA REPS UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

CORNWALL’S HERITAGE AT RISK

Every year Historic England produces a sort of heritage M.O.T. in the form of its updated Heritage at Risk register. Information about this is available online at https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/heritage-at-risk-2017. As with all such reports, it can make very sobering reading, but it is important to take a regular, hard look at the condition of some of our most important places. And sometimes this can be the catalyst for change. Perhaps the greatest shock this year was to discover that Trethevy Quoit had been included ‘as a result of increased erosion by livestock as well as damage to the field and land caused by fencing’. However, this is a case where the catalyst effect can be seen in action since ‘when the site came up for sale, Historic England helped to safeguard it by giving a £19,000 grant to the Cornish Heritage Trust to purchase the field’. With the excellent track record of C.H.T. in managing heritage assets we can be optimistic about the long-term future of the site.

Sites do get removed from the register. Nationally, Historic England’s target to cut the number of entries on the Register in 2015 by 15% (not including conservation areas) has been met a year early. The Register ‘includes buildings, places of worship, monuments, parks and gardens, conservation areas, battlefields and wreck sites that are listed and have
been assessed and found to be at risk. Of all listed buildings across England we assess:

- Grade I
- Grade II*
- Grade II listed places of worship across England
- Grade II listed buildings in London

Grade II listed buildings outside London, other than places of worship, are not included’.

According to Andrew Vines, who is H.E. Planning Director in the South West: ‘Over 160 sites have been conserved and are no longer considered at risk. In the last year we have awarded grants of £1.76 million to 69 sites across the region, and we have also helped to secure significant additional grants and resources from our partners: the Heritage Lottery Fund, Natural England, trusts and private individuals’.

To download a PDF for the South West Register, go to: https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2017-registers/sw-har-register2017.pdf/.

The entries for Cornwall can be broken down as follows:

<table>
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<th>Building and structure entries</th>
<th>Place of worship entries</th>
<th>Archaeology entries</th>
<th>Park and garden entries</th>
<th>Battlefield entries</th>
<th>Wreck site entries</th>
<th>Conservation area entries</th>
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<td>182</td>
<td>1</td>
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Cornwall is fortunate in having two very active Heritage at Risk Protection Officers, Ann Preston-Jones, who covers most of the county, and Dan Bashford, who, besides having a huge area outside the county also keeps an eye on south east Cornwall. They work very closely with our Area Representatives and with many other volunteer organisations across Cornwall. Historic England encourages members of the public to contact them about any sites that may be at risk.
A TALE OF TWO CHAPELS

Two Methodist chapels on the 2017 register offer contrasting stories about the possible fate of heritage assets.

Gunwen Methodist chapel in Luxulyan is included in the current register because of these problems: ‘A roof in poor condition with slipped slates. Rot and water ingress to ground floor and windows in poor condition’. This would be depressing enough but the present chapel is especially significant having been built on the site of the first chapel associated with the founder of the Bible Christians, William O’Bryan (or Bryant), who was born in 1778 at nearby Gunwen Farm. However, the register notes that a restoration programme was planned and as the following pictures show, it is now complete, so hopefully the building will not be on the 2018 register.
This chapel is in an isolated location in a part of Cornwall that is definitely not affluent, yet its dedicated trustees have managed to obtain the funding necessary to secure the future of this lovely structure. The next photograph lists the organisations deserving praise for the effort:
By complete contrast there is the much-marketed ‘historic port’ of Charlestown (are any ports not historic?) near St Austell. Over the years this has been transformed into a thriving commercial honeypot with pub, restaurants, shops, and a museum. It is indeed a wonderful place, relying for its popularity on the collective heritage impact of harbour, industrial buildings, cottages, and other structures, some of which date from the late 18th century. What a shame then that one of the most significant buildings in the village, the former Wesleyan chapel, is on the at-risk register and deteriorating fast.

According to the 2017 register this privately owned building (dating from 1827) is Grade II* Listed, as well as being situated in a World Heritage Site area. Historic England judges its condition to be ‘very bad’ and the register states: ‘Listed Building Consent granted for conversion of rear school block and stabilisation of chapel agreed, with revised consent subsequently approved in 2013. Work still not commenced in spring 2017 and the condition of the building is noticeably deteriorating. The Council is investigating enforcement action’. Cornwall Buildings Group includes the chapel in its excellent feature on ‘Dilapidated Cornwall’

(https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/media).

The beautiful façade of Charlestown chapel
It is sometimes said that there is no money in heritage; yet money-making is often dependent on heritage features. The archaeology, architecture and historic landscape of Cornwall are what attract many visitors, as well as giving residents an invaluable sense of place and better quality of life. Once attracted to Charlestown, visitors spend large amounts on food, accommodation, and other items. They do not flock to this part of the county to observe the stark, brutalist and incongruous housing and retail developments that have been spewed over the landscape between St Austell and Charlestown; rather it is the historic character of the port that tempts people to visit. But if important pieces of the rich mosaic of structures that give the place its unique character are lost, so is the magnetism of the place, and eventually the local economy will suffer if people no longer visit. The chapel is an integral part of that mosaic.

What a contrast between the two chapels. At Gunwen, public spirited locals have overcome obstacles, including a lack of funds, to rescue an isolated historic chapel, while in the ‘money pot’ that is Charlestown a major building is allowed to fester and rot.
ANCIENT BRIDGE ADDED TO H.E.R.

Cornwall’s Historic Environment Register contains a vast number of entries, yet it has never been claimed that it is complete. Sometimes, close observation brings a special reward and this has proved so for Sheila James, who has discovered a clapper bridge along the bridleway between Treloggas and Higher Lanner in Kea parish. Sheila sought the advice of Ann Preston-Jones, Anna Lawson-Jones and Andy Jones. They confirmed her identification and now it has been recorded on the H.E.R. database – site MCO58723.

The clapper bridge is visible beyond the fallen tree

Photographs by Sheila James
The second biannual meeting of Area Representatives was held on 14th October 2017 at Wheal Martyn (part of which is also on the 2017 Heritage at Risk register by the way – happily an application to the HLF to pay for restoration has been made). This was attended by our current President, Nick Johnson, and President-Elect, Caroline Dudley. Guests included Chris Coldwell, who, as newly appointed officer for Cornwall AONB, is keen to work more closely with organisations like CAS, and Richard Truscott who was formerly the Bridges Officer for Cornwall County Council. Much consideration was given to the threats to the county’s historic bridges (and possible solutions). The minutes for the meeting will appear on the CAS website. This was Peter Cornall’s last meeting as Convenor of our Area Representatives. Nick thanked him for his invaluable and painstaking work in building and managing a network of representatives operating throughout the county. On behalf of the Society, Nick presented a gift to Peter in appreciation of all he has done. Those of us who have worked with Peter have appreciated not only his efficiency and clear guidance but also his unfailing courtesy and good humour.
At the meeting Peter formally handed over the role of Convenor to Iain Rowe. Iain has vast experience in community archaeology and education, as well as being a trustee of CAS and an officer at Kresen Kernow. One of the greatest wishes of the late Tony Blackman was for CAS to have a thriving Area Representative network. It is in no small measure due to Peter’s work, often behind the scenes, that this has been achieved, and it is heartening to know that Iain will be there to carry on the good work.

Iain fails to escape from his new responsibilities...

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, 3rd November 2017