



CORNWALL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Area Representative Monument of the Month



Christmas 2018

CURIOUS CROSSES

Christmas might be a good time to look at crosses and particularly ones with unusual antecedents. Camborne Churchyard has provided refuge for a number of crosses from its parish boundaries or waysides. This one is the Connor Downs Cross a wayside cross which once was a bound-stone between Camborne and Gwinear parishes. It was recorded as lying on the ground by Borlase in 1755, but had fallen by 1856, when Blight found it, the stone had been adopted as a gate post. The holes are plain to see. It was erected in the churchyard in 1907. It is 6ft 10ins tall and the shaft tapers downwards from 8.5ins to 1ft 8ins. The head is

only 11ins across, so the stone could have been much wider at the top before the head and wings were chipped out.

This re-use was the fate of so many crosses, but it was not the first reworking for this stone. Charles Thomas thought it had been a prehistoric menhir which had been converted in the 11th or 12th centuries into a wheel headed cross by four triangular depressions being cut out to form a saltire. There are small projections below the wheel head and the shaft has panels of punch dot decoration, similar to the Penzance Market Cross, now outside Penlee House



Art Gallery and Museum.

Another wheel-headed wayside cross which may have been made by altering a Bronze Age standing stone is Long Tom, at Minions in the parish of St Cleer. Its head does not extend beyond the width of the shaft and the projections below it are only small. It is 9ft 6ins high. The width of the head is 2ft 4ins and of the shaft 1ft 10ins to 2ft 3ins, so the area below the head may have been chipped away to enhance the projections and head.

Legend has it that the early Celtic saints carved menhirs into crosses to express the superiority of their religion as they did when they built cells and holy wells at water sources revered

by the pagans. Alternatively they might just have been making use of convenient markers already in place. It seems less shocking to us than that framers took crosses as gateposts.

Measurements and background taken from Andrew Langdon's *Stone Crosses in West Cornwall* and *Stone Crosses in East Cornwall*, published by the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies.

Adrian Rodda, Camborne, Redruth and thereabouts.