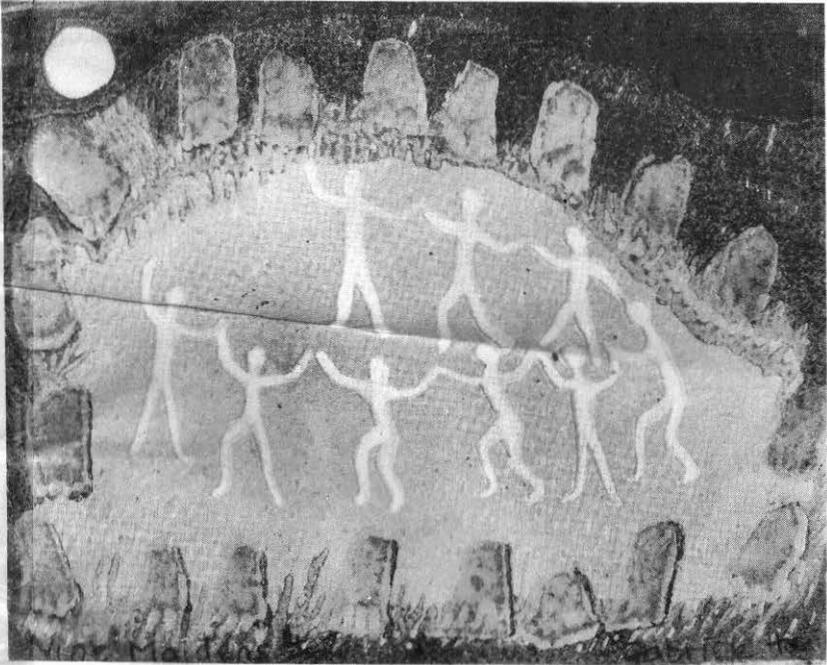


# Meyn Mamvro

**ANCIENT STONES & SACRED SITES  
OF WEST PENWITH. Issue 2 £1.20**



**THE FIRES OF BEL by Alan Bleakley  
THE SUNSET TRAIL with Hugh Miners  
LOST STONES • FOGOUS • PAGANISM  
LEYS & EARTH MYSTERIES • BOOK REVIEWS**

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# MEYN MAMVRO

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The first edition of Meyn Mamvro (Stones of our Motherland) was launched at the Winter Solstice 1986 and it proved to be an auspicious occasion. We had a fantastic response to the magazine, both in terms of reaction by people to its appearance, layout and contents, and by outlets in West Penwith and elsewhere who, almost without exception, took - and more importantly sold - the magazine extremely well. Thanks are particularly due to the Quay Bookshop in Penzance and Visions & Journeys Gallery in St. Just who enthusiastically started us off, and to all those others who later took copies, including the American publication "Stonehenge Viewpoint".

The existence of the magazine provoked quite a lot of interest by those in the fields of Earth Mysteries and associated subjects, both within Cornwall and elsewhere. Amongst the kind comments we received were from Ken Rees, lecturer in pagan studies for London LEAs ("The mag is very fine and well produced. I am impressed."), Rob Stephenson, organiser of the London Earth Mysteries Group ("I thought it was very professional..... a lot of good work has obviously gone into it"), and David Thomas, regional co-ordinator in Cornwall for ASSAP ("Just a brief glance at the magazine told me that you could not fail to realise your wish with a product of such quality"). Local people responded just as enthusiastically: for example, Jill Brooker, some of whose paintings appear in this edition, commented - "It brings a breath of fresh air to the reader and shows an exciting approach to subjects on ancient Cornwall, especially about the mystic area of West Penwith."

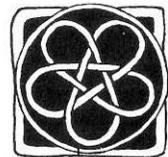
Reviews in the press were also very favourable, including one in the U.S. magazine "Unicorn"! Nearer home we had a mention on Radio Cornwall, and Frank Rurmund gave much coverage to the magazine in the Western Morning News (26/1/87) and The Cornishman (29/1/87) where he commented: "At a time when our very heritage is threatened as never before, when the blade of a mechanical digger can rip up more pages of history, destroy more of the landscape, and do more irrevocable damage in a few moments than any invader to our shores ever did, this magazine is more than welcome and deserves the support of all who not only care for Cornwall but also for our whole quality of life." And the Peninsula Voice gave us an excellent write-up in their February edition: "No doubt Pagans and lovers of the Cornish heritage will welcome its arrival and file it away as a collectors item. Full marks must go to the team for professional layout and presentation. The articles have been well researched and written with enthusiasm and style and profusely illustrated with photographs, line drawings and paintings. Voice wishes them every success."

That success is in no small way due to the many readers who bought our first copy and supported it in various ways. To all of you, our heartfelt thanks. There was a brief moment of uncertainty when we received the box full of copies, not knowing whether we would sell 6 or 60 or 600! But we have virtually sold out, and at least covered our printing costs, so hope we can do the same this time. We are grateful for all those who have been in touch with ideas, suggestions and articles for future editions, and particular thanks are due to Gabrielle Hawkes for the front cover, Jan Adamson for the headings and art-work, and Tony Bayfield for the map work.

Additional copies of No. 2 (and a few copies only left of No. 1) may be obtained from:



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# The LOST STONES of TREGESAL Common

By CHERYL STRAFFON & TONY BAYFIELD

*Tony Bayfield has had a deep interest and love for Cornwall all his life and has now been living in West Penwith for about a year. He has done graphics and artwork, and his main interests are in building up a photographic library of ancient sites as well as compiling a graphic micro data-base of them.*

*Cheryl Straffon is Editress of the magazine. She and Tony have been researching, visiting and investigating the ancient landscape of Kenidjack Common near where they both live, and hope that this article and map will introduce readers to an area not widely known, or fully understood.*

The few square miles of Tregesal or Kenidjack Common (including Truthwall, Carnyorth and Botallack Commons) near St. Just must have originally been one of the most important, if not **the** most important, megalithic centre of West Penwith. No where else was there such a concentration of stone circles, barrows, enclosures and other stones, which have been lost and are now generally not widely known about. Today all that remains is one stone circle, 4 or 5 round barrows, and some holed stones (of which more later), but the evidence, and occasionally the remains, of the missing stones can be traced from older sources and on the ground.

The remaining circle is that of Tregesal (East) 38663238, which has been extensively restored. John Barnett (Prehistoric Cornwall, 1982) says that it probably had 21 stones originally. Borlase (1796) noted 20 stones, 17 of which were standing, but Buller (1842) noted 21 of which 12 were standing. When Cotton (Illustrations of Stone Circles etc., Redruth 1827) saw it 3 had been removed and 5 fallen. 34 years later Halliwell (Rambles in Western Cornwall, 1861) noted there were 12 standing stones. Between 1861 & 1869 a small quarry encroached on the site and a great deal of damage was done. 2 uprights and 4 recumbent stones were removed, and 3 more fell by 1902. However by 1932 the fallen stones had been re-erected and other stones inserted to complete the ring by "persons unknown". Meanwhile a second circle, Tregesal Central 38613237



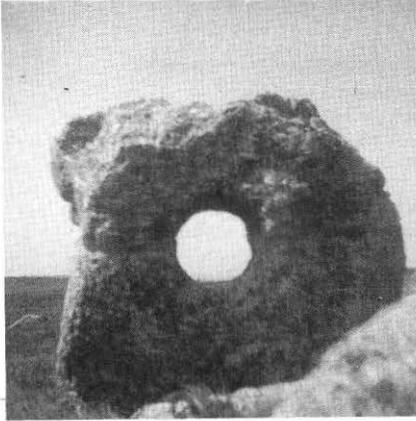
(first recorded by Borlase with 10 upright & 4 fallen stones, and Buller with 6 upright, but which may originally have had 18 or 19) 120ft. to the west of Tregeseal East has now all but disappeared. Before 1905 all the remaining stones were cleared, and all that remained were 3 uprights and 1 recumbent incorporated in a wall. Further field clearance occurred in 1961 when more boulders were piled against the wall. Finally, the site of a third circle Tregeseal West 38573236, in line with the other two, was recently discovered by examining crop marks on aerial photographs (Air Ministry photographs 3G/TUD/UK). Such a triple circle site is probably unique in West Penwith, the only other example in Cornwall being the 3 circles of the Hurlers on Bodmin Moor.

However these were by no means the only 'circles' on the Common, for study of old maps and books reveals a wealth of other sites. An 1876 6" map shows 2 other stone circles and sites of 3 more. We should treat this evidence with some caution as early map-makers marked as 'stone circle' sites which we should now call barrow kerb surrounds, or enclosures, or even hut circles.

For example, in Buller's 1842 book (St. Just - A Statistical Account) he mentions (p109) Gol Voel - "where there are traces of two circles, the sad remains of a cluster which were destroyed not many years since." They are illustrated on his map as 2 separate circles, a larger one northwards of a smaller. 34 or so years later the 1876 map has in what appears to be the same place (to the north of Devil's Lane or Watershed Way) at approx. 37903270 double "stone circles", though this time the concentric circles are inside each other. By the 1906 2½" map they had become "burial chamber", and on the most recent 1981 6" map they have metamorphosed into "Enclosure"! Two stones can still be seen nearby according to this map, though on the ground it is only an outline of a large circle with some stones in situ that can be seen.

A few yards to the east on the opposite side of the lane the 1876 map marks "site of stone circle" (38083265?), but going back to Buller's map in 1842 it is obvious from the shape of the field system that this is in fact a large semi-oval of stones stretching across one field and round on to the moor. Annoyingly, Buller does not mention them in the text, but traces of them may perhaps still be seen now as a stone hedge which runs across part of the field.

Nearby at 38173259 the 1981 6" map marks "tumulus": this is a bowl barrow listed by Vivien Russell (West Penwith Survey, 1971) as St. Just 33, about 40ft. across, 3ft. high with a shallow hollow in the top. It is within an area cleared in 1985. The area includes a Bronze Age settlement to the north-east, which was wantonly destroyed, though most of its field system still survives. This is the Soldiers Croft or Suljor Croft mentioned by Buller on p.110 & map. The 1876 map gives another "site of circle" here (38553271!). All that remains now, if indeed it is part of the original, is a conspicuously large triangular-shaped stone. This must have been the settlement of a people whose 3 (Tregeseal) circles nearby were their places of ritual/astronomical observation with Carn Kenidjack dominating the nearby skyline, and who buried their dead in the numerous barrows dotted around the Common. Vivien Russell mentions four (St. Just 5,6,7,8) which are also shown on Buller's map and on the 1876 map. One (38913258) contains the remains of an entrance grave, and the next one to it (38873252) was said last century to also contain an entrance grave, but is now too badly robbed to tell.



Nearby to these barrows are a curious cluster of stones. There are four stones in a line (38953255), three of which are holed and the fourth (now a stump) which judging by its shape may also have been holed. A few yards to the north-west across the path there is another, and some 100 yards away to the north-east on the hillside yet another. These stones may originally have been in a different configuration - Buller has them as 2 sets of 2 stones, and at least one of the stones looks as if it has been re-erected at right angles. One stone had split and was re cemented into place a few years ago. Whatever their original status, their purpose remains an enigma. They are however close to the remaining kerbstones (9 in number) of a small oval barrow (Vivien Russell, St. Just 58), not much more than 18" high (39063260), mistakenly identified as "Stone Circle" on Buller & 1876 maps. Buller also has a semi-circle at approx. 38993255 which has become

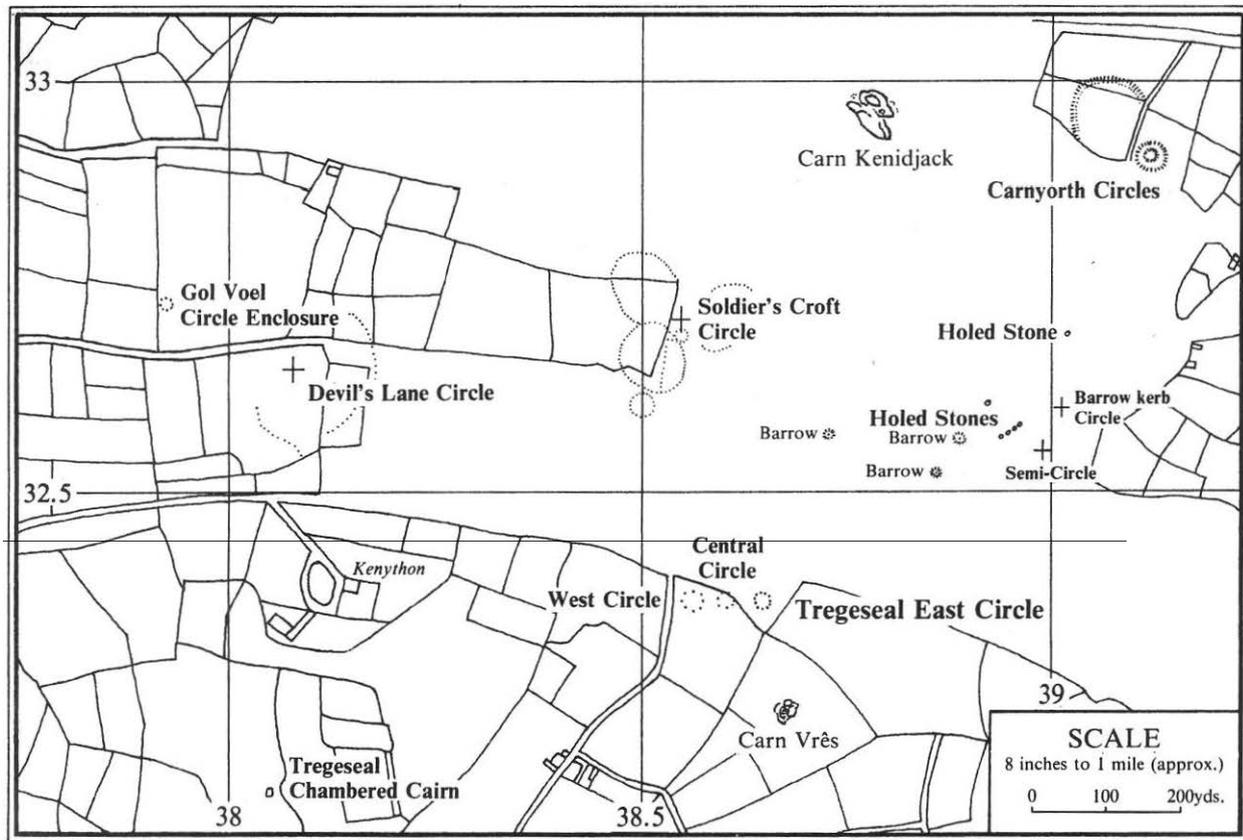
"site of semi-circle" on the 1876 map, "site of stone circle" on the 1906 2½" map, and thereafter disappears from record, though some low kerb stones can perhaps still be seen. What this was is now unknown. On the hill above lie the Carnyorth Circles (39103285) marked as "Enclosure" on the 1981 6" & 1983 2½" maps and now a litter of stones. Nearby another barrow is marked by Buller & the 1878 map at approx. 39013298, but only a mound of stones and earth when listed by Vivien Russell in 1971. The whole area must have been associated with the nearby main Common settlement: indeed Buller claimed the existence of a shallow trench of 4ft. width lined with stones linking the Soldiers Croft settlement with the holed stones, though there is no corroboratory evidence that this was ancient.

Finally, a tentative supposition. The whole of the Common was so obviously covered with ancient sites that one part of it is conspicuous by their absence. Kenynton Hill (38183239) is a prominent high spot to the south of and overlooking the Common. From it, all the stones and settlements would have been visible, and it provides a link between the sites of the Common and the Tregesal Chambered Tomb (38053216) which is just over the brow of the hill (illustrated in Meyn Mamvro No. 1). It would be strange if there were not originally something here, especially considering the importance of holy hill tops in West Penwith. At present it is covered by two houses and lawns, but the owners of one - Kenynton Cottage - have a curiosity all around the edge of their lawn: a number (about 16) of recumbent stones lying prone end-to-end, in shape and size typical of standing stones, and certainly not the usual kind of stones one would expect to find in such a situation. Could these be the remains of a lost circle on Kenynton Hill? If so, it would be the last piece of a jigsaw that is Kenidjack Tregesal Common, and which, if one were fortunate enough to be transported back in time some 4000 years, would provide a very different scene to the one we see today.



**Article & map (c) Cheryl Traffon & Tony Bayfield. Paintings (c) Gill Brooker (Tregesal Circle) & Gabrielle Hawkes (Holed Stones)**

*The authors would like to express their thanks to Craig Weatherhill for help in preparation of this article.*



# THE SPIRIT OF KENIDJACK

By BLIGHT

*To give a flavour of the area of Kenidjack Common detailed in the previous article on the stones, we turn to J.T. Blight (1835-1911) whose book "A Week at Land's End" (1876) was a sensitive response to the landscape and antiquities of West Penwith. His life and sad descent into madness was chronicled by John Michell in his biography "A Short Life at the Land's End" (1977), and a new poetic tribute to Blight by local poet Roger Venables follows this extract.*

Carn Kenidjack stands near the northern roadway to Penzance; being 640ft. above the sea, it is a very conspicuous object for several miles around; the rocks on the summit assume the most fantastic forms, and an arrangement irregular and strange. The surrounding country exhibits one monotonous tint of blackish brown, broken here and there by a few grey rocks appearing above the surface; stunted heath endeavours to thrive on this sterile soil, but the piercing blasts which sweep over this unsheltered tract check all vegetation. Macbeth's witches might have danced on such a spot. Yet there is an attraction about this hoary cairn which must render it of interest to all. Its solitary and desolate aspect is one feature; a deep silence and mysteriousness hang over it - the spirit of the past seems to reign here, for the spot is now as it ever was. Northward, an even plain stretches until the rising of the next hill, on which is Chûn Castle. Southward are traces of mystic circles (one consisting of upright stones which is nearly entire), holed stones, and other evident signs of the former presence of the Druids. Near the circle is Carn Vrês, the "rock of judgement" with a rock bason on its summit.

The barren plain below Carn Kenidjack is called the Gump - a well-known haunt of the fairies. The benighted traveller has oft been led astray here, and has beheld the most wonderful sights, has been conducted hence into the shadowy regions of fairy land; the 'little people' have tuned him harmonious music on heath-bells, have danced around him in a mystic circle, shown him bright lights, and beguiled his senses, leaving him alone on the dewy ground at the grey dawn, when they 'hear the morning lark'. A wierd tract is that of Kenidjack and the Gump, and of ill repute. The old half-starved horses on the common, with their hides grown rusty brown, like dried and withered grass, by exposure, are ridden by the arch-fiend at night. He is said to haunt lost souls over this heath; and an old stile hard by bears an evil name, for there the souls are sure to be caught, none being able to get over it. The people tell of midnight fights by demons, and of a shadowy form holding a lantern to the combatants. The very word Kenidjack "the Hooting Cairn" is ominous, and fearful and melancholy sounds does the wind make in passing around its jagged buttresses. Even by day it imparts a gloomy and mysterious impression; by night, the miners cross the Gump in fear and trembling.

## "House of Water"\*

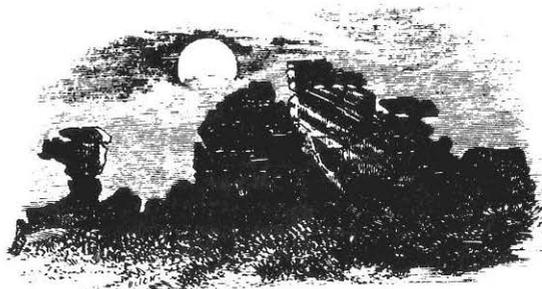
In Memory of J.T. Blight

There is a House of Water  
Contained by walls of stone;  
Your destiny bears witness  
To one whose walls are bone.

At Wheal Owles sleep the miners  
In levels where they drowned;  
Who holes your house of water  
Lives buried above ground.

Roger Venables

\* A House of Water was a mass of water used to flood mines.

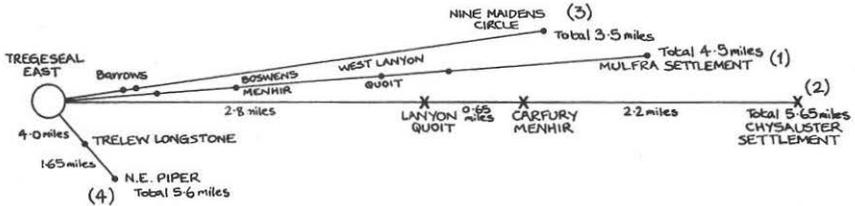


CARN KENIJACK

Illustrated by Blight

# WEST PENWITH LEY LINES

## No. 2 - TREGESEAL ALIGNMENTS



John Michell (*The Old Stones of Lands End*, 1974) lists 4 ley lines emanating from Tregeseal (East) circle. These alignments illustrate some of the remarkable qualities, and some of the problems, associated with leys. In general terms they are all "good" leys, as they link together all ancient sites in direct alignment: there are no "mixed marker" sites (churches, pathways, etc. from later historical periods which may or may not have pre-historic antecedents), and they all run within a maximum length of 6 miles, so there is less chance of distortion in the lines. On the other hand, West Penwith has such a wealth of extant sites that one could argue that several are bound to coincidentally fall on the same line, and they are not all equally convincing in the quality of the sites used. Also they all start from Tregeseal (East) circle, and no lines appear to pass through the missing Tregeseal (Central) and Tregeseal (West) circles, and yet presumably all circles must have been originally equally important.

To turn to each ley in turn:-

(1) Mulfra Settlement. This was featured in *Meyn Mamvro* No. 1. An impressive ley, it runs through 4 major points, and can be extended backwards to cross Tregeseal Chambered Tomb (38053213) and run beside Carn Gluze Barrow (35553124). Interestingly, it also crosses the site of the semi-circle on Kenidjack Common mentioned in the previous article on the lost stones (38993255), making at least 7 ley marks. One of the best leys in W. Penwith.

(2) Chysauster. Another good ley, although none of the points are intervisible. From the circle it crosses Lanyon Quoit and Carfury menhir and ends at Chysauster. Michell comments: "As in alignment 1 the line ends at an ancient site of habitation in a high exposed position, perhaps a religious and scientific establishment rather than an ordinary village." The only problem with such ley marks is that settlements



*A 'Close Encounter' at Lanyon Quoit on Ley No. 2!*

such as Mulfra & Chysauster cover a relatively large area of ground, thus making the statistical probability of hitting the site less significant.

(3) Nine Maidens. There are problems with this ley. Michell says it runs over the barrow on Kenidjack Common (St. Just No. 8 (388823248)) mentioned in previous article, over the 'site of stone circle' at 39063260 (which is in reality a barrow as already mentioned) to the Nine Maidens stone circle at 43412512. But it is evident from a large-scale map that this ley only touches the very edge of Tregeseal circle, and besides why should these 2 barrows be significant out of a cluster of 5 or 6 on the Common?

(4) Trelew Longstone - NE Piper. Only 3 points on this ley, which makes it rather doubtful. And a large gap between the circle and Trelew of 4.6 miles. But of course there **may** have originally been intermediary points, now lost. And, curiously, the

length of the ley (5.6 miles) is exactly the same as Ley No. 2, a remarkable coincidence, if coincidence it be.

The **length** of leys is something not often considered. Using Professor Thom's measurements, a length of 5.67 miles comes out at 11000 megalithic yards or 4400 megalithic rods to the nearest whole number, a rather significant precise measurement. (In his study of megalithic sites Thom claimed they were constructed on precise measurements common to all sites throughout Britain and Brittany). And the length of ley no. 1, 4.5 miles, also comes out exactly at 8800 megalithic yards with no rounding up or down. Clearly leys did have some purport for megalithic man, even if we must be extra careful how we define them nowadays, lacking the complete knowledge held by those who originally constructed and used the ancient sites in alignment. (CS)



*Follow the Ley No. 4 from Tregeseal Circle (page 3) through Trelew Longstone (above) to the N.E. Piper (page 24)!*



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# MOTHER and SUN

## The Orientation of the Fogous

By IAN COOKE

*Ian Cooke has always been connected with printing and after moving to St. Just in 1970 he started drawing and gradually got into lino cuts. 7 years ago he set up the Men-An-Tol studio as a workplace and selling area for his etchings and prints, many of which were of the ancient stones. Out of this he became interested in the stones themselves, and from his studios sells a pamphlet on walks around the local sites. He is at present writing a book on local stones and footpaths, and is married to Yuklin who also started print-making a few years ago.*

*In the last 'Meyn Mamvro' (No. 1) Craig Weatherhill wrote about the riddle of the fogous. Here Ian presents his fascinating ideas of a possible solution.*

Probably the most intriguing aspect of the Cornish fogou, and the one which continues to provoke the most lively debates, is to what possible use these strange man-made 'caves' could have been put to. There are several features built into the structure of Fogous which are very difficult to explain outside of some kind of ceremonial purpose. The tiny restrictive 'creep' doorways and passages leading into much larger tunnels and chambers; the obvious degree of permanence intended for the structure when compared with the relatively flimsy dwellings of the inhabitants<sup>1</sup>; and the most odd features of all - the curvature and orientation of the main passageway.

This curved passage, which can vary from the almost straight to a right-angled bend, is the distinguishing feature of the fogou whether completely underground or at ground level<sup>2</sup>, and out of eleven sites for which there are sufficient visible remains or detailed old plans\* all but three (Pendeen, Porthmeor and the ruinous site at Lower Boscaswell) have their passage curved from the north-east to the south-west, and this will bend to the right when viewed from the southern end. These two peculiarities I think give the clue to its original primary function, and make no sense if the fogou had been intended as a "village cold-store" or hide-out - two uses still often applied to them.

As most ancient stone structures have some kind of built-in link with the

\* See list on page 11

sun or moon I determined to find out whether the north-eastern end of the passages had a definite relationship with the rising midsummer sun - when worked out at home they certainly seemed to, but I wanted to check it out 'on site'. I decided to test my theory by going to a fogou at dawn around the time of the summer solstice and choose Carn Euny since the end of the original covered passage (before the extension into the adjacent courtyard house about the 1st century BC) was both open to the sky and had its side walling intact. Only a low wall and a few small bushes obscured parts of the skyline.

The chosen morning was completely clear of any cloud but the air felt rather cold for the time of year, and as I waited down the fogou passage I could see the faint 'fingernail' of the waning crescent moon low in the eastern sky. By half past five (BST) the top of Carn Brea and the fields beyond St. Buryan were bathed in a soft orange glow, and ten minutes later the eye-piercing glare of the sun appeared above the horizon. As it rose rapidly upwards it became obvious to me that someone, over 2000 years earlier, had deliberately marked the position where this end of the fogou should be placed so that the underground covered passageway would later 'receive' the first rays of the rising midsummer sun. The time of year when the sun reached its climax of power, after which the waning half of the year would begin as the neighbouring hilltops blazed with the light of the solstice bonfires.

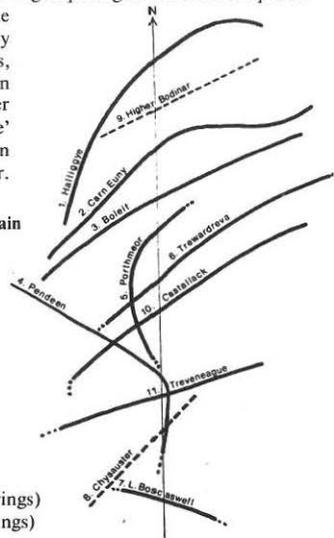
A year later (1986) I tried to experiment again, this time at the above-ground fogou of Porthmeor. I had the same results, and although the higher ground to the north-east meant that the sun appeared about 20 minutes later I felt that my theories had been satisfactorily confirmed. Nevertheless there was one very obvious exception to this 'rule' which spoilt my whole neat arrangement - the site of Pendeen Vau. The northern end of the Vau faced to the north-west, nowhere near to the sunrise position. A little detective work revealed its secret. The long passage had been built to face the position where the sun would appear to hover above the sea just before it 'died' beyond the western horizon on the long midsummer evenings. Everything was beginning to fall into a definite pattern.

The southern ends of the passages show a much wider variation of their orientations, and unfortunately many sites seem to be more ruinous at this end, making accurate recording difficult. However there does seem to be a definite preference for the south-western position of the setting midwinter sun. The four annual directions of solstice sunrise and sunset were commonly used in many megalithic ceremonial structures thousands of years before the appearance of the Iron Age fogou, and the continuity of culture shows the great strength of local traditions from the Neolithic right through prehistory to the beginnings of Christianity.

The interpretation of the curvature and directions of the fogou passages is of course open to individual preferences. Suffice to point out that most, if not all, the ancient stone sites were concerned in some way with the continuity of all life from birth, to death and back to rebirth, and that caves, wells and other 'holes' in the ground have traditionally been considered as entrances or exits into or out of the body of Mother Earth; while the Sun penetrates Her 'skin' to provide the 'male' energy needed by Her to remain fertile and permit crops, vegetation and animal life to grow on to maturity before the onset of winter.

Orientation of the Fogou main Passages

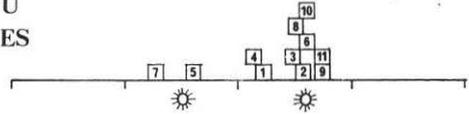
1. Extensive remains
2. Extensive remains
3. Extensive remains
4. Extensive remains
5. Unroofed passage
6. About 25 feet of covered passage left
7. Ruinous only about 8 feet of covered passage left
8. Ruinous only about 6 feet of covered passage left
9. Only a grass covered open trench remains
10. Destroyed. Recorded by J.T. Blight 1866. (plan & drawings)
11. Destroyed. Recorded by J.T. Blight 1867 (plan & drawings)



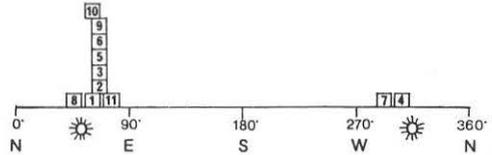
## ORIENTATION OF THE FOGOU MAIN CURVED STONE PASSAGES

**Site Numbers:**

1. Halliggye (Trelowarren) SW 877254
2. Carn Euny SW 403288
3. Boleit SW 437252
4. Pendeen SW 384355
5. Porthmeor SW 434371
6. Trewardreva SW 728300
7. Lower Boscaswell SW 377348
8. Chysauster SW 472348
9. Higher Bodinar SW 415320
10. Castallack approx. SW 452253
11. Treveneague, exact position unknown, St. Hilary Parish.



Top: the southern ends of the passages in relation to the positions of the rising and setting MIDWINTER sun.



Lower: the northern ends of the passages in relation to the positions of the rising and setting MIDSUMMER sun.

**Notes**

1. Excavation at Carn Euny showed that dwellings were virtually all-timber constructions at the time when the fogou had been the only completely stone structure in the village. (apart from the earlier 'beehive hut'.
2. It is for this reason that I have not included the 'beehive huts' in the category of monuments described as 'fogous' - there are both earlier and completely different in shape.

Article & Diagrams (c) Ian Cooke

# FEEDBACK on fogous

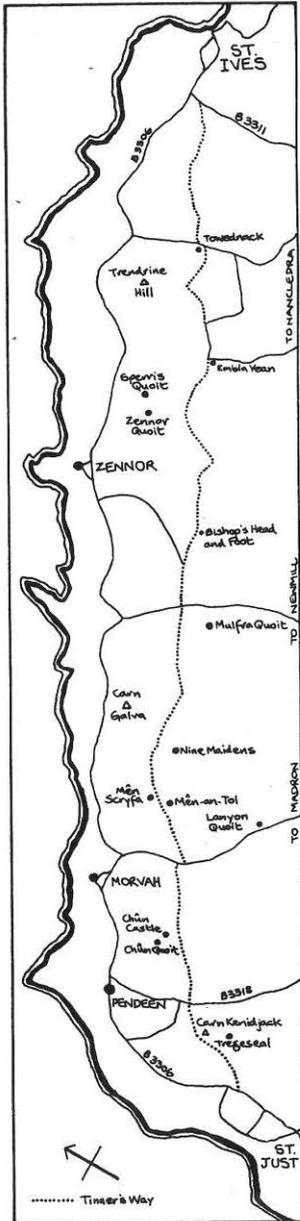
From Dr. Alice Gilby (Gorseth Bard) of Trythogga, Gulval:

"I was very interested indeed in the article 'The Riddle of the Fogous' by Craig Weatherhill (MM No. 1). He refers to the book 'Cornish Fogous' by Evelyn Clark and to the 'running out of fogous to excavate'. There is a big mistake in 'Cornish Fogous' (page 123) headed Rosemorran, Gulval, Penwith, where she says 'no sign of a fogou or tradition of it is to be found here. The hamlet lies on a hillside between Foage and Zennor'. Well it doesn't! And there is a fogou there and an old tradition of it. Firstly I have never heard of a place called Foage and can't find any reference to it anywhere, nor do any of my friends in Gulval. Many years ago now (10 - 15 perhaps) a Cornish friend John Ellery, knowing of my interest in archaeological remains, asked me one day if I'd like to see an old cross at Rosemorran and 'the tunnel' they knew as Dead Men's Holes that ran from Rosemerron gardens (where a lot of bamboo canes grew) out to and under the road that ran just outside the Rosemorran fence boundary. He asked and obtained the permission of the Rosemorran owner or occupant at the time and took me over there and showed me the 'holes'. I can't remember now just where it was (apart from being near the 'bamboo' garden section) but it was definitely there since John Ellery and his sister knew it from childhood up as Dead Men's Holes, so there must have been an old tradition handed down."

Dr. Gilby's most interesting letter opens up a real can of worms here! The basic problem seems to arise over a confusion between two different Rosemorrans! One, referred to in Evelyn Clark's book as lying between Zennor and Foage can be found at 46063800, Foage being a farm in the valley at the bottom of Zennor Quoit. Clark rightly says there is no fogou or tradition of it there, but then confuses the issue by placing it not in Zennor Parish but in Gulval Parish. But there is another Rosemorran in Gulval Parish, the one referred to by Dr. Gilby, at 47493270, and this is the one quoted by Vivien Russell in the West Penwith Survey (1971). So either Clark mistook the location of Rosemorran, or else Vivien Russell misplaced Clark's reference (which she gives as a source), although providentially it appears from Dr. Gilby's letter that she has indeed chosen the right location. (Editor).

# WALKING INTO THE SUNSET

with HUGH MINERS



"I have never walked in such a large party before". So observed an experienced member of The Ramblers' Association when in the Summer of 1986 no fewer than 75 people completed the 14 miles walk along the Tinnars Track from St. Ives to St. Just. With those words she finally set the seal on the labour of love begun some seven years ago by the late Roland Barr whom I was very pleased to accompany on what we might reasonably claim as having been the pioneering walk along that track in modern times. With its official recognition by the Countryside Commission, its popularisation by Radio Cornwall, and thus, on that day its use by so many walkers in a party, representing, as they did, the Ramblers' Association, the local Footpath Preservation Society, the Cornwall Archaeological Society, etc. etc., the Tinnars Track can now confidently be said to be "on the map" both literally and figuratively. It will be waymarked by the Manpower Services Commission later this year, and it is hoped that it will now be used (but, please, not over-used) by many walkers in the days and years to come.

So far, so good, but it is not necessary for a walker on the path to go the whole distance, of course. There are numerous "tributary" paths (including metalled roads for the motorist!) feeding into and out of the Track along its entire length and these may be used to plan shorter walks and two exciting "long distance" walks, connecting opposite corners of Penwith; one, from Land's End to Marazion and the other from Mousehole to St. Ives are possible by the use of the Track and, of course, there are many variations on that theme.

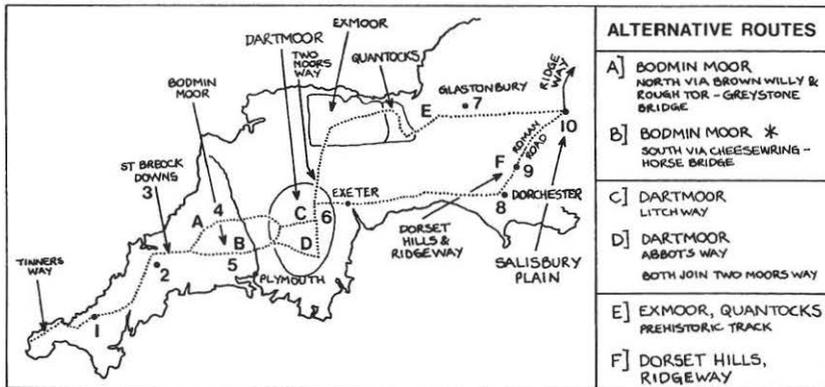
But, the Tinnars Track, starting and finishing near Land's End, opens up another vista, one which extends far beyond the bounds of Penwith! In ancient times, Britain was generally heavily forested, except on the hill-tops, and most of the settlements and the paths between them were, of a necessity, located on the hill-tops above the swampy forest-lands of the valleys and coastal plain. Thus, in Penwith, the majority of the megalithic sites are located on the ridge traversed by the Tinnars' Track and, further up Cornwall this pattern is repeated - eg., Carn Brea, Bodmin Moor, as well as over the Tamar on Dartmoor, and so on throughout much of Britain.

*The Tinnars Track showing the route across the moors and the neighbouring ancient sites. A 40 page booklet "The Tinnars Way" is available free of charge from Penwith Community Programme, Cross Street, Penzance (enclose an A5 size SAE please).*

Many of the ancient tracks used by man in this island converged on Salisbury Plain which naturally became an area of great importance to our early ancestors as is evidenced by the abundance of prehistoric sites there. Down the ages, Man has made continuous use of those up lands creating paths converging on Salisbury Plain, and we have recently enshrined many of them in our designated Long Distance Footpaths - the Ridgeway, the Pilgrim's Way, the South Downs Way, and the Cotswold Way. In fact, Salisbury Plain may be likened to the hub of a great wheel whose spokes reach out into every part of the country - into Wales, the West Midlands and the Pennines via the Cotswolds; to the East Midlands and East Anglia via the Chilterns; to Kent, Sussex and the whole of S.E. England along the Downs, both North and South.

That list shows a gap; there is no such designated path into the South West. Why? What a splendid Long Distance Path we should have if we could connect Land's End with Salisbury Plain and thus with virtually every part of Britain! I have, in fact, written to both the Countryside Commission and the Ramblers' Association proposing that the line of such an upland footpath be worked out in detail, and suggesting that it should run more or less along the ridges made up of the Wiltshire Downs, Quantocks, Exmoor, Dartmoor, and then through Cornwall via Bodmin Moor, St. Breock Downs, and the upland ridge (Ladock, Lanner, Crowan, Leedstown and down to sea level at St. Erth) ending on our Tinnars Track to Land's End. (An alternative route at the other end might be via Salisbury Plain and the Dorsetshire Hills). The Land's End peninsula was known to the Ancients as "the Land of the Setting Sun", so what better name to give this proposed LDP than "The Sunset Trail".

Already parts of such a path are recognised: there is the Quantocks prehistoric trackway, the Dorset Ridgeway and the Dartmoor-Exmoor Way, and I am confident that local rambling groups, encouraged and assisted by the admin. staff of the Ramblers Association and the Countryside Commission, could identify existing public rights of way which would enable these LDPs to be incorporated into the "Sunset Trail". Such a trail would give anybody who walked its length an enormous variety of scenery, views and vegetation, and historical and pre-historical associations. The Tinnars Track would then be the first and last leg in an exciting Long Distance Path through 7000 years of man's life in Britain. My ambition is that I may walk the entire length from Stonehenge to Lands End before long.



ANCIENT SITES EN ROUTE: (1) Carn Brea Hill Fort (2) Castle-an-Dinas Hill Fort (3) Nine Maidens Stone Row & Men Gurtha Menhir (4) King Arthur's Hall, Stannon & Fernacre Circles (5) The Hurlers & Trethevy Quoit (6) Many Dartmoor Sites (7) Glastonbury Tor & Abbey (8) Maiden Castle, Stones, Cerne Abbas Hill Giant (9) Badbury Rings (10) Stonehenge.

\* For details of this walk see Shirley Toylson: "The Moors of the South West" (Walk 7 - The Dragon Path).

Article (c) Hugh Miners. Maps (c) Tony Bayfield.

If anyone is interested in researching existing rights of way that might be incorporated into the trail please contact Hugh Miners via Meyn Mamvro. Hugh lead (s) a full moon night walk along the Tinnars Way starting at St. Just as midnight on Thurs. 11th/Fri. 12th June, sunrise at Mulfra Quoit and finish for breakfast at Porthminster beach St. Ives.

# FIRES OF BEL

## THE CELTIC MIDSUMMER

By Alan Bleakley

*ALAN BLEAKLEY has lived in Cornwall most of his life, and has a deep love of West Penwith. He is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Cornwall College, where he runs courses on counselling, interpersonal skills, and archetypal psychology.*

*He is a long-time student of Kethor Keltek, of the Oiled Ones, those of Bright Eyes; and places his allegiance with the Sea-raven, the cormorant family. From this follows his subscription to Blake's vision of an awakening of the Anima of the Isle - a deepening to the Celtic soul, or Avallen.*

*His main expression of this vision is through poetry, where he is widely published. He has written articles for a number of periodicals, including **Resurgence** and **The Ley Hunter**; and two books on archetypal psychology: **Fruits of the Moon Tree** (1984), and **Earth's Embrace** (forthcoming, Autumn 1987), both published by Gateway Books.*

*One reason for a love of Cornwall centres on the pressing presence of the sea. Alan has been a keen surfer for almost 25 years, and a lover of the sea for as long as he can remember.*

The westernmost hilltop in Britain, Carn Brea near Land's End, commands a magnificent view over the last thin crescent of moorland before this island plunges into a great wedge of the Atlantic ocean. This is the place to come for a sunset, especially when the sea is absolutely calm and silky, when the sinking sun bottoms into her, spreading a fan of colour like hot oil across the transparent plate of water. Artists come here for the quality of light, especially the twilight, which is so thin and clear during the day and then soaks up rich colours at sunrise and sunset because of the reflective quality of the sea which surrounds the peninsula.

It is just after sunset, in the twilight zone, that the traditional Celtic day begins. After sunset and before sunrise, when light and dark are sweetly mixed, is a time of magic, of the melting of boundary between reality and illusion, of the

powerful, intrusive presence of an other world. Like the day, that draws its breath at twilight, so the Celtic year is a round that can be divided - a huge cyclic breath that begins with the year's inspiration on the eve of February 1st, the twilight of Spring: Imbolc or Oimele. (Specifically, sunset on January 31st marks the beginning of this quarter-day, the same applying to the other three quarter-days mentioned below). The festival day of Imbolc was Christianised as Candlemas. The great breath of Nature is drawn in fully at the twilight of Summer, May 1st eve: Beltane (Christianised as Whit-Sunday). With this inspiration, Nature is fully charged and gives forth her fruits and warmth through the Summer. By August 1st eve: Lughnasad (Lammas), she releases her breath and sinks into rest on the exhalation of Autumn and Winter twilight. Then her fruits die or rest, the Winter twilight being celebrated as Samhain (November 1st eve, All Souls or Halloween). At Imbolc, her Spring renewal begins, and the yearly round is complete.

For the Iron Age settled Celtic farmers, this annual cycle celebrated an agricultural year, and replaced the older (Palaeolithic) cycle of hunter-gatherers that followed the observed fixed points of the year as shortest, longest and balanced days of dark in relationship to light - the cycle of equinoxes and solstices. In the Celtic cycle, Imbolc celebrates the breaking of the birth-waters of ewes in lambing, and the lactation of ewes in feeding their young. The ceremonies associated with Imbolc then centre on fertility of the woman, on ovulation, childbirth and breast-feeding, the fruiting or beginning growth of the new year. Such a time is sacred to water (birth-waters and the springs of life), so holy wells are venerated, and the day is given over to Brigid, goddess of childbirth and all growing things.

Beltane, literally "the fire of Bel", celebrated the health and fertility of cattle moving on to good pasture. Twin fires were lit on hilltops and the herds driven between them for fertility and purification. As the Imbolc ceremony goes into the valley of the well of the goddess, so the Beltane ceremony moves away from the pregnant mother to the virile father, and moves up the hilltop, closer to the sky-fathers, to thunder and lightning. Bel or Belenus is an aspect of the Dagda, the thunder-god (Zeus, Thor, Jupiter, Indra), and "tan" or "tane" has the universal meaning of an ending by death, cutting off a head or sloughing off a skin, in other words, a rebirth or major change. St. Michael and St. George are the tanners who cut off the head of the serpent/dragon for its skin, or rather to have conversation with its changes. The skin shedding of the serpent is an allusion to the monthly changes of the woman at menstruation, and so the hilltop hero is asking the woman of the valley, whose birth process and wellspring was honoured at spring twilight, to teach him of the meaning of her blood-changes.

Lughnasad, sacred to the hermanphroditic, mercurial god Lugh, is the time of the holy marriage of the goddess and god, woman and man, where well water meets hilltop fire in a festival of dance, theatre, song and poetry, dedicated to air, and communication between peoples. For the Celts, this was the first harvest, where the fruits of the union between earth-mother and sky-father were culled. Samhain is sacred to the child born of the union of woman and man, and is dedicated to the earth, as the year moves into Winter twilight and Nature rests. Here, cattle were brought in to shelter for the Winter. In this time of bedding down, anybody, taking on the potential of the child, could choose to alter form, shape or destiny, so this became the witching time, when the otherworld would mix inextricably with this world, and life and death would be inseparable. In underground fogous, as birth chambers and natural orgone accumulators, the mysteries of death-and-rebirth are made known to those who wish to know.

For many years at Beltane, fires were lit on top of hills such as Carn Brea all over the Celtic world. A chain of hilltops would be linked through Cornwall until this last fire, at the westernmost edge, at the jumping-off point to the otherworld, was lit. This last fire pointed to the Scilly Isles, where more burial mounds are packed into this small acreage than anywhere else in Britain. This was the final land of the dead, setting with moon and sun, who would rise in the eternal cycle of death and life, released from the bodily death of this world into the full life of the soul, perhaps to choose a fleshly existence once more, on another round of learning, having re-assembled the neglected soul in the Isles of the Blessed. With the intrusion of Christianity, such hilltop fires lost their purpose, both the immediate one of purifying cattle, and the wider one of symbolic beacon. The retreat into church turned a back on the natural temples of the landscape.

For a number of years, sometimes alone, sometimes within a group, we have kept alive an annual ceremonial cycle (the solstice and equinox solar year; the Celtic quarter-days solar year and the Celtic tree cycle lunar year). Our ceremonies have sometimes been short and simple, at other times long and elaborate, complementing the psychological and artistic work we also pursue. Last year several of us planned a two-part celebration of May: a Beltane ceremony with traditional hilltop twin fires on Carn Brea, and a maypole ceremony for later in the month in celebration of the flowering of the Maythorn. The Beltane ceremony was to follow-up a well ceremony we had carried out at Imbolc.

Having spent most of the day in a howling wind hauling wood up the long path that winds around the hill, at twilight several families and their dogs gathered to light the twin fires, to dance between them, to sing, and to invoke the powers of thunder and lightning in simple ceremony. The men stayed on late to tend the fires, while the women, bearing firebrands, walked to a nearby well to divine in the water as the fires blazed on the hill, marrying the two elements.

In the middle of the month, on the Celtic lunar tree cycle, we move into celebration of the blossoming hawthorn or maythorn. Our maypole ceremony begin with asking a stately ash tree if she would give away one particularly tall, thick branch that we could dress as our maypole, to be used for many years to come. Over a day, adults and children painted the thirty-foot pole with whatever came intuitively, rather than the traditional stripes. The pole was forked at the top, representing the balance always present in Nature: death-life, feminine-masculine, shadow-light, underworld-upper world, and so on. We also prepared coloured ribbons to dress the pole.

In a field near our house we have built a large stone circle and tree-ring that acts as our ceremonial site. In an earlier ceremony, we planted crystals in the middle of the circle in honour of Arianrhod, goddess of the silver wheel (mirroring the Great Bear constellation that circles the tip of the imaginary world-tree at the north pole). Our maypole would be planted off-centre to avoid disturbing the crystals. We hadn't realised how difficult it would be to erect the pole - it was so cumbersome and we had to make sure it was deeply rooted. Four of us heaved and jiggled the pole into a pit, wedging it with wooden staves. The symbolism of the clumsy male within the circle of the patient woman was evident! As the wind freshened, the coloured streamers attached to the tip of the pole unfurled and flapped against the clear sky, like long tails of a kite, making spectacular cracking sounds. The pole itself audibly hummed - there was a long moment where we all stood in awe and gazed at the beautiful sight we had created, a moment of deep, resonant silence and wonder.



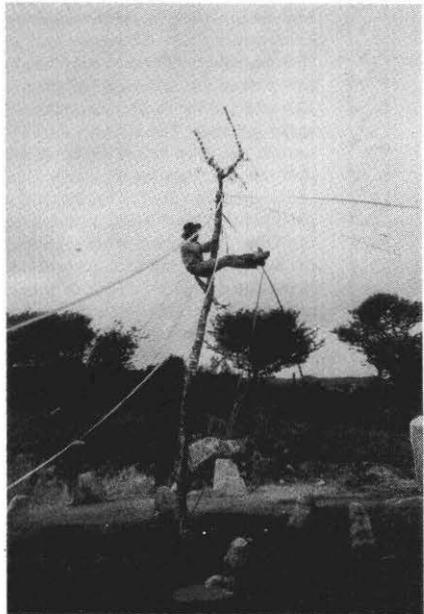
The ribbons were to be our umbilical cords, as dancers, attaching us to the mother-tree, to the navel or omphalos of the world. The maypole is a twin reality - both an obvious phallus celebrating the fertile growth from Spring into Summer, and the navel/womb of the Mother who births us (who we celebrate as we dance at her centre, our source). In the dance, we remind ourselves of our own births, our coming out of the mother; our dignity as we move away from here to our own individuality, but also our humility as we heel-toe-heel-toe back to her in a round dance of communion.

The hawthorn month is sacred to the goddess Cardea, or Oestre (Easter), the original May-queen of woman's fertility. The children dressed up as May-queens with beautiful flower crowns. The May bride is traditionally the young woman coming into fertility (so the maythorn pricks and raises blood - the first period and blood at first intercourse). Her white flower reminds the woman of the keeper of childbirth, who is a "virginal" goddess (her sister-hood remains untainted, unmanipulated by men): the bear-goddess Arianrhod or Artemis. (Her milky stars form the mutton leg, the thigh of the sky-goddess at the top of which is the source of the starry heavens of the north, the pole). Her son is the quintessential hero Arthur, whose name means "son of the bear", and whose vitality the maypole must also represent, as phallus.

The maypole is also centre of the maze (maze-pole), which is the confusing dance of life with its twists and turns, blind-alleys and through-roads to a centre that is the Self. This is each individual's potential - who we might become. The dance is also then the tortuous motions of the soul that shadows you through life, and which dances away at death, the double, devil or shadow. Ignorant as we were of the traditions of morris-dancing or maypole-dancing, we made up our own steps as we moved along, sometimes dancing as a group, sometimes moving individually to the centre to touch the tree, and back, all the time holding our umbilical ribbons. Mostly it was plain lighthearted fun seeing ourselves tangling up, but within this were moments of chilling beauty, such as the ribbons spontaneously wrapping in absolutely perfect pattern around the pole, and then unwinding just as perfectly as we found a harmony and rhythm between ourselves. There was also the moment when one of the dancers, who had trained in the circus, shinned up the pole and performed acrobatics at the top of the gently swaying ash.

When the hawthorn flowers, we gather around her because the goddess Beauty has shown herself. Whether distress or beauty urge, all of us at some time turn to a source for sustenance, a place of succour or comfort, a straight pole to lean against. It is good to find that place of strength within the Self as well as the community. Mayday is a reminder of that navel which we can contemplate and strengthen in ourselves, instead of falling asleep on our source, which is also our major resource. Beltane fire-hopping and maypole-bopping are just two ways to jog our memories

Article (c) Alan Bleakley. Photos (c) Carol Bishop



# Paganism in W. Penwith (2)

By CHERYL STRAFFON

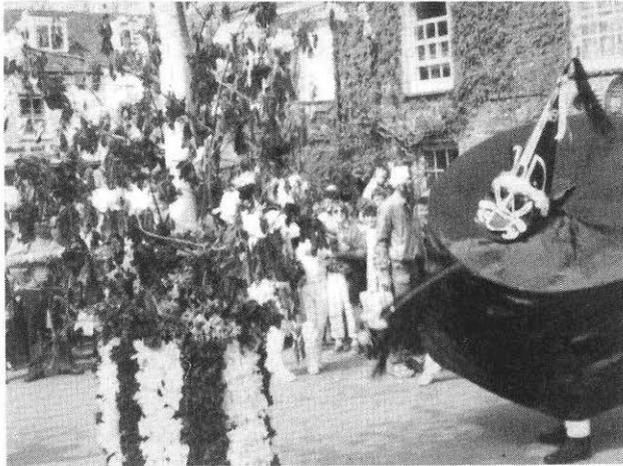
*The previous article on Paganism in West Penwith featured some of the old Winter festivals, customs and traditions of the western part of Cornwall which harked back to the pagan origins of that Celtic country. This second part turns the wheel round to the other half of the year - the summer, and finds more evidence of a pagan substrata lying not very far below the surface of our 20th Century "civilisation".*

Alan Bleakley in the previous article 'The Fires of Bel' has highlighted the important Celtic Spring ceremony of Beltane. James Frazer<sup>1</sup> says: "The Beltane fires were formerly kindled with great ceremony on the first of May, and the traces of human sacrifices at them were particularly clear and unequivocal", though he does not state his evidence for this. Janet & Colin Bord<sup>2</sup> point out that "on this day the fertility of the earth was reaffirmed and celebrated." This had practical expression in the coming-together of the young men and women of a village in the woods on the night before May Day. "Their purpose was twofold: to cut down and bring home the maypole tree, may blossom, and other greenery; and to practise the emotive and symbolic ritual of orgiastic mating.... By concentrating all their mental and physical energies into an act of procreation they were literally able to cause the natural forces to respond in empathy." The first part of this at least is still practised in Padstow where the night before May Day many of the inhabitants stay up and go to collect flowers from the woods to make garlands. This occurs too at Helston where the 'Hal-an-Tow' takes place outside the town before daybreak and the dancers return with green boughs to decorate the town for the Furry Dance.

This also used to be practised in West Penwith. Hunt<sup>3</sup> says that the locals gathered the 'May' which included the young branches of any tree in blossom of fresh leaf. It also used to be the custom to hang a piece of furze to a door early in the morning of May Day. At breakfast time the one who did it appeared at the house and demanded a piece of bread and cream with a basin of 'raw-milk'. This presumably has links with the custom, widespread throughout Europe, for the May-ers to go from house to house announcing the arrival of Spring with rhymes, songs or dances, in return for which they were rewarded with gifts of eggs, dried fruit or cake, a gift from the community for those who were the 'messengers of the gods', bringing news of the forthcoming fecundity and fertility of the earth. At Pendeen a horn was blown up on the Carn which announced the arrival of Spring and entitled the people to go and have bread and treacle to eat.

In Penzance young people sat up until midnight, and then marched round the town with violins and fires, summoning their friends to the Maying. Also in Penzance large tin horns were blown at daybreak by parties of boys who "enter the gardens of detached houses, stop and bray under the bedroom windows and beg for money. With what they collect they go into the country, and at one of the farmhouses they breakfast on bread and clotted cream, junket etc. An additional ring of tin (a penn'orth) is added to his horn every year that a boy uses it."<sup>3</sup> At Hayle on May Day groups of children decorated with flowers and paper clothes went singing through the streets, and in the evening bonfires were lit in various parts of the town; houses were also lit with candles and torches. It was also the custom commonly throughout Cornwall for young boys to 'dip' in a bucket of water anyone they met who did not have the protection of a piece of greenery on their clothes - this links with the Obby Oss in Padstow who used to visit a pool near the town, wade in, 'drink', and sprinkle the onlookers with water for good luck, an obvious fertility ritual. The dance of the Oss itself is of course a living fertility myth whose roots are very ancient, and the death and rebirth of the Oss as it is teased throughout the streets is a mythopoeic representation of the death and rebirth of life throughout the seasons.

The use of water as a fertility symbol is illustrated in the use of wells in West Penwith (Carol Slater touched on this aspect in her article Holy Wells in MM No. 1). It was always a custom that the time for visiting Madron and Carn Euny wells was in May, for only then was the healing water at its most efficacious. The instructions for Madron were most specific: it had to be visited on the first 3 Wednesdays in May. Groups of young girls would also go there at that time to drop pins into the water: if they kept together the girl would be married to her sweetheart; the number of bubbles they made in falling showed the time that would elapse before the event. Again the connotations of fertility with this event in May are obvious.



Obby  
Oss

The continuation of life and rebirth of fertility continue to be celebrated at the next great Pagan festival - the Midsummer solstice (June 21st/24th). This is the great season of the fire-festivals, marking the high spot of the sun's reign on the earth, before it begins the slow descent into winter. James Fraser says:<sup>1</sup> "A faint tinge of Christianity has been given to these fire-festivals by naming Midsummer Day after St. John the Baptist, but we cannot doubt that the celebration dates from a long time before the beginning of our era." In Penzance and elsewhere in West Penwith on St. John's Eve lines of tar barrels were simultaneously lit in all the streets while at the same time bonfires were kindled on all the cairns and hills round Mounts Bay, Fire crackers were lit and flaming torches swung around. Bottrell<sup>4</sup> describes the scene: "Then the villagers, linked in circles hand-in-hand, danced round (the bonfires) to preserve themselves against witchcraft, and, when they burnt low, one person here and there detached himself from the rest and leaped through the flames to insure himself from some special evil. The old people

counted these fires and drew a message from them.”, and Hunt<sup>3</sup> reinforces the divinatory nature of these ceremonies: “A bonfire is formed of faggots of furze, ferns and the like. Men and maidens, by locking hands, form a circle and commence a dance to some wild native song. At length, as the dancers become excited, they pull each other from side to side across the fire. If they succeed in treading out the fire without breaking the chain none of the party will die during the year. If however the ring is broken before the fire is extinguished, ‘bad luck to the weak hands’.” Apparently all the witches in West Cornwall used to meet at Midsummer-eve at Trewa in Zennor parish and “around the dying fires renewed their vows to their master, the Devil.” Behind all this lurks the pagan god Baal himself.

The midsummer bonfires were lit in a chain from hill-top to hill-top running throughout Cornwall. The custom is still observed, at least in West Cornwall, by the Old Cornwall Society, who, in their pamphlet on it, say:<sup>5</sup> “The fires held on Midsummer Eve would have celebrated the splendour of high summer, with the sun at the peak of its power and glory in the heavens, and promising ripeness to the maturing fruits and grain.” The first fire used to be lit on the Garrack Sans (Table-Mên) near Sennen (on which a maypole was also erected) but now the only one in W. Penwith is on top of Chapel Carn Brea (filmed by BBC TV in 1986 for their programme ‘Doomsday’). Here there is a ceremony in Cornish and the Lady of the Flowers casts into the flames a bunch of herbs, bound with coloured ribbons, representing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ influences. With a cry of:

TAN Y'N CUNYS	I set the pyre
GORRAF DESEMPYNS;	At once on fire
RE SPLANNO AN TANSYS	Let flame aspire
DRES LYES PLU!	Over many a parish.

the fire is lit and blazes in defiant celebration of the forces of sun and light, despite the incongruous Christian prayers held and sing-song that follows. In times past, the neighbouring hill-top Bartiné was also crowned with a fire - indeed Blight<sup>6</sup> said that “Bar-tiné” means “hill of fires”: “The word may refer to a practice of primitive times, when huge fires were kindled on the hill-tops by the sun worshippers on the very moment of the solstice.”

Another aspect of the solstice was the custom observed in St. Just and other mining areas where “shooting the Midsummer holes” took place. The young miners would bore rows of holes in the tops of flat rocks which they then charged with gunpowder and exploded in rapid succession. The custom was supposed to commemorate the fact that tin was discovered on Midsummer Day, but this ‘coincidence’ must hark back to the pagan custom of celebrating with light and noise the highspot of the year’s cycle. As Buller commented: “Though the customs are kept up chiefly as an amusement for young people on their Midsummer holiday, it cannot be doubted that they are vestiges of the ancient fire worship.” Similarly, the custom of Cornish farmers to carry bunches of burning furze towards their cattle allowing the smoke to pass over the stalls, the walk always being made in the direction of the sun, must hark back to the sacrifice of cattle to the Sun God to ensure the fertility of the next year’s crops.



*The Crying of the Neck, West Penwith -  
'Pen Yar! Pen Yar! Pen Yar!  
(Gill Brooker)*

Another custom closely linked to the farming community marked the end of the Summer's cycle. The Crying of the Neck, occurring around the time of the Autumn Equinox, marks the end of the harvest. The last sheaf of corn - "the neck" was cut by the oldest reaper, held aloft to cheers from onlookers and made into a miniature sheaf, decorated with ribbons and flowers, carried home in triumph and hung up where it is left until the next harvest. The spirit of the harvest was supposed to remain in the last sheaf, and these last stalks were worked into the mysterious pagan figure of the corn-dolly. James Frazer points out that this custom was widespread throughout Europe and represents a most important part of the pagan year - the death of the vegetation goddess and her rebirth in Spring as the sprouting of the young corn. There may also have been a sacrificial element to the cutting of the neck of the corn, a hint of a link perhaps with the cutting of the throat of the first stranger into St. Just at the time of the Feast, mentioned in the last article. Death and rebirth - the eternal cycle of the seasons - the killing of the Corn Spirit and her rebirth in Beltane at the fertility festivals. We live amongst the pagan world of our ancestors, and we ignore it at our peril. If we stop remembering the old ways, if we stop observing the old customs, if we lose our respect and care for our Mother Earth, then mankind is doomed and our planet will be destroyed - the old pagan gods and goddesses are not to be mocked or forgotten.

Article & photo (c) Cheryl Traffon. Painting (c) Gill Brooker.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## CORNWALL AND THE CELTS

**Celtic Britain by Charles Thomas (Thames & Hudson, 1986 - £12.50)**

**The Celts by F. Delaney (BBC Publications, 1986 - £14.95)**

**The Pagan Celts by Anne Ross (Batsford, 1986 - £17.95)**

**A History of Cornwall by Ian Soulsby (Phillimore, 1986 - £8.95)**

With three new books (plus part of a fourth) and a television series on their history and culture, the Celts are suddenly flavour of the month. This attention is long overdue: as Professor Thomas says in the Preface to 'Celtic Britain': "Many people in Britain - certainly in England... are told or taught far less about the Celts than about Anglo-Saxons, Normans, Plantagenets, and Tudors." In this he is certainly correct: I recall leaving school in Cornwall knowing next to nothing about my native history, culture, language - or even geography, and have no reason to suppose that things are a great deal better nowadays. Thomas attempts to redress the balance a little in his examination of the roots and development of the Celtic nations of Wales, Scotland and Cornwall. A Cornishman by birth himself, and founder of the journals *Cornish Archaeology* and *Cornish Studies* as well as 4 other books, his book gives a fair share of attention to early Cornwall which is not often the case in other books of Celtic studies, which seem to have a preponderance of Irish and Welsh material but very little Cornish. The material in his book includes the origin of the word 'Cornwall' (originally *Cornovia*, 'corn' meaning horn, perhaps a reference to followers of the cult of some pagan horned god), the early kings and tribal leaders of Cornwall, the legendary Arthur, Tristan & Iseult, and the pre-mediaeval evidence of Tintagel. But the book is no mere recitation of historical data: underlying it is a passionate feeling for the separateness of the Celtic cultural and linguistic elements and their treatment by the English - "It may well be another century before most native Cornish cease to think, subconsciously and automatically, in terms of 'Cornwall' and 'England'." He places Celtic Cornwall in the context of a Celtic Britain and shows that "all Britons...inadvertently continued to share in a Celtic inheritance".

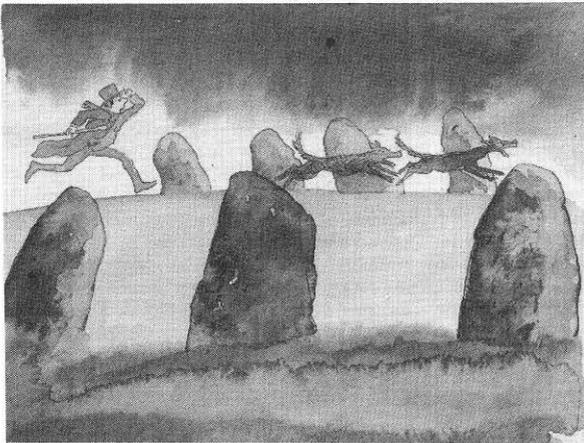
The roots of this Celticism are explored in Delaney's 'The Celts', the book of the BBC TV series, and both books should be read alongside Anne Ross' revised and expanded 'The Pagan Celts' which complements the historical approach with a look at the everyday life of the Celts. Neither Delaney or Ross have hardly any Cornish material (again!), but 'The Pagan Celts' does give a wealth of detail on the art, spirit religion and rituals of the Celts. There is particularly useful information on Celtic goddesses, and an important view on megalithic sites: "All the evidence suggests that in Ireland, as elsewhere no doubt in the pagan Celtic world, ancient sacred sites were used by the innovating Celts for their own religious purposes."

This comment is echoed in Ian Soulsby's 'History of Cornwall' - "Celtic religion was essentially an open-air activity which probably utilised existing stone monuments and circles leaving little tangible evidence behind." Soulsby incorporates other recent research in his chapter on the ancient sites, such as the fact that "archaeologists no longer accept the previously held view that (Quoits) were originally covered with an earthen mound which was subsequently eroded by the elements", and current ideas that stone circles were the focal points for both astronomical and ritual purposes. There is little on individual sites in the brief resumé, but a good overall view that includes acknowledgement of West Penwith's well-preserved Iron Age field system and agricultural landscape, and the density of settlement rounds here. The chapter on Celtic Cornwall is a more succinct, less academic, summary than Charles Thomas' book, and makes the point that Dumnonia (Celtic Cornwall) was relatively little disturbed by successive Roman, Saxon and Viking invaders right up until the 12th C and the arrival of the Normans. "Many Cornishmen claim that Cornwall is not English at all and for much of its history it belonged to the Celtic world, not the Anglo-Saxon". These books in their own and respective ways show how and why this is so. (CS).

# The Magic Ointment and Other Cornish Legends

By Eric Quayle & Michael Foreman  
(Andersen Press, 1986 - £7.95)

This book, in which local author Eric Quayle retells a dozen legends set in the villages and ancient landscape of West Penwith, is already a best seller. It deserves to be, for the stories are well told, able to be appreciated by children and adults alike, and are complimented beautifully by Michael Foreman's illustrations in colour and black and white. Classic local legends like the Mermaid of Zennor are elaborated in the re-telling, while others like The Little People's Pageant (The Fairy Revels on the Gump) are recounted more or less faithfully from Hunt's Popular Romances (1865), supplemented by Bottrell's Traditions & Fireside Stories (1870-80). Occasionally the original has been changed for no apparent reason. For example, 'Duffy and the Devil' follows Hunt almost word-for-word until the end when Hunt's version (which has Squire Lovel's stockings and shirt dissolving when the Devil's name is "guessed" by Duffy) has been changed by Quayle (whose tale ends with the much less effective death of the Squire and Duffy entering the witch's coven). In the same tale Quayle has also altered the names of the stone circle and standing stones where the Squire chases the hare from their correct form given in Hunt as "Dawmse Main" (the Dancing Stones or Merry Maidens) and Pipers to the "Merry Pipers" - a small niggle perhaps, but it is an unnecessary change that makes nonsense of the legend of the stones (it being the **maidens** who were merry and turned into the stone circle because of the two Pipers standing stones for dancing on the Sabbath), telescoping the circle and the menhirs into the same thing! But one or two irritations like this aside (which would only be apparent to the reader who knew the old legends well) the stories are entertaining and deserve to be widely read for the strange and mysterious atmosphere of West Penwith that they conjur up, as well as ensuring that they are rediscovered by a new generation and not lost for ever. (CS)



*Squire Lovel's dogs chase the  
mysterious hare through the  
Merry Maidens stone circle.  
Michael Foreman's  
Illustration from  
'The Magic Ointment' Book.*

**JOHN LITTLE EAGLE** lectures on American Indian Culture, and has spoken in Penzance in 1986. No charge is made but either petrol costs or donations are welcome. He can be contacted at Myra Villa, 2 Fore St., St. Dennis. (0726-822419).

**THE CAULDRON** Meyn Mamvro is now exchanging journals with the pagan magazine The Cauldron. Subscription details from Mike Howard, Treforgan Mansion, Llangoedmor, Cardigan, Dyfed SA43 2LB.

# 'The Pipers Tune'



The mystery standing stone at Carn Eanes (386338) mentioned in the last issue has an explanation. We have heard from someone who knows one of the contractor workers who were clearing the site, and he says that they found the stone lying just underneath the ground when they were clearing the site and decided to put it up, probably to perplex the rest of us! No stone circle was found - that was rumour taken wing. And that should be that. Except for a nagging thought that most other neighbouring hill tops have or had ancient remains. Carn Bean (tumuli) Chún (Castle) Watch Croft (cairns & standing stone) etc. Could Carn Eanes also have had something that was destroyed and buried by mining works and only rediscovered when the site was cleared? We shall probably never know, but a stone stands there now, a 20thC megalithic 'folly' or 'tribute' to the past.

At least it is nice to see a standing stone being erected rather than destroyed which usually seems the case. So much of an ancient landscape seems under threat that Craig Weatherhill, the man who (according to Radio Cornwall) can "tell a monolith from a rubbing stone at a hundred paces!", wants to set up an ad hoc group to monitor the ancient sites in W. Penwith. The Cornwall Archaeological Unit is very underfunded and over-stretched, so anything anyone can do to report any destruction and protest about it is welcome. Contact Craig on 0726-883086 or via Meyn Mamvro.

More help wanted by Tony & Angela Paget who are interested in researching a possible West

Penwith landscape zodiac after the Glastonbury Zodiac discovered by Mary Caine, and the one on the Cambs/Beds border by Nigel Pennick. They feel there may be evidence of a W. Penwith one in old field names, landscape features etc., and would welcome any ideas and information. They can be found at Tregurno Cliff Lamorna (0736 731205).

Help of a different kind may be needed by the person who left a note well hidden at Boscawen-un stone circle asking the "keeper of the circle" for forgiveness and for healing to atone "for my misdeed carried out August 1984". Much of the note is very personal, but if he or she is reading this and would like to contact someone please drop us a line - all confidences would be respected. The note was only discovered by chance and replaced in its secret place.

Finally, on a more cheerful note, news of an exciting Beltane festival in West Penwith. As we go to press, we have been liaising with the Oak Dragon Project to help them find a site here for a camp in May 87 where about 150 people will be living and interacting together for about a week, exploring themes like ancient mysteries, shaking off winter ceremonies, tribe and nature awareness. The themes are researched taught and investigated both formally through focused workshops and informally through evenings around campfires - an experimental journey in which each participant plays a guiding role. We hope the festival will be taking place near the Merry Maidens stone circle, and if anyone in Cornwall is interested they should contact Barbara Davies on 0726 833465.

**ASSAP.** The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena which investigates and disseminates information about various fields including earth mysteries, ley lines, dowsing, UFO's, ESP, astrology etc. has just started a Cornish Group. They are willing to take enquiries from interested parties, and hope to hold group meetings shortly. They can be contacted via the Group Leader, David Thomas, Plot 27 Strawberry Lane, Redruth (0209 219178) or the Secretary, Dinah Jenkins, 'Penwindle', Plaidy Park Road, East Looe (05036-2067).

# FEEDBACK HOLY WELLS

In the last edition of 'Meyn Mamvro' there was an article on 'Holy Water' by Carol Slater together with a list of some holy wells in W. Penwith. We asked for any more known, and Craig Weatherhill has supplied us with a list of 40. Some of these have been destroyed or lost, though he has re-discovered some. He hopes to supply more details in a future edition of 'Meyn Mamvro' so please let us know of any more not listed. Listings are by Parish.

## GULVAL:

Gulval Holy Well (dest.) 486317  
 Venton Bebibell 429352 (re-discovered)  
 Ventonegga 440353

## LELANT:

Venton Uny holy well 536386 (Fairy Well)  
 Venton Sauras? holy well? 542369  
 Giant's Well, Trencrom 520363  
 Trencrom Castle Well 517363



*Sancreed Well (418293)*

## LUDGVAN:

Ludgván holy well (dest.) 503331  
 Collurian? holy well? 523347  
 Castle-an-dinas well (dest.) 485350

## MADRON:

Madron holy well 446328  
 Castle Horneck holy well 461302  
 Nanseglós holy well 452313  
 Bone holy well 456333  
 Venton Jean (still trying to locate)

## MORVAH:

St. Morwetha's holy well 401359  
 Chun Castle well 405340  
 Bosulow Trehyllys well 409343

## ST. BURYAN:

Alsia holy well 393251  
 Leah well 407276

## ST. IVES:

Venton Ia holy well 515407  
 Venton Vision (does it still exist?)

## ST. JUST:

Venton East holy well (partially dest.) 373316  
 Lower Boscaswell holy well 377347 (Hesken well)  
 Higher Boscaswell well 387341 (The Fountain)  
 Cot Valley well 365305  
 Bartinney Castle well (dest.) 394293

## ST. LEVAN:

St. Levan's holy well 381219

## SANCREED:

Chapel Downs holy well 418293  
 Chapel Uny holy wells 399288  
 Anjarden holy well 418287  
 Goldherring well 412282

## SENNEN:

Sennen holy well (dest.? location behind  
 Old Success inn?)

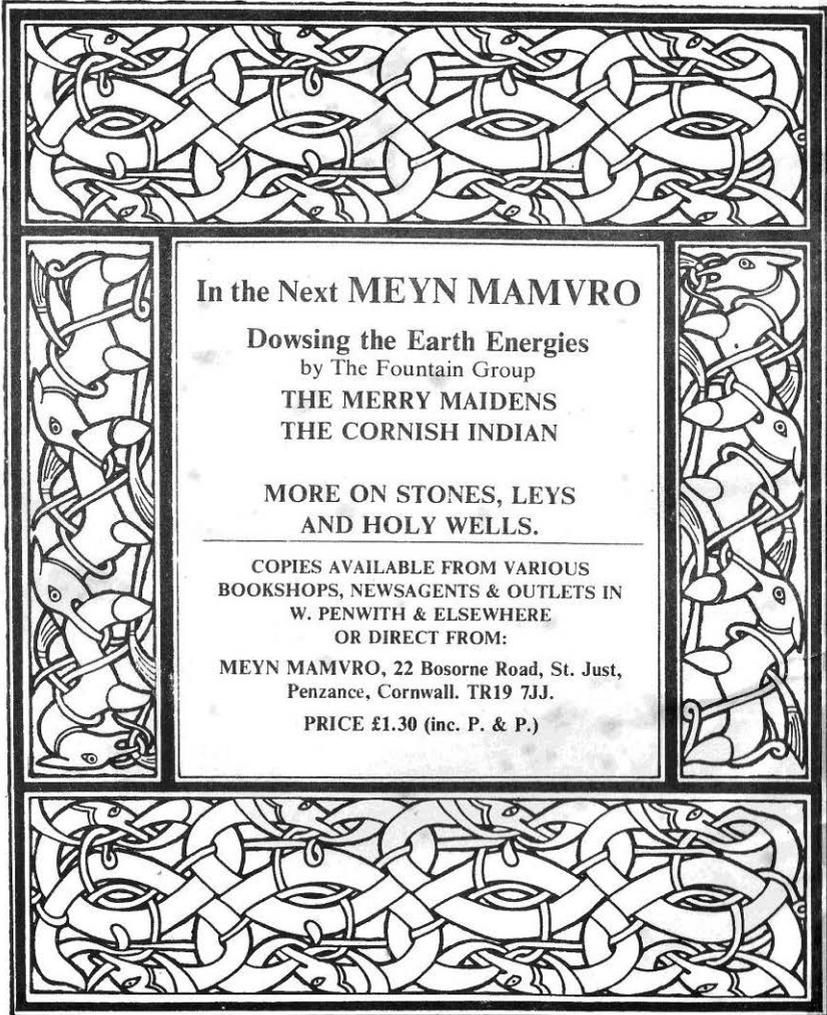
## TOWEDNACK:

Fairy Well (location?)

## ZENNOR:

Chapel Jane holy well (partially dest.) 434382  
 Venton Zennor holy well 460382 (re-discovered)  
 Higher Kerrow well 463362  
 Bosporthennis well (location?)  
 Giant's Well (location? Zennor or Towednack parish?)  
 Druid's Well (location? Zennor or Towednack parish?)

Readers may like to note that 'source', the Journal of the Holy Wells Group is presently running a series of "Atmosphere" pieces on Cornish Holy Wells called 'Secret Shrines'. Details from Mark Valentine, 109 Oak Tree Rd., Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hants.



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