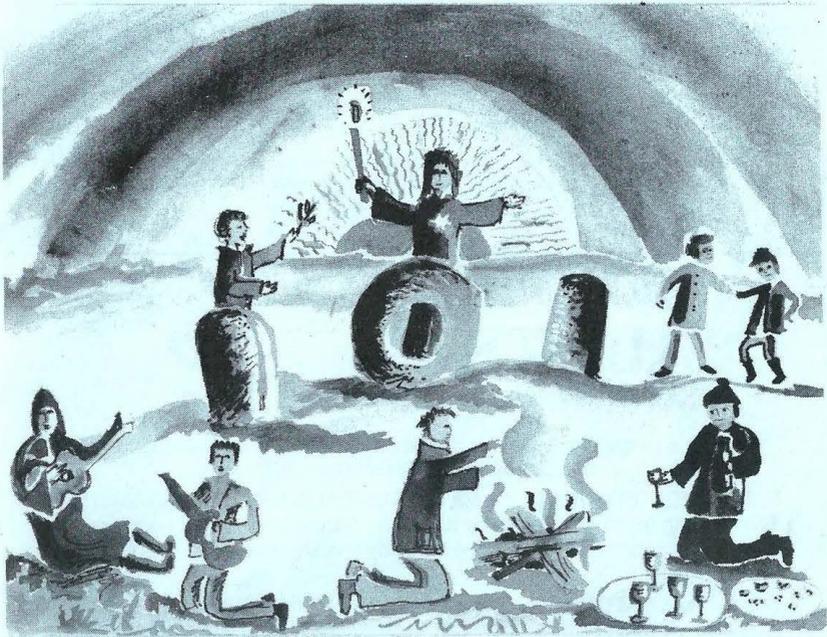


Meyn Mamvro

**ANCIENT STONES & SACRED SITES
OF WEST PENWITH.**

Issue 5. £1.20



**DOWSING THE EARTH ENERGIES
BRITTANY - PENWITH'S FRENCH CONNECTION
MAZES • ENTRANCE GRAVES • WELLS
LEYS & EARTH MYSTERIES • PAGANISM**

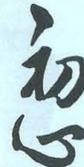
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Our grateful thanks to Gabrielle Hawkes for the front cover and Earth Goddess picture on p.23, Penny Harris for the picture on p.21, and Jan Adamson for the headings and artwork.

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One thing we have always been pleased and proud about at Meyn Mamvro is our wide cross-section of readers (excepting Mr. Williamson of the Wayside Museum in Zennor of course!), much broader than the average regional EM magazine with its band of devotees. Those readers include Professor Charles Thomas, Head of the Cornish Archaeological Unit and President of The Cornish Archaeological Society (though that is not to imply that he agrees with all of the magazine's contents!), as well as members of the Archaeological Unit itself, with whom your editor has close links, and who are refreshingly open-minded about earth mysteries and what they term 'alternative archaeology'. One archaeologist, upon seeing some corn offerings at a sacred site left by a local pagan group, even commented how nice it was to see the ancient sites still being used in such a caring and positive way! And another is very free-thinking about, for example, the use of Cornish fogous, suggesting they may have been used as a sanctuary for women during times of menstruation, and perhaps birth in the creep passages. A member of the Unit and myself (ed.) have been out together on field trips, and interest has been shown in some of the astronomical and 'earth magic' alignment at our sites. This communication can do nothing but good for mutual understanding, and is probably unique in the archaeological-EM fields, which seem generally beset with mutual contempt and intolerance. Meyn Mamvro also numbers amongst its subscribers foremost archaeologist Aubrey Burl who commented it was a "handsome production", and enjoyed the article on Cornish centre stones in the last edition. He believes they were probably earlier than the circle that encloses them which explains why so few of them are truly central, whereas John E. Palmer from the Netherlands believes they are contemporary with the surrounding circles because they are sited at intersections of the internal circle geometry and on alignments. You pays your money!

MM is also delighted to have as a reader John Michell, the man who began all the Cornish ley research in the 1960's, and author of such seminal works as 'The View Over Atlantis' which so influenced and stimulated a whole generation of ley-hunters and EM researchers, John has been particularly complimentary and encouraging about Meyn Mamvro, describing it as "a very valuable contribution, a precious record in Cornish archaeology... in the honorable line of Borlase, Blight, Halliwell etc." He adds that "it is wonderful that you are carrying on this work which I only outlined" (modest man is John Michell!) and believes MM to be "the leading mag in the field". Such praise is hard to live up to, but he has promised us a piece on a Penwith ley for a future edition, which will be eagerly awaited. Meanwhile we print part of his introduction to Paul Broadhurst's new book on Cornish wells on p.21 of this edition.

Finally, our thanks to all readers who wrote to us, Mr. Williamson, and the press about the Wayside Museum's nonsensical ban. Among the comments we received were that he has been "showing the same bigoted intolerance that has been the curse and misery of thousands all down the ages", that "a narrow-minded museum is no museum at all", that "people like that are a pest - we all spring from a common source, we take which pathway we chose and should live and let live", and that "Mr. Williamson should reflect on his decision, open up his mind, leap out of the dark, and stock Meyn Mamvro so that both visitors and locals may have a chance to read about paganism and the Christian era whilst at the same time learning about the wonderful beauty of West Penwith and that heritage which is ours." Oh, we did have one letter that started - "May Mr. Williamson be for ever praised!" and continued "If he had not banned Meyn Mamvro, resulting in the matter being raised in Peninsula Voice, I would not have discovered this fascinating magazine"!

What more can one say! Thank you Mr. Williamson!



INTO ALIGNMENT



TREGESEAL COMMON UPDATE

In the last MM (No. 4) Helen Woodley showed (in "Where Stones Touch the Skies") how a perimeter stone at Tregeseal circle is exactly level with the horizon when viewed from the opposite edge of the circle. And furthermore, how Bosawens menhir on the horizon is then perfectly in line with these stones. Bosawens is at the extreme edge of visibility from Tregeseal circle, and John Michell ('Old Stones of Lands End, 1974) claims that it is also possible to see the circle from the top of Bosawens menhir itself. Anyone who has ever tried this will, however, realise that the circle is not readily apparent from the stone! One might speculate that it is John's extra height that gave him a certain raised elevation, denied to the rest of us! In order to check this out properly, we waited for a clear bright day with no wind (rare in West Penwith!) so that viewing would be at maximum advantage. A flag on a long staff was erected at Tregeseal circle, and with the aid of binoculars was **just** visible with some difficulty from the top of Bosawens menhir at the extreme angle of the horizon. The circle itself with small stones blending into the gorse was not. This leads to a couple of possible conclusions: one, that the circle was not meant to be viewed from the menhir, only the other way round, where it would have marked the Beltane sunrise. Or two, perhaps it was intended to be viewed at night, when a fire lit in the circle would have been visible from the menhir.



Bosawens menhir itself is something of a curiosity. It seems to be linked in some way visually with Chûn Quoit, silhouetted on the next hill across, though no known leys run between the two. And last winter (1987) it displayed an unusual quality. In the heavy snows that West Penwith experienced the whole of Bosawens common was covered quite deeply, but at the stone itself there was a circular patch of green grass around the stone (see picture above). Could it be that in some way the stone itself was 'hot' enough to send out enough energy to melt the surrounding snow? Or does anyone have a more prosaic explanation?

Back to Tregeseal Common, a couple of possible alignments given speculatively in previous MM's can now be shown not to be deliberate. One, given by B.S. McMillan (in MM no. 3) across the Common does **not** cross the top of Kenython Hill, as a detailed study of the 6" map shows. However, it does point to the May Day sunrise, and therefore **all** the many parallel lines running across West Penwith and beyond found by B.S. also point to the May Day sunrise - a major finding for Earth Mysteries researchers.

The second alignment is that postulated by Calum McIntosh from the NE holed stone to a barrow on the horizon. However, we now know from Vivienne Russell (privately to the editor) that the holed stones are **not** in their original position. When viewed by her some 25 years ago, 4 at least were in a straight line, through much broken up. Evidently over the years they have been moved, and when cemented together by Egbert Rowe about 10 years ago were probably placed where he found the pieces. All reference works on West Penwith please note!

Finally, a brief mention of Tregeseal West circle, the so-called 3rd circle found from aerial photographs of cup marks. I (ed.) have now had an opportunity to study these original photos, and am by no means convinced of the reality of a 3rd circle here. The pattern is of a number of small circles, bisected by a line, which looks far more like a small hut circle cluster! I think there needs to be more research before we assume, as writers have since done, the existence of a triple circle complex on Tregeseal Common. (CS).

DOWSING THE EARTH ENERGIES

BY HAMISH MILLER

Hamish Miller is a local blacksmith working at Lelant. He has done a great deal of dowsing work in W. Penwith and elsewhere, and often gives talks and workshops on healing and dowsing. He is a lecturer at St. Austell and Falmouth on alternative medicine, and has broadcast on radio and T.V. He works with the Fountain Group and is also currently researching a book on dowsing with Paul Broadhurst, whose new book on holy wells is featured on p.20.

I shall never forget the moment of magic when my newly forged rods moved and crossed on the lower slopes of Trencrom.

I had been to a talk by Colin Bloy, a man of many talents and founder member of the Fountain Community Healing idea, on the subject of "Healing and Ley Lines". Colin has been dowsing energies for many years and is far beyond having to use the tools of the trade — rods or pendulums — to get accurate results on the interpretation of energy fields around people and their environment.

I watched this man delicately defining auras, chakras and earth energy fields, his fingers moving swiftly and lightly in a confident appraisal of the shape and form of things about which I had previously heard only vague references.

At the end of the afternoon I approached him with some diffidence telling him that I lived in the West Penwith, an area with sacred places, standing stones, circles, holy wells and a compelling pull on certain people to return, live, and learn again some of the secrets that, as a matter of course the Old People knew for their survival. I asked him if he knew of a dowser in the area with whom I could work to find out more about the strange Penwith energies which had fascinated me for upwards of thirty years. I was disappointed when he looked at me and said "You can do it yourself".

My immediate reaction was of rejection from the fresh new area of thought which just opened up and I left that afternoon with mixed feelings of intrigue, bewilderment and subdued excitement and a certainty that this was a concept much too important to ignore.

He was right, of course. "You can do it yourself" niggled in the back of my mind for weeks while I was beating hot iron in the forge and late one afternoon when the fire was going really well I picked up a couple of lengths of $\frac{3}{8}$ " rod and, inspired by visions of Vulcan, hammered out a pair of heavy dowsing rods for use in the windswept West Penwith — an act which completely changed my life.

*The Author Dowsing at the Merry Maidens
(Photograph ©Paul Broadhurst)*



With great care I polished them, lacquered them, laid them down on the bench and admired them, handled them, laid them down again, started another job, afraid to take them out to try in case after all Colin was wrong and they didn't work. Finally into the car and up towards Trencom. Legend has it that there were two giants, one living on Trencom and the other on St. Michael's Mount, who were great friends. They had only one hammer and used to throw it to each other if either of them needed it. How else could the Troubadors describe the massive exchanges of energy between these two powerful mystical sites? The story goes on to describe the tragedy that led to the quarrel between the giants and the breakdown of the friendly exchange resulting in the reduction and perhaps cessation of the flow of power.

It seemed possible that there might be a residual effect from the Old Ones, neglected for countless years, but surely still active from the accounts of so many people who find peace and healing in quiet contemplation on top of the hill.

I walked around the base of the Hill Fort, rods pointing in front, hands nervous, knees weak, but with a deeply entrenched certainty that something was there — a feeling of involvement with something beyond the five senses. For some minutes nothing happened, and I began to despair that I may not be able to take part in the exploration of these strange matters. Then in a moment of pure joy and a sense of wonder that brought tears of exhilaration, the rods moved positively round and crossed on the first energy line I had been able to find.

Six feet further on I found a second line and beyond that another which barely registered. Two hours and miles later I had crossed and recrossed the line in fifty places, always finding the same configuration and on marking the points on a map discovered that the line went directly from the top of Trencom to St. Michael's Mount. It was the beginning of a dramatic, intriguing, tantalising relationship with what I now believe is our planets *Gia's* nervous system.

A few weeks later I was enthusing with another dowser on the fact that the line still existed and in the course of demonstrating the configuration found that there now appeared to be five lines where originally there had been two and a bit. An intensive period of dowsing and recording followed and within a couple of months the line seemed to have re-established itself with eight clearly defined separate bands with a total width of approximately six feet. In some way the strength of the line seemed to be responding to an awareness that it existed and it was now possible for many people who had never dowsed before to get a positive reaction to the energy field. They were picking it up naturally and without guidance as to where it was and one of the great pleasures of this work is to watch the expressions on the faces of people who realise that the rods are moving apparently of their own accord.

About this time I had learned that dowsing rods can be used holding the handles together and looking along the two like sighting a rifle. Trying this on the side of Trencom one clear morning I took a look confidently expecting to see St. Michael's Mount in the sights only to find to my dismay the line was miles out. A few yards further on the line appeared to be pointing in another direction and when there

appeared to be no consistency from various points I thought that perhaps the technique was wrong or that I had lost the capacity for accurate dowsing. On looking again it became obvious that in the reverse direction the lines consistently pointed to a particular rock at the top of the hill and after circling the hill and identifying the rock it was possible to locate what was palpably the earth energy centre of this powerful sacred site. From this point energy lines, forty eight in all, unequally spaced, radiated from the source like the spokes of a wheel, discernable at least two hundred yards away. Also starting at the source was a colossal right hand energy spiral, starting closely together at the centre and winding out becoming weaker until it covered most of the area round the hill. It was an exciting discovery and triggered a whole new series of checks to find out variations if any caused by time of day, moon movements, weather etc. and provided the basis for further work in dowsing some of the secret enigmatic power sources which abound in the Penwith.

They have to be treated with respect and care, approached with love and humility. If your intent is good the energies will envelope you with an inner peace that is indefinable. If your intent is harmful to people or place the reaction is of rejection and a reflection of the ugliness within makes you act in this way.

In the early stages of working with the stones, in a moment of egotistical triumph I put a left hand patronisingly on the top of a single stone not far from the Merry Maidens. What I can only describe as a violent electric type shock went through my arm and for the next twenty minutes I found it virtually impossible to drive the car. We are good friends now, that stone and I, but that day I learned an important lesson. We are one, the earth and us, and we must learn to stop abusing our parent body. The American Indians, Aborigines and some African tribes are amongst the last remaining few who still have an understanding of what our relationship with the earth should be. Most of us have been cut off for so long that we have to make tenuous contact with things that were accepted as normal by ancient people who had infinitely more dignity and spiritual capacity than we care to recognise.

The stones and the sacred sites have the knowledge stored in them which we desperately need. It will be given to those who care.

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BRITTANY - PENWITH'S FRENCH CONNECTION

BY CHERYL STRAFFON

In 'Megalithic Brittany' Aubrey Burl comments: "In some ways the interaction of landscape and settlement here (in Brittany) was like that of Cornwall, equally grey and granitic and austere, only 160 km to the north across the English Channel."¹ That channel had only just become a channel, geologically speaking, in Mesolithic times, and the links between Brittany and Cornwall have always been extremely close ever since. These connections become apparent to anyone visiting Brittany: from obvious links such as the similarity between the languages of Breton and Cornish (Breton is still spoken in the more remote parts, and anyone with a basic knowledge of Cornish root-words can easily translate Breton place-names); to the unexpected connections in mythology (Brittany has its own Arthurian legends and has its land of 'Lyonnesse', the lost land of Ys lying off the Breton coast, from which the King only escaped when it sank - we also saw a house called 'Lyonnest' on the Ile aux Moines); to the closeness in place-names (all the Ker-Tre- & Pen- prefixes, Finistère - literally Land's End, and Cornouaille - the Breton province, even the Breton town St. Just with its associated megaliths!) These connections have come about because of the migrations by Cornish and Welsh people to Brittany (literally 'little Britain') in the 6th & 8th Centuries.

But thousands of years before this migration, there was a probable equally close link between megalithic societies in the two lands from about 3500 BC onwards, and the evidence for this can be seen all around Brittany and Cornwall. Indeed, the 6th C migrations from Cornwall to Brittany may have been an ironic reversal from a possible passage the other way round 3,000 - 4,000 years earlier in Neolithic times. Axes of jadeite and dolerite, probably cult objects, from a Neolithic axe-factory at Sélédon in Central Brittany have been found in various places in Britain; and on Salisbury Plain over 84% of the discovered axes - many of them objects of beauty - came from the Mount's Bay axe 'factory' in Cornwall. As Aubrey Burl shows,² all this reveals a developing trade/barter link between the various Neolithic communities in Cornwall, England and Brittany from about 3500 BC onwards. "The influences from Brittany started patchily in the Neolithic, but were becoming powerful during the Early Bronze Age in Southern England. This must certainly apply in the S.W. Peninsula just as it does in counties Cork & Kerry in Ireland." (Aubrey Burl in letter to me).



“Carnac Rows”

Brittany has so many sites it is a real megalithic wonderland, perhaps the megalithic capital of Europe. During our stay we visited about 100 sites - dolmens, tumuli, stone rows, passage graves, menhirs etc. - but even that was less than 1/3rd of the sites listed in Aubrey Burl's excellent guide! And even he only lists the major sites. A glance at the large scale map of the Carnac-Morbihan area for instance reveals many more site listings - (we visited some to try and get a perspective and found that although some are ruined, some are in remarkably good condition). The Carnac rows are of course the most stupendous and impressive, and there is nothing like them in Cornwall, or indeed England (though the lost serpentine rows at Avebury may be a relative), a curious fact we shall consider later. And Brittany has some of the most unrivalled megalithic tombs anywhere, such as Gavrinis with its wealth of megalithic carvings, unparalleled outside of Newgrange in Ireland. But it was at the site of one of the smaller, almost insignificant, sites that I was made to think about the real significance of the megalithic builders and how the societies of Brittany and Cornwall related to each other.

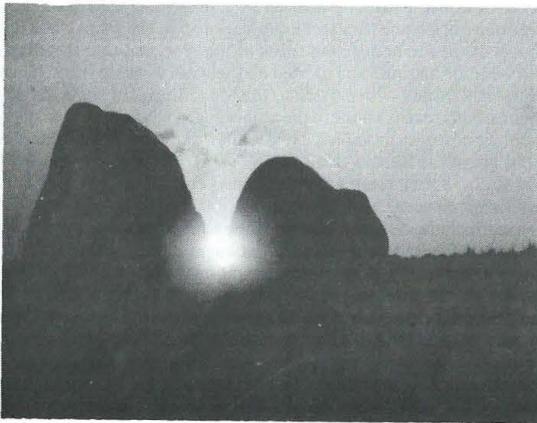
We had stopped off at a wayside dolmen in the little village of Le Roch, when a local Frenchman appeared and seemed eager to talk about 'his' dolmen. Evidently tutored by a 'professor' who had visited the site (he couldn't be more explicit!) he pointed out a stone with some cupmarks on it. His theory was that they were carved in order to show the passage of the sun at different times of the year, and that the people who built the site were the same people who went to Cornwall and carried on their sun worship there. There are other enigmatic cup marks on other stones in Brittany — in particular the Mané Lud Lud passage grave which has 18 or 19 cupmarks in a circle. Interestingly, excavations in the adjoining mound at the turn of the century revealed a circle of low uprights, number of stones unknown. Now while there are fewer cupmarked stones in Cornwall (the main examples being Tregiffian Barrow, Chûn Quoit capstone - top side, and those near the base of Castalack menhir - see MM No. 4 p.5), there are stone circles containing 19 stones, the most obvious being the Merry Maidens and Boscawen-un. And a curious fact, unexplained by archaeologists, is that Brittany - for all its wealth of ancient sites - has no stone circles* as we know them in Cornwall and England (only 'cromlechs' which in Brittany are not dolmens but stone circle enclosures at the end of stone rows). Could the stone circles of Britain be a later development by the Neolithic peoples of the kind of sun worship or observance seen in the stone of the Mané-Lud passage grave in Brittany?

* except perhaps on Er Lannic island, but their very singularity makes them a curiosity, especially as they are obviously directly associated with Gavrinis tomb opposite: they may be related to the kind of stone circle we see surrounding Newgrange tomb in Ireland, especially as whatever might have been between the circles and tomb could easily have sunk beneath the waters of the Morbihan Gulf, as the circles themselves have half done.



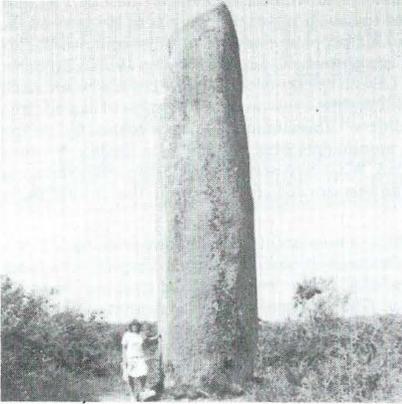
Cup marked stone at Le Manémur

We discovered another standing stone covered by cup marks, unremarked upon by Burl or others, in the village of Le Manémur at the end of the Quiberon peninsular. These marks were in a different pattern, and could be a different version of a sun chart or even star map: interestingly enough, one of the packing stones in the Er-Lannic island circles has 9 cupmarks which have been likened to the constellation of Ursa Major. That there is an astronomical connection for Brittany's megalithic monuments is not doubted by many archaeologists. Most passage graves are approximately orientated to equinoctial sunrise or most northerly moonrise. At Gavrinis a shaft of light enters the tomb at the moment of the midwinter sunrise - for less than a minute we were told (as does Dissignac passage grave near St. Nazaire), linking them directly to Newgrange in Ireland and Bosiliack Barrow in West Penwith (see back cover picture). And surely it cannot be a coincidence that if one follows the very long Ménéac and Kermario stone rows along their passages, the sunset is best seen from the largest stones on the highest ground at the very end of the rows. The cromlechs at either end are also orientated to midsummer and midwinter sunrises and sunsets. "A plausible interpretation of these settings is that they were for processions and ceremonies at midsummer and midwinter to commemorate the important divisions of the year."² Les Champ des Roches stone rows at the Côte du Nord also align to the Beltane or Lugnasad sunrise. Also in the Côte du Nord the menhir at the Parc ar Men Sul (Field of the Sun) is said to dance at midnight on the days of the midwinter and midsummer solstices. At Lagatjar in Finistère there is the ruin of a megalithic complex possibly once used for rites involving both the sun and the moon. Near some more rows at Lampouy there are 2 menhirs, and a local tradition says that the midsummer sunrise can be seen from one over the other. The St. Just stone rows may be orientated on the equinoctial sunsets of March and September, as may the Crucuno Rectangle of stones (similar to King Arthur's Hall on Bodmin Moor). Alexander Thom claimed many other astronomical alignments for the Brittany stones, including the Imbolc and Samhain sunsets from a menhir near the Kerlescan rows, and midwinter sunset from the Manio-Kerlescen hamlet stones, as well as moonrise at Le Grand Menhir Brise from the Tumulus St. Michel. Professor Rolf Müller of Germany has postulated that carvings on the Table des Marchands tomb near Carnac represent particular dates in the trajectory of the moon and eclipses of both the moon and sun.⁴



All this directly links to the solar orientation of many West Penwith's monuments, such as the fogous (see MM No.2 p.9), the Beltane sunrise alignment from Tregeaseal E circle to Boswens menhir (see MM No. 1 p.12), the Imbolc/Samhain sunrise from Boscawen-un circle to Trelew longstone, and sunset through the quartz stone (see MM No.4 p.5), the midsummer sunrise from Treen Common circle to Zennor ridge (see MM No.3 p.5) and the midwinter sunset from Chûn Quoit to Kenidjack Castle (see MM No.3 p.12).

Sunset at the Kermario Stones



Kerloas Menhir

tiptoeing, though I didn't try it stripped!) This recalls the (somewhat more decorous) use of the Men-an-Tol stone in W. Penwith where young couples would sometimes hold hands through the holed stone to ensure a happy and fruitful marriage.

Possible sacrificial memories are evidenced by the Chateâu-Bu four poster site near St. Just in Brittany where a young girl was supposedly sacrificed every year, and the Table de Sacrifice near the Kerzerho rows where 'the blood used to flow down'. It remarkably resembles the Tom Thumb rock near St. Just in West Penwith, and the legend recalls Borlase's obsession with druidical sacrifice at ancient sites (see MM No.1 p.20). A pagan goddess figure, the Venus de Quinipily, who can still be seen near Baud, was worshipped as late as the 17th C, which recalls an incident recounted in the 6th C Breton text 'Life of St. Samson' (Celtic saints travelled freely between Cornwall and Brittany) in which Samson reproved some Cornishmen near Trigg for worshipping a standing stone.⁶ Pagan merrymaking itself used to take place at the Champ des Roches stone rows at Pleslin (also known as the Druids Cemetery) until discouraged by priests in the 1860's, a similar repressive move to the discouragement of guizing activities in W. Penwith in the 1870's (see MM No.1 p.21). Finally, the inhabitants of the Ile de Seine, the island off the Pointe du Raz (Brittany's Lands End) used to be practising pagans until converted to Christianity in the 18th C. The island itself has great roots in antiquity - it was supposedly the place to which the corpses of druids were taken for

burial and there was allegedly a coven of nine druid priestesses active there. Perhaps a similarity here to the witch gatherings of Zennor in W. Penwith, and the Isles of Scilly where, given the large numbers of burial chambers, it has been speculated the Neolithic and Bronze Iron age people were carried for burial from Cornwall.



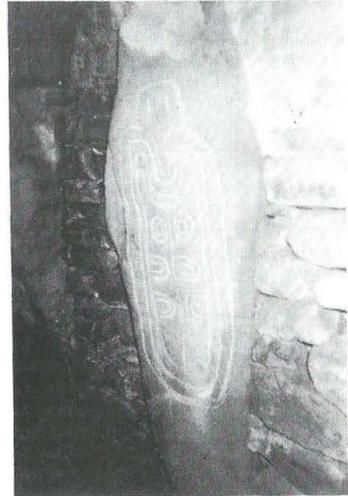
Table Des Sacrifices (and victim!)

Other Druidic rites and Arthurian legends are associated with the enchanted forest de Paimpont, where the Korred (elves) lived. The korred are supposed to have brought the menhirs to Brittany on their backs, and may be a distant memory of the first Neolithic peoples. They are not dissimilar to the little people frequently seen on the Gump and elsewhere by Cornish writers. (See MM No.1 p.19, No.2 p.6, No.3 p.16 - 18). As Craig Weatherhill says (in "Belerion"): "Legend speaks of the Small People who are said to dance around the great barrow (Carn Gluze) on moonlit nights, a folk memory perhaps of sacred rituals that were once performed by the last of the megalith builders." This comment is neatly echoed by one from Aubrey Burl on the Brittany burial chambers: "These monuments were becoming (in the late Neolithic) shrines for the living rather than burial-places for the dead. What ceremonies were performed in them must remain unknown, although one might speculate about an ancestor cult connected with the rising of the sun or moon."

So, we have similarities in the use of the megalithic monuments in Cornwall and Brittany. But what of the monuments themselves? There are differences too: the most obvious ones are the plethora of stone rows in Brittany and their paucity in Cornwall - reverse for stone circles (though the cromlech enclosures in Brittany may have performed the same ritual function). The wealth of carvings in Breton tombs such as Mané-Kejoned, Mané-Lud, the Table des Marchands, Mané-Rutuel, Les Pierres-Plats, Barnenez, Gavrinis, etc. finds no echo in Cornwall, except perhaps one later - possibly Celtic - enigmatic carving in Boleigh fogou (see MM No.1 p.8). Many of the Breton carvings seem to be of anthropomorphic figurines with breasts, possibly the Earth Goddess herself: Burl speculates that the offerings found in the Crech-Quille allée-couverte were not to the dead but to the Goddess herself represented in the tomb, and a broken statue-menhir found in the Kermané tumulus seems to be of the mother goddess herself. Again direct evidence for the Goddess is lacking in Cornish sites, though there is some evidence from other parts of Britain (see "The Gods of the Celts" Miranda Green, 1987). Allée-couvertes and passage graves themselves have a uniquely Breton style, and whilst dolmens and standing stones can be found in common in the two countries, somehow the Breton examples always seem to be on a grander scale: double dolmens instead of single; 2, 3, 4 or more passages in the graves instead of just one; massive capstones (Mane Rutuel is over 50 tons in weight) heavier and bigger than anything in West Penwith; menhirs more numerous (nearly 5000 of them) and generally taller and larger (the greatest, Le Grand Menhir Brisé is an unbelievable 300 tons or more, and if it ever stood would have been an amazing 66 ft. Kerloas, now the tallest standing stone in Europe, is more than 30ft.). Brittany seems like Cornwall writ large. And yet, the Breton monuments are earlier-earlier than anything in Britain by up to a 1000 years. It is as if West Penwith were a sub-branch of Brittany set up by tribal groups who, for whatever reason, moved away from their homeland across the water, and because they were numerically less, erected smaller but slightly different types of monuments. Perhaps the Frenchman we met at Le Roche dolmen was right after all. And the Cornish who emigrated to Britany in the 6th C AD were only returning to their original homeland.

Article & photographs © Cheryl Traffon.

Photograph (right) © Alexandra Lobban.



Carving of the Earth Goddess?

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 - 2 — Aubrey Burl: "The Stonehenge People" (Dent, 1987)
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 - 5 — Barbara Bender: "The Archaeology of Brittany" (Faber, 1986)
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A GUIDE TO SCILLONIAN ENTRANCE GRAVES IN WEST PENWITH

Compiled by Gill Brooker

The Scillonian Entrance Graves hide many mysteries. They can only be found on mainland Britain in West Penwith, but on the Scilly Isles there are about fifty similar monuments. Brittany and south-east Ireland also have barrows resembling Scillonian Entrance Graves.

Much has been theorised about these sepulchres but only a fleeting glimpse is gleaned of their real purpose because propositions can only be assumed so this leaves an illusive atmosphere surrounding them. They have imprinted indelible marks upon their immediate neighbourhood but still we do not have any clear evidence of exactly what their use or number was, nor why or when they were built.

A hypothesis is proposed by Charles Thomas¹ that here could be a parallel linking the ritual importance of the Neolithic Age to the Bronze Age by the circular ground plan of barrows with stone circles. This claim is further projected with circles and the dead in the round graveyards of early Christian churches.

These megalithic structures can be of simple or complex multi-phase construction but all have passage-like stone chambers of roughly coursed granite. They were probably built in the Neolithic period and possibly re-used in the early to middle Bronze Age. More excavations and radiocarbon dating work is necessary if we are to get these tumuli to offer up their secrets. At the moment only interpretations are available. The chambers are roofed with a number of stone slabs and usually open at one end onto outside earth and stone mounds, with these hillocks being retained by dry stone kerbs. Often they show a lower circle of rocks around the original mound as a second phase of building, or there is a blocking of the main chamber. There is a bulge near the inner end of the tunnel and entrances are often restricted by reducing the aperture of the opening.

These entrances are an ever open door ready to receive offerings. Probably they were used not for burials but for rites of fertility of the soil because they are placed near ancient pastoral settlements. Some now stand in bleak beauty, others are silhouetted against the skyline but now they lie in solitary isolation forgotten amongst the bracken, buckthorn and crops, or grazed by animals. Reports suggest that some did contain cremations from secondary usage, but as these barrows may have had successive or continuous access for many years we have no clear evidence of their origins or purpose. In ancient times these burial mounds were for the glorious dead, so were placed in prominent positions to arouse emulation.

The openings of West Penwith Entrance Graves face south except for the South Treen I which looks towards the north. Could this be because north is the dark or evil side of the universe and often had a sinister meaning for ancient people? The tombs of the Scillies follow no set pattern so no analogy can be obtained from this information. Ian Cooke² makes some interesting comments regarding observations at megalithic sites.

There are approximately a dozen known Scillonian Entrance Graves in West Penwith of which well preserved traces can be seen at several sites, but how many tombs are lost or hidden we cannot tell. These memorials will remain as sentinels against the mists of time.



SITES IN WEST PENWITH

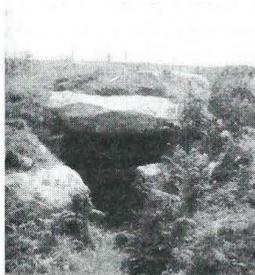


BOSILLACK Madron (SW 431432). This barrow lies north of Lanyon Quoit about ¼ mile off the Madron to Treen road. When Professor Charles Thomas of the Cornwall Archaeological Society excavated it in 1984 he found what looked like a primary deposit contained in a pot which seemed to be late Neolithic and co-Beaker coarseware. The mound is now flattened but consists mainly of large granite stones with most of its kerb upright slabs intact. From inside the passage looking outwards through the partially blocked entrance it has been observed that the rising of the sun at the midwinter solstice can be seen.² Mercer³ draws attention to

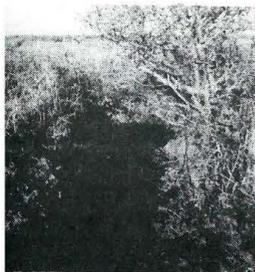
Ashbee's⁴ reference to entrance graves on the Scillies being built on pre-existing lynchets, and there is the possibility that this tomb is built on an earlier field system. Dimensions: 16½ ft. (5.1 m.) diameter. 5 ft. (1.5 m.) mound, orientation of entrance 155°.



BRANE Sancreed (SW 401282). This is a small beautiful cone-like grave of simple construction lying unchanged in the corner of a cultivated field to the south-west of Brane Farm (ask permission). The passage is well preserved with its opening in the south-east side, and having two large roof slabs still in place. The small round kerb cairn has seven blocks remaining. Dimensions: 15 ft. (4.6 m.) diameter. 7 ft. (2.1 m.) high. Chamber 9¼ ft. (3 m.) long, 4 ft. (1.2 m.) wide, 2½ ft. (0.8 m.) high. Orientation of entrance 155°.



TREEN Zennor (SW 438371). There are four barrows of which two are recognisable as entrance graves. They lie in croftland on the west side of the Penzance - Gurnards Head road. The south barrow (Treen I) of simple construction is the best preserved with a mound 25 ft. across. There are three granite roof stones showing at the top of the heap of earth but the retaining kerb has been removed. The opening to the passage faces towards the north with large stones restricting its aperture. From this site to the south-west Carn Galva is visible, marking the midwinter sunset. Dimension: 25 ft. (7.6 m.) diameter, 4½ ft. (1.3 m.) high. Chamber 13 ft. (4.0 m.) long, 3 ft. (0.9 m.) high, 4 ft. (1.2 m.) wide, orientation of entrance 348°. The north tomb is now very overgrown and its narrowed south-west doorway is difficult to find but has an orientation of 220°. Dimensions: 20 ft. (6.1 m.) across. 3½ ft. (1.1 m.) high.



TREGESAL St. Just (SW 380321). This chamber tomb is situated on an incline in rough ground on the west side of a lane through the Tregeseal Valley. It is unusual in that it has an oval mound. The passage has its entrance obstructed by an upright block of granite but still has one third of the kerb remaining together with two roofing slabs. When W.C. Borlase excavated this heap of stone and earth in 1879 he found it had an inner retaining wall. There were cremated bones and broken pottery finds on a well paved floor and a cist was found behind the inner end of the chamber. Dimensions: Oval mound 41 ft. (12.5 m.) by 31 ft. (9.4 m.), 4½ ft. (1.4 m.) high. Chamber 11 ft. (3.3 m.) long, 4 ft. (1.2 m.) wide, orientation of entrance 127°.

CHAPEL CARN BREA Crows-an-wra. (SW 386281) (NT). This entrance grave is situated on the 'first and last hilltop' in Britain. It is a Neolithic tomb containing a south facing rectangular chamber which has a tapered inner end. It was covered at a later date by a massive stone cairn some 62 ft. (19 m.) across. Dimensions: 30 ft. (9.2 m.) diameter approx. 8ft. (2.5 m.) high. Chamber 9 ft. (2.7 m.) long by 3½ ft. (2.1 m.) wide & 4 ft. (1.2 m.) high. Orientation of entrance SSE (major southern moonrise?)



PENNANCE Zennor (SW 447374). This simple tomb lies ¼ mile west of Zennor on the B3306 St. Ives to St. Just road. It can be seen clearly from the road lying in a sloping field at Pennance Farm (ask permission) and is known locally as the 'Giant's Crow'. The mound is retained by a kerb of alternate large and small granite stones with the chamber having five roof slabs in place. The entrance is in the south-east section and faces up the valley. Dimensions: 26 ft. (7.9 m.) in diameter, 6 ft. (1.8 m.) high. Chamber 13 ft. (4.0 m.) long, 4½ ft. (1.4 m.) wide, 2½ ft. (0.8 m.) high, orientation of entrance 111°.



TREGIFFIAN St. Buryan (SW 431244) (Heritage Trust). This multi-phase tomb is situated near the Merry Maidens stone circle on the south grass verge of the B3315 road. Part of the kerb remains, as do some of the roofing stones. There is an unusually large 11 ft. stone across the roof which looks very much like a menhir. The south facing entrance has an eastern flanking stone which is a replica of a cup-marked stone (the original of which can be seen at Truro Museum) with another cup-marked stone at the inner end of the passage. This barrow has a radiocarbon date 1995 - 1680 BC taken from charcoal with a pot which was either buried when the monument was built or placed there soon after. This grave might possibly have been placed over ground used by earlier Neolithic people. Dimensions: Originally 40ft. (12 m.) across. Chamber 13½ ft. (4.6 m.) long, 5½ ft. (1.8 m.) wide, and 3 ft. (0.9 m.) high, orientation of entrance 187°.



CARN GLUZE (BALLOWAL) Chambered tomb. St. Just (SW 355312) (Heritage Trust). This large unusual multi-phase structure lies 1 mile west of St. Just-in-Penwith on the roadside near the cliff tops. There is an opening on the south-west side into the 20 ft. thick outer rim which is the well preserved entrance grave roofed by two thin slabs. The Entrance Grave itself was most probably built before the massive complex monument was constructed. Dimensions: Central dome oval 37ft. (11.2 m.) approximate height now 10ft. (3.0 m.) Outer collar 20 ft. (6.1 m.) thick, 8ft. (2.4 m.) high. Orientation of entrance 211°. Entrance Grave 11 ft. (3.3 m.) long, 3 ft. (0.9 m.) high.



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4. Paul Ashbee. Mesolithic Megaliths? The Scillonian Entrance-Graves: A New View (CA No. 21, 1982) & Chambered Tombs of St. Mary's (CA No. 2, 1963)

WEST PENWITH ENTRANCE GRAVES – Destroyed & possible sites

BOSAVERN ROS, ST. Just (c.SW 375302). This barrow was documented by Hencken in 1932. It probably had an entrance grave because Borlase described it as having a 'kind of cave or door vault which led into the barrow with a tall stone on either side and a covering stone across.'

ROSEMERGY, Morvah (SW 426357). Documented by Blight in 1870. Destroyed in 1963 but in the 19th C it was said to have had an entrance grave within it. The entrance faced eastwards.

TRENDRINE HILL, Zennor (SW 479388). Traces can still be seen of this possible entrance grave within a barrow consisting of a mass of stones. Documented by V. Russell in 1971 and Ashbee in 1982.

TREGIFFIAN VEAN, St. Just (SW 373277). Craig Weatherhill in 'Belerion' gives a detailed description of this tomb, but Barnatt in 'Prehistoric Cornwall casts doubt on its authenticity.'

TRUTHWALL COMMON (c.SW 383325). There are several damaged tombs on the moor below Kenidjack Carn of which two could easily have been entrance graves. There are also the remains of a denuded barrow at **PORTHERAS COMMON** nearby (SW 391333) which contains what looks like an entrance grave, but is probably a cist.

ISLES OF SCILLY

There is visible evidence of over 40 entrance graves on the Scillies and many others have been documented. The fact that there are so many is ascribed by some to sea fishing but a better reason is that many lie on ancient field systems. On Samson, Gugh and the eastern side of St. Mary's these barrows are situated in groups or cemeteries.

A great deal has been written about the four different types of entrance grave on the Scillies. The most numerous are those built on level ground with chambers placed inside kerbed cairns. A variation is those with chambers dug into sloping ground and overlaid with a cairn. Thirdly, chambers set along of an escarpment and then covered. Finally, those with closed cists set in cairns.

Entrance graves were probably not only places for burying the dead but for cult purposes. The relationship between using these barrows to intern the dead and the management of the land could be part of the same developing culture, for in prehistoric times the living and the dead inhabited the same world. The chambers were often continuously used over a long period, and it is far from clear whether they belong to the late Neolithic or the Bronze Age. Some remains found inside some graves indicate an early date, but the fact that some were built into hillsides on earlier cultivated land indicates a later date.

PRINCIPAL SITES ON SCILLY

BANTS CARN, St. Mary's (SV 910123). A passage grave in which an entrance passage leads into a central round cairn, covered by 4 capstones. There is both an inner and an outer retaining wall.

INNISIDGEN, St. Mary's (SV 921128/922127). Two entrance graves, the most spectacular being the upper one (Giants Grave). A mound 26 ft. in diameter has a large chamber capped with 5 stones.

PORTH HELLYCK DOWN, St. Mary's (SV 928108). An impressive passage grave - some 40 ft. in diameter - in which a roofless entrance passage leads at an angle into a chamber roofed by 4 capstones. A single upright part-divides the sections.

CRUTHERS HILL, St. Martins (SV 930152). A number of barrows adorn the summit, the best entrance graves being the northern and central ones. The northern is covered by a capstone, the central a roofless chamber.

OBADIAH'S BARROW, Gugh (St. Agnes) (SVV 888085) Built into the hillside, the chamber is entered by a short angled passage. 2 capstones have fallen into it. Not far away on the island is the menhir The Old Man of Gugh.

SAMSON HILL, Bryher (SV 878142). Overlooking the sea. The chamber, covered by 6 capstones, is entered by a gradually widening passage.

CASTLE DOWNS, Tresco (SV 886162). An entrance grave above Gimble Porth with chamber almost intact, but little evidence of the original mound.

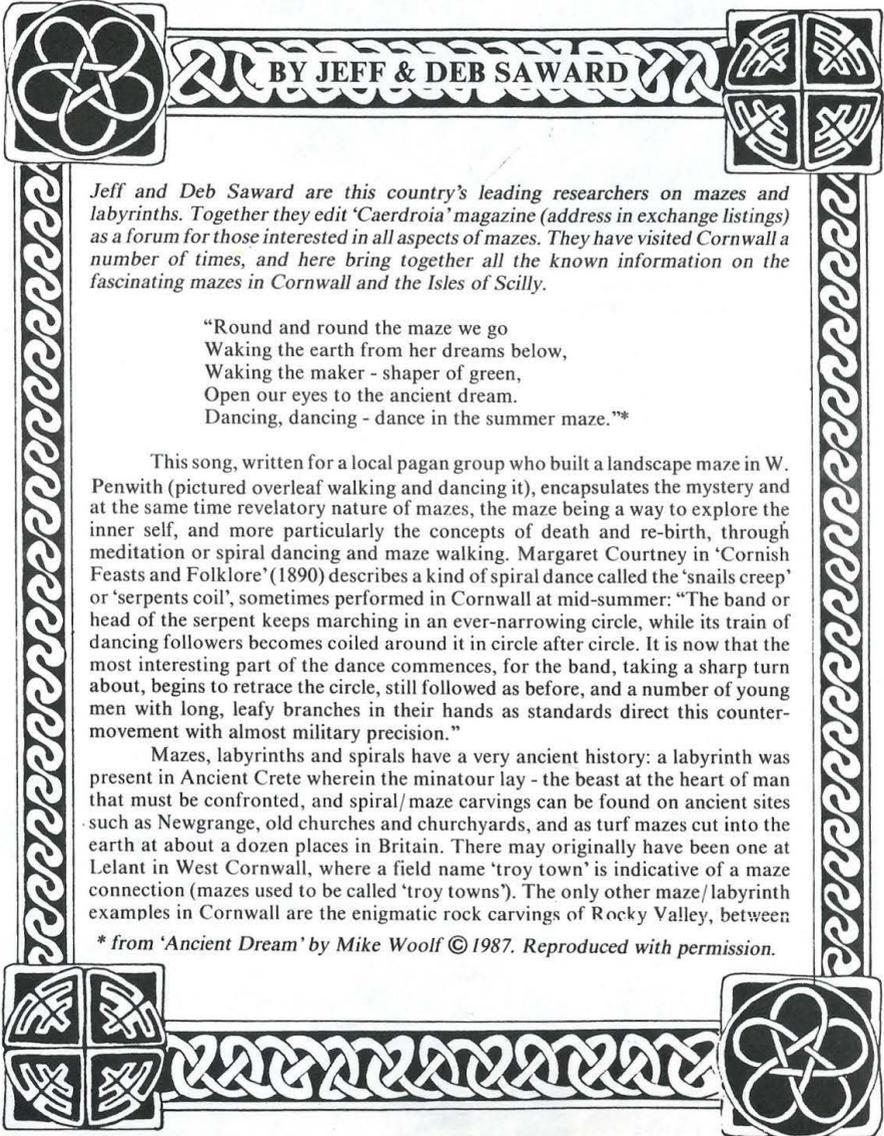
NORTH HILL, Samson (SV 871131). An entrance grave, its mound 26 ft. in diameter. 2 capstones remain.

Sources: Luke Over. Visitors Guide to Archaeology in Scilly (1974)

Craig Weatherhill. Cornovia (1985)

Vivien Russell. Isles of Scilly Survey (1980)

The Riddle of the Mazes



Jeff and Deb Saward are this country's leading researchers on mazes and labyrinths. Together they edit 'Caerdroia' magazine (address in exchange listings) as a forum for those interested in all aspects of mazes. They have visited Cornwall a number of times, and here bring together all the known information on the fascinating mazes in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

"Round and round the maze we go
 Waking the earth from her dreams below,
 Waking the maker - shaper of green,
 Open our eyes to the ancient dream.
 Dancing, dancing - dance in the summer maze."^{*}

This song, written for a local pagan group who built a landscape maze in W. Penwith (pictured overleaf walking and dancing it), encapsulates the mystery and at the same time revelatory nature of mazes, the maze being a way to explore the inner self, and more particularly the concepts of death and re-birth, through meditation or spiral dancing and maze walking. Margaret Courtney in 'Cornish Feasts and Folklore' (1890) describes a kind of spiral dance called the 'snails creep' or 'serpents coil', sometimes performed in Cornwall at mid-summer: "The band or head of the serpent keeps marching in an ever-narrowing circle, while its train of dancing followers becomes coiled around it in circle after circle. It is now that the most interesting part of the dance commences, for the band, taking a sharp turn about, begins to retrace the circle, still followed as before, and a number of young men with long, leafy branches in their hands as standards direct this counter-movement with almost military precision."

Mazes, labyrinths and spirals have a very ancient history: a labyrinth was present in Ancient Crete wherein the minotaur lay - the beast at the heart of man that must be confronted, and spiral/maze carvings can be found on ancient sites such as Newgrange, old churches and churchyards, and as turf mazes cut into the earth at about a dozen places in Britain. There may originally have been one at Lelant in West Cornwall, where a field name 'troy town' is indicative of a maze connection (mazes used to be called 'troy towns'). The only other maze/labyrinth examples in Cornwall are the enigmatic rock carvings of Rocky Valley, between

^{*} from 'Ancient Dream' by Mike Woolf © 1987. Reproduced with permission.



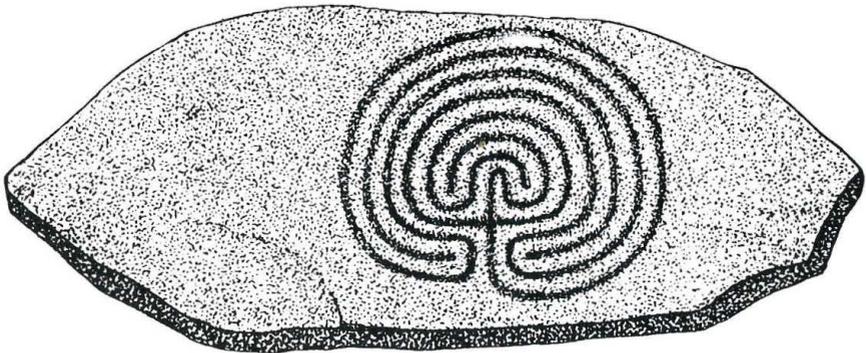
Tintagel and Boscastle. They can be reached by following a footpath along a steep sided wooded valley, where a ruined watermill and house lie close to a vertical west facing rock face on which the Cretan type labyrinths have been carved. The labyrinths are sharply defined and were carved using a metal implement, and measure $8\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ " and $9 \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ " respectively. The age and nature of these small carvings have been the subject of speculation for many years. An official Department of the Environment sign on the rockface dates the inscribed labyrinths to 1500BC, presumably due to their superficial resemblance to Bronze Age cup-and-ring marks. This date seems improbable for many reasons; we do not know of any other such carvings in Britain, and the weathering of the carvings suggests that they are not as ancient as that, even given that they are carved onto hard metamorphic slate which overhangs and thus affords some degree of protection from the effects of weather. Other dates have been put forward, including the suggestion that the carvings date to the 6th century when St. Nectan, an Irish missionary, had a cell in Rocky Valley. We know of the interest early Irish Christians had in the symbol of the labyrinth; the Hollywood Stone, a large boulder carved with a Cretan labyrinth, formerly lay on a pilgrim's track from the 6th Century cell of St. Kevin to the monastery of Glendalough, Eire: it is now in the National Museum in Dublin.

Another possibility is that a local mystically-inclined mill owner living in the 17th century was responsible for the carvings. There are various types of graffiti carved among the ruins of the watermill, one of which is dated early in the 18th Century; the weathering of the graffiti is very similar to the condition of the labyrinth carvings, further strengthening this suggestion. In the light of the information further on in this article regarding the 'Troy stones' used by Cornish and Manx wisewomen, here may be an interesting alternative explanation for the provenance, age and possible uses of the Rocky Valley labyrinths. We do not know whether Rocky Valley has ever been a haunt of witches or wisewomen, but St. Nectan's choice of

site for his cell and the mystic pre-occupations of the aforementioned miller, may indicate that the area was traditionally known for its spiritual qualities and was considered appropriate by wisewoman for conducting their divinatory rites. It is an interesting coincidence that the only other known carved labyrinth in the West Country resides at the Witchcraft Museum in Boscastle, barely a couple of miles away.



*Left Hand (facing)
Labyrinth Carving*



This carving is on a slab of blue slate, approximately 18 inches long and is carved on one face with a seven-circuit classical labyrinth. A label attached to the stone simply states that it came from a farm at Michaelstow, a village 8 miles south of Boscastle. In an attempt to discover a little more about this stone, we contacted the owner of the museum, Mr. Cecil Williamson, who told us a number of details regarding its history. According to Mr. Williamson, the stone was given to him in 1950 by the daughter of a Manx wisewoman known as Kate the Gull, who had acquired it from a famous Manx witch Nan Wade, who in turn had acquired it from Sarah Quiller on the Isle of Man. Although this stone has obviously been passed down through several generations of wise-women on the island, and no doubt is of some antiquity, the tradition attached to the stone is that it is not native to the island, but originally came from 'across the water'. Although it was never certain where this was intended to signify, a possible clue is contained in a further snippet of information provided by Mr. Williamson. Sometime after the museum at Boscastle was opened (1958), a Cornish wise-woman told him that her mother once had a stone very similar to the one on display in the museum, but that upon her death it was broken up and disposed of as her mother had requested. Apparently these stones are known as 'Troy-stones' in the south west and were (still?) used for magical practices, particularly to induce a state of mental hypnosis, by tracing the design over and over again with one's finger. During this process, which is carried out by the wise-women or her client, the wise-women would accompany this with rhythmic humming, until the desired state was attained. From this practice they were also known as 'brain-stones', probably both from the mental practice associated with them and their resemblance to the appearance of the gyri of the human brain.

Other names are applied to labyrinth stones according to the use to which they are put by the wisewomen. They are called 'moonstones' when worked at night; presumably the stone would have been carefully wrapped in a cloth when not in use during the day, and would only have been uncovered in darkness or in moonlight for use in divination. Scrying glasses or 'black mirrors' used by witches for trance work are similarly protected by their owners. Labyrinth stones worked with during the day in sunlight are known as 'snake' or 'serpent' stones; this is maybe an illusion to the coils of the labyrinth, which seem to move if they are stared at for long enough. Bright sunlight would heighten this odd effect. Even though we have brief details of how wisewomen would use the 'brainstones' to induce trance states, other practices associated with moonstones and serpent stones are not known in any depth. We have simply given our own suggestions for their possible uses, and would be very interested to hear from anyone who still uses these stones, or from anyone with secondhand knowledge of these practices. As far as this labyrinth stone in Boscastle museum is concerned, it is very interesting (but not entirely untypical) that this unique Troy-stone currently in Cornwall may ultimately originate from Cornwall!

Finally, the most remote and probably least visited of all the labyrinths in the British Isles must be the 'Troy-Town' on the island of St. Agnes, one of the westernmost of the islets that form the Isles of Scilly, 28 miles south west of Land's End. This labyrinth is unique in many respects and must surely be one of the most interesting of all the labyrinths, stone or turf, that these writers have visited over the years. Constructed of large water rounded pebbles, it is the only 'ancient' stone labyrinth in the British Isles, although several 'modern' examples are now to be found elsewhere. It is also one of the smallest walkable labyrinths, having a widest diameter of only 16 feet, although as we shall see it would once have been slightly larger. It is this combination of diminutive scale, and its curious setting in a wild landscape,



Troy Town Maze, St. Agnes



seemingly on the edge of the world, that gives it an indefinable air of mystery that captures the heart of all that encounter it for the first time.

The Troy-Town is situated on the west side of the island south of Troy Town Farm, on a narrow stretch of grass backed by heather and gorse grown moorland, just beyond the reach of the highest tides. Around it stand several imposing granite piles; one of these bears the curious name of Gamperdizl Point, possibly derived from the term 'deosil' meaning sunwise or clockwise turning motion. It is uncertain whether this is in any way connected with the maze, or it may refer to some other tradition connected with the spot. On a fine day the view from the maze, with only the reefs of the Western Rocks, Melledgan and Lethagus in the distance breaking 3000 miles of open sea between there and America, is stunning. Here standing guard over the Atlantic is the symbol that is found throughout Europe, as if looking towards her sisters in the southwest states of that far off land.

The history of the Troy Town maze is seemingly well documented, but at the same time raises more questions than it answers. The commonly accepted claim is that the pattern was laid out in 1729 by one T. Amor Clarke, son of a former lightkeeper or alternatively a lightkeeper himself, depending upon the source of the explanation, who had married into the Hicks family long established on St. Agnes. Supposedly he constructed the Troy Town to while away a few hours during a visit to the island. Here a number of variables creep into the story. Some say he was originally from London, some that he was a sailor, so the source of inspiration for his handywork is unclear. Where for instance would he have come across stone labyrinths before? In Scandinavia? Another interpretation is that Amor Clarke was only upholding an established tradition; that he either created a new stone labyrinth, the form of which the islanders would be familiar with, or simply restored a neglected stone labyrinth. The fact that the nearby farm is named Troy Town Farm, obviously after the maze, certainly suggests that one of these options is possible. It seems hard to believe that a farm would be named after a supposedly 'foreign' monument constructed in 1729, unless the islanders were familiar with the concept of Troy towns in one form or another. As we have seen, labyrinths were known in mainland Cornwall, so why not on the Scillies? The question remains whether this remote corner of Britain is unique in its expression of labyrinths in stone from a genuinely ancient time, or from a more recent re-introduction of a familiar form in an unusual guise. Unless archaeological excavation fortuitously turns up another example in the Scillies or the South-West, the question must remain open.

Over the years the maze has been reasonably well cared for, and an early photograph of it from 1885 with the wreck of the 'Earl of Lonsdale' in the distance shows little sign of wear, although the paths can be seen to have sunk appreciatively towards the central region of the maze. The design of the maze is quite clearly seen to be of a seven circuit (or eight walled) classical or Cretan type. Other photographs from 1890 and 1921, when members of the Royal Family visited and walked the maze, show much the same. Recently,



The Second Troy Town Maze

however, the increase in visitors, mainly tourists, have caused much wear to the pathways and regrettably damage to the design. As previously stated, the diameter of the maze is now 16 ft., but the loss of the outer circuit to produce the current six circuit design has left traces of the former outline which shows its original diameter to have been 19 ft. Interestingly, a second maze, a more perfect copy of the first, has now been constructed some yards away over the hillside from the original one. Any information on this would be very welcome.

All of the labyrinths to be found in Cornwall and Scilly are very unusual for the British Isles, seeming to form a distinct group separate from the traditional turf mazes found widely elsewhere in Southern England, the reasons for which are unclear. It would seem, however, that the labyrinths to be found here preserve a number of practices and traditions not known from other areas of the country. A curious group indeed; the Troy-Stone currently in Boscastle included, and for all of them a marked uncertainty surrounds their age, origins and usage. Obviously only further research can hope to clarify some of these questions.



Early (1885) photograph of Troy Town Maze.

Article, photographs and drawings © Jeff & Debbie Saward. (This page top photo Jenny Croxford). Additional material Cheryl Straffon. Parts of this article have appeared in Caerdroia 18.

BOOK REVIEW

SECRET SHRINES – In Search of the Old Holy Wells of Cornwall

By Paul Broadhurst (1988 - £34 inc. p&p)

The 20th C has seen a great revival of interest in wells, particularly in Cornwall - from Thomas Quiller Couch's 1894 work to more recent books by Lane-Davies (1970) and Meyrick (1982) on the holy wells of Cornwall, through to Janet & Colin Bord's 'Sacred Waters' (Granada, 1985) and Craig Weatherhill's first full listing of the West Penwith sites in Meyn Mamvro No. 4. Now Paul Broadhurst approaches the 'well-worn' subject in a fresh original way, redolent with the atmosphere of wells, rather than just a catalogue of sites. "Secret Shrines" is a sumptuous book, with beautiful photographs, printed on high quality paper, and lovingly put together with original illustrations and engravings. But it is more than just a glossy guide to the wells: it is written with a deep insight into the interconnectedness of all the planet's sacred places - "a recognition that the Earth is indeed alive, and that the health, prosperity and future prospects of everything that lives on it depends on an acknowledgement of this ancient Law".

The first half of the book focuses on the meaning and purpose of wells themselves, including their function as the feminine energy points in the geomantic structure of the earth, their curative properties, and their place as gateways to the Otherworld "where the vital flow of life-force could be used to penetrate the veils of matter". It also broadens out into other related areas such as the ancient ways, 'man megaliths and magic', the Druids and their rites, the cult of the Christ, and earth energies. As Paul says: "I soon became captivated by the magical atmosphere that seemed to hang like a cloud around some of the old remains, strange thoughts began to filter into the mind and I started to dwell on the meaning of these places. Slowly I began to 'tune in' to the wells until some sort of sympathetic interchange seemed to take place."

The second half of the book is a ramble around the "still remote land of Cornwall in search of the old wells and remnants of their ancient sanctity, often just a crumbling ruin, dripping with moss and ferns and penetrated by the gnarled roots of twisted trees." He says that the quest for a particular well sometimes seemed like a sort of initiation, a curious species of ordeal involving a pagan baptism of the elements. And it is this questing approach that gives the accounts of individual wells their charm and potency. Familiar and unfamiliar wells may be discovered: in W. Penwith - "an area that is famous for its strange solitude" - he visits the Giants Well (Trencrom), Chapel Euny, Madron, St. Levans, Alsia and Sacreed, which he describes thus:- "The potent, primeval atmosphere of the subterranean shrine of Sancreed Holy Well exhudes an air of extreme antiquity. The ruins of an old chapel stand above the well, at a spot that impresses the mind with a poignant mood of ancient sanctity, drawing us back to distant times." Other wells visited are in north, mid and east Cornwall, Bodmin and the Moor, and the Clay Country, a cornucopia of discoveries.

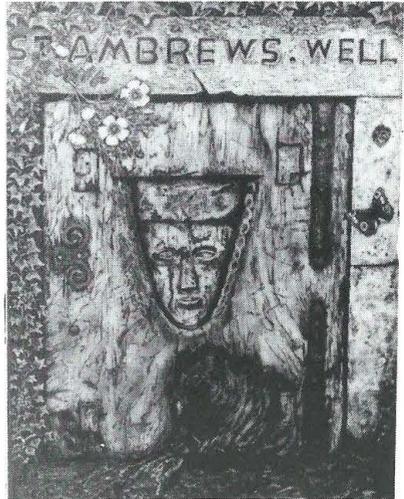
To sum up in Paul's own words: "The quest was to seek the spirit of the wells, to observe impressions which were personal and subjective, yet which may give a feeling of the magical nature of these half-hidden places. And to photograph them in a sympathetic manner which may give a glimpse into the mysterious qualities of these sacred springs, once worshipped by our remote ancestors, and now only haunted by their ghosts." He admirably succeeds in this quest, and has produced a real collectors book which, although it may appear to be relatively expensive, in fact offers good value for money. There is much food for thought, an insight into the nature of wells, and a delightful guide to their locale, a heady mixture that taps into "one of the most potent forces in the primitive pantheon... the importance of water as the essence of life itself." The ghosts of the wells have come alive again.

(CS)

The book is a present only available by private subscription. Full details from the Author or direct from Meyn Mamvro (large SAE please).

"Half-hidden in the natural seclusion of the Cornish landscape, there still exists a diverse, and somewhat mysterious, array of old Nature temples which connect us with the remotest past, back far beyond the age of written records to times when Mankind lived for forgotten thousands of years in mutual harmony with the Earth. The natural springs that bubble from beneath the surface of the planet have been held sacred from the very dawn of human evolution, and despite the ravages of millennia, they still flow on as the ebb of time carries us further away from our dark origins. In deep, wooded valleys, narrow green lanes and tranquil country churchyards, distant memories of a strange past echo around the countryside, infusing the atmosphere with an almost hypnotic fascination. To sit silently in a rarely-visited wooded hollow, to touch the old worn stones on an ancient mossy shrine above a sacred spring is to re-discover that subtle sphere of the mind which we all still possess, but which is all but eclipsed by the frenetic activity of modern man. The dreamscape for this nocturnal search, a gentle groping about in the dark of the unwritten past, is set in the antique land of Cornwall, a place of increasing rarity where the remnants of our long sojourn on this planet are not as yet overtly vandalised by the Machine Age."

(Paul Broadhurst from 'Secret Shrines')



The ancient image of St. Ambrew stares out from the side of a Cornish lane at Crantock, eroded by time and countless hands from the past. This painting by Cornish artist Penny Harris is reproduced in colour in 'Secret Shrines'.

CORNISH HOLY WELLS by John Michell

Almost 200 holy wells are still known in Cornwall and the Scillies, and with them is preserved the ancient, sacred spirit of the west. They are the true wealth of this country. In their pure waters the old people found healing and inspiration. To modern visitors they offer respite and peace of mind, and they serve also as repositories of natural wisdoms to enlighten the future. Many of them are certainly of prehistoric origin. In early times they were resorted to by tribes for communication with the spirits of nature which their lives depended. By unknown rituals and and invocations, performed at the appropriate seasons when the waters were at their most potent, they procured the fertility of animals and plants, and the traditions they founded have never wholly been forgotten. Many items of holy well lore, their seasons of efficacy and their various uses for healing or divination, may derive from Britain's earliest, mesolithic inhabitants.

The first, semi-historical characters associated with Cornwall's holy wells were the Celtic saints. The Celtic church was apparently little more than a reformation of Druidism, assimilating its doctrines and customs and adopting the old pagan shrines. This caused it in the seventh century to be suppressed by the Church of Rome, but stories of the mystical, hermetic holy men and holy women of the Celtic church, reflecting those of their Druid predecessors were lovingly preserved into the Middle Ages and are still remembered in the names and legends of the holy wells which they sanctified.

The modern holy well renaissance is clearly in reaction against the processes which caused their decline and which are now threatening the last vestiges of local culture and the beauty and fertility of the entire countryside. Paul Broadhurst is well aware of this, and his book is a gentle but inexorable argument for the resanctification of the landscape beginning at the sources of its living spirit, for a land which loses its spirit together with its sacred places is no longer decently, humanly inhabitable. This is no mere personal opinion but a message which comes direct from nature and steals unbidden into the minds of silent visitors to the secret shrines of the earth goddess. At such places, traditionally adapted for communication with spirit, the deity makes known her moods and desires, which correspond to those of humanity. Every living thing, human, animal, and vegetable, craves the fulfilment of its nature, and the same may apply to every element in creation, from the earth herself to the humble spring of water. Over a desecrated holy well, as over a mistreated child, hovers a scream of anguish. To bring help and comfort to any such is to turn darkness into light, a fear of spiritual alchemy which those who visit holy wells can perform to the benefit of themselves and the whole of nature. The process of healing the earth, and curing the sickness within ourselves, could begin with the reconsecration of our secret shrines.

(From the Introduction to 'Secret Shrines'. Reproduced with permission)

A REGIONAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND – THE SOUTH WEST TO AD 1000 - Malcom Todd (Longman, 1987 - £19.95)

One of the first in a new series covering all of England features Devon and Cornwall, though the General Preface itself acknowledges that the river Tamar has historically divided Cornwall off from its neighbour. The uniqueness of the region is stressed - "there is nothing quite like high Dartmoor or the salty moors of West Penwith... in any other part of Britain", and the book illustrates how this uniqueness has developed from paleolithic times onwards. In the chapter on the Neolithic, Todd makes some interesting observations: for example, that hill 'forts' such as Carn Brea may be earlier than generally thought and have had their origin in the Neolithic; that there is no evidence the Tolvern stone near Gweek or the Men-an-Tol ever formed part of a chambered tomb which is often pedalled as an archaeological presumption; that there are more stone rows in Cornwall than has been hitherto suspected (7 on Bodmin Moor and 1 or 2 in Penwith, as well as the Nine Maidens near St. Columb); and that the fact that many megalithic tombs in Penwith and on Scilly stand on lynchets and cultivated land is a reminder to that Neolithic man the living and the dead inhabited one world. But there are also bad errors that have crept in: Boscawen-un does not have 'a tall internal pillar of quartz' - the quartz stone is one of the circle stones; Chapel Carn Brea hardly 'overlooks' Whitesand Bay, Sennen; and to say that no circles in W. Penwith have standing stones associated with them makes one wonder where the Pipers have gone!

And in other respects Todd can, like many conventional archaeologists, be curiously blind. For example, he accepts the possibility that the Stripple Stones on Bodmin Moor might have been used for the observation of the equinoxes, and yet puzzles about the siting of other circles far from trackways or settlement areas without drawing the obvious conclusion that they were placed either on alignments or for astronomical observation. This refusal by conventional archaeology to take on board theories of leys or archaeoastronomy, (even when demonstrated by mathematics with the skill and experience of Alexander Thom) is the greatest enigma of the lot! After all, they play around with other equally speculative material and theory, much of which is modified, adapted or even discounted by later research, and yet omit a particular area of research which may throw great light on some dark places. It is as if there is a whole area in their subconscious folk memory they have repressed which they then rationalise by dismissing it as a 'lunatic fringe'. So, while a book such as this may be a very useful and valuable reference tool it is, and other similar books will always be, incomplete while they do not make themselves aware of the research being carried out by the 'alternative archaeologists'. (CS)



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Spirit of West Penwith

By HUGH MINERS

The mist rolls in from the restless sea enveloping carn and cromlech, bracken and bog, muffling sound, a great grey blanket of soft moisture which slows life to a stand-still and hides the secret places of our incomparable land.

Through the silence, the voices of our distant past float down from their immortal home; voices of those to whom this land was once theirs as it now is ours, telling of their lives and loves, warning us to care for the land as they cared for it, taking from it, by gentle means, alone, our sustenance, and returning sustenance to it, a harmony of Sowing and Reaping, Harvesting and Sowing in which all natural life partakes, equally.

As season followed season, they gloried in the unique opportunity by which each enhanced the others: Spring rains swelled the new-sown seed, Summer's sun gave growth and strength to the nearing crop, Autumn's glory brought colour and ripeness, Winter's sleep descended upon and rested all. A natural, flowing symbiosis from which all benefited. Could this ordered world of Penwith, this harmony of man and beast and Nature have come of its own accord?

The Ancients thought not. In the Beginning, they said, was the Mother, - Earth - with her fullness awaiting the impregnating force of the Sun God. But, first he must be stirred and, as the cold grip of Winter gave way to Spring she wooed him, baring herself to his enraptured gaze and stirring the essence of his loins.

Thus, she transformed him, beckoning him through fickle March then hiding till he pursued her and locked in a deep embrace, they brought back all Life again. For life comes early to this thrice-blessed land.

Man, wayward, wanton man, is just one part of the great orchestra of Life, but it is the tragedy of our time that, all too often, he will play his own discordant notes, thinking, as a willful child, that his is the right tune and that all other



players must harmonise with him.

He will assert his rightness, his self-taught authority, his own notes which, ever and anon, produce a hideous cacophony which blights our landscape and demeans us all.

Ancient moors are ploughed, gorse and heather laid waste, the lives of all natural things poisoned and stunted, blasted and burned, including his own existence. Man creates myths and theories, mutually-antagonistic mono-theistic religions which breed tyranny and cruelty in his bigoted mind.

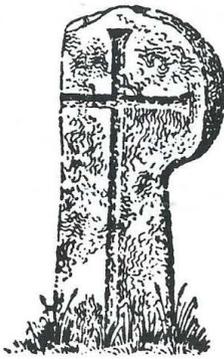
Why, oh why, do we desecrate the gentle land and fields, the noble trees and silver waters, stamping out the lives of God's creatures who have lived here since immemorial times and, above all, destroying our own souls, tender, kind and loving encased within the dark unyielding hides with which we needlessly strangle ourselves?

Wars and strife, tyranny and ugliness will continue to stalk this fair Earth until, once again, we acknowledge the goodness and the bounty, the beauty, warmth and love of our Mother and her noble consort in whatever guise we may see them.

Their love and their union are the true mysteries of Earth and of Life, but they are here, around us, for us to serve and to follow, in this magic land which our fore-fathers so aptly called, in their tongue which that unknowing and uncaring tide from outside so nearly crushed and swept away, "GWLAS AN HOWLSEDHAS", "The Land of the Setting Sun".

When we watch, evening after evening, the cosmic fires blazing beyond the Western sky, and the purpling darkness descending upon Trendrine and Mulfra, Kerrowe and Treen - musical names whose notes were first struck in a past we cannot comprehend - then should we sink to our knees in humility and thankfulness to the gods who, with love and devotion, fashioned this magic Land of Penwith.

The Piper's Tune



A Celtic cross, wheel-headed with incised Latin cross head, standing 2 to 3 foot high near the Halvana Plantation in a remote spot on Bodmin Moor near to the Jamaica Inn has recently gone missing. Nick Johnson from the Cornwall Archaeological Unit said that its theft was appalling: "It was miles from anywhere and weighed 3 or 4 cwt." He added that these crosses have a certain mysticism or mystery about them, and that he imagined it had gone to decorate someone's garden. However, an unnamed "Church of England expert on occultism in Cornwall" claimed that it may have been borrowed for a "Halloween ritual". He commented: "There are - or people claim there are - ley lines which criss cross the country and are lines of power. If this cross had been marking a standing stone which lay along such a line, occultists might have thought the cross was blocking the line of power and taken it away to let the power flow through freely." MM feels that he can't be that much of an "expert" or he would have known that markerpoints on a ley, be they Bronze Age menhirs or Christian crosses or even churches, are all equally important, and to remove any one is to destroy part of the power of that ley. Behind this reaction lies the classic establishment paranoia that lumps together anything they can't explain as the work of "occultists and satanists". Of course, if any reader has got it in their garden, please return it to Nick Johnson!

Talking about the Archaeological Unit, they recently organised an exhibition of aerial photography in Cornwall at Penlee House museum in Penzance. The 66 pictures covered topics such as abandoned landscapes on Bodmin Moor, hill forts such as Castle-an-Dinas (though

it would have been nice to have seen rather less hill forts and instead at least one or two stone circles, quoits or menhirs), and the landscape of continuity in West Penwith. Mentioning the settlement boundaries at Chysauster that were destroyed during agricultural clearances in 1984 they make the point that "it was this damage that has helped to highlight the particular threat to Penwith's extraordinary rich but fragile heritage". The Unit are to be congratulated for doing this kind of PR exercise, and they also tell MM that, following our *cri de coeur* in this column last time, they are proceeding with a computer programme to list as many of West Penwith's ancient stones as possible for English Heritage whose responsibility they will then become. MM has provided them with a comprehensive list of standing stones, as these have often been treated very piecemeal in the past, and many of the Michell & Barnett noted stones not hitherto scheduled. This should hopefully add a measure of protection to the existing sites, though perhaps we cannot be too optimistic, what with previously scheduled stones like Chapel Carn Brea being torn up by the farmer a couple of years ago with no action taken by English Heritage, despite a formal complaint being made to them by Craig Weatherhill at the time.

Finally, on the subject of the Unit, we reported last time that Newquay mayor Derek James was upset because site director Jackie Nowakowski left the Newquay Bronze Age dig to go on holiday without providing an exhibition of the finds. Charles Thomas tells us that in fact Jackie's holiday had been arranged long beforehand, and it was just not possible anyway to do a display so soon after the completion. We are happy to put the record straight.

STOP PRESS As we go to press, we hear of a most interesting discovery made by a visitor to West Penwith, Mr. A. Woolcock of Lichfield, Staffs. While looking at Trevern Round, near Newbridge, an ancient walled enclosure close to a standing stone, he found a series of marked inscriptions on a large stone near the entrance, noticeable only by the light of a low setting sun. In full daylight nothing could be seen, but when he filled in the markings with white chalk, a straight line about 28 inches long with many shorter lines branching off each side could be perceived this appears to MM to be very much like Ogham script which, although known on a few stones in mid and east Cornwall dating from the Dark Ages (about 6th Century) is unknown in West Penwith.

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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.

MEYN MAMVRO is available on annual subscription — 3 issues £3.99 (inc. p. & p.) A few back copies of No. 4 are available at £1.33 (inc. p. & p.). **Please note new address** — 51 CARN BOSAVERN, ST. JUST, Nr. PENZANCE, CORNWALL TR19 7QX

§ The next edition will include articles on The Celtic Cycle, the lost stones of the Merry Maidens complex and Celtic crosses in W. Penwith.

The Back Cover shows another linoprint by Ian Cook entitled 'Rebirth of the Sun', the drawings for which were made while sitting in the darkened interior of Garvrinis chambered mound, whose entrance faces the midwinter sunrise, and which is reproduced here to link in with the article on Brittany and Penwith (see p.8). It represents the first rays of the newborn sun providing the male energy needed by Mother Earth to conceive and begin the annual process of regeneration.

RILKO (Research into Lost Knowledge Organisation) (Annual: 2 issues £4.50) 10 Kedleston Drive, Orpington, Kent BR5 2DR

PAGANISM

THE CAULDRON — Pagan journal of the Old Religion (Annual: 4 issues £3) Mike Howard, Treforgan Mansion, Llangedmor, 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 NEW 3 (Address: 4 High Tor Close, Babbacombe Road, Bromley, Kent.)

ANCIENT WAYS — Irish pagan/EM mag. (Annual: 4 issues £4/Single: £1) c/o The Alchemists Head Bookshop, 10 East Essex Street, Dublin 2.

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CELTIC

CARN — A link between Celtic nations Cornish section. (Annual: 4 issues £5.50) Ian Williams, 6 Rose Row, Redruth, Cornwall.

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