

**JOHN MICHELL IN CORNWALL • ISEULT •
CIRCLES • HILL FORTS & CLIFF CASTLES
EARTH MYSTERIES • PAGAN CORNWALL •**

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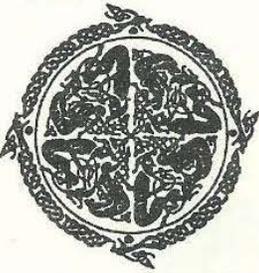
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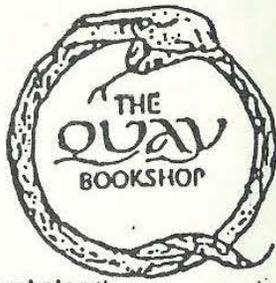
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Meyn Mamvro

Stones of our Motherland

**EARTH ENERGIES • ANCIENT STONES • SACRED SITES • PAGANISM • LEYPATHS
CORNISH PRE-HISTORY & CULTURE • MEGALITHIC MYSTERIES • LEGENDS & FOLKLORE**

Your editor's book "Pagan Cornwall: Land of the Goddess" was launched at a special event at Penzance's Acorn Theatre in September 1993, and has received a very positive and appreciative reaction, which has been most gratifying. Radio Cornwall picked up on the book and presenter Ted Gundry ran a whole week of interviews with me (CS) about different aspects of it at various sites in the land. They were broadcast every morning for 5 mornings in November at 9.45am, described irreverently by one of my friends as "The Goddess Slot"! On the first day, we visited the Merry Maidens stone circle and talked about the Maidens of the Moon, and the significance of nine, nineteen and dancing at the circles. On the second day, we were at Boleigh fogou, and talked about the meaning of fogous as ritual and ceremonial centres, places for the ancient peoples to connect with the spirit of Mother Earth. The third day saw us at Alsia Well, where we talked about wells as places of healing and divination, and the continuation of the old pagan customs into modern times. The fourth day took us to Chapel Carn Brea, where the discussion centred on sacred hilltop sites used for bonfire rituals at the festivals of the Wheel of the Year, and how the cycle related to the lives of the people. And finally, on the fifth day we ended up at Sancreed Church, to talk about the interface between paganism and Christianity, and how the goddesses and gods became adapted into the lives of the Saints, the folklore legends, and the village wise women. It was altogether a marvellous opportunity to put over to the public at large some of the interpretation of the continuation of spiritual belief and practice based on current research and theory (a subject that does not normally get much if any airtime), while bringing it alive "in the field". If any reader would like to hear the broadcasts, please send a blank C90 tape together with a strong self-addressed envelope (with 29p stamps) to Meyn Mamvro.

I also gave a talk on "The Goddess in Cornwall" at the 1993 New Age Festival in Perranporth in November. This year was the biggest gathering yet, with 2 full days of events in 3 workshop & lecture rooms running simultaneously. Subjects ranged over astrology, far memory, T'ai Chi, Shiatsu, healing meditation, flower & gem remedies, spiritual healing, crystal energy, kinesiology, dream contact, I Ching, graphology, rune magic, ghosts, reiki healing, and medicine wheel. There were sacred circle and Arab Egyptian dancers, poetry and song and storytelling, and many stalls and exhibitions. Congratulations go to Caroline Bowyer for a marvellous feat of organisation which in its professionalism does Cornwall credit. It was also in aid of St.Petroc's Society for the Homeless, a very worthy cause.



The 4th year of annual Autumn & Winter talks commenced on Thursday September 30th with **Helena Patterson** talking about Celtic Lunar Zodiacs. Helena, who lives in Cornwall and researches Celtic myth and history, is the author of a book of the same name, in which she blends much information and speculation on flower, herb and treelore, Gods and Goddesses and astrological correspondences. She spoke of how she had (re)discovered a zodiac that was based on a lunar rather than a solar cycle, and went through each of the signs and their correspondences in the cycle. Judging by the reactions of some of the audience, many of her ideas struck a chord!

On Thursday October 28th **John Michell** made a special trip to Cornwall to talk to a packed Earth Mysteries Group meeting. He was of course back on "home" ground, the place where he first did all the research for "The Old Stones of Land End", the book that inspired a whole generation of ley-hunters. John's talk was illustrated with many interesting slides, and because of its direct relevance to Meyn Mamvro is reproduced opposite. The next day on the Friday he led an interested group of stone-hunters around some of the lesser-known stones in the Castallack and Toldavas areas.

Thursday November 25th brought CEMG group favourite **Craig Weatherhill**, this time talking about Cornish Legends. As research for his new book with Paul Devereux on the geomantic significance of the old Cornish legends, he examined in more depth some of the old "drolls and fireside stories" passed on through generations of Cornish families, and finally collected by both Hunt & Bottrell in the 1870s. These stories, still entertaining in themselves, contained much ancient wisdom of the lore about the other world of faery folk and elementials and their interaction with human kind.

Finally, on Saturday December 18th there was the annual **Winter Solstice** gathering at Chûn Quoit to see the sunset alignment over Tregeseal, followed by a social at Heather Farm, home of committee members David and Dorothy Haynes. More talks are planned for 1994 - details on back page.

NEWS The Cornish Gorsyth revived the ancient Celtic Samhain festival with a bonfire on October 31st at St. Breock Downs, near St. Columb, to protest at the granting of planning permission for a wind farm to be erected on the Downs, close to megalithic standing stones there. The Grand Bard George Ansell said: "A good number of people came to show their feeling that St. Breock Downs is a sacred site that will be despoiled by the proposed wind turbines. This is a spiritual site, an ancient burial ground with standing stones, whose tranquility will be destroyed by such a development".

THE OLD STONES AND THEIR ALIGNMENTS

JOHN MICHELL

West Penwith has always been a mecca for antiquarians because of the large number of stones in the area. However, since I came down in 1985-86 to test the theory of alignments between ancient stones (first put forward by Alfred Watkins) many stones have gone. It is so important that even the smaller stones be recorded - they are just as important as the larger ones. So many of them have disappeared. No stone that was placed on the land was taller than it needed to be, in order to be seen from the next stone, so that the smaller stones were often on the horizon, whereas the larger stones were positioned lower down where they needed to be seen.

Alignments occur most obviously in the arrangement of the stone circles and standing stones, later in time than the burial mounds and quoits. The area of West Penwith has the key to the understanding of the megalithic system: the stones and circles are all interlocked by the alignment system. There must have been a wave of megalithic building, and stone circles and menhirs must have covered the whole area, a priestly system to do with necromancy and magic. The 7 or 8 stone circle sites in the area would have been inauguration places of ritual and social order. Perhaps the system did not last very long; the priestcraft may have become too intrusive. By the time we get to the early Christian monuments there was a reformation in Druidism, and people went back to the sources of spirit in rocks, wells, and other more natural holy places. On the other hand, stone crosses seem to be in many cases adaptations from megaliths or on the sites of megaliths. Christian sites replaced the pagan or Druidic sites, but Christianity did not change the pattern of life, so it made sense to continue the sacred pattern.

Every stone we find adds to the rediscovery of the alignment system, and helps us to reconstruct the whole system. Each stone on the alignments was intervisible from the next, and the lines were very accurately aligned. So that where there is a gap in the chain of intervisibility we can predict where the missing stone might be. There are still many undiscovered stones with hedges built around them: John Barnett discovered one near the Merry Maidens, and I found one near Sheffield, and one between West Lanyon Quoit and Lanyon Quoit. The astronomical features were not to do with scientific study, but with letting light into the temple on a significant day of the year as part of the rituals. I found no examples of trackways or church paths between the standing stones, or lines of stones going to church sites, so I believe the alignments were for the purposes of a procession, some way of empowering the local chief or king.

The landscape in West Penwith is something special. Sites were planned according to geographical reasons, making a pattern on the country. The work in West Penwith is not finished. There are stones still awaiting discovery, and a complete map of information on all the locations should be drawn up. This is the key to the whole of megalithic study and to the mind of the ancient peoples behind it.

Cornwall's mysterious places

WARLEGGAN & TEMPLE

Warleggan is a tiny hamlet that nestles on the flanks of Bodmin Moor, seldom visited, but having some curious facts attached to it. It is virtually surrounded by three rivers, and if it is true that psychic energy cannot cross running water, Warleggan must be uniquely trapped within its energy field. The high hill it stands on was formerly surmounted by a church steeple instead of the usual Cornish church tower, presumably to ensure it could be seen for miles around. Such arrogance was laid low however, when in 1818 a bolt of lightning smashed the spire to ruins, an incident reminiscent of the 'earthquake' which shattered the church on Glastonbury Tor and St. Michael's Mount.

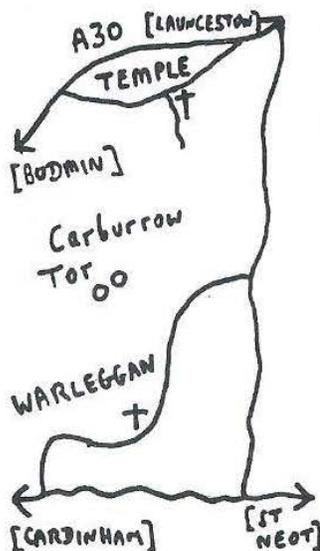
The dedication of the church is to St. Bartholemew, a fictional saint whose claim to fame lay in his supposed 'victory' over the Goddess Astarte in India. Interestingly, the Rev. F.W. Denisham, Vicar of Warleggan from 1931 to 1953. was in India prior to taking up the living at Warleggan. He fell out with his parishioners who no longer came to the church, whereupon he built a barbed wire fence around the rectory garden and preached to an empty church containing cardboard cut-outs of the parishioners. There is some evidence that he believed himself to be under both physical and occult threat. Apart from the numerous locks and bolts, the barbed wire, and dogs for protection, he painted coloured crosses on the walls of the rectory, and had a small sanctuary room filled with sacred imagery. Eventually he met his death by falling down stairs and being unable to summon help. A building that previously occupied the site of his rectory in the 14th Century was lived in by Ralph de Tremur, who was accused of celebrating black mass in the church. There are accounts of hauntings too in this rather eerie place.



A few miles away in a line that crosses the ancient cairns and tumuli of Carburrow Tor lies Temple, a place described (by Canon Miles Brown) as "a lonely church in the desolate moor". There is another connection here with India, for this was a church of the Knight's Templars founded in 1120 as a hospice for travellers, and was dedicated to St. Catherine, who was really the Gnostic Goddess of the Assyrians in the 8th Century, and an aspect of Kali, the Hindu Goddess of death and transformation. Catherine was brought to England by the Cathari or mediaeval Gnostics who revered her almost as a female counterpart of God. Later Christian myth told of her torture on a fiery wheel (as a Goddess she was Dancer of the Fiery Wheel at the hub of the universe), but the wheel was shattered by a sudden bolt of lightning, which has curious synchronistic echoes with the bolt of lightning that struck nearby Warleggan.

Some of the tenets of the eastern Gnostics were adopted by the Knights Templar, who were a rather mysterious order themselves. They were virtually wiped out in the early 14th Century in very cruel and sensational trials in England and France, where they were tried on charges of worshipping the devil in the form of a cat; adoring an androgynous idol Baphomet; denying God, Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Saints; and stamping, spitting or urinating on crucifixes. Many were tortured and put to death, but it has been suggested that they were only following an ancient Gnostic religion under the guise of medieval Christianity. If so, the church at Temple would be a special place of worship, influenced by Eastern mysticism. The church's later history is also odd. After the Reformation it remained outside the bishop's jurisdiction until 1774 and became a Gretna Green for illicit marriages, a place outside the boundaries of ecclesiastical law. All in all, both Temple and Warleggan seem to have had a very curious history, perhaps as a centre for Gnostic heresy, linked in some symbiotic way across the prehistoric landscape of Carburrow Tor on Bodmin Moor.

[c] Robin Ellis & Cheryl Traffon

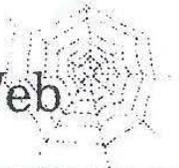


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READERS WRITE

Meyn Mamvro has hitherto not had a letters page: this was a deliberate decision, to avoid the kind of personal attack or navel-contemplation so often found in such columns. Instead we have tried to incorporate readers' information within the regular editorial and column pages. However, this new column provides the opportunity to feature readers' ideas that do not easily fit in elsewhere. If you would like to write to MM from now on with any points or views, please feel free to do so.

THE MÊN-AN-TOL

"I read with great interest the article on the Mên-an-Tol [MM22], and from experience with recumbent stone circles in north-east Scotland, I suggest that the possibility of lunar alignment be investigated. SSE is close to the Minor Standstill moonrise in the Metonic cycle, but it would obviously need to be validated for that location, relative to geographical position and elevation. Rotating the holed stone 90° may provide a portal, and the 'stony mound' could be construed as a crescent shaped pavement.

I am astonished that there should be adverse reaction to clearing the ground around the Mên-an-Tol. It would seem unlikely that a ritual place would not have been cleared. The scrub has no relevance to the stones, does nothing to enhance the appearance of the area, and hampers elucidation of the site's true configuration, which is surely of major interest to all genuinely concerned with understanding it. Any interference with the site, or excavation, would, of course, be a different matter."

Trevor Allcott, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire.

"The Mên-an-Tol site is certainly an enigma. The suggestion [in MM22] that originally the monument may have been an amalgam of two separate traditions is a very interesting one. Recently in the Channel Islands I came upon a site which has always been called a 'cist-in-circle' but which was, in fact, an 'Irish' recumbent stone circle with grading, prostrate slab and central boulder-burial. We've still got a lot to learn."

Aubrey Burl, Northfield, Birmingham.

CONNECTING WITH CORNWALL

"May I take this chance to thank you for a magazine which I always look forward to receiving. I subscribe to several magazines on Earth Mysteries and similar topics and I find MM is consistently the most interesting of all. As a result of reading MM, I have visited your beautiful Cornwall for the first time since I was a child, and found it to be every bit as powerful as expected. I went down to Rocky Valley two years ago at Beltane, and the experience was one of those days which I will remember for many years to come! The only place I have ever been to which has more raw energy is the island of Lundy, out in the Bristol Channel. It is unfortunate that I live so faraway that I cannot come to any of the events in Cornwall, or even visit the ancient sites as often as I would like, so I would be pleased to hear from anyone down there who feels like dropping me a line!"

Richard Bass, 17 Cransley Avenue, Wollaton, Nottingham NG8 2QX.



Circles of mystery



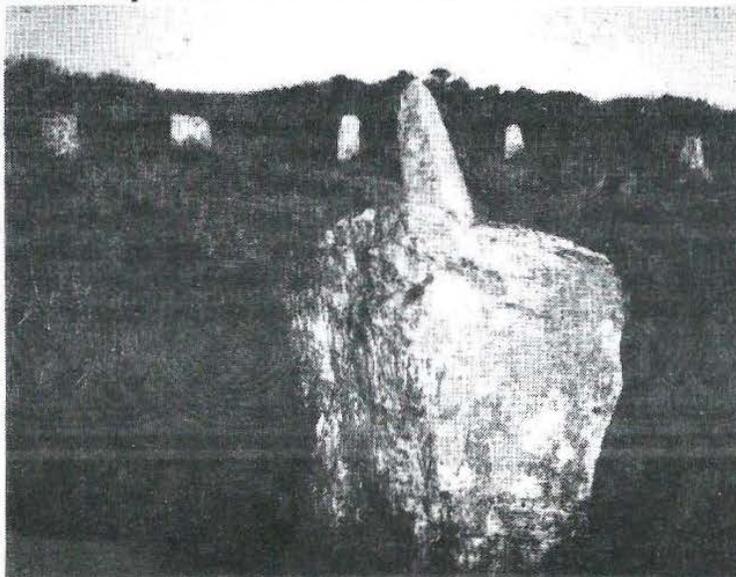
by JOHN STEADMAN

There are very many ancient monuments in the Land's End area, including standing stones, entrance graves, quoits or cromlechs, the mysterious fogous, and the holy wells and stone crosses that litter the lanes and roadsides. It is a landscape strewn with historic and prehistoric remains.

Of all these antiquities, none to me are more intriguing, more perplexing, than the stone circles, at least four of which remain locally in varying degrees of preservation. These to me have a special magic that personally does not diminish. No matter how many times I make a return visit to one of these sites, I am captivated. I almost feel that by touching the stones I can in some small way establish a bond with the anonymous people who worked and dressed the giant stones so long ago, and those who hauled and levered them upright into their prepared sockets. Of all the antiquities, these relics from the edge of prehistory would seem to be the most completely shrouded in mystery.

Archaeological evidence is scant. There is little or no organic material to make radio carbon dating viable, as is the case with the burnt remains associated with entrance graves and burial mounds, so in many cases they cannot be dated with any real accuracy. There are no inscriptions. They don't give answers easily. They are the stuff that myths & legends are built around, yet I think that we all feel that somewhere, somehow, if we sit and think about it long enough there is a code that can be unravelled, and the clues to the mystery of the stone circles will begin to become apparent.

Many circles are indeed precisely circular, others it seems have been made deliberately flattened, yet others appear to obey a primitive geometry, but the ravages of time and repeated restoration could account for these differences. Some circles have focal stones within their make-up. These may be stones of a different size or shape, or of a differing mineralogical constitution, as in the case of the quartz stone at Boscawen-un, or indeed a centrally placed monolith as at Boscawen-un.



In order to scratch the surface of the riddle of the circles, I began to look for trends or similarities between those that still survive today. One fact quickly came to light and was obviously of too great an importance to ignore. Of the four stone circles remaining in the Lands End peninsula, all have or have had at some point in their history a total of 19 stones. This number is of particular interest to those of us who believe the builders of the megalithic circles and henges worshipped the female deity or lunar aspect. The complex cycle of the moon's motion through the sky repeats itself approximately every 19 years. Could it then be possible that stone circles were in some way temples of observance of ritual based on the moon's movement through the sky? If stone circles throughout the British Isles all comprised 19 stones then this idea would gain considerable merit, but this is not the case. Stone circles on Bodmin Moor contain a larger number of stones (27 or thereabouts), and those on Dartmoor an even greater number (between 30 & 36): the number varies throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles.

I think it would be foolish however to dismiss the idea of temples of ritual observance. Neolithic and Bronze Age farming communities were doubtless very much 'in tune' with the apparent motion of the sun and moon, and quite probably many of the planets and major constellations. There is in fact much evidence of possible astronomical or calendrical association. This would help to explain the existence of outlying stones, contemporary with, and in many cases so obviously bound up with the geometry of the stone circle system. Tantalisingly, there are some convincing alignments with natural features in the landscape, these in turn approximating with the points of midsummer or midwinter sunrise or sunset on the visible horizon. It can be safely said that some stone rows and stone circles with their accompanying outlying monoliths give a good indication of the existence of an astronomy-practising theocracy here in Britain in the third millennium BCE. The Neolithic or Bronze Age peoples of the British Isles had then at their disposal sufficient knowledge to be able to predict with some accuracy the four solar festivals or greater sabbats; i.e., the summer and winter solstices, and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. It follows that a knowledge of the lunar cycle, together with the ability to predict eclipses would not have been out of the question. Ritual or ceremonial gatherings would have been predetermined by fixed points in the solar or lunar calendars, and it would make perfect sense that such gatherings take place in a specially constructed site nearby. I personally feel that this was the original purpose for which circles were constructed.

It is probable that the majority of stone circles date from 3500 to 1500 BCE but it has been suggested that they could be much older. During a period of thousands of years it is not unreasonable to suppose that they may have served more than one purpose. It is indeed highly probable that as the centuries passed and differing cultural trends slowly superseded one another, these ancient sites almost certainly became adapted for purposes other than those for which they might originally have been constructed. It is generally accepted that Bronze Age peoples lived within a tribal system, each tribe made up of a number of smaller units or clans. A number of clans would have existed side by side in an area like the Lands End peninsula,

and we know from the archaeological record that they did not always exist in complete harmony. The construction of elaborate defensive hilltop and cliff-top fortifications were still occupied into the late Iron Age and even Romano-British times. Chûn Castle in West Penwith is a classic example. It is my belief that around 2500 BCE a civilising and more stabilising influence began to sweep over the British Isles and subtle changes began to take place. I believe that as conflicts arose and differences between neighbouring clans became less frequently practicable to resolve through violent confrontation, then a more constructive approach to resolving the differences had to come about. This marked change could have happened as a result of the need to unify forces against an outside threat of invasion, or it may indeed have been a natural progression.

It does however follow that the transition between an internecine tribal state, and numerous disparate settlements living in comparatively peaceful co-operation would have required some kind of self-government with a rudimentary parliament, and this would have been held at some venerated gathering place. I propose that stone circles came to fulfil this tribal parliamentary function, possibly alongside their former role as sacred places with individual stones within the circle standing for each clan or clan representative at any given moment in tribal history. This would account too for small fluctuations that exist in the total number of stones present. It is possible that the Lands End circles may have comprised of as many as 22 stones at an earlier period of their history, and this is not unreasonable as the number of clans could not be expected to remain constant over a period of several hundred years. This new civilising influence could be attributed to the 'invasion' of an Eastern European race known to us as the Beaker People. Their distinctive pottery remains are commonplace at enough sites throughout Europe for their expansion to be dated quite precisely. It is an interesting fact that both Boleigh and Tregeseal have had more than one stone circle at the site: could it be that the circles were rebuilt or reconstructed as the old astronomical or ritual function of the site was superseded by the need for a local parliament?

I feel that the next step is to look for evidence of a correlation between the number of Bronze Age settlement remains in the Lands End peninsula, with the number of stones in our stone circles, the idea being that each settlement would have been occupied by a different clan. However, archaeological evidence of Bronze Age settlements or homesteads is virtually non-existent: we know little about their lifestyle compared to the information we have regarding their funerary arrangements. What we do have however are many well-preserved Iron Age villages, some of which are known to have been built on earlier sites. There are also a number of Iron Age fortifications on hilltop and cliff-top locations, such as Chûn Castle some of which have been excavated and similarly found to have been built on older sites. My assumption is that there were Neolithic and Bronze Age farming and tanning communities occupying settlements and homesteads on hilltop and cliff-top locations throughout the area, some of which would have been fortified positions, gradually being improved upon over the years, and ultimately giving rise to the impressive Iron Age settlements we see today.

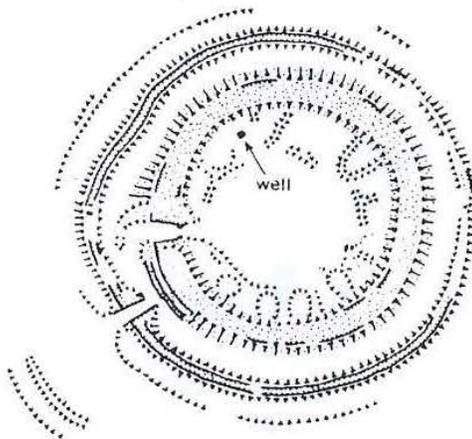
A close study of the Ordnance Survey map for the Lands End area gives quite an interesting correlation. Without too much difficulty one can pinpoint 12-15 fortifications of this type, with another 5 or 6 very likely locations. Therefore what we seem to have is a number of occupied defensive positions very close to the magic number of nineteen. If the number should fall short by one or two, I would suggest that two or more clans may even have 'shared' 2 defensive earthworks in times of difficulty.

In short, I propose that, although the parts played by stone circles in the lives of our forebears may have been diverse, there is one inescapable fact: stone circles were without doubt gathering places. They may have been built on very carefully chosen sites, both geographically and topographically, but they were a focal point where our ancestors came together, possibly for a whole variety of reasons. Indeed they still are: the inauguration of the Gorsedd of the Cornish Bards took place at Boscawen-un. They could have been a place of worship, a place of ritual observance, a place of hearing, or indeed trial and execution. They, like any other enduring monument, would have been subject to the social evolution of our race. In more recent times they may have been the site of festivity and merry-making, dancing, contests or tournaments. Myths, legends and names associated with the circles conjure up a picture of dancing, fiddlers, pipers and maidens, a strong folk-memory that is doubtless many hundreds of years old. It is entirely possible that we may never fully understand the stones, but it is equally possible that in attempting to understand them, we are missing the point entirely: maybe we should just go there, be there, and come to understand ourselves.



GUIDE TO PENWITH HILL FORTSCHŪN CASTLE (SW4051 3395)

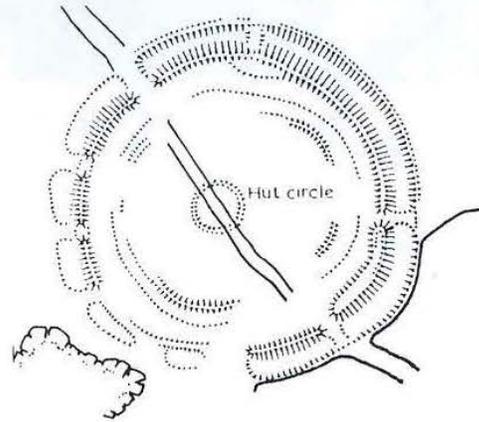
An impressive hilltop fort, approachable from Trehyllys Farm or the North Road, Pendeen. Close to Chŭn Quoit, which however predates it by over 2000 years, the Castle being first constructed in about 200BCE. It is about 280ft in diameter, with two concentric thick (15–20ft) granite walls, which would originally have been 10–20ft high. During the Iron Age the site was reoccupied, the entrance was staggered, and huts were also built. In modern times the site was plundered of its stone to build a workhouse & pave Penzance streets.



CARN GULVA (SW4275 3601) This distinctive hilltop has been recently identified as a hillfort.

CAER BRÂN (SW4075 2903)

By footpaths from Carn Euny or Grumbla, this is a well-preserved hillfort with views right across the peninsula. It is 430ft in diameter, with two concentric circles, the outer being an earth rampart, with remains of an inner ditch. In the centre there are the overgrown foundations of a large hut circle.

LESINGEY (SW4534 3035)

Just off the main St Just–Penzance road, Lesingey is perhaps the most beautiful of the hill forts. It is only 260ft in diameter, wooded, and carpeted in bluebells in Spring. There is a large oval rampart about 12ft high above a surrounding ditch. It has the appearance of a sacred enclosure or a settlement site rather than a defensive structure.

FAUGAN ROUND (SW4519 2823)

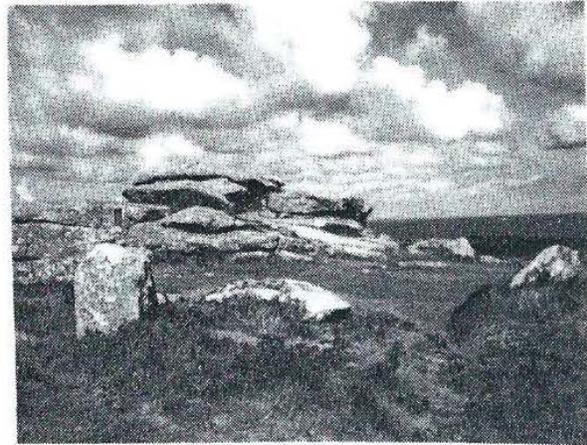
This original hill fort, found beside a footpath behind Rose farm on the Drift - Newlyn road is much ploughed over, but still contains the remains of two concentric ramparts and two upright stones, which marked the original inner entrance of the fort. John Michell suggested that two leys ran through the stones, one to Tresvennack-Chyangwens and the other to Kerris-Treveren.

LESCUDJACK (SW4754 3104)

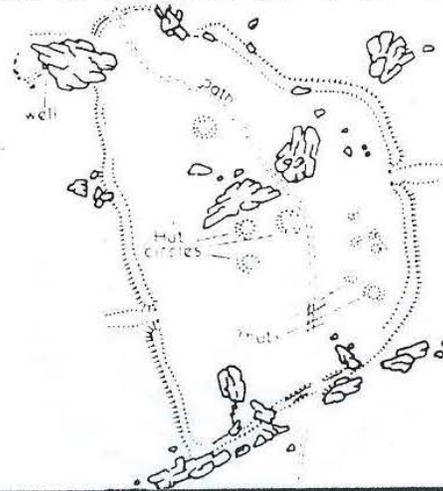
This hillfort, beside Castle Road in Penzance, is now all but destroyed. It originally had three layers of entrance, and was the largest of the hillforts, being oval in shape measuring 400ft x 500ft.

CASTLE-AN-DINAS (SW4849 3500)

This is reachable by a footpath from the B3311, but is now dominated by a large quarry. It is some 435ft across, and originally had two massive concentric stone walls, an earth and a stone rampart, and an outer rampart and ditch. In the centre there are the possible foundations of a hut circle. The site has been much robbed of stone over the years, and a folly, known as Rogers Tower, was built there in 1798.

TRENCROM (SW5177 3620)

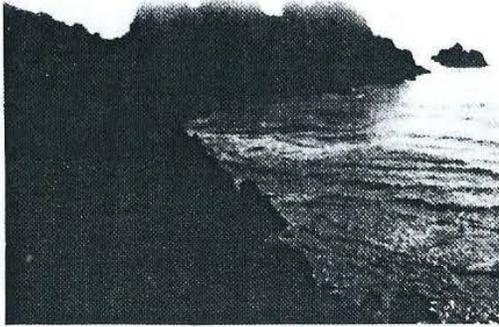
Reached from the A3074 between Nanledra and Lelant, this hillfort has fine views over to St. Michael's Mount. The fort follows the contours of the hill summit itself, making an irregular pear-shaped structure, similar to some found on Bodmin Moor. The walls are 15ft thick in places, and two distinctive gateway stones survive. There were originally a large number of hut circles inside (perhaps 16), and, like Chûn Castle, there are also wells, one on the eastern slope known as Giant's Well, and one up a hidden path at the north end of the fort.

ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT (SW5145 2985)

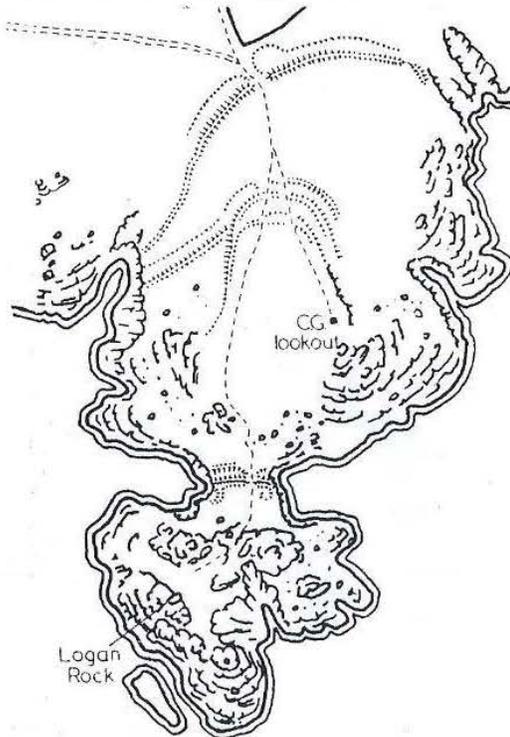
Recently the remains of a hill fort have also been discovered on this holy hilltop, linked to Trencrom in legend and by ley-line.

GUIDE TO PENWITH CLIFF CASTLES

TRERYN DINAS (SW3974 2212)



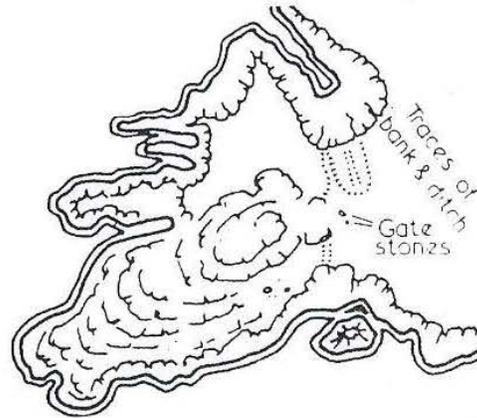
This spectacular cliff castle encircles the famous Logan Rock (near Porthcurno) with 4 lines of defence walls, embankments and ditches, built at various times between 3rd & 1st centuries BCE. Legend has it that Merlin was imprisoned forever by magic in a cave below the Logan Rock.



CARN LES BOEL (SW3568 2326)

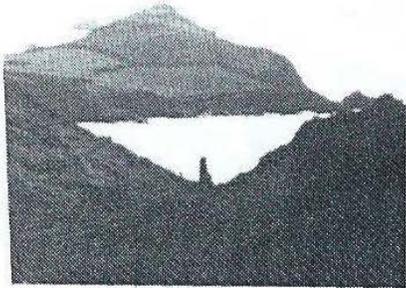


Along the same coast towards Lands End at Nanjidsal is a prominent rock headland with traces of earth and stone ramparts and some stones, one of which is still standing. The Miller & Broadhurst Michael energy line is supposed to start from this point.



MAEN CASTLE (SW3477 2576)

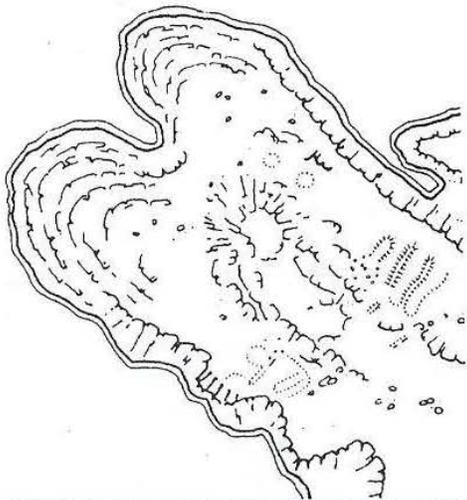
Around Lands End on the way to Sennen is a small rocky headland defended by a stone wall, ditch and bank. The gateway, constructed of granite blocks, is well preserved, and there traces of a contemporary field system nearby. It was excavated in 1939 & 1948, and a date of pre-300 BCE given to it.

CAPE CORNWALL (ap.SW353 318)

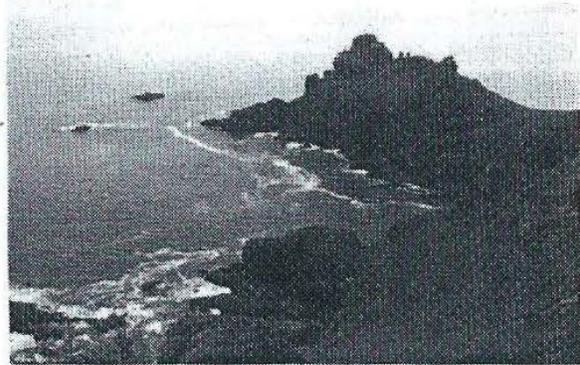
Near St Just. Ramparts & ditches destroyed in late 19th century.

KENIDJACK CASTLE (SW3555 3258)

Around the next headland from Cape Cornwall, traces of a triple fortification, including 2 hut circles. The site was a source of axes and probably tin, and may have marked the beginning of the Tinnars Way track across the Penwith moors to St. Michael's Mount & St Ives Island, from where the tin was probably shipped

BOSIGRAN CASTLE (SW4168 3694)

A spectacular site on the north coast, but a simple structure, consisting of a single line of well-constructed wall defense, the wall surviving to a height of 5ft.

GURNARDS HEAD (SW4325 3851)

Moving further up the north coast is another grand site. The neck of the headland is narrow and there are two ramparts and three ditches, misaligned to produce a twisting entry. There are at least 16 hut circles, and on the eastern side of the headland the remains of a chapel (Jane) and a lost holy well.

ST IVES ISLAND (ap.SW520 411)

The final cliff castle in Penwith (now destroyed) was on St.Ives Island, marking the northern end of Penwith, just as St.Michael's Mount, which also had a clifftop hill fort (see p.12) marks the southern end.

CLIFF CASTLES OR SHAM CASTLES?

by Paul Thomas

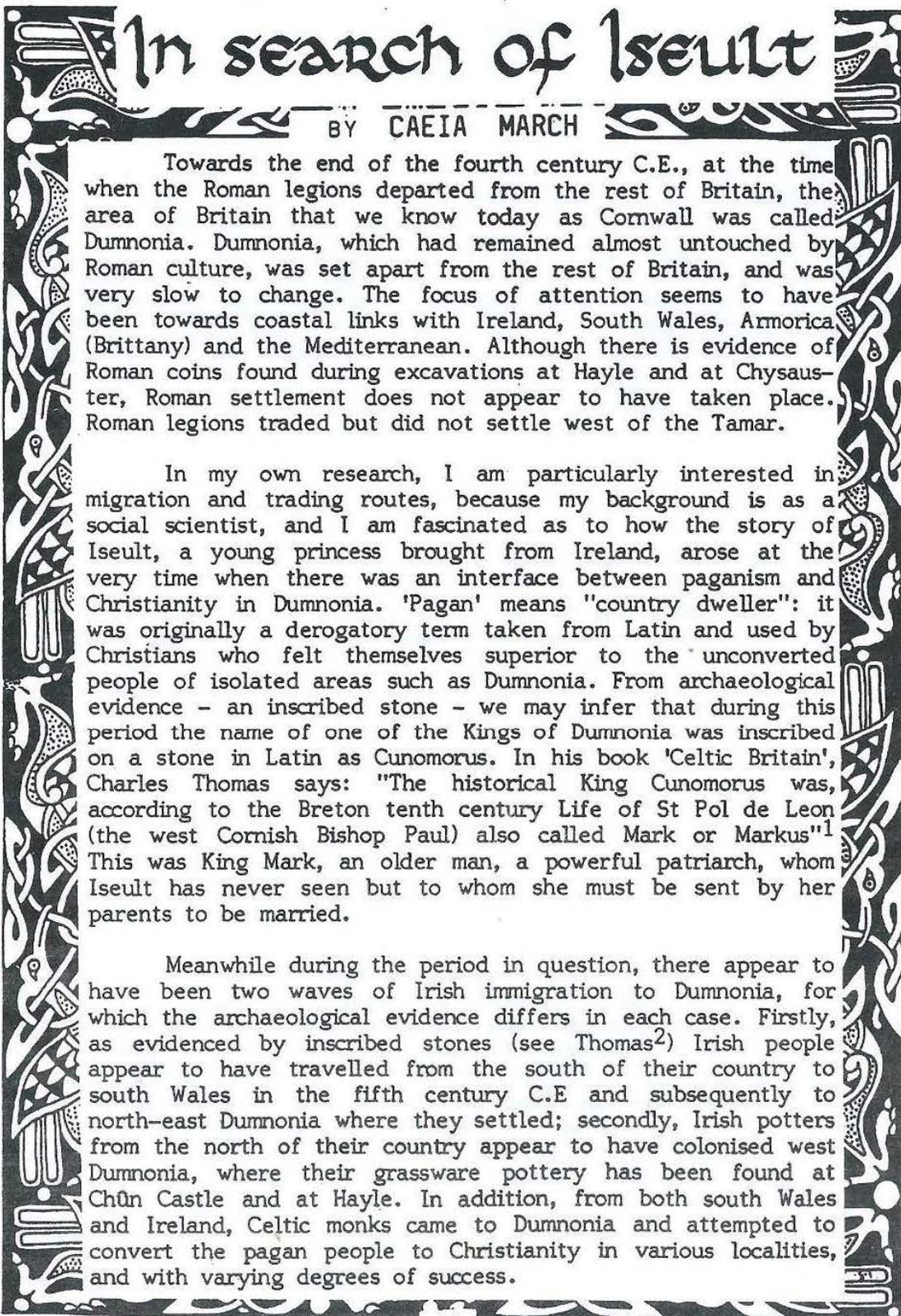
A castle by the sea is a near impregnable structure. At least one side can't be taken from the land and a sea-borne assault is difficult. The defenders can be supplied by sea and also make their escape by it if the defence goes badly. The cliff castles of West Penwith seem impressive structures at first glance, but when one enters and studies them there are a number of flaws which suggest otherwise.

They are constructed on a headland and the main defences are the massive ramparts and ditches which cut off the promontory from the mainland. Sometimes there is only one but usually three. A considerable effort has gone into the building of these. The ditches and ramparts are massive structures and reinforced by great blocks of stone. The entrances are staggered to hamper an attacker. On the face of it the cliff castles would deter or baffle any attacking force.

However, while such defences might have deterred a relatively small raiding party, a large and more determined one could surely have managed to storm the ramparts and massacre the defenders trapped inside. If the attackers had decided on a seige the defenders would have suffered badly since the area inside was limited. It is highly unlikely that there would have been any substantial stocks of provisions and the headland would have been exposed to the elements. Some do show signs of having huts erected within the enclosure but others do not. The prospect of conducting a defence on an exposed cliff edge must have been almost as daunting as storming the ramparts. The cliffs flanking many of the castles could have been descended by some of the defenders who sought to escape. But they could equally easily be scaled by a raiding party of the attackers. If the cliffs were inaccessible then the defenders could be effectively cut off by an attacker laying seige.

It makes one wonder if the cliff castles of Cornwall were ever seriously tested. Possibly they served a similar function to that of nuclear shelters in more recent times: a comforting structure to dive into in the event of an attack. It's rather tempting to regard the cliff castles as sham castles designed to comfort the locals and deter the attackers, but no doubt the builders didn't! Although these criticisms could apply to the hill forts, these were strongly defended all round: they weren't so exposed to the elements and enclosed a large area with a well and buildings. A much stronger defensive structure than the cliff castles. Even though the cliff castles and hill forts were obviously built for defensive purposes, could they have been used for rituals at any time? A kind of symbolic defence and attack perhaps? At least they look picturesque in their spectacular settings!

← *Drawings of the hill forts & cliff castles on p11-14 (c) Craig Weatherhill.*



Towards the end of the fourth century C.E., at the time when the Roman legions departed from the rest of Britain, the area of Britain that we know today as Cornwall was called Dumnonia. Dumnonia, which had remained almost untouched by Roman culture, was set apart from the rest of Britain, and was very slow to change. The focus of attention seems to have been towards coastal links with Ireland, South Wales, Armorica (Brittany) and the Mediterranean. Although there is evidence of Roman coins found during excavations at Hayle and at Chysauster, Roman settlement does not appear to have taken place. Roman legions traded but did not settle west of the Tamar.

In my own research, I am particularly interested in migration and trading routes, because my background is as a social scientist, and I am fascinated as to how the story of Iseult, a young princess brought from Ireland, arose at the very time when there was an interface between paganism and Christianity in Dumnonia. 'Pagan' means "country dweller": it was originally a derogatory term taken from Latin and used by Christians who felt themselves superior to the unconverted people of isolated areas such as Dumnonia. From archaeological evidence - an inscribed stone - we may infer that during this period the name of one of the Kings of Dumnonia was inscribed on a stone in Latin as Cunomorus. In his book 'Celtic Britain', Charles Thomas says: "The historical King Cunomorus was, according to the Breton tenth century Life of St Pol de Leon (the west Cornish Bishop Paul) also called Mark or Markus"¹ This was King Mark, an older man, a powerful patriarch, whom Iseult has never seen but to whom she must be sent by her parents to be married.

Meanwhile during the period in question, there appear to have been two waves of Irish immigration to Dumnonia, for which the archaeological evidence differs in each case. Firstly, as evidenced by inscribed stones (see Thomas²) Irish people appear to have travelled from the south of their country to south Wales in the fifth century C.E and subsequently to north-east Dumnonia where they settled; secondly, Irish potters from the north of their country appear to have colonised west Dumnonia, where their grassware pottery has been found at Chûn Castle and at Hayle. In addition, from both south Wales and Ireland, Celtic monks came to Dumnonia and attempted to convert the pagan people to Christianity in various localities, and with varying degrees of success.

Meanwhile, from the five hundreds onwards, in increasing numbers and with increasing ferocity, waves of invaders arrived on the north, east and south coasts of Britain. Some like the Jutes and Angles became one with the indigenous peoples, intermixing and intermarrying, and some would have converted to Christianity. Others like the many Saxon groups retained their own pagan religions. In 565 C.E Columba established his monastery at Iona, which became the centre of the Celtic Christian Church; and in 597 C.E the head of the Church in Rome sent Augustine as his emissary. Landing at Kent, Augustine established himself at Canterbury and from then to the middle of the seventh century the Celtic and Roman Churches vied against each other for conversion of the predominantly pagan population of Britain.

The Christian monks had to negotiate heavily with the Kings of the different regions of Britain with respect to the conversion of individual Kings and/or their subjects to Christianity. Christianity and native paganism maintained an uneasy ebb and flow. In Dumnonia, it may be surmised that, despite pockets of Christianity, general belief systems continued to be based upon the wheel of the year, and the remaining goddesses and gods in the Druidic pantheon, which was hierarchically organised, derived from and born out of a much older native religion. It can be argued that from Neolithic times (4,000 - 2000 BCE) onwards belief systems were matrifocal and matrilocal, goddess-based, arising from and belonging to the landscape in which people lived and worked.³

The story of Iseult, which is set in the court of King Mark, was a spoken tale which remained in the oral tradition until Beroul wrote it hundreds of years later. I think that a story has to be powerful if it is going to last three or four hundred years told in inns and taverns, repeated around late night fire sides and sung by minstrels. It must catch the imagination of those who are listening, or they wouldn't bother to repeat it. Thus it is a social action - a telling of a tale. It has to have a meaning, a making sense, a reflection of reality or it simply won't survive.

In every version of the story of Iseult there are parallel themes which suggest to me that Iseult herself is derived from a pagan "Goddess in Cornwall" tradition. Wherever in the world a patriarchal takeover is trying to overcome a Goddess tradition, several possible methods may be employed. One is to deny; another is to hide; another is to diminish; another is to kill; another is to incorporate, transform or transmute the nature of the Goddess into something else: a fairy, a folk heroine or a saint. How does this process relate to Iseult?

Firstly, Iseult is the land. She represents the power of Ireland so that it is only through Mark's marriage to Iseult that Dumnonia and Ireland can be united. She brings peace in this way also. Whereas the mothers of ancient times carried within themselves the essence of the land, representing the earth herself, the Kings of later times could only establish or maintain their power/energy by marriage to the land. Other versions of this (in Cornwall) come through in the Arthurian legends - e.g, drawing energy from the stone via the sword, or from the water of the lake via the sword (e.g Dozmary Pool). Mark (who is NOT Arthur) does likewise.

Secondly, Iseult is magical. She is a healer, wise and very powerful and able to transcend the brutality of her father's plans and King Mark's desires. In MM21, Cheryl Traffon & myself outlined the start of joint research on the Irish Brighid - Bride - in Cornwall. This research is ongoing as we search along the immigration routes across north Cornwall towards Bridestow in Devon. There is a folk memory that some wells along some of these routes were called Brighid's wells, for example. Much more map work remains to be done. Nevertheless the healing powers of the legendary Iseult are so extraordinary in the Tristan and Iseult tale, that it is not difficult to reveal the healing aspects of Bride in the character of the folk heroine Iseult, given that in the story Iseult is brought from Ireland. She is the Irish healer in Cornwall, having previously healed part of Cornwall in Ireland (the wounded Tristan). In Ireland Bride as triple goddess, one aspect of which was healing, was so powerful that it took a Papal decree to put the fires out at her shrine at Kildare in the Middle Ages. I think that the second aspect of Iseult as folk heroine incorporates magical healer.

Thirdly, I suggest that Iseult is a vegetation Goddess in disguise - the hidden aspect. The hunch on which I am working here is that wherever she goes when fleeing from Mark with Tristan, the land shelters, protects and nourishes her. In this aspect I think she is one of the few remaining aspects of vegetation Goddess in Cornish mythology. As Pamela Berger argues⁴, there are vegetation goddess stories embedded in the tales of folk heroines or women saints in some parts of Britain, e.g, Milburga of Shropshire. I suggest that in Dumnonia the vegetation Goddess became the folk heroine Iseult rather than a saint. However it is also possible that some aspects of the vegetation Goddess became incorporated into the tales of some of the women saints, and more research is needed here.

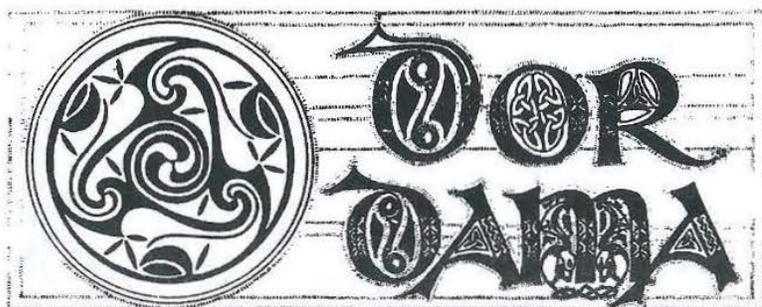
Fourthly, the particular timing of the origin of the Iseult story is itself significant. Whatever strong Goddess names and traditions there were in Dumnonia, the names and places and details were lost, or deliberately left out, by the time the Christian Norman French scribes were writing records in the Middle Ages. Denial and misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Cornish language was part of this process. Cornish heritage was being harshly filtered by the English, the Norman French, and by the use of Latin as well. The same loss happened in much the same way in my own ancestral land of the Isle of Man, despite the fact that the Manx language had the pseudo protection of water on all sides instead of three sides. The process of recording with denial from the vernacular into the dominant languages of the recording people is a classic kind of deculturalisation. But some things came through strongly despite the filters. Bride in Ireland; Iseult in Cornwall. The power it takes to transcend that process is phenomenal. This legend hints at that power.

The woman Iseult is still magical enough to warrant operas, plays, novels, short stories and on-going research. We are dealing with a very powerful heroine here. She is a wonderful role model too. She is passionate and warm; she does not fear her own sexuality; she faces exile, when her own parents force her to leave her homeland; she heals herself after sex against her will and becomes capable of passion with her chosen partner even then; she represents the land and finds haven within it. She is homeless, living on the cliffs, living in the woods. Her spirit will not die. Her story was generated in the six hundreds and is alive today.

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+ "The Cornish Background to the Tristan Stories" - Oliver Padel (Univ. Camb. 1981); "Women of the Celts" - Jean Markale (Inner Traditions, 1975); "The Celtic Alternative" - Shirley Toulson (Century, 1987); "Tristan & Iseult in Cornwall" - E.R.M. Ditmas (1969); "Cornwall: Land of legend" - Joy Wilson (Bossiney, 1989); "Women's Encyclopedia of Myths & Secrets" - Barbara Walker (Harper & Row, 1983); "The Saxon Kings" - Richard Humble (Weidenfeld 1980).



This contribution from reader Lucia Borelli is about a powerful initiatory experience in Pendeen fogou in West Penwith, which fits most aptly into our Dor Dama column (Cornish for 'Earth Mother').

I managed to visit many ancient places on my visit to Cornwall in March 1993. Some old friends to me on Bodmin Moor and others that were new, like Rocky valley and the fogou at Pendeen. I had never been inside a fogou before and I wasn't sure what to expect, though I have read a lot of theories about them.

It had been a lovely warm afternoon and Pendeen was the last place I could visit that day. I waded through the farmyard which was full of cows and my brother followed, as puzzled as I was. I was surprised when I reached the fogou - I hadn't expected it to just 'drop' into the ground. My brother was not willing to go very far inside and he came out pretty quickly. I stepped down carefully as the entrance was slippery and covered in beautiful little rock plants. As I got down inside I was struck by the coldness. It was numbing and as I reached the point near to the creep I began to feel very strange. I sat down on a large stone and looked about. It was such a complete silence and I could see my breath in the damp atmosphere. Then I began to feel a pain in the front of my head. It was sharp and stabbing and extremely uncomfortable. At the same time I began to feel something like a band being tightened around my skull - it felt as if my head would explode.

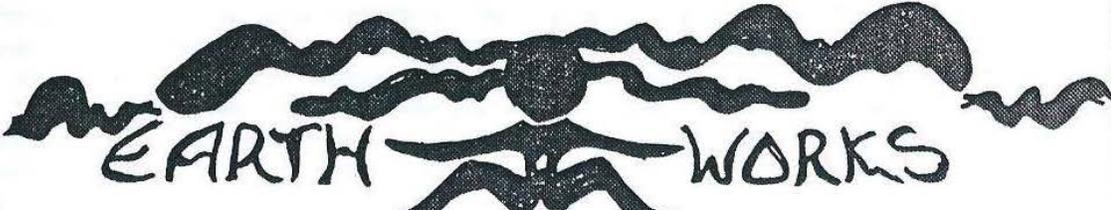
I wanted to get out but the pain started to subside a bit and I thought I should go into the creep before I left. I lit the candle I'd brought specially and went in, lying on my back. It was very muddy but there was a wooden plank that had been put down, so it wasn't difficult to edge myself through the narrow entrance. Once inside the creep, I was able to move along the passage in a crouching position. Unlike the main tunnel, this is wet clay with stones of every size lining the floor. In the middle, the passage dips and a pool of water collects there. The atmosphere was much warmer and I felt very calm: all I could hear were my heartbeats and the drip of the water. I felt as if I could have melted into the earth. Nothing seemed to matter to me, all my troubles seemed a million miles away.

I lowered the candle over the water and my reflection gazed back at me. I knew then that I was part of the earth, that the Goddess was all around me. I was her little child in the womb. I felt such peace and safety, and could have stayed in the creep for hours! I wanted to fall asleep there, I felt overwhelmed. I reluctantly moved towards the entrance and blew out the candle. I could see the light coming from the main passage, I suddenly felt a great need to see the light. I pulled myself out of the creep and the only thought in my mind at the time, was of Birth.



Pendeen fogou

"MOTHER AND SON: The Cornish Fogou", Ian Cooke's complete fogou guide, as featured in MM22, has now been published and will be reviewed fully in the next MM. It is priced £38 and available direct from The Men-an-Toi Studio, Bosulow, Newbridge, Penzance TR20 8NS.



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BOOK REVIEWS

"PAGAN CORNWALL - LAND OF THE GODDESS" - Cheryl Traffon [Meyn Mamvro Publications, 1993 - £7.50].

This unsolicited review was freely offered to Meyn Mamvro by Jo O'Cleirigh. Jo has some 36 years involvement in archaeological excavation and illustration, 28 of them professionally, and he also runs the Pan-Pagan School from Cornwall by correspondence, so is extremely well qualified to review this book.

Destined to become a classic among Cornish books, "Pagan Cornwall - Land of the Goddess" is a 120 page book and a little gem. The author Cheryl Traffon, well-known as the editor of "Meyn Mamvro", is a Cornish-woman who has not only a deep love of her native land, but a considerable knowledge of the Archaeology, Folklore, and Mythology of this Celtic country. She has also travelled through Europe and read widely about its Prehistory, and so is able to place Cornwall in this wider context.

And what an exciting context it is, especially since the monumental publications of Marija Gimbutas have greatly increased our knowledge and appreciation of the long-lived matrifocal cultures of Old Europe, which preceded the hierarchical patriarchal and warmongering cultures in these areas by 20,000 years! The highpoint of matrifocal civilisation in general was Neolithic, and Cornwall has a lot to show from this period with its great chambered tombs or Quoits and the portal dolmens, and by the polished stone axe 'factory' on Carn Brea and the settlement which could be one of the oldest in Britain. Seen in this context of European Neolithic and of the Megalithic Cultures of North West Europe, in which it shares, the land of Cornwall must have had a secure foundation of Goddess spirituality. How and where that survived the vicissitudes of time, and the imposition of Christianity, is well documented by Cheryl Traffon in "Pagan Cornwall".

Chapters place Cornwall in the matrix of European prehistory, discuss the sacred sites, including Cornwall's very special and beautiful holy wells. The legends and folklore, the importance of the Isles of Scilly, and the wheel of the year are all discussed. Other chapters tell of witches and wise-women and other survivals of the 'Old Religion'. Finally, there is a fascinating look at the activities of modern pagans. No less fascinating are the varied and beautiful photos and art-work by local artists. The introduction is by Monica Sjöö, and reproductions of her inspired paintings occur throughout the book.

Personally I shall be recommending this book without reservation to all students connected to the Pan-Pagan school. A fine production and well worth £7.50.

"Pagan Cornwall - Land of the Goddess" is available from all Meyn Mamvro outlets, plus bookshops in Cornwall (including Launceston, Liskeard, Bodmin, Callington, Wadebridge, Truro, Falmouth, Redruth and Penzance), The Goddess & the Green Man shop in Glastonbury and Silver Moon Bookshop in London, or direct from Meyn Mamvro @ £8 inc p&p.

"THE EARTH MYSTERIES GUIDE TO BODMIN MOOR & NORTH CORNWALL (INCLUDING TINTAGEL)" – Cheryl Traffon [MM Publications, 1993 – £2.95]

This review by local historian & researcher George Bishop first appeared in Town & Country magazine (Cornwall & Devon edition).

This handy sized, comprehensive and concise guide to the ancient sites of Bodmin Moor and North Cornwall is compiled by Cheryl Traffon, who edits Meyn Mamvro magazine. With artwork by Andy Norfolk and others, it provides an insight to the possible uses of these ancient stones, crosses and holy wells. Its rather long title says it all. Whilst it is not a complete list, it does cover most of the important and impressive sites within its area.

Cornwall is liberally sprinkled with the megalithic remains of our forefathers. Their monuments remain in profusion on the higher moorland of the county, resisting both the elements and man's puny efforts to remove or deface them; their only enemies are insidious time, the frailty of human memory and airborne pollution. Cheryl has set about recording their positions and conditions. Each site is given its appropriate map reference. Some have references to owners who are not welcoming to casual visitors, but most fall within the open moor and are fairly easy to find. The booklet offers information on the archaeological background of each site and interpretations of its possible relationship to other remains in the vicinity plus its 'alternative' role in the Earth Mysteries landscape. Did you know that Tintagel, Cheesewring and Plymouth Hoe are all laid out along the Summer and Winter Solstice Lines? You could say that that is just a coincidence, but read the book first and then decide!

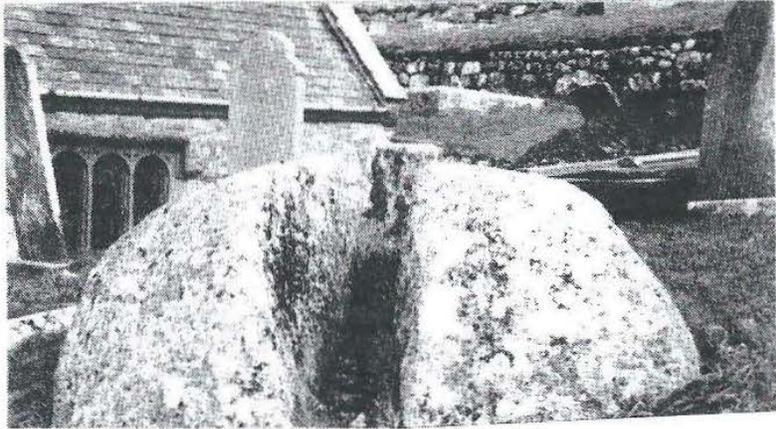
This is not the first book on such sites, but it is the first to bring so many together in so small a space. As an addition to your walking kit, it is ideal. It offers information and interest to bring a breath of life to the otherwise silent stones. Translations of the stones carved by Romans and Celts and a brief history of their origin, Christianised pagan stones and stones that were defaced by musket fire, all find a place in this interesting booklet. This is not a scholarly tome, nor does it profess to be. It merely offers a layman's guide to some of the treasures of our heritage. A section on the various alignments by Andy Norfolk and his computer offers the Ley enthusiasts a great deal of thought-provoking material. Sections on St. Breock Downs, Kit Hill, Stowes Hill, Tintagel and Dark Age Cornwall with its Arthurian legends complete what is a very well composed booklet.

At only £2.95 it represents good value for money too. 48 pages in A5 format, the reproduction of the 58 photographs is excellent. The more than thirty sketches and maps are also well executed and shed light into dark corners!

"The Earth Mysteries Guide to Bodmin Moor & North Cornwall" is available from Meyn Mamvro outlets & shops in North Cornwall (including Altarnun, Minions & Blisland P.O.s, The Old Smithy-St Neots, Bricknells of Bodmin & Wadebridge, The Book Shops of Liskeard & Launceston, The Little Bookshop-Callington, King Arthur's Bookshop-Tintagel & The Mystical Shop-Boscastle), or direct from MM @ £2.95 inc p&p.

The Pipers Tune

The theme of spirit paths which has been featured in *The Ley Hunter* magazine, and reported in this column in MM20,21 & 22, is followed up in the latest TLH (no.119) by an article by Paul Devereux on a Cornish mythic route, church way and death road. Paul writes as follows:-



"The mythic aspect relates to St. Levan. He was accustomed to walking from the hamlet of Bodellan via the hamlet of Rospletha to his clifftop chapel overlooking delightful Porth Chapel bay. A legendary incident happened between St Levan and a woman called Johana at Rospletha. At this mythologised point, the track changes direction and aligns straight towards the old church at St Levans - near the southwesterly most point of the peninsula, and is marked by a small Celtic cross along its way. It is said that 'the grass grows greener wherever the good priest trod than in any other part of the fields through which the footpath passes' (Robert Hunt, 'Popular Romances of the West of England' 1881).

Today, one can still walk this straight path to the churchyard. Where the path meets the churchyard boundary there is another small cross, and a life-sized (if that is the word) coffin-shaped stone, just to leave one in no doubt that this is a coffin line or death road. Not only is the church itself ancient, in the churchyard there is a great split boulder [pictured above], to which a legend is attached, that was doubtless the omphalos of the site long before Christianity asserted itself at the place."

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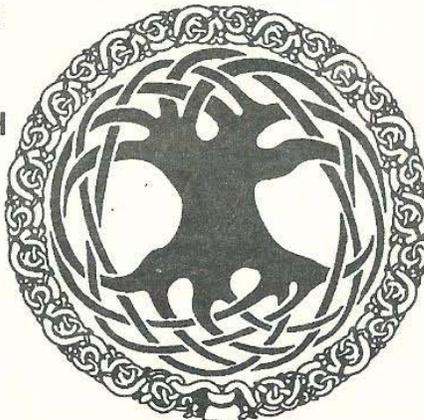
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