

## ***FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS***

### **AN UPDATE FROM CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S AREA REPRESENTATIVES**

Opinions in these articles are those of the author and should not be assumed to be those of Cornwall Archaeological Society.

## **MARCH 2018**

### **This month:**

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### **SPRING CLEAN FOR HELMAN TOR**

Is this the scene that confronted groups of Neolithic people approaching Helman Tor for seasonal gatherings? Did they view with a sense of anticipation the rugged boulders and boundary wall just visible above the surrounding wilderness of scrubby woodland? Maybe smoke from fires, and tiny figures scurrying about on the summit, promised a friendly welcome from friends not seen for a long while?



Of course, this flight of imagination needs to be tempered quickly by fact. The vast area of scrub, heathland, watercourses and ponds that surround the Tor has been heavily tin-streamed and altered for centuries, so the view is far from timeless. Until recently, Helman Tor itself has been increasingly obscured by rampant vegetation growth, so much so that this Scheduled Monument is included on the Heritage at Risk Register for 2017.

But this is not a tale of woe; quite the opposite – it is a very good news story. The Tor and surrounding area (217 hectares) is owned by Cornwall Wildlife Trust, which is keen to do its best for both historic and natural environments. Working in consultation with Ann Preston-Jones (Heritage at Risk Protection Officer for Historic England) the Trust has undertaken a massive programme of controlled grazing and vegetation clearance, with startlingly impressive results.

In addition to the important Neolithic tor enclosure, there are numerous other features of interest, including a Bronze Age roundhouse, and field system, on the lower slopes. For years these have been very difficult to find. But bracken control techniques and the voracious appetites of the cattle grazing the slopes and hilltop have worked wonders.



A Bronze Age roundhouse is revealed on the western slopes of the Tor. This photograph is looking to the west.



In 2013 this roundhouse was almost hidden. This photograph was taken looking east towards the summit.



Looking south along the eastern part of the summit towards the location of the excavation carried out by Roger Mercer in 1986.



The hilltop is much clearer. This is looking south. The boundary hedge linking boulder outcrops can be seen clearly.



The extent of clearance on the lower slopes can be seen from this view, which is looking southwest towards Hensbarrow and the china clay district.

Cornwall Wildlife Trust (<http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/>) deserves great credit for their work as stewards of this wonderful area. For more information about the Helman Tor reserve, go to: <http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/helman-tor> . If you seek archaeology, wildlife or just a sense of remoteness, a visit to the Tor and the surrounding mini-wildernesses of Breney Common, Redmoor and Lowertown Moor is highly recommended. And if it is too wet to visit, why not download an excellent archaeological report by Pete Herring and Cornwall Archaeological Unit about the Trust's various reserves at: [http://map.cornwall.gov.uk/reports\\_event\\_record/2001/2001R068.pdf](http://map.cornwall.gov.uk/reports_event_record/2001/2001R068.pdf) ?

## A PEEK AT YOUR AREA REPRESENTATIVES

It's time for an action shot. Normally Area Reps are rarely glimpsed, since they shun the warmth and sedentary ease of life indoors and opt to brave harsh weather and unforgiving terrain in search of archaeological features. However, here are some of them, hard at work and fathoms deep in thought at their most recent meeting at Wheal Martyn Museum near St Austell.



Photo: Ann Preston-Jones

Twice a year your Area Reps meet to discuss matters of interest or concern, as well as to listen to invited experts. This time we were able to welcome two guest experts, both of whom are hoping to involve members of CAS with their exciting projects. Chris Coldwell of Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is looking for help in identifying and conserving Scheduled Monuments in three parts of Cornwall's AONB: Bodmin Moor, the Lizard and Rame Head. This will tie-in very well with the Monument Watch carried out by

Area Reps and is open to anyone who is interested. Three training events will be taking place soon, so please get involved. They will be held at these venues:

- Liskeard Public Rooms, West Street, Saturday 28th April 2018 starting at 9.30 am and ending about 1 p.m.
- Helston Guildhall, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May, starting at 10 am and ending about 1 p.m.
- Maker Heights Visitor Centre, Rame, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May, starting at 10am and ending about 1 p.m.
- There will also be another at Truro College, which will be on a weekday - details to follow.

About 30% of the county is part of the AONB, which enjoys protection equivalent to that of a National Park. Perhaps those of us who care about the county's natural and historic landscape should be pressing for the other 70% to be included, and as quickly as possible? Their website (<http://www.cornwall-aonb.gov.uk/>) is packed with information, as well as stunning photographs, and is, appropriately enough, outstanding! The contact email is: [info@cornwall-aonb.gov.uk](mailto:info@cornwall-aonb.gov.uk).

Our other guest speaker was Pru Manning, who crossed the border to explain how she is attempting to interest Devon Archaeological Society in the Medieval Graffiti project. CAS made a start on this a while ago but progress has stalled; however, it is hoped to pick up speed again and to work in step with our friends in Devon and other counties. If you are interested in the subject, these sites are recommended: <http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/> and <http://www.medieval-graffiti-suffolk.co.uk/>. Also see Dan Ratcliffe's report about the scheme and local examples below (*A Heritage Statement About Graffiti*).

Many more items were discussed and the report will be available on the Members' page on the CAS website: <https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/members-area/area-representatives/>. Special mention must be made of our new recruits, many of whom were at the meeting. New Area Reps include: Martin Andrewes; Rebecca Davies; James Gossip; Fuller Hughes; Laura Ratcliffe-Warren; Veronica Summers; Sean Taylor; and Deborah Wingfield. Not all parishes are covered but we're getting there and if you would like to get involved, you'd be more than welcome, just email: [arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk](mailto:arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk).

## **A HERITAGE STATEMENT ABOUT GRAFFITI**

Many of you will know Dan Ratcliffe, who used to lead Cornwall's Strategic Heritage Service. He is one of your Area Reps and also runs Statement Heritage (<http://www.statement-heritage.com/>). He has very kindly contributed this article about historic graffiti:

Vandalism, criminality, anti-social behaviour – not the average night out of an Area Representative but a selection of words quite likely to come up in conversations about



graffiti. It's exactly these deviant characteristics that make modern graffiti writings of interest to [anthropologists](#), and even to those who [list buildings and monuments](#). The study of graffiti opens a window onto attitudes, behaviours and social relations that are less likely to be documented by their authors in more traditional historic source material. The nature of graffiti means that more obvious examples are often lost or overlooked, so [creating a record](#) is particularly valuable and worthwhile.



*'VV' mark at St Ildierna's- often in 'ritual protection mark'*

Recent projects like those inspired by the [Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey](#) have highlighted the interest and abundance of graffiti in medieval churches, and at our Spring Area Representatives meeting we were pleased to welcome Pru Manning, who is co-ordinating the Devon Medieval Graffiti Survey, to let us know a little more. Dan Ratcliffe (Area Representative for St Sampson, Lostwithiel and St Columb) has offered to help continue our own [Cornwall Historic Graffiti Project](#), begun by Emma Trevarthen before her departure to York. The project will provide training in simple photographic recording techniques, and will focus initially on church graffiti (but submissions from other contexts will be very welcome). It will be open to all and all the results will be available through the project website and go towards enhancing the [Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record](#).

Anyone who would like to get involved, or has photos of interesting historic graffiti in their area to share with the project, can get in touch with Dan at [graffitiproject@statement-heritage.com](mailto:graffitiproject@statement-heritage.com)



These examples here come from pews at St Ildierna's Church in Lansallos, dated via dendrochronology to the early to mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, although the graffiti itself is currently undated and may be later.

## ENRICHING THE LIST

Have you ever said 'Grrrr!' at the omission of certain details of a site on Heritage Gateway, or sighed sadly at the lack of any photographs? Well, the solution is at hand. By signing up for a Heritage Passport at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list/>, you can suggest additions, or amendments, and upload photographs. It's free and simple. Naturally, your offerings will be moderated, just to keep out the claims that 'Elvis was seen here' and the like.

On a similar theme, if you would like to submit information about memorials to ordinary, less-well-known people, go to: <https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/help-write-history/help-find-englands-secret-unknown-forgotten-memorials/> to complete an online form, ideally with photographs included. At the end of the year Historic England will assess entries and exhibit those that are suitable online.

## SITHNEY CHURCH – WHAT LIES BENEATH

Veronica Summers is our new Area Rep for Sithney and she reports that archaeologists are investigating and recording various intriguing features that have been uncovered during essential renovation work.



Photo: Veronica Summers

Unsurprisingly, bones have been found, although it is not known at present how old they are. However, the report will no doubt give some fascinating additions to what is already know about this building.



Photo: Veronica Summers

## THE FUTURE OF PENWITH'S PAST



Mulfra Quoit

The Penwith Landscape Partnership is an exciting initiative which aims to foster: *a resilient living, working Penwith landscape where farming prospers while protecting natural resources, restoring habitat connectivity and enhancing the archaeological heritage; a landscape that is loved, enjoyed and supported by local communities and visitors.* David Giddings is our highly experienced and knowledgeable Area Rep in that area and represents CAS on the Partnership Board.

The 13 projects that make up the plan encompass the past, present and future of this stunning landscape. The project that is most relevant to archaeology is Ancient Penwith, which will involve: *Historic sites, monuments and landscapes. Recording and monitoring of heritage features, access improvements to historic sites, and restoration of neglected sites; schools educational visits.* It is wonderful to hear that Laura Ratcliffe-Warren, a very well-known figure in Cornish archaeology has been appointed as Ancient Penwith Project Officer. Laura is also a CAS Area Rep.

To learn more about the Partnership, visit the website at:

<http://www.penwithlandscape.com/> . And, of course, any reference to the archaeology of Penwith which doesn't also include CASPN would be a bit like bacon without the eggs! Their website is: <http://cornishancientsites.com/> .

## WHAT CAN PLANNERS DO FOR ARCHAEOLOGY?

It sometimes seems that any flashes of yellow in the Cornish countryside are more likely to be planning notices than primroses, but, be that as it may, planners, developers and archaeologists should be able co-exist constructively – and often do. Archaeological investigations are sometimes inserted into the conditions of approval for development and these reports can be fascinating additions to the archaeological record. Some may be read online on Cornwall Council’s website (<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/community-and-living/mapping/>). Others can be found in what is known as ‘grey literature’. One useful site is the Archaeological Data Service (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/query.cfm>) which allows searches by contractor, place, the type of site, and time period.

If you search for work conducted by contractors, you can download a huge number of reports carried out by Cornwall’s own highly-respected archaeological service, now known as Cornwall Archaeological Unit (<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/cornwall-archaeological-unit/>). Not all archaeological work in Cornwall is carried out by the local experts; other contractors operate in the county as well. For example, Sally Ealey has been monitoring a housing development at Higher Nansloe in Helston, where evidence has been found of a Bronze Age settlement, as well as artefacts relating to the Iron Age. It is hoped that the finds will be deposited in a local museum. The work was carried out by Cotswold Archaeology and the report can be downloaded from: [http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/query.cfm?REDSQUIDARCHIVES\\_eea0385d-0f65-4b53-99d3-e419a7a31925\\_0](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/query.cfm?REDSQUIDARCHIVES_eea0385d-0f65-4b53-99d3-e419a7a31925_0).

As an amateur it is fascinating to get the chance to read about archaeological work financed by developers, however. A case in point would be the massive housing developments off Par Lane, at Par. The building has occurred on land that once bordered the huge estuary of the Par or Luxulyan River. Little is known about the area in the period before the Industrial Revolution, so new work could fill in major gaps in the record.



The area of 21<sup>st</sup> century housing can be glimpsed in the middle. The fields in the background on the left are on the eastern side of the former Par estuary. The trees on the horizon are at Kilmarth (mentioned in du Maurier’s *House on the Strand*).

It is believed that features dating to the Romano-British and Medieval periods have been found. Since the history of the area has so many gaps, with most of what is known relating to the Industrial Revolution and later, it would be fascinating to learn more of the archaeological investigations. Of course, the developer who pays for the work is not obliged to publish but curiosity is a powerful thing!



This was taken from the new housing off Par Lane in Par, and is looking east across the former estuary towards Tywardreath Church (visible in the centre). The Priory probably stood immediately to the right of the Church.

Cornwall Council has archaeologists who monitor planning (known as Senior Development Officers Historic Environment). What if you think that a development near you is likely to have an impact on archaeological features? The 5 main options are:

1. Contact Cornwall Council's planning team at [planning@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cornwall.gov.uk) , quoting the planning reference number.
2. Or you could comment online. Go to: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/online-planning-register/#comment> .
3. Contact the planning archaeologists directly at: [HEP.Arch@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:HEP.Arch@cornwall.gov.uk) .
4. Contact the local CAS Area Representative at: [arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk](mailto:arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk) .
5. Contact your local Cornwall Councillor.

## BISCOVEY CHURCH APPEAL

New Area Rep Sean Taylor has drawn attention to efforts in his area to raise funds towards the repair of a very significant local building, St Mary's Church at Biscovey. This was built in 1849 and was the first church to be completed by G.E. Street, a major figure in the Victorian Gothic Revival. It is, sadly, on the Heritage at Risk Register and might have to be closed if repairs to its crumbling spire are not carried out. The Save Our Spire group has been offered £250,000 from the HLF provided they can raise the additional £100,000 needed. Incredibly, they have raised about half of this but are asking for people to contribute through their Crowdfunding page at: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/save-our-spire> . The Victorian Society is supporting this worthy cause. The website also has an excellent short video.



This little architectural gem is next to Tregrehan estate and is easily seen by motorists on the busy A390.



The crumbling masonry of the spire is a cause for concern.

And finally, you might wonder: 'What do Area Reps do to relax?' Well, David Edyvean took a day off work on his birthday recently and how did he spend it? By helping, with his wife Linda, in a second round of clearing at St Thomas' Chantry Chapel in Bodmin!



Photo: Andrew Langdon

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 send an email to [arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk](mailto:arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk) .

Roger Smith, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018