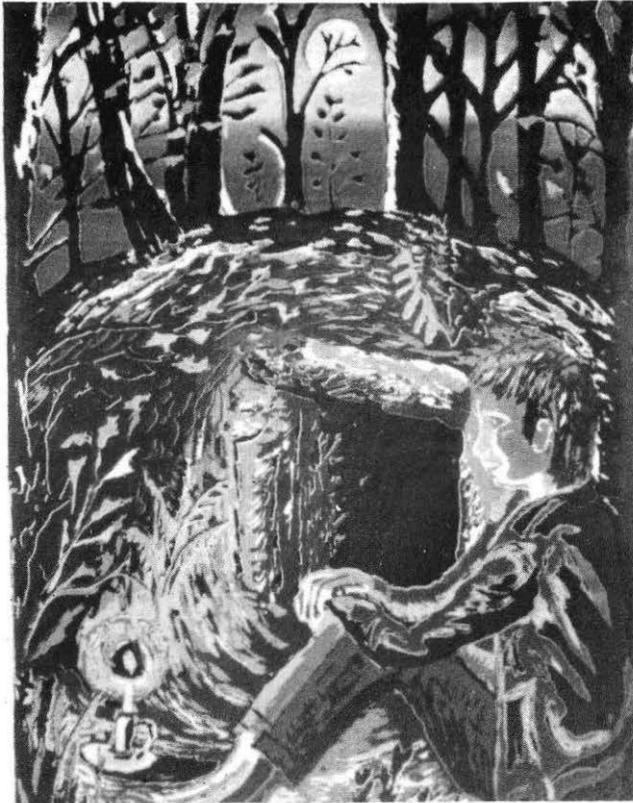


Meyn Mamvro

**ANCIENT STONES & SACRED SITES
OF WEST PENWITH. Issue 4. £1.20**



**COMPLETE GUIDE TO PENWITHS WELLS
WHERE STONES TOUCH THE SKIES
CORN DOLLIES • SPIRITS AT SACRED SITES
LEYS & EARTH MYSTERIES • PAGANISM**

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Our grateful thanks to Gabrielle Hawkes for the front cover & Persephone picture on p. 22, Penny Harris for the picture on p. 16, Jan Adamson for the headings and artwork, and Tony Bayfield for the mapwork and drawings.

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Some readers of Meyn Mamvro will probably be aware of the little local difficulty we recently had with the last edition of the magazine. There were news items in the Sunday Independent and in the West Penwith paper "Peninsula Voice" (September) which put the matter very well:

MEYN MAMVRO, the magazine of Cornish heritage and ancient sites in West Penwith, has been banned by the Wayside Museum in Zennor because it is allegedly 'pagan'. Although the privately-owned museum stocked and sold out the last edition, the owner Mr. Williamson has now refused to take the latest edition, No. 3, because of supposed 'objections' to its paganism.

The magazine, launched last year, received a great deal of favourable comment from, among others, *The Cornishman* newspaper who described it as "a magazine that is more than welcome and deserves the support of all who care not only for Cornwall but for our whole quality of life." Contributors have included Cornish pre-historian Graig Weatherhill, and past Grand Bard of the Gorseth Hugh Miners who said: "It is with sincere gratitude that we find so very well-presented and professional a magazine revealing the true Cornwall and the people who spring from her soil."

Editions Nos. 1 and 2 sold out completely in about 18 outlets in West Penwith and elsewhere, including the Tourist Information Centres in Penzance and St. Ives, who approved the magazine for sale, and it is also stocked by Cornwall County Libraries. The magazine's editor Cheryl Traffon commented: "I was absolutely amazed at Mr. Williamson's attitude. The magazine is a serious and well-researched journal on the ancient stones, sacred sites and Celtic traditions of West Penwith, which of course date from pre Christian times; and who does Mr. Williamson think built the ancient sites that he features in his museum if not our pagan ancestors? It's also certainly true that many people today still try to follow those ancient ways of belief in Mother Earth. Being brought up in Cornwall, I have great respect for other native religions, and would expect the same tolerance from others. If Mr. Williamson had not sold the magazine well, I could understand his reluctance to stock it, but as it is, it appears to me a blatant attempt at censorship in a so-called free country. If Mr. Williamson wishes to accurately portray the history and pre-history of this area, it seems rather ironic to me that he sells tourist nick-nacks but bans a magazine about our Cornish heritage."

When asked by *Peninsula Voice* if he had any comment to make, Mr. Williamson said: "This is all getting very silly; they even phoned up Radio Cornwall about it."

In fact the only silly part of this was Mr. Williamson's ban in the first place, and it was Radio Cornwall that phoned us. In the interviews that they did with your editress and Mr. Williamson he commented: "Of course we live in a Christian country - at least it's supposed to be, so anything pagan is bound to be an affront to a Christian!" Several of our readers who knew about the ban gave us great support by writing very reasonable letters to Mr. Williamson, but his responses were at best evasive or contradictory (or perhaps he realised his actions were indefensible?). Among these was Dave Thomas, Group Leader of ASSAP Cornwall, who commented: "As a serious researcher I welcome the accuracy and open mindedness that the magazine puts across. I did detect a possibility that what you said on Radio Cornwall had a religious bias.... but I would ask again that you reconsider your decision as I know many people consider the pre-Christian folklore is just as important, if not more so, than the Christian folklore." As he has not so far justified himself satisfactorily, we would be most grateful if other readers care to write to Mr. Williamson & send us a copy of any reply. An assessment of paganism follows on p.2, and, needless to say we shall continue to publish articles in the ancient ways of W. Penwith objectively and without prejudice.

“AN AFFRONT TO CHRISTIANS”

It is perhaps quite amazing that a religion of the earth and the stones practised some 5000 years ago, and followed today by some people who love their native land and her sacred sites, can generate such opposition as to be banned by a museum purporting to reflect the history and pre-history of our area. As two of our readers (who have an article on the stones on p.3 opposite) Mike Woolf & Rachel Garcia said in a letter to Mr. Williamson of the Zennor museum: “You must surely recognise that paganism is represented in MEYN MAMVRO because it played a very real part in Cornwall’s past and still influences its present. To the ignorant, paganism may be synonymous with all sorts of evils -ignorance always seems to produce fear and repression - but most enlightened souls recognise the good in nature worship, which is particularly relevant at a time when nature is abused on a previously unknown scale. These alternative beliefs were very strongly rooted in these islands long before Christianity, which has by comparison, existed for a very short timespan here.”

This point is well echoed in a book by Bob Stewart (“Where is Saint George?” Moonraker Press, 1977) in which he says: “However unpalatable Christians today may find the fact, the Christian faith originally developed and established itself, not because of its new or unique quality but because of its regression to an ancient pattern of ritual and pagan belief. Christianity is built on paganism: paganism is its bedrock and its matrix. Virtually everything in the Christian faith, from its saints to its concept of a sacrificial victim (Jesus) can be traced back to pagan origins.” †

Many Christians recognise this, however unconsciously, and, especially down here in Cornwall are often interested in the ancient ways and antiquities that preceded the Christian era. Christianity only assimilated and modified those ways, and most Christian festivals and folklore are adaptations of pagan originals. There is no conflict here, unless one has a very narrow and restrictive view of Christianity. Pagans are not generally hostile anti-Christian, and they certainly have nothing whatsoever to do with modern-day devil worship or black magic. MEYN MAMVRO itself does not advocate any particular kind of -ism and numbers among its subscribers those who are Christians as well as followers of wicca, and those just interested in our ancient heritage. But as we have been accused of being “pagan”, perhaps it might be apposite to clarify just what that means today.

A “pagan” originally meant someone who lived in the country and followed the old pre-Christian religion. But does the religion of our ancestors matter very much today? Well, yes, partly because, as Ian Cooke has shown in his book “Journey of the Stones”, the megalithic sites were built as part of a sun and moon worship/observance and cannot be separated from their purpose and use. And partly because today “more than any previous time there is an overwhelming need for a spirituality closely connected to Earth and her cycles.”* As a faith, Paganism holds the Earth sacred, as our Mother who sustains and nurtures us, and believes that all fellow creatures should be respected, not exploited. To pagans, all life is interconnected, and love for our Mother Earth and thanks for what she gives us is expressed in ritual and celebration. Pagans usually celebrate the traditional festivals of the year, as a means of “re-establishing their links with the cyclic pattern of the seasons and the cosmos”,* during which they may invoke the Goddess whom they believe to be the essence of the universe. The ancient sites are held as sacred places to be approached with reverence and curiosity. The ancient ways are sources of wisdom and understanding and should be followed up and kept alive. All this, MEYN MAMVRO aims to express and reflect. If paganism means caring for our Earth, the ancient sites, and the traditional ways then we are indeed proud to be called a pagan magazine.

* from an excellent leaflet produced by ‘The Pipes of Pan - address in exchange listings on p. 24. For a copy send SAE to them.

† See also “Nineteen Centuries of Wrong: the History of Christian Persecution of Other Faiths” - Nigel Pennick (Runestaff 1987). 60p inc. p & p. Address in exchange listings.

Sunset with the Blind Fiddler

by MICHAEL WOOLF & RACHEL GARCIA



"Sunset at the Blind Fiddler"

Those who spent June 1987 in Cornwall, particularly in West Penwith, will have few memories of sunshine. However, the greyspell was broken at last for summer solstice. After a misty dawn, the sun was in exaltation all day, the rarity of his rays adding power to his midsummer.

As sunset approached, we travelled west to give thanks at the stones. We had planned to visit several sites that evening, ending at the Merry Maidens, but events at the Blind Fiddler menhir (SW 425282) made us remain there for sundown.

What took place was not earth shattering but quietly meaningful.

We entered the field, to find ourselves alone but for the long-eared crop whispering in the slight breeze. Touching the menhir, we looked West to see the sun edging along the hills, steadily losing height. We noticed a clearly visible notch in one hill (Bartine Castle??) and from where we stood, it almost seemed that this notch had been created to drain the last drops of sunlight into the earth at midsummer.

Moments later, the mist began to return, but not before our answer came. The sun obligingly slipped into the notch on the western hill and disappeared from view. There was a momentary stillness.... then came the "Earth-thunder".

This is an interesting phenomenon and we would be glad to know if other have experienced it.

It is like a sudden, muffled thunderclap, audible but emanating from beneath the earth. It does not shake the ground but sometimes seems to alter the air pressure, the way explosions do. We have experienced this often in West Penwith; in the Cader Idris range of Mid-Wales and once on Midsummer Eve, at Wayland's Smithy, near Uffington White Horse, Berkshire.

Various explanations have been given (one being the echo of the French Concorde crossing the channel!)

We are convinced that the sound emanates from within the earth, as if a charge is triggered, perhaps by certain alignments between the earth and her sister spheres. Could the stones act to amplify these signals?

So, with our backs against the Blind Fiddler and the sun below the hill, another Solstice passed, leaving us feeling that the motherland was very much alive and replenished. We felt it both in the tingling of the warm stone and ourselves.

The memory will shine beyond the sunset.



"With our backs on the Fiddler"

CENTRE STONES IN CORNISH CIRCLES

by Cheryl Straffon

In 'Meyn Mamvro' No. 3 Calum McIntosh mentioned the angle of the Boscawen-un Circle centre stone, and how the bevelling could indicate the Candlemas (Imbolc) sunset through the quartz stone in the circle. Ian Cooke in his book "Journey to the Stones" (Men-an-Tol Studios, 1987) mentions that the centre stone has 2 axe-head carvings which are only visible when the first light of a midsummer sun strikes the stone. The stone itself points NE towards the direction of the midsummer sunrise, and 'Meyn Mamvro' reader Patricia Cox wonders whether the stone could be deliberately angled to act a kind of central arm of a gigantic sun-dial: the length of shadow its casts at different times would measure the passage of the sun throughout the year.

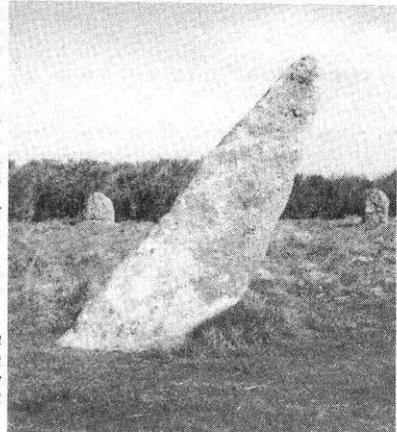
To check out these possibilities, I thought it would be interesting to compare other centre stones in stone circles to see if they are at an angle or not. The main difficulty is that centre stones in circles are the exception rather than the rule: of course it may well be that most stone circles originally had centre stones which have subsequently been destroyed, and as most stone circles have been rebuilt at some point in their history, the centre stone could have been omitted. But some circles, such as the Merry Maidens, which we know to have been little restored, never had a centre stone as far as we can tell. Of the other 14 or so extant circles in Cornwall, only 3 have centre stones - the Stripple Stones, the Hurlers Central, and the Nine Stones Alternun (all on Bodmin Moor), and in all three cases the centre stone is either fallen or has been subsequently re-erected.

Aubrey Burl (in "Stone Circles of the British Isles," Yale U.P., 1976) suggests that centre stones in Cornish circles may not have been built at the same time as the circles. He says that, if they precede the rings "such single stones could have an ancestry deep in the Neolithic when foundation sacrifices may have been placed at the foot of standing posts, which, whether carved or adorned with offerings, perhaps served as cult or phallic objects... investing them with an attraction unapparent in the bare, weathered and slumped pillars of today." That they may have been added later to the circles is suggested by Alexander Thom's observations that no centre stone stands at the exact centre of any site in the U.K.

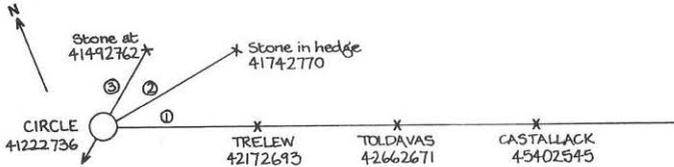
Outside of Cornwall the greatest concentration of centre stone circles lies in Southern Ireland where there are 11, and SW Scotland where there are 5 or 6. Other ones may be found at Avebury, Callanish, and Shropshire, but frequently they differ from the Cornish sites by having cremation deposits found at the centre stone. No significant angulation is found at any of the other sites, and in most cases the centre stone is either unshaped or unimposing and insignificant. Even in SW Scotland sites where the centre stone is bigger than the surrounding circle stones none of them are bigger than 1.6-1.8 metres high (less than 6ft.) whereas Boscawen-un central stone is 1.8m (6ft.) in length above the ground and would be 2.4m (7¾ft.) if upright. This would make Boscawen-un almost unique in the size and angulation of the centre stone (if indeed that angulation were deliberate and not the result of disturbance*) though an interesting comparison can be made with the stone circles of SW Ireland (Munster) many of which have central stones of quartz (e.g. Currebeha) a link with the quartz stone standing S.W. in the Boscawen-un circle. Burl comments: "Cornwall would seem the most probable source for the introduction of centre stones in south west Ireland possibly by copper prospectors or traders. People knowing of Cornish circles like Boscawen-un with its large quartz pillar... could well have added such a feature to the otherwise alien recumbent stone circles they encountered in Cork and Kerry."

So, West Penwith may be the prototype of central stones elsewhere, and may indeed be the matrix from which others were copied, albeit less spectacularly. The centre stone at Boscawen-un holds its mysteries, but repays much closer study than it has hitherto received.

**The earliest reference to the circle by Camden in 1594 does not mention that the central stone is inclined (but he does not say it is not), and the earliest drawing by Borlase (in 1796) has the central stone in the current position.*



BOSCAWEN-UN ALIGNMENTS



Boscawen-un Circle

1) Lockyer (1911) first noted an alignment between the circle and Trelew longstone marking the November (Samhain) sunrise, which if extended backwards through the centre and quartz stones would mark the February (Imbolc) sunset, mentioned in the previous article. John Michell (1974) continued the sunrise line to include a couple of fallen stones and on to Toldavas boulder and Castallack standing stone. This standing stone has a curious pattern of cup marks (unique to W. Penwith stones), 7 in one line with 2 underneath (see photo below). It is interesting to speculate whether this may not be a megalithic map of the alignments (viewed the other way round) illustrated above.



Castallack cup marked stone

2) This alignment was first noted by Lockyer to mark the midsummer solstice and runs from the circle to a stone in the hedge (4174/2770) on the lane to Boscawen-un farm. This hedge stone is triangular in shape (viewed pointing to the May moonrise in the photo). It has a twin in the corner of the field on the opposite side of the lane, not noted before.



Triangular stone in hedge

3) Lockyer believed this stone (4149/2762), three fields away from the circle, marked the rise of the star Capella in 2250 BC approx., but intervening high ground makes this unlikely. Michell noted a ley between the stone and the circle leading to another stone(?) marked on the 6" OS map at 398359, but a 3 point ley with one doubtful point is not terribly convincing.



Standing Stone in nearby field

4) Michell noted other leys from Boscawen-un, but the best of these, involving two outliers of the circle at 4041/2721 and 4031/2719, is now unfortunately non-existent, the two stones in question having been wantonly removed in recent years.

BOSCAWEN-UN circle is illustrated in a linocut by Ian Cooke reproduced on the back page. The picture represents dawn on the longest day at the circle, the start of the day in which the male energy of the Sun will penetrate the 'skin' of Mother Earth at maximum strength. Yet at the same time the Moon lies ready to begin to consume the Sun once His day of climax has passed and He commences His slow predestined journey of decline towards midwinter. The energy of the Sun strikes the great centre stone and this power is radiated out into the landscape to ensure that all things may grow on before the onset of winter. Female energy is derived from the everpresent Moon who although subservient to the Sun at this time of year, still keeps Her hold around the circle while channelling Her energies through the single quartz stone - the representative of the Underworld and a reminder that all living things must pass through the stage of Death before Rebirth can take place.

(c) Ian Cooke linoprint & interpretation. Reproduced with permission.

WHERE STONES TOUCH THE SKY

BY HELEN WOODLEY

Helen Woodley has been living in Herefordshire for the last 6 years where she is a partner in a small horticultural enterprise, the business being structured so that time can be devoted to earth mysteries and ecological interests. She is particularly concerned with the horrors of ongoing archaeological destruction, and gives talks and slide shows on this theme. Moorlands have always held a particular fascination for her, and although West Penwith is relatively new territory, she has become very excited by its atmosphere and relatively good state of physical preservation. Here she presents her findings on some of the sites on West Penwith moors.

This article is intended both as a celebration of the beauty of thought that went into megalithic construction and as a plan to all field researchers that their observations are carried out with the same degree of precision as that which went into the design of the sites in the first place.

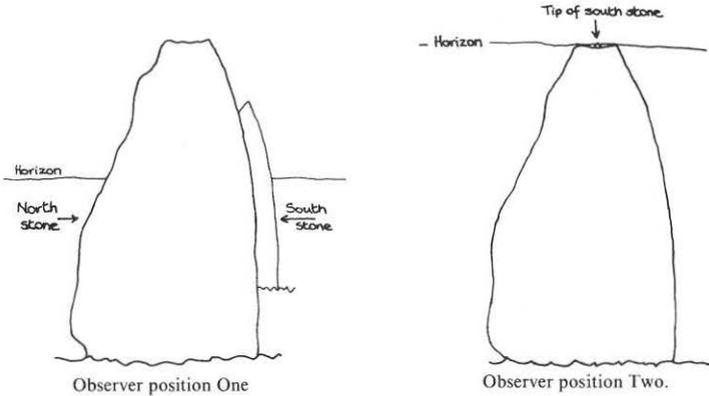
Earth mysteries terminology is currently rather confused. I personally would like to restrict the word "ley" to its Watkinson sense of "a visual alignment with three or more mark points" and shall use it with this meaning.

We must also be careful not to make too many assumptions about leys and other alignments. Two common errors are that alignments are assumed to run from (or to) the centres of stone circles (they may do, but not always) and that they are assumed to be viewed from a standing position (again, they may be, but not always).

Also I sometimes find that the most commonly photographed angle of a megalithic site may be its most photogenic position but not necessarily the one of prime significance.

The Merrivale stone row on Dartmoor, for example, is most obviously photographed looking down its length, but I believe there are also some important observations to be made in a crosswise direction, looking northwards. How many folks have studied the row from this angle?

On the other hand the two menhirs at Drift in West Penwith are perhaps usually photographed one to left, one to right of the picture. But the wonder of this site is in fact in its alignment, with the tops of the two stones 'boning' with the horizon to the south with remarkable precision.



From position One it can be seen that the nearer menhir is flat topped (with slight irregularity) and the further one has a pointed tip. This pair of stones were placed on a S.E. slope so that as the observer walks away from them N.W. she will reach position Two where the nearer stone totally conceals its partner apart from its very tip, and it is at this point that both stones precisely touch the horizon. Note that, because of the nature of the sloping ground, any observer can view this from a standing position, regardless of their personal height.

I hope it is clear from my drawings that, at observer position Two it is possible to move a short distance to left and to right and thus obtain two distinct precise alignments to the horizon, as well as the central position illustrated. I suspect that due to the parallel nature of the right hand edges (West facing edges) of the stones as viewed from this angle the major intended alignment from this site is from the "tip at right" position.

The stones themselves tell you where to stand. This guideline is well worth remembering as it can be applied at sites widespread over South West England and indeed perhaps at many or most major megalithic sites throughout Western Europe.

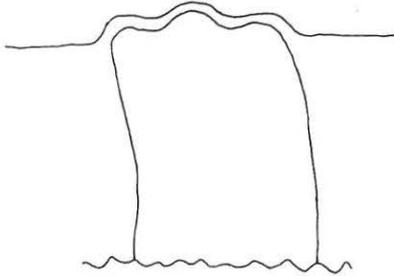
Using this guiding principle it is possible to discover or to refine alignments with a much greater degree of precision than by merely assuming, for example, that leys run out from the centres of stone circles. As the reader will have realised, it is also possible, using this principle, to have two-point alignments: third point being the position of the observer. One can hardly therefore call them leys in Watkins' sense, as the third point will not be found on any map!

If I may take you out to Dartmoor again for a moment, I'd like to tell you of another delightful two-point alignment, and my discovery of a convention applied by the ancient designers of stone circles.

A good hour's walk out of Postbridge over the moor stands the magnificent pair of stone circles known as the Grey Wethers. On a clear day (mine was close to the winter solstice) it is possible, looking southwards (again) to see Believer Tor on mid horizon, just over four miles away, with this silhouette:

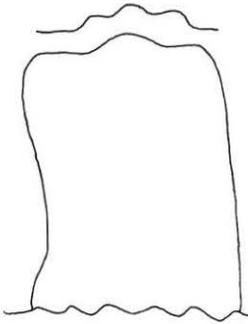


And one of the most southerly stones of the southern circle has the same shape when viewed with the Tor behind it.

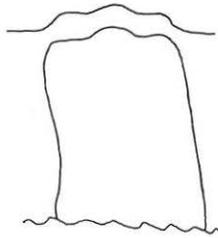


A beautiful reflection in stone: do go and look for yourself. If you'd like to actually discover the design convention I have mentioned, please stop reading at this point for the time being.

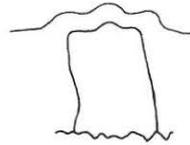
It will be appreciated from the drawing (left) that the Tor and its stone reflection will move out of phase one with the other as the observer moves towards or away from the stone. The observer position from which the two are most nearly in phase is on the further perimeter of the same circle. Not diametrically opposite but on the eastern side, and conveniently in a gap between two stones.



Observer within circle
(out of phase)



Observer on perimeter
(in phase)



Observer beyond circle
(out of phase)

This then is the observable design convention. Using it, even a single standing stone, if part of a circle, may indicate, with precision, the observer's intended position from which to view a horizon feature. Here again is a precise visual alignment that is not, in the absence of other known mark points, a ley in Watkin's meaning of the word. The one inch O.S. map does however suggest at least another stone circle on the alignment, establishing it as a ley feature that certainly warrants further investigation.

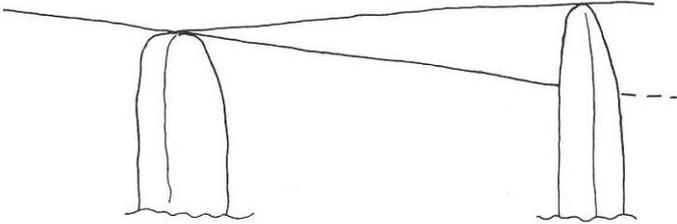
It will be apparent that, unlike at the Drift menhirs, where the observer's position is variable according to personal height, here the observer's position is fixed and a tall person must bend slightly if the stone is to exactly cover the Tor in an equivalent manner to the northern Drift stone covering the southern one.

If this observation at the Grey Wethers is a design convention then it should exist at other sites too. Let's look at Tregeseal, already familiar to Meyn Mamvro readers. There is indeed an equivalent stone here, the one on the north of the circle that reflects Carn Kenidjack in shape. But the convention is a different one in this case, the relevant viewing position being from close to ground level at or very near the centre of the circle. That's fine; but what of my perimeter convention hypothesis? The convention is there all right but it so happens that it doesn't apply to that particular stone. Again, if you'd like to go and discover it for yourself, please stop reading here.

At Tregeseal I was able to position myself so that two adjacent stones on the eastern side of the circle just touched the further horizon, or to be exact, the further horizons. It is a typical feature of stone circles, if not in too ruinous or restored a condition, that from various observer positions one is able to 'bone' tops of stones (not necessarily adjacent ones) with the horizons beyond. Indeed, sometimes, as I have already

shown in the Grey Wethers example, the very shape of the stone, or the angle of its top face, is making a clear statement to the observer: or shall I say participant?

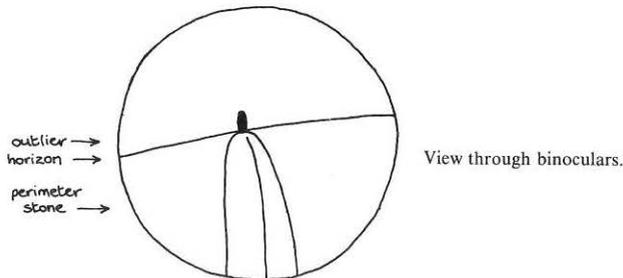
The Tregeseal stones speak perhaps with a more subtle voice but their intent is equally clear. The pair in question, one rounded, one pointed, both touch the horizons together at only one observer position, due to the slope of those horizons.



My recollection is that from my personal height of 5 foot 8 inches I had to bend slightly to observe this horizon-touching position but to my delight (I'm sure you will have guessed) I found myself standing once again on the perimeter of the circle and again not diametrically opposite.

I then realised that, in the absence of a significant horizon feature (such as Bellever Tor at the Grey Wethers) two stones are required in order to fix the observer's position, assuming a range of personal height. This is analogous to the situation at Drift site except that here at Tregeseal the pair do not align one with the other to a flat horizon but stand equidistant from the observer and use the horizon's slope to guide the observer to her correct position.

In a sudden flash of inspiration I then thought that the pointed stone of the pair could be **pointing at something**; and I looked through the binoculars. I guessed there might be an outlier on the horizon and indeed there was!



After scanning round to discover that this was the **only** outlying monolith visible from the circle I realised with much pleasure that my horizon-touching observations and perimeter convention hypothesis had suddenly brought me much closer to the minds, the thoughts and the intentions of our distant ancestors. There was also of course, the sheer delight of pure discover, and of a discovery that will surely prove useful both in ley research and in solar and lunar observations. Here was a precise alignment and it didn't go either through the centre of the circle nor strike it tangentially.

I must have been blessed by the benign spirits of the place that day as it was my good fortune that I had not looked up beforehand John Michell's discourse on the Tregeseal site. Had I done so I would have had prior knowledge of this horizon outlier (Michell's stone 35) and its indication from the circle of the May Day sunrise. Being aware of its existence might have affected my deductive process. More especially I wonder if I would have made the discovery at all if I had taken John's word for it that the outlier was apparently not visible from the circle! This mis-observation has in fact already been corrected in Meyn Mamvro (Issue 1). Perhaps I might comment here that the season has a lot to do with outlier visibility -

hazy summer skies and high vegetation are both unhelpful. My visit was in clear weather in early March, and as well as being ideal for observational purposes it was interesting to note the difference in vegetation inside and outside the circle. I just mention this here, perhaps to offer further thoughts on vegetational aspect at a future date.

The reader might be asking at this point, why the outlier? Once the perimeter convention and the horizon touching or 'boning' principle are understood and used, then the pointed stone of the pair indicates the alignment (to the sunrise) even in the absence of an outlier. There is an element of superfluosness intrinsic in the design. Were neolithic people offering us an extra feature so that we could be certain we were on the right track (literally as well as conceptually!)?

My guess is that the outlier added extra precision to solar observations and also was visible from sites not themselves intervisible and that this was important to the builders.

One might also suggest that the perimeter convention is superfluous, but this is not so unless the observer height is fixed. It is possible to speculate about a conventional standard observer height, say two megalithic yards. However, I really don't think it is likely that neolithic people used such a convention. The evidence at Drift and elsewhere suggests otherwise: that they appreciated and made allowance for differences in observer height. Anyway, they built these places to last and probably also realised that the ground surface level might change over the years or over the centuries. At Drift it is clear that there has been soil erosion, yet, marvellously, the site still functions as originally intended.

I hope I have convinced you well enough for you to want to watch the May Day sunrise not merely from "the Tregeseal Circle" but from that particular point on the circle indicated by my observations. I believe that the earth's axis wobble may affect the present day rising point but I certainly wouldn't put it beyond the scope of those imaginative and intelligent people to even build in a feature that made allowance for that too! It is also, I hope, apparent that now that we know the correct observer position with some precision this may enable a mathematician or astronomer to calculate the date of the circle's construction through careful measurement of the contemporary sunrise position.

Something else of great potential interest arises out of these observations. Did the two Drift stones once point to a now - destroyed monolith at the limit of visibility? Does Believer Tor (on mid-horizon, remember) indicate a yet more distant horizon feature or outlier? If we are able to postulate to archaeologists visual alignments with a greater degree of precision than previously, we might reasonably hope for them to respond with their latest research techniques, such as magnetometer surveys, which could help pinpoint sockets of previously unsuspected destroyed outliers. Even negative evidence could be of interest to us here.

It is reasonable also to suggest that once we have more fully understood the principles and the conventions behind the designs it just might be possible to say whether a restored stone has been put back in its correct position or not. With enough information we might even be able to build models of the lost circles at Tregeseal even down to the detail of the shapes of the stones.

Both Tregeseal circle and the Grey Wethers have unfortunately had the heavy hand of restoration upon them. But if you're thinking of suggesting to me that this may invalidate my observations I just might retort that perhaps the Victorians themselves had noticed, understood and applied these principles and the design convention in their own restoration work! Seriously though, my best information (from John Barnatt) is that although the 'Believer Tor' stone has been restored, the Tregeseal stones in question have not.

Finally, I wonder whether these new strands of evidence might help to convince the sceptics? One sometimes hears or sees the comment that stones are too big or the horizon too close for a precise ley or astronomical alignment to be determined. Much further research work is needed but I hope I have made a good case for suggesting that the key to precision is in the shapes, dimensions and spatial relations of the stones themselves.

Article & Drawings © Helen Woodley 1987.

A GUIDE TO HOLY WELLS & CELEBRATED SPRINGS IN WEST PENWITH

Compiled by Craig Weatherhill

ALSIA WELL, St. Buryan. SW 393251. Holy well, presumably of St. Beryana, with spring rising in a stone-lined recess and covered by a small stone building. Traditional healing and oracular powers. No trace now remains of the stone cross which once stood nearby.

ANJARDEN WELL, Sancreed. SW418287. Holy well. Natural spring, with just a few stones remaining of a rough superstructure. Properties unknown.



"Bartinney Well Enclosure"

BARTINNEY CASTLE WELL, St. Just. SW 394293. Seen by Dr. Borlase in C18, within NW quadrant of this enigmatic earthwork. The site is obscured and damaged by miners' trial pits, one of which often holds water and may be the well site. This pit is now surrounded by a little wall erected in 1985. No known properties, but it should be noted that Bartinney Castle is said to offer sanctuary from evil spirits, who cannot walk within its confines.

BONE VALLEY WELL, Madron. SW 456333. Holy well, once used for divination. Spring within a copse. No trace of former superstructure.

BOSPORTHENNIS WELL, Zennor. Holy well, once said to have been the equal of Madron Well in potency. The location of this well, along with its traditions, has been lost, but it may be that which exists near the stream and beside the track to the S of Bosporthennis Farm at SW 439363.

BOSULLOW TREHYLLYS WELL, Morvah. SW 409343. Stone-lined, bottle-shaped shaft about 15 feet in total depth, surrounded by a low stone cairn. It adjoins, and was formerly within, a large courtyard house settlement, and a saddle quern was found in it. At one time it served a row of cattlesheds which no longer exist.

CASTLE-AN-DINAS WELL, Ludgvan. SW 485350. Seen by Dr. Borlase in C18, within S quadrant of hill fort's inner, enclosure. Subsequently filled in, its site is now untraceable. It was formerly approached by a flight of stone steps.

CASTLE HORNECK WELL, Madron. SW 461302. Holy well. A strongly flowing spring approached by two steps within a small slate-roofing building. Two pillars mentioned by Quiller Couch have gone. A chalybeate well considered good for sore eyes. The writer has not visited the site since the mid 1970s, and has since heard that the site may have been demolished.



"Cross beside Sancreed Well Chapel"

CHAPEL DOWNS WELL, Sancreed. SW 418293. Holy well in a pine grove SW of Sancreed church-town. Steps lead down to water in an underground vault which does not extend beneath the chapel remains 10 feet away, as stated by a number of sources. A modern cross (1910) stands nearby. Clear, bitter water whose virtues were lost from memory, as was the well itself before its rediscovery in 1879.

CHAPEL JANE WELL, Zennor. SW 434382. Holy well, destroyed by cliff erosion, but spring still issues from the cliff-top just S of the chapel remains.

CHAPEL UNY WELLS, Sancreed. SW 399288. Twin holy wells in a pocket of the hillside W of the Carn Euny courtyard house settlement, and lying on either side of an ancient trackway (Vounder, Goggas, or Grassy Lane). At the larger, and better known well, seven steps lead down to the water which flows away under a large lintel as the infant Lamorna Stream. The opening of the well is surrounded by working stones from the former chapel of St. Uny which stood just a few paces to the NE. The water was considered extremely



“Steps down
to Chapel
Uny Well”

potent for all manner of ills, but only on the first three Wednesdays of May. Children were dipped 3 times against the sun and dragged 3 times around the well in the same direction. The water enters via an underground channel from the smaller second well just to the N, a stone-edged recess which is itself fed from an external source. The area has recently been cleared of choking vegetation by a nearby resident.

CHUN CASTLE WELL, Morvah. SW 405340. A stone-lined shaft, 12 feet deep, with a trough cut out of the bedrock at the bottom. For many years, it has been choked to within 6 feet of the top with loose stone torn from the castle walls. It contains clear, still water which, according to an end-note in Margaret Courtney's "Cornish Feasts and Folklore," endows the drinker with perpetual youth.

COLLURIAN WELL, Ludgvan. SW 523347. Holy well. A chalybeate spring, said to be unusually rich in iron, sulphur and naphtha. Slight traces of the former superstructure remain. Situated in a tree-hung dell, it was the most powerful of West Penwith's wells for curing eye diseases. A Cornish derivation cannot be found for the name: could it be the Greek **kollurion** - eye-salve?



“Cot Valley Well - with flowers”

COT VALLEY WELL, St. Just. SW 365305. Holy well? Beside a track near a footbridge over the stream, and steps lead down to clear water. The well is apparently nameless and although its virtues are not remembered, offerings of flowers are still left here.

DRUIDS' WELL, Zennor or Towednack. Exact location unknown but said to be within 1/2 mile or so, and to the S or SE, of Zennor Quoit. Mentioned by Hunt, Folliott-Stokes and Meyrick, it may be in the Amalveor Downs/ Mill Downs/Lady Downs area, or it may be one of the springs at the head of the Foage valley. See also the Giants' Well.

FAIRY WELL, Towednack. Mentioned by Hunt in his retelling of the legend of Barker's knee. Location unknown, but it might be the well in the fields N of Breja Farm at SW 488385.



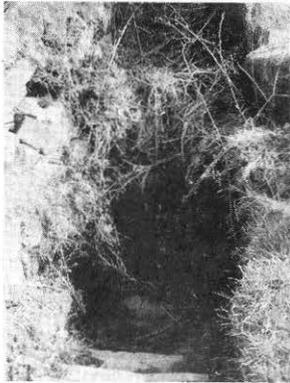
“Giants Well”

GIANTS' WELL, Trencrom, Lelant. SW 520363. A deep shaft (at least 50 feet) under a padlocked iron plate on the lower E slope of Trencrom Hill. The mouth is enclosed by three large slabs set on edge, two of which carry the supports of a former bucket winch.

GIANTS' WELL, Zennor or Towednack. Often mentioned in association with the Druid's Well (q.v.). Its location is also lost, but is probably in the same area as the Druids Well.

GOLDHERRING WELL, Sancreed. SW 412282. A few yards E of the enclosed courtyard house settlement of Goldherring. Now concreted around and capped with an iron cover, the well is in a sunken enclosure edged by a horseshoe-shaped wall which might be an original feature of the site.

GULVAL WELL. SW 486317. The Holy Well of St. Welvela, sometimes the Gulf Well, was on Fosses Moor to the S of Gulval church. It has been totally destroyed. Famed for its oracular powers, a chapel once stood near it. The site is now within a pasture field.



"Higher Boscaswell"

HIGHER BOSCASWELL WELL, St. Just. SW 387341. Known as "The Fountain," this well stands beside the track from Pendeen to the North Road, near the fir plantation. Four steps lead down to clear water which flows away to the north from the stone-lined recess.



"Entrance to Higher Kerrowe Well"

HIGHER KERROWE WELL, Zennor. SW 463362. Beside Kerrowe Cottage and alongside the ancient Tinnars' Way. The spring (source of the Trevaylor Stream) rises in a small grotto within a sunken, walled enclosure entered from the S by steps. Square niche over well opening; another to the right. Parish boundstone at foot of steps. A small iron gate bars the well opening.

LEAH WELL, St. Buryan. SW 407276. Water flows via stone-lined underground channels (extent unknown) through a small subterranean chamber reached by a narrow flight of steps. No known powers.

LOWER BOSCASWELL WELL, St. Just. SW 377347. Holy well, also known as the Hesken Well (*hesken* - sedge), within a rectangular cairn-like enclosure. Steps lead down to the well which once contained leeches. A chapel once stood about 400 yards to the NE.

LUDGVAN WELL. SW 503331. Holy well, destroyed by building development, although water still runs. It was said that those baptised in its waters would never be hanged, and it cured eye complaints before the Devil spat in it.



"Madron Well"

MADRON WELL. SW 446328. Holy well. Stone-lined spring in thicket, 100 yards SW of chapel remains. Powerful oracular and healing virtues, with documented instances of miraculous cures (John Trelil etc.) Votive rags are still tied to the surrounding bushes.

MORVAH WELL. SW 401359. Holy well. Stone-lined spring, probably destroyed by erection of concrete pumphouse over it. Foundations of the chapel, probably that dedicated to St. Morwetha, traceable 20 yards to the N. The well water, said to possess potent healing properties, was formerly used for baptisms at Morvah church, to which an ancient green lane leads.

NANCEGLOS WELL, Madron. SW 452313. Holy well. Large stone trough and chute in an oval recess in the hedge. Fast flowing water, said to be excellent, but no other known virtues.

PORTH CHAPEL WELL, St. Levan. SW 381219. Holy well of St. Selevan. Small, roofless building of large granite blocks (recently consolidated) built on a huge, unhewn slab which covers the spring. The well is near the top of an ancient flight of steps leading down to the two-roomed chapel of St. Selevan, on the ledge above Porth Chapel beach. The well was effective against toothache and eye conditions, and the patient was afterwards to sleep in the saint's chapel. The water is occasionally used for baptisms in St. Levan church nearby.

SENNEN WELL. Holy well, mentioned by Hunt in the Arthurian legend of the Battle of Vellandruchar. Its location is unknown. A witch, emptying the well against the hill, conjured a westerly gale to strand the invaders' ships above high-water mark. The site of this well may have been on the uphill side of the Old Success Inn at SW 355263, and it might have been associated with the destroyed Chapel Idne.

TRENCROM CASTLE WELL, Lelant. SW 517363. Spring within an artificially enlarged recess in natural outcrop, just outside hill fort rampart and reached by a concealed path through the rocks. Signs of an overflow channel and a pool surrounding wall.

VENTON BEBIBELL, Gulval. SW 429352. 200 yards S of the Four Parishes Stone, and against E side of an old hedge. Large slab set on smaller stones over spring which is the source of the Newlyn River. Former Good Friday practice of baptising dolls, which might explain the name: **fenten byghan bobel** - well of the little people.

VENTON EAST, St. Just. SW 373316. Holy well of St. Just (fenten Ust). Super-structure destroyed, but water still issues.

VENTONEGGA, Gulval. SW 440353. Spring issuing from old mine adit a steep slope of Tredinnick Common, hence its name: **fenten ogo** - cave spring. No known virtues or traditions.

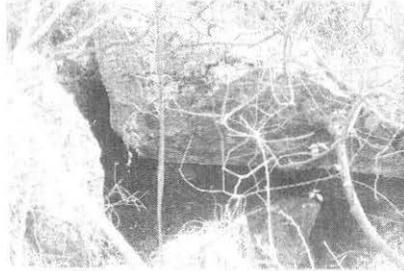
VENTON IA, St. Ives. SW 515407. Holy well of St. Ia (fenton Ya), situated above Porthmeor Beach. Clear water within restored superstructure.

VENTON JEAN, Madron. Name of a long-vanished smallholding adjoining N side of A3071 at SW 435312. There is a spring by S side of the road 100 yards to NW. The name is **fenten yeyn** - cold spring, and no traditions survive. The site was once nicknamed "Beggars Boys."

VENTON SAURAS, Lelant. SW 542369. Holy well? In grounds of "The Abbey," Lower Lelant. Basin beneath impressive two-stage structure dated 1612. Derivation of name and traditional virtues unknown, but its waters were once in great demand.

VENTON UNY, Lelant. SW 536386. Holy well of St. Uny, in nutgrove on coastal slope below railway. Small stone trough carved out beneath natural outcrop and reputed to be a wishing well where wishes must be confined to thought and not spoken aloud. Also known as the Fairy Well.

VENTON VISION, St. Ives. SW 507406. Spring, about which little is known, except that it was considered important enough to have its name given to the adjoining farm. Derivation of name unknown.



"The re-discovered Venton Zennor"

VENTON ZENNOR, Zennor. SW 460382. Holy well of St. Senara, lost for many years but, like Ventonegga and Venton Bebibell, rediscovered by the writer. Massive block of granite, trigged up at the corners on small stones, over spring and surrounded by a small pool which overflows to the S.W. It is in a heavily grown-in area on the lower slopes of Zennor Carn.

Feature (c) Craig Weatherhill
Photos (c) Cheryl Traffon (1 & 2)
Craig Weatherhill (3,5,7,8 & 9) &
Tony Bayfield (4 & 6).

FURTHER READING

- Quiller-Couch, M.L.: *Ancient & Holy Wells of Cornwall* (1894). Of historical interest.
- Lane-Davis, A: *Holy Wells of Cornwall* (Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, 1970). 150 wells listed in areas, 10 from W. Penwith, 30 pages of Photographs.
- Meyrick, J: *A Pilgrims guide to the Holy Wells of Cornwall* (1982). 192 Wells listed alphabetically (17 or so from W. Penwith) plus introduction. 2 pages photos.

Secret Shrines

SECRET SHRINES by Paul Broadhurst - £34. A specially produced limited edition of 500 copies, each one individually numbered & signed by the author. An entertaining & informative ramble around remote Cornwall in search of the old wells and remnants of their ancient sanctity. Includes 20 full colour photos plus 20 sepia photos together with Victorian sketches & engravings. Subscribing now for publication early 1988. Details & prospectus from the Author, Trebeath, Egloskerry, Launceston. Cornwall. PL15 8RY, or direct from 'Meyn Mamvro'.

SPIRITS AT SACRED SITES



In the last 'Meyn Mamvro'Su French wrote about the Faery Folk of Cornwall. In this article Jo May, co-ordinator of CAER at Rosemerryn, takes the theme one step further by offering some guidelines for communicating with, and being receptive to, spirits at ancient sites.

From the outset it is important to adopt an "as if" frame of mind. So if you're sceptical about whether spirits exist at all, then try to approach the subject "as if" there was something in it. Of course spirits, ethereal forms, powers and presences, devas and fairies are nonsense, delusions, and merely figments of the imagination. Nevertheless, act "as if" they are really there, and then see what happens. Then, instead of dismissing any phenomena you encounter as purely subjective, allow ambiguity to flourish. Don't chop things off with reason. Give space for the growth of the nebulous and bizarre. Then after the event, come back to it again with reason.

Methods of communicating range from those using a "tool" as an intermediary, such as a Ouija board or Dowsing tool, to more directly perceived contact. How easy you find each method will depend on how sensitive you are to the frequencies at which these energies are vibrating. Set a pendulum swinging and "ask" it to show you your "yes". Note any change of direction, and then repeat for "no", "don't know" and "I won't answer that". Stay relaxed and trust what is happening. A pendulum can be a very useful tool and there are good books on how to use them. Automatic writing is another device that I have found fruitful. Approach a site with respect, seek permission of its guardian to be there, and ask whatever guidance you want about what seems to be important for you at that time, and then just write whatever comes without censoring.

Harder to trust, and yet ultimately the most rewarding methods rely on using your own body directly as a channel of communication. The dowsing tool is, after all, only an amplifier of your own bodily response. So tuning in on a frequency that yields more direct information can be more efficient. I'm talking about your inner eye and ear. If you imagine you can see something, don't dismiss it as "merely your imagination". Act "as if" something out there is interacting with your capacity for generating pictures. Maybe it's the only way it can communicate with you. Or, act



“as if” your inner voice isn’t just you talking to yourself, but something external to yourself activating your capacity for internal speech. Once you begin to trust it, you can use your imagination to actively contact spirit forms. Trust what leaps into your imagination. Trust what it seems to be saying to you and go with it as far as it will take you. Then afterwards, see if it actually makes any sense to you. Allow yourself the experience. Analyse it later.

Treat everything that happens both to you and within your immediate environment as significant - a puff of wind, a crow call, a falling leaf, an itch, a fleeting emotion. Notice what is happening at the periphery of your vision, in the space right at the edge of your visual field where, if you rotated your eyes any further, you’d be looking inside your own skull. Curious things happen at the edges between worlds. It is probably useful to assume that whatever you encounter is an energy field which communicates its essence by stimulating in you the perception of an archetypal form. Fairies may not really be little people with gossamer wings and red hats, but our perception of them that way may correspond most closely to their essence and how they would have us see them. A spriggan might really be nothing more than a nobbly swirl.

Always show beings you encounter respect. Honour them. Be humble. Don’t just bumble into whatever site they may be guarding. Ask them first. Every sacred site seems to have its guardian spirit. Wells seem to be guarded by slender female spirits about three feet high. Each of the twin wells at Carn Euny has one such spirit, and the well at Sancreed seems to have several. Spirits at wells seem willing to offer advice and healing. The fogou at Rosemerryn is presided over by three female spirits each about the same size as a human. They seem to be priestesses of some sort, and although their presence is generally benign, they will tolerate no nonsense. They let you know when you’re being self-centred or stupid! Spirits at hill forts tend to be imposing and may demand to know what your purpose is and who you are. Bartinney has a guardian

spirit which is about fourteen feet tall. Stone circles and hill forts seem to have guardians who initially make their presence felt at the periphery of their respective sites, usually at gateways or obvious entrances.

It is possible to summon some form of spirit almost anywhere in the countryside. The native Americans stamp their feet and call the little people to bless the site where they intend to stay. You can use little bells, Druids' Bells, musical instruments, or simply clap your hands, or use your voice, or intent of will.

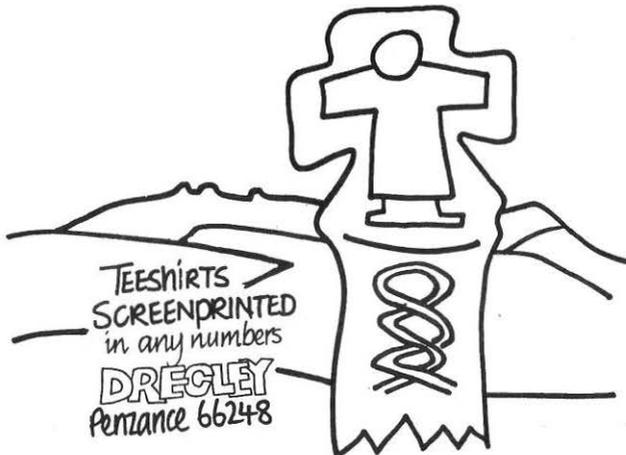
I'd like to finish with an example of an interchange I had whilst using automatic writing with the guardian of the well at Santry, near St. Buryan. It includes things which I would not have thought of myself, and so, for me at any rate, has a ring of authenticity.

"It has been a long time since man was here to honour me. Only the cows come. I thank you for remembering me and this place... Men lived here many years ago. They held this place sacred because of the waters... This water purifies. There are rich veins in my body and my blood flows pure to wash the valleys... feed my beings... give life to my lushness. The blood that was here is washed away by me. I restore the peace and balance to the works of men that have destroyed. Now is the time when mankind must feel me in their bones and flesh. You need me to wash through you."

Article c Jo May

Painting c Penny Harris, Matrix

Penny Harris is an artist who now lives in St. Agnes after running an art gallery for many years in the Clith Gateway of Launceston town. She paints directly on to glass in reverse and her works have a startling luminosity and vibrancy, a feeling of movement and serenity all in one. Her subject matter shows an instinctive appreciation and response to the essence of nature and mother Earth, and her paintings include scenes of the egg source of life, the elements, an earth wedding, megalithic cromlechs, the Green Man, and the Serpent and the Dragon. An illustration of hers will adorn the new book by Paul Broadhurst 'Sacred Shrines', and Meyn Mamvro will have pleasure in reproducing this and other works in forthcoming issues, as well as complementing Jo May's article (above). A comment of hers ties in very nicely with this article: "One hummy sort of summer evening with the bees buzzing and the sun still quite bright I heard a voice. And I don't usually hear voices out of the blue. It told me quite clearly that I should sign my paintings Matrix. I had no idea what it meant until my husband told me it means something close to nature, a cavity where minerals are formed." Both Penny and her husband are followers of the Old Religion and the Ancient Ways.



CORN DOLLIES - A PAGIN ORIGIN

BY JAN GENDALL

Jan Gendall is married to Richard, well-known for his 40-odd years activity in the Cornish language field, and for his music which has done so much to promote Cornwall and its culture. Together they have spent the last 3 years renovating a star-listed medieval house, Tregrill, which they hope to turn into a Heritage Centre "Teere ha tavaz" (Land and Language) where people can come for free information, help and contacts on all matters Cornish. Jan is gathering a small private 'museum' of past artifacts, costumes, crafts, and Cornish books, and her love of folklore and tradition is reflected in this interesting article on the origin and meaning of Corn Dollies.

It is impossible to say when or where corn-dollies were first made. They are not confined to Cornwall, or even Britain, being found all over the world, from Mexico to Egypt. There were invariably made as harvest fertility tokens, and continued to be so in this country until the last century.

Nowadays, sadly, corn-dollies are regarded mainly as "arty-crafty" items, yet I was certainly taught to make them as a living tradition by my grandfather, and there are at least two men in Cornwall both in their eighties, who carried out this harvest custom with solemn ritual until rheumatism or loss of land put a stop to their activities.

It is thought that the original rites included human sacrifice to a spirit, which is quite possible, although there is no definite proof that this was the case. The local names do seem to suggest a pre-occupation with a "neck" or "head", and it is a well known fact that the decapitated head was an object of veneration to the ancient Celts. Indeed, the Cornish name for a corndolly is a PEDN YAR, or "chicken's head", and it was woven from the "neck" or last swathe of corn to be cut at harvest time.

The "neck" was cut at a "crying the neck" ceremony, which has been revived in a Christianised and very watered-down manner by the Old Cornwall Societies, who would no doubt frown upon the heavy drinking and slap-and-tickle that accompanied the festivities in former years.

Basically, allowing for slight regional differences, the ceremony of crying the neck runs thus:-

The coin is cut around the edges of the field working towards the middle, where the final ears are left standing. The head reaper cuts them, surrounded by his fellows, and he holds it aloft, with the cry of "I 'ave 'un, I 'ave 'un, I 'ave 'un," at which the others ask, "What 'ave 'ee? What 'ave 'ee? What 'ave 'ee? The head reaper then shouts, "A neck, a neck, a neck." Sometimes the neck is dipped to the ground, or raised to the heavens as the "cry" is made.

Then, in Cornwall at least, the head reaper has to run back to the house with the neck, pursued by his fellows, and chased by girls with buckets of water, who attempt to douse him thoroughly. (This is left out of the O.C.S. revival!) The weather the following year was thought to depend on the wet or dry condition of the reaper when he reached the house.

If he reaches the door without being wetted he can claim a kiss from either the maiden or the mistress of the house. It is here that we first encounter the idea of fertility, but in a much milder form than was surely once practised. A feast followed, known in Cornwall as GOOLDIZE, or DICKLYDIZE, words from the Cornish language signifying "Feast of the Ricks". Over the feasting table in some regions was hung a tash of flowers which conveyed the same rights as mistletoe at Christmas.

There was a traditional pudding eaten at such a time, rather in the manner of a Christmas pudding, and the usual drink was "lambs-wool", for which there were many recipes, but was basically cider or beer beaten up with raw eggs. At a later date the old name DICKLYDIZE came to mean a type of drink, its original meaning having been forgotten. Several harvest drinking toasts have come down to us, some reflecting the fertility aspect e.g.:-

"Health and prosperity, peace and good will
I always like kissing and so I do still"

Another, "Here's to the Black then" gives an echo of the Cornish name PEDN YAR. It was while this feast was in progress that the "neck" was plaited into the corn-dolly proper.

In most regions this votive offering was kept until the following harvest, or the grains from it mixed with the next sowing crop, but in Cornwall it was given to the best milk-cow, or the bull of the farm. Always it was associated with the idea of plenty, of strength and virility. The head reaper, who set the mowing pace had to be fit enough to keep his lead, for there are numerous reports of the No. 2 reaper cutting into his ankles if he showed signs of flagging.

Even women who in the middle ages did the mowing bent double with a sickle or reaping hook, and later in some places did the mens work with scythes were quite ruthless in their attitude to a leader who could not stand the pace. In a book published in 1896 there is mention of a conversation between 'Lisbeth Gendall and Becky Bownance about a failed attempt at "cutting into" the lead reaper, who in turn slashed at the hands of the contestant.

Dominance had to be fought for and was held only by the strongest, who ritually mowed the final neck for making the PEDN YAR.

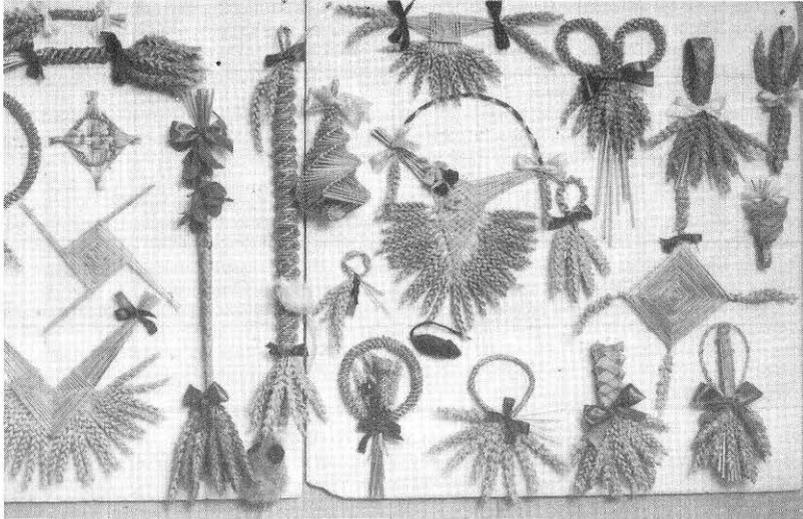
It is interesting to note that there is one Cornish reference to bearded wheat being singled out for the corn-dolly. Bearded wheat is usually considered to be of inferior quality, but one variety, EMMER, which was grown in the Iron Age (and is now being carefully cultivated at the Butser Ancient Farm Project Trust, and in a smaller way at Tregrill Veian) had a much higher nutritional value, although its bulk yield was less than that of modern crops. It is an ideal wheat for corn-dollies, with a creamy-white head on a very tall slender stalk.

Even in the last century, the non-bearded wheats were taller and more suitable for weaving than the thick, short stalked varieties grown by modern farmers.

The corn-dolly itself varied in design and weave from region to region, although a few popular types are found in many places, from Penzance to Durham. In some cases a distinctive style was found confined to one farm, and a great deal of questioning and elimination is necessary to discover which styles are general and which are unique to Cornwall.

Some, like the shoulder-high offering from St. Neot require less skill than the small, button-hole sized love tokens, given between sweethearts at harvest time, with the whole gamut of bells, drops, horseshoes, fans and crosses in between. One particular "kissing ring" was shown to me by a late Indian Queens farmer, who used several types of weave for the small flower-decorated circle (it could vary according to the skill of the weaver) the only criterion being that it was "big enough to kiss the maids through".

Baring Gould, in his "Book of Cornwall" makes reference to the loving harvest habits, and tells of a Quaker, preaching against "vain sports", and a convert who asks whether "making sweet hay with the



maidens" was forbidden. The answer came back "Naw, sure, that's a' in the way of Natur!" Baring Gould also tells of cords of hay, which were cast around girls necks, to draw them close for a kiss.

Although wheat is the most generally used straw for corn-dollies, barley, with a similar appearance to bearded-wheat can also be used for some designs, and a drinking toast-cum-middle was recorded in Cornish about barley, dating to 1728.

FLO VE GENNES EN MIZ MERH
NI TREHES E BIGEL EN MIZ EAST
E A ROS TOWEL DHŪ PROANTER POWLE
MIZ DU KEN NADELIK

"A child was born in March
We cut its umbilical cord in August
He gave a fall to the preachers of Paul
In the Black Month (Nov.) before Christmas"

It refers to the barley, tilled in March, reaped in August, the preacher of Paul drank barley-beer in November and fell over drunk!

There are many references to hard drinking at harvest time, both at the making up of the shocks or mows and at the Gooldize feast while the Pedn Yar was being made. Even the earliest written British poems, and the classical writers comment on the Celtic love of drink at festivals, and at feasts, far beyond what was considered usual by other nations. There is always a possibility that the first dollies were woven at LUGHNASA, the feast of Lugh on Aug. 1st. This feast is now Christianised as "Lammas" to mark the first cutting of the year's corn, so there does appear to be a connection although this is pure speculation, as there are no records of the first weaves, or weavers.

We can only be sure that whether corn-dollies were given as love-tokens between sweethearts, given to fertile beasts, or ploughed back into the soil, they were always made to invoke a spirit of fecundity, that a time of plenty might follow. It is for that reason that they are believed by many, even these days, to bring good luck.

Even those who are not superstitious can get a feeling of continuity when confronted with the centuries old craft of corn-dolly making, and even the most modern-minded person finds that a well placed corn-dolly in the home can be an object of interest, and a talking point.

She is with us still, the corn dolly - and will be for a long time yet!

Article and Photo © Jan Gendall

BOOK REVIEW

FESTIVALS OF CORNWALL - Douglas Williams (Bossiney Books, 1987 - £3.50)

This **ought** to have been a good general reference book covering the traditional festivals in Cornwall - certainly it is full of photographs (perhaps too many) and up-to-date information on days and places. However, like most publications from Bossiney Books which are aimed primarily at the tourist, it falls lamentably short of what it could be, resisting the temptation to give anything more than a superficial look at the subject matter. Douglas Williams promises an awareness of the Celtic spirit underlying the modern-day versions of certain festivals when he says: "It is vital to ensure that our genuine festivals are not allowed to degenerate into gimmick-laden entertainments, provided solely for tourist-bait and fund-raising", but then his handling of the festivals themselves is a disappointment. Most are modern and of those that are not there is little or no attempt to probe their origins or significance: Padstow's Obby Oss is described as perhaps originating in the C14th in response to a French landing party! No mention of the pagan death and rebirth symbolism of this or the Helston Hal-an-Tow. Again, Guy Fawkes Day has no mention of its original significance as the festival of Samhain when bonfires were lit to supply energy to the sun to return at the Spring festival of Beltane. The significance of Padstow's Obby Oss as a Beltane festival is also ignored! Altogether a very slight work, with little over 100 pages (less than half of which are text) and no index, the opportunity to give a deeper understanding of Cornwall's ancient traditions has not been taken up. (CS)



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**NEW AND SECOND-HAND BOOKS
OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY (ALL DAY) (EVERY DAY)**

Spirit of West Penwith

by Su French



“When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes.”

Such lines wrote Thomas Hardy after visiting the Lands End, for this is truly a magical land. When I sit on the green painted seat near Carn Glouce on a summers day and listen to the Earth's sounds, the sea crashing against the rocks below, bees buzzing for pollen in the heather, the call of the magpie, this is the heartbeat of the mother Earth and I cannot imagine a more peaceful place in the world.

There is an element of human nature which seeks out the spiritual meaning of life. Not everyone is conscious of it, but of those who are, many are drawn to Cornwall by some inexplicable web of spirituality thrown out by the land here. There are undoubtedly more beautiful places in Britain, but here there is a timeless quality to the land, an elemental beauty. Living in West Penwith one has the feeling of suckling at the breast of the mother who feeds us, and the food is nourishing to the spirit.

Here the great cycle of life can be seen in motion all around us, from the sun rising over the hills in the morning to its setting beyond the Western sea. The moon comes and goes in her varying positions, but we can be sure of her silver rays of protection through the hours of darkness. There is a feeling of great satisfaction from seeing the moonrise over Mounts Bay from the lofty vantage point of Chapel Carn Brea, and to see her shadow glide slowly and silently across the water.

The landscape changes entirely with each new season. Spring is my favourite time, when winter casts off her frosty mantle and the hedges are painted with the yellows, then pinks and blues of the spring flowers. The bracken on the moors, green and vibrant around Chun and Mulfra begins to uncurl and stretch its fingers skyward after the long winter sleep. Even the cliffs, once barren and rocky take part in this Spring awakening, and clothe themselves in a glorious mass of sea pinks and bluebells.

Summer is alive with visitors, and the land preens and boasts of untold secrets as they walk about the maze of footpaths. The ancient guardians of the stones must once again be aware of the sound of footsteps coming through the undergrowth. Late on a summer evening in Boscawen-Un or Men-an-Tol it is not difficult to imagine being there one hundred or one thousand years ago, for man has used these sacred places since ancient times. In summer for balmy days stretch into long languid evenings and one feels compelled to go out onto the clifftops to watch the sun as it glazes the clouds and sets a calm sea aflame. Autumn is a period of winding down. After the equinox the land of West Penwith goes contemplative and quiet. She rests after the intense period and reaping the harvest, and silently awaits the death of the sun god, the old year. Animals are seen scurrying around in their haste to hibernate.

Winter in Penwith is magnificent. Now the elementals take over. The sea comes crashing against the cliffs, bring huge boulders tumbling and rumbling onto the beaches. The fierce Atlantic gales shout unrelenting over the hills, into the ears of anyone willing to listen. In contrast, there are days of rest and calm, when the air is crisp and so very clear, and one can go out walking to renew the spirit, and to think ahead to the days when the earth mother must give birth to the sun god, and the cycle will begin again. Penwith is my home and my foundation. My roots are growing deep down into the Earth and the granite below for sustenance, and I stretch my branches up towards the sun and give thanks for my tenancy here.

THE NEW AGE DAWNS IN CORNWALL

"On August 17th, 1987, 144,000 Sun Dance enlightened teachers will awaken in their dream mind-bodies and the various winged serpent wheels will begin to turn, to dance once again, and when they do, the Rainbow Lights will be seen in dreams all over the world, and these Rainbow Lights will help to awaken the rest of Humanity."

So runs the prophecy of the Hopi Indian tribe, a prophecy celebrated at sacred sites all over the world on August 16th/17th this year (1987), including those in Cornwall, one thread in the spiders web of



cosmic harmonic and spiritual vibrations. It was also the time when ancient Mayan & Aztec writings predicted alignments that would mean the end of their particular calendars, and marshall in a new epoch, the first in 23,412 years. This spiritual enlightenment has been variously interpreted as meaning the real dawn of the age of Aquarius, the last chance for mankind to get things right for our planet, and the end of the old patriarchal world-structure to be replaced by the return to an age of feminine-based values.

Cornwall played her part in the observation of this special

day, from a rainbow party on the eve of the day at Sancreed in West Penwith, to ceremonial events on the evening itself at various sacred sites through Kernow, including Boscawen-un stone circle. The foremost one of these was at the Trippet Stones circle on Bodmin Moor, organised by spirit woman Marilyn Spicer (whose article in The Sacred Earth column appeared in MM No. 3). On a hot sultry afternoon people began to gather on the moor from all over Cornwall and elsewhere, and by the evening spontaneous music making from Webcore and others was taking place in the teepee erected by John Eagle close to the Trippets. At around 11 p.m. everyone gathered in the circle of stones, a fire was made, and together with flaming torches the moor was illuminated. As the stones flickered in the lights, the moon came up and the stars shone clearly on a circle of 70 or so people holding hands and chanting: "I am a circle, I am healing you, You are a circle, You are healing me, Unite us, be as one." Earlier in fact some healing ceremonies had taken place, which were to prove successful. At the suggestion of Dave Thomas from ASSAP, groups of people stood outside the circle, then each in turn tapped 'their' stone with a wand of hazel and broom to raise the energy, and the circle came alive with the humming of the stones and the people.

After a break to stretch legs, most people settled down to await the dawn (which was heralded with drumming and dancing and a burst of stellar activity), while others from West Penwith returned to greet a new age at the Merry Maidens stone circle. The circle had already been 'charged' up overnight by some drumming and pan-pipe music, so had a peaceful and expectant feel about it. Another ceremony was carried out there sending out waves of hope for the future, and then a small group settled down by the flickering light of torch fires to await the dawn, when they were joined by about a dozen more people. A circle was formed and some chanting done, and as the sky lightened over West Penwith and the stones, a feeling of deep communion with other centres was felt: it was as if the whole planet was breathing together in harmony for a few moments. The web was woven, the ebb was flowing. (CS).

The Piper's Tune

Cornwall Archaeological Society have recently issued their Silver Jubilee volume of 'Cornish Archaeology' 250 pages filled with a survey of pre-history in Kernow and Scilly, covering the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze-Age, Roman and Medieval periods. The chapter on the Neolithic in Cornwall by Roger Mercer is particularly useful for its lists on the pre-historic sites in readily referable format, but it does contain 2 major errors. In discussing the stone circles of West Penwith the author makes reference to two vanished circles as though they are still in existence. He says: "Tregeseal comprises a pair of surviving stone circles" whereas in fact no stones of Tregeseal Central (which he calls Tregeseal West) now remain, except a possible 2 or 3 incorporated into a hedge. It is evident that Mercer has taken his information from Barnett's 'Prehistoric Cornwall' (1982) which muddles up a drawing of the Tregeseal circles (Tregeseal East is wrongly labelled as Tregeseal West on p.163). Furthermore Mercer says "The circle at Boleigh is too ruined to add usefully to our discussion", whereas no trace whatsoever remains of Boleigh (near the Merry Maidens) not even in a ruined state, nor is there any record of it having existed after 1906 (by Lockyer in a third-hand report). All this only goes to show the necessity for archaeologists to actually visit the sites they are writing about!

But it is the chapter on 'The historical heritage: present and future attitudes' by Nicholas Johnson that contains some of the most worrying reading. Out of a total of 71 standing stones in Cornwall, a mere 12 are 'listed' and thus given some measure of protection, against a further 59 which are un-scheduled and thus could be removed at any time by an insensitive farmer or land-owner. Even in the case of 'scheduled' standing stones, their removal (as in the case of Chapel Carn Brea a couple of years ago) seems to occasion a nil response from the Inspectorate of Monuments and English Heritage. As many standing stones may be important points in a network of leys and earth energies, as well as being intrinsically important in themselves, the scheduling of **all** sites and their effective protection should be a matter of utmost urgency.

More archaeological controversy in Cornwall recently. Firstly, the 3 gold Bronze Age bracelets discovered on land at Rosemorran Farm near Gulval, and featured in the last M.M., are being sold by the owner Barrie Rodda, rather than being held at a Cornish museum, as was originally



rumoured. This is because farm-worker Tony Richards and his mother threatened to sue Barrie Rodda if they did not receive a reward for the finding of the priceless bracelets. The bracelets were exhibited at Penlee House for a couple of days in August, and it is hoped at least that replicas can be made and put on permanent display.

Secondly, what has been described as "the most important archaeological dig in the south-west for 20 years", a Bronze Age settlement at Trethellan Farm enar Newquay, has upset the mayor of Newquay, Derek James, because site director Jackie Nowakowski went on holiday instead of providing an exhibition of the finds. An offer to do an exhibition in November was dismissed because Derek James says he was inundated with calls for a display at the end of the dig itself. Jackie herself is tutor on an Evening Class this Winter on 'Prehistoric Lifestyles in Cornwall' organised by Exeter University F.E. The course is set around the settlements of West Penwith and being held in Redruth, well outside the area of easy access for anyone living in W. Penwith! Jackie herself lives in Penzance!

Finally, congratulations to Betty Figg & Craig Weatherhill, Cornwall's famous amateur archaeologist and Meyn Mamvro contributor, who were married in Penzance on September 5th, followed by a service blessing by the vicar of Pendeen at the Merry Maidens stone circle. Mind you, that was not without controversy as well, the original application to the Bishop of Truro being turned down, the Gorseth refusing permission for the wearing of the Gorseth robes (Craig is a bard, it being deemed "an occasion not important enough" (!), and some mutterings being made that it was sacrilegious to use a pagan site for a Christian service! (which is where I think we came in at the beginning of this Meyn Mamvro!) Anyway, none of this mattered on the day for the happy couple, pictured above, Craig in traditional Cornish dress.

EXCHANGE MAGAZINES

MEYN MAMVRO now exchanges with the following magazines which we consider are all worthy of support:

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ANOMOLOUS PHENOMINA

ANOMALY - journal of ASSAP. Sample copy £1.50 from Alan Cleaver, 65 Amersham Rd., High Wycombe, Bucks. (Annual: 2 issues £3)

THE MAGPIE - ASSAP Cornwall. For free copy and ASSAP membership details send SAE David Thomas, Plot 27, Penhale Estate, Strawberry Lane, Redruth, Cornwall.

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PAGANISM

THE CAULDRON - Pagan journal of the Old Religion (Annual: 4 issues £3.00) Mike Howard, Treforgan Mansion, Llangoedmor, Cardigan, Dyfed, Wales.

THE PIPES OF PAN & Pagan Parenting Network Newsletter (Annual: 4 issues £2.50 + 50p). Pagans Against Nukes, Blaenberem, Mynydd-cerrig, Llanelli, Dyfed, Wales.

WOOD AND WATER - A Goddess Inclined Eco-Pagan Magazine (Annual: 4 issues £3.40) Subs to 77 Parliament Hill, London NEW3 (Address: 4 High Tor Close, Babbacombe Road, Bromley, Kent.)

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