

# meyn mamvro

ancient stones and sacred sites in cornuall



SITES OF THE GODDESS ● FOWEY  
MYTHIC ROUTES & HAUNTED HIGHWAYS  
MEGALITHIC STONES ● LEGENDS  
+ WIN A FREE BOOK COMPETITION

**CONTENTS**

Editorial ..... p. 1  
 Cornish Earth Mysteries Group ..... p. 2  
 Readers Write ..... p. 3  
 Lost and Found ..... p. 4  
 News ..... p. 5  
 The Old Stones of Lamorna Plateau - CS ..... p. 6  
 Fowey - a Goddess place? - David Stringer ..... p. 8  
 The Goddess Tour of Cornwall ..... p.10  
 Guide to Goddess sites ..... p.11  
 Spirit Paths in Cornwall - Paul Devereux ..... p.15  
 Haunted Highways - Cheryl Straffon ..... p.18  
 Myths & Legends of Cornwall + competition ..... p.20-22  
 Book Reviews ..... p.23  
 The Pipers Tune ..... p.24

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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

Cornwall has many well-known ancient sites, but equally many hundreds of others that are little-known and infrequently visited. It is these that are most at risk from neglect and indifference. During research for the new MM publication "Guide to Ancient Sites in Mid-Cornwall" (see p.14) it was fascinating to discover some of the more obscure and hidden sites away from the main areas of West Penwith & Bodmin Moor/Tintagel. But at the same time it was also worrying, as these sites are often unprotected and could easily disappear. Hopefully the new booklet will go some way to redressing this, but we need to be ever vigilant. For example, the Eathorne menhir, which born-again fundamentalist farmer Clemoes ripped up from his field (breaking the top) in 1991 was only subsequently restored (and then in the wrong place) through a great deal of pressure from the CAU, CEMG and MM readers. Now it has been fenced off with barbed wire, presumably by Clemoes, so that it is not part of the field any more. Clearly, he still fears the power of this ancient Bronze Age stone, and this is his way of making sure it does not walk across the field and get him one dark pagan night! He has excommunicated the stone! More seriously, it shows how vulnerable the sites still are, and how many are dependant on the whim of the landowner.

Meanwhile, an attempt to restore a little-known site Caerwynen Quoit by CEMG member Kenny May (see p.5) has met with some success in that English Heritage have given permission, but also rendered virtually impossible as they (and the CAU) are insisting on a large excavation of the site first which would cost Kenny something in the region of £50,000! This is clearly ludicrous and shows that the professional archaeologists are more interested sometimes in advancing their own profession than making the ancient sites (of which they are only the custodians) available for us all to enjoy.

Meyn Mamvro will continue to campaign for all sites in Cornwall to be given full protection, and for the CAU to consult all interested parties before making decisions about the maintenance of the sites in their care. This has sometimes made us unpopular in some quarters, but we must be doing something right as we are still here and thriving after 8 years existence! In that connection, we must regretfully announce a small price rise from the next edition, the first for 3½ years. The cover price will go up from £1.50 to £1.70, and the annual sub from £5 to £5.50. This will pay increased printing costs and keep us on an even keel. Our thanks as always go to all our readers who continue to support their Cornish magazine.



The May weekend brought some fine weather for the 6th annual **Maypole Dance** on Carn Bosavern, with local musicians and dancing and feasting, followed by the 6th annual **Three Wells Walk**, the 13 mile walk by inland paths to the sacred wells of Carn Euny, Sancreed and Madron, collecting water from each and depositing it in Madron Baptistry well in a simple ceremony, linking back to the visting and use of the wells in the past at this time of the year. A couple of dozen people turned up to both events, which made a lovely start to the summer's activities.

On Sunday June 19th, Ian Cooke was the knowledgeable and most interesting guide to **Carn Euny Fogou**, both for dawn (when a stalwart half-dozen people turned up!) and later on at 11am, when he described the evolution of the fogou and the possible midsummer and midwinter sun alignments. Seeing it all on site made the whole theory very comprehensible, and led to much fruitful discussion.

On Sunday July 3rd about a dozen members turned up at **Madron Well** to clear the trees of some of the messy plastic and tissues left by the hundreds of visitors each year, and then walked on along the Spirit Path to Lanyon Quoit, where it was suitably misty and mysterious! At the beginning of August there was an Earth Mysteries investigation day at the **Merry Maidens** stone circle, filmed by Paramount Pictures from U.S.A for a television documentary they are making on the sites of Cornwall. This was followed by a day at **Chûn Castle** to clear out the well, and do some dowsing. Finally, on Sunday September 4th Kenny May lead(s) a visit to the holy hilltop site of **Carn Brea** near Redruth, pointing out his alignment discoveries there, which will be featured in a future MM and in the new Guide to the Sites of Mid-Cornwall [see p.14].



The **DEVON EARTH MYSTERIES GROUP** had a preliminary meeting at Princetown in June, and plan to start talks next year. Their magazine "Wisht Maen" has now a second issue, with articles on Nymet (one by MM contributor Andy Norfolk), Bride in Devon, and Goddesses and Gods of Devon by MM editor Cheryl Traffon, as well as news, letters etc. It is an excellent sister mag to MM, and may be obtained from Tracey Brown - details in Exchange Lists.

# readers write



## MORE ALIGNMENTS

"In respect of Calum MacIntosh's letter in MM24, I think I may have noticed a midsummer sunrise alignment running from Goonhilly Downs, over the standing stones of Essa (SX138 510), then on to Duloe stone circle (SX2375 5830), then via various bridges, Castlewich Henge (SX3708 6854), then via various churches, bridges, crossroads and towns with meaningful names, straight across north-west Dartmoor, Bridgewater, across the Mendips and through the Long Barrow country, then over the Fens before finally bursting through the Wash. With the exception of the Cornish sites, I do not have the maps or equipment to check it in detail, but at first sight it seemed fairly strong. I would be interested in hearing if anything comes of it."

Kris Bond, Redruth.

## WATERFALL CLOSED

"When the chance came to have a few days holiday together at Beltane we returned to Cornwall to stay in Boscastle. We headed for St.Nectan's Glen and the Waterfall. [N.B - see MMs 18, 19 & 21 for relevant articles - ed.] The Glen was, as always enchanting, in the literal sense of the word. We were prepared for the fact that you have to pay to see the Waterfall (although a little unhappy that we are denied free access to one of our sacred sites), but when we arrived we were in for a disappointment. A notice now says: "The Waterfall is on private land and is not open to the public." The bungalow/tearooms has a run down, almost derelict air about it. We were very very angry; nobody in the local area seems aware that this beautiful site has been permanently closed. The shops still sell postcards showing the Waterfall, and the locals we spoke to all said they didn't know. We never did find out anything more, so if the site is to remain permanently closed to the public, perhaps you could make mention of this, so that others do not suffer the same disappointment we had. Perhaps one of your readers knows what is happening?"

Richard & Pat Bass, Derbyshire.

## CHANELLING AT ANCIENT SITES

"When I sit at some of the old stones or circles and fogous, I get a lot of writing coming through. I seem to even write in the dark sometimes, and don't know what has been told to me until I get to a source of light in order to read them. I would be very interested to know if anyone else has had similar experiences. Has anyone gone 'out there' with a note pad and pen just to see what happens? I would also like to know if anyone has seen fairies as I have seen them, or experienced energies of earth as I have. I am just fascinated by the whole thing!"

Myra Wendy, Delabole.

## CONTACTS WANTED

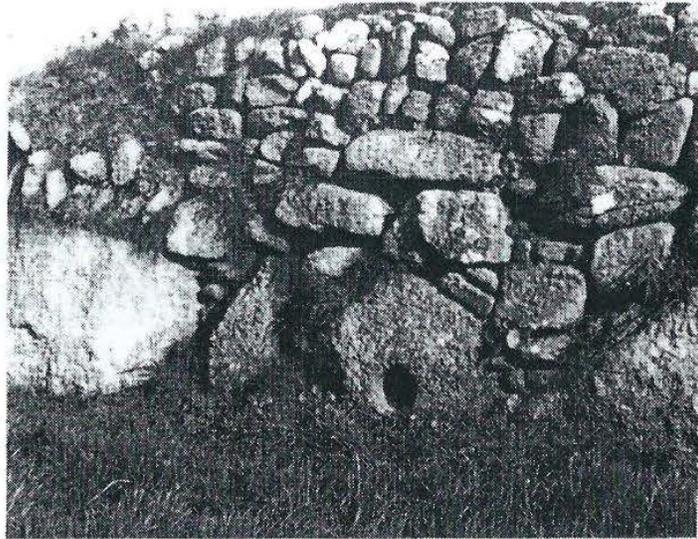
"Are you interested in esoteric, magical, shamanistic, pagan beliefs etc? Are you interested in forming a Group in Penwith to meet like-minded people for meditation, self development, healing, support, ceremony and fun? If so, please get in touch with your details."

Adam Bear, 9 Carn View Terrace, Pendeen, Penzance TR19 7DU.

## Lost and Found

### HOLED STONE FOUND

Reader Rory Te' Tigo has discovered a holed stone in a hedge a couple of fields away from Pendeen fogou at SW 3821 3558. The stone, of which the top half is above ground, is some 34" high, 31" wide and 16" deep, with the hole 17" from the top with a 6" diameter.



Its proximity to the fogou is interesting: there are a line of holed stones at the Merry Maidens close to Boleigh fogou, and Blight in "Holed Stones of Cornwall" (1864) mentions another holed stone not far away in a croft between Boscaswell (which also has a fogou) and Pendeen church.

### STONE ROW LOST

An addition to the corpus of stone rows in Cornwall featured in previous MMs is listed in Aubrey Burl's new book (reviewed in MM24). It formerly stood at Longstone Farm east of Lezant (SX362 803) practically on the border with Devon at Greystone Bridge. Three large stones of head height stood widely-spaced in a line near to some Quarry workings, but were unfortunately destroyed before they could be properly recorded. The location puts them far away from the other stone rows on Bodmin Moor, St. Breock Downs and West Penwith (Zennor), and the nearest other 3-stone row is on St. Martins, Isles of Scilly. Perhaps they were connected with the ancient crossing of the river at this point, and may have been directional marks leading to/from the River Tamar, which to our ancestors would have been a Goddess (Tamara).



Q-When is a standing stone not a standing stone?

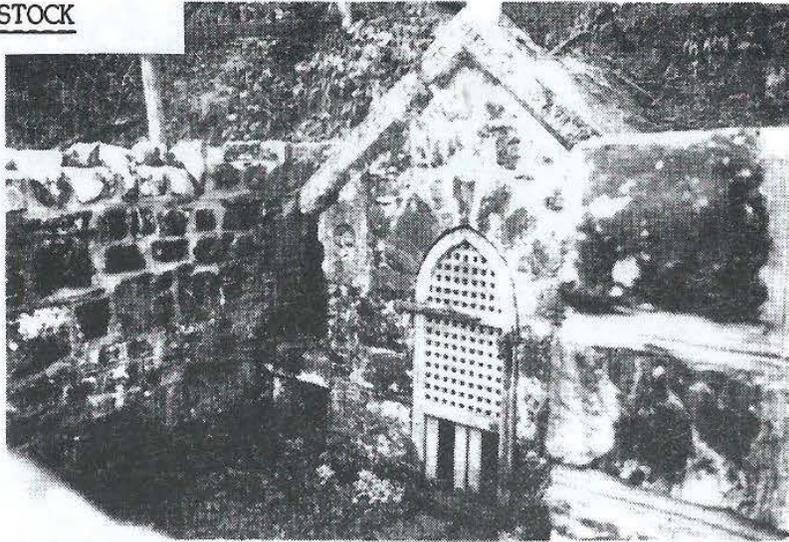
A-When it is an earth-fast rock!!

The standing stone on the flanks of Kit Hill (SX3728 7203) [pictured left] first identified in 1990 by Pete Herring of the Cornwall Archaeological Unit, and featured in MM13 (p3) has now been shown to be a natural finger of granite rising from the bed rock! The stone was therefore not purposely erected by Bronze Age people as had been assumed by the CAU, but instead is a natural feature. However, nothing daunted, the CAU say that it is such an unusual feature that it was probably venerated by ancient peoples anyway!

## NEWS

ALL'S WELL AT POUNDSTOCK

The Holy Well of St. Neot at Poundstock near Bude (SW204 999) has now been restored. Situated in a remote valley in a peaceful and secluded area beneath the trees, the well with its stone building and oak door and the surrounding courtyard had gradually become delapidated by cattle breaking down walls.



A Rural Action Grant obtained by the Parish Council and the Heritage Coast Service has now ensured that the well has been cleared and protected, and the walls rebuilt, so that future generations may enjoy this peaceful place.

ST.BREOCK DOWNS WINDFARM PROBLEMS AIRED

However, not such good news at St. Breock Downs. As reported in MM23 a major windfarm has been built there in a designated area of great landscape and historic value. As George Ansell, Grand Bard of the Cornish Gorsyth, has said: "St. Breock Downs is one of the most sensitive areas in Cornwall. It contains several Bronze Age monuments, including the famous Longstone, several burial mounds and other standing stones, and is also on the Saint's Way, that ancient track from coast to coast used in post-Roman times by the Celtic saints." None of this, nor the combined opposition of Cornwall County Council, North Cornwall District Council, St. Breock parish Council, English Heritage and many other bodies and individuals has made the slightest difference to the Government whose DOE Inspector allowed Ecogen to go ahead. Ecogen is Japanese-financed, and it has been suggested to them that such desecration of such a sacred area is equivalent to placing the turbines on Mount Fuji. However, the Windfarm has gone ahead and was opened in the summer.

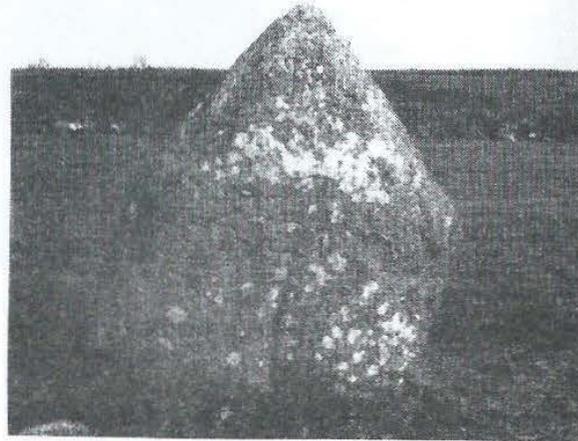
KENNY MAY RE-BUILD CARWYNNEN QUOIT!

Local CEMG member Kenny May has, somewhat surprisingly, received permission from English Heritage to restore Carwynnen Quoit, which stands in a field on the edge of Pendarves Woods, Troon near Redruth (SW6500 3720). The neolithic chambered tomb collapsed after earth tremors in 1967 and now lies in a jumbled heap. At the moment there is no public access to the site, but an agreement has been reached with the farmer to have the stones restored to their original position, a fence placed around the Quoit and a path leading up to it. The only fly in the ointment is that English Heritage/CAU want a full-scale excavation done first which would cost something in the region of £50,000! Kenny is negotiating to try and have this reduced, and meanwhile is looking for sponsorship to restore this neglected monument.

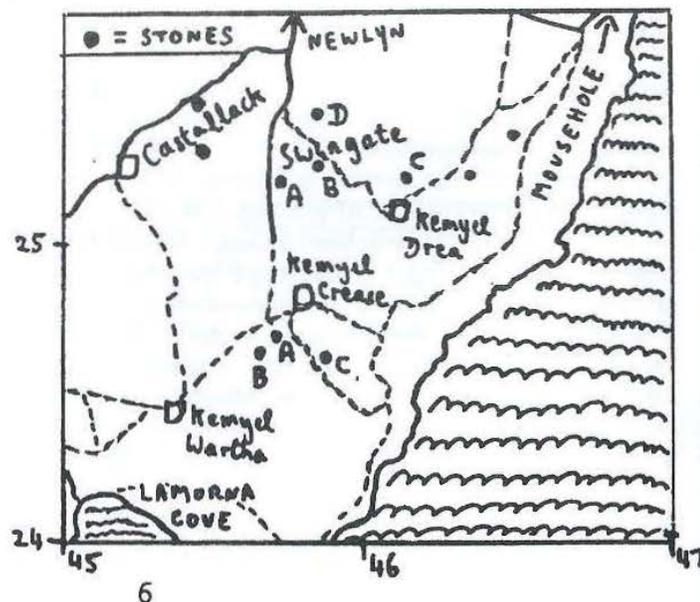
## THE OLD STONES OF LAMORNA PLATEAU

On the plateau above Lamorna Cove are a considerable number of stones, hitherto largely unrecorded. Antiquarians in the past have mainly concentrated on the Penwith moors, and this inland area lying between Mousehole and Lamorna is even today quite well off the beaten track. And yet it is a fascinating area - almost every other field seems to have an upright stone. Are they all rubbing posts? If so, why so many in such a small area? And if not, how many could be standing stones?

The first of these stones to be mentioned was by John Michell in "The Old Stones of Land's End". He featured and illustrated a largish (about 6ft) triangular stone at Swingate (SW4570 2517) [photo right] close to a minor road leading nowhere in particular. He did not find any leys running through it (but see below), but also mentioned a second stone nearby to it which had been destroyed. John Barnett (in "Prehistoric Cornwall") named this extant stone **SWINGATE A**, and



added 2 others **SWINGATE B** in the next field northwards at 4582 2524 (a 4½ft high possible rubbing post) and **SWINGATE C**, of which more anon. However, he failed to note another smallish triangular stone in the next field north of Swingate B at 4582 2539, which we may call **SWINGATE D**. Swingate A lies directly on a line to **CASTALLACK** stone (4540 2545) and the **Blind Fiddler** menhir (4253 2814); and Swingate B lies nearly on a direct line from **Boscawen-un** circle, through a fallen stone at 4182 2702, to **Trelew** menhir (4217 2693), a fallen stone at 4243 2682, the **Toldavas** stone (4266 2671) and the **Castallack** stone (4540 2545), one of Michell's classic leys.

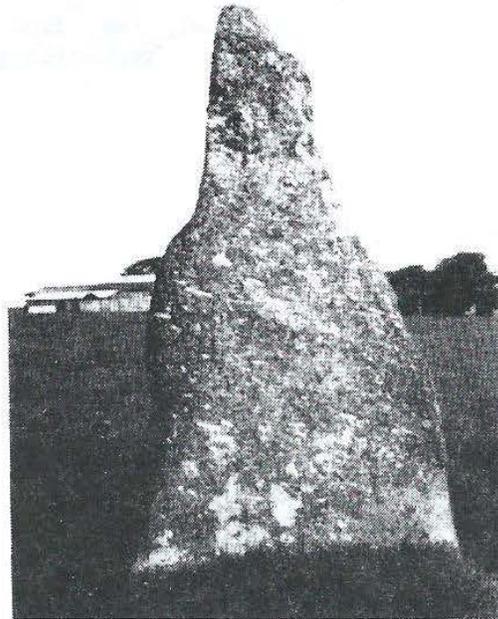


A couple of fields further south close to the inland path near Kemyel Drea lies **SWINGATE C** at 4614 2522. This is an interesting  $5\frac{3}{4}$ ft stone that points to St. Michael's Mount at an angle of N45E and has a beautiful view over Mounts Bay. This is a significant angle, for it would give a midsummer solstice sunrise alignment right over St. Michael's Mount when viewed from the stone. St. Michael's Mount is of course perhaps Cornwall's most famous holy island, and the early name of the mount even meant "hill of the sun". All this seems to suggest that Swingate C at least is an ancient standing stone.



Further along the path towards Mousehole are 2 other stones in neighbouring fields at 4635 2520 & 4649 2535, but these are smallish thin stones with no significant alignments or leys, making them probable rubbing posts.

Going in the opposite direction back along the path towards Lamorna are yet another cluster of stones. Just outside the farm of Kemyel Crease there is a goodly-sized triangular stone very similar to Swingate A, which we may call **KEMYEL A** (45692467). It is about 6'3" tall, 3' base tapering & 15" thick. It points directly to the very tip of The Lizard across the expanse of Mounts Bay at an angle that would give a Samhain (Nov 1st) or Imbolc (Feb 1st) sunrise alignment from the stone. The farmer told us that it goes back at least 5 or 6 generations of his family, and it would seem to be a good candidate for a genuine menhir.



There is also a second stone **KEMYEL B** in the hedge at 4573 2466, and the 2 together align with Pipers NE menhir and Alsia Well. Finally, on the opposite side of an ancient lane running through the fields at 4587 2458 there is **KEMYEL C**, another similar stone about 5'6" tall & 2' 10" square leaning westwards. It too forms a possible ley to Castallack stone (4540 2545) and Kerris stone (4439 2743).

So, altogether in a few square miles around the Kemyel farms, may be found some 9 standing stones or rubbing posts (many intervisible from each other). Which are which? Go and have a look and decide for yourself! (CS)

THE PREHISTORY OF FOWEY -  
POSSIBLE SITES SACRED TO THE GODDESS?

by DAVID STRINGER

In Old Cornish, the word for spring "Kerrow" is cognate to the name of the Goddess "Ker" or Keridwen and Kerensa (= "love"), though Kerrow is sometimes replaced by Romano-Celtic Venton/Fenton/Fountain, as in "Penventinue". Therefore every spring is a potential ancient site for Goddess worship, plus its accompanying 'sacred grove' of trees around it, leaving no need for any inscribed stone monument, except in woodland denuded areas(?)

In the Fowey area, all the oldest sites, farms or hamlets were, of necessity, situated by a spring, a water supply, of which there are many, some larger and more powerful, as at Lescrow. This does not mean that every spring was used as a ritual site by the community as a whole (though the individual, taking water, would thank the Goddess for it, wherever they were), or that Holy Wells (such as St.Sampson's at Golant and St.Fimbarr's in Cobb's Well, Fowey) were on a pre-Christian Goddess site. As such, this could be simply accounted for by the 'saint' in question setting up his/her cell or original chapel by such a spring - so 'making it holy' in name. Indeed, these saints sought quiet, away from people, for their meditations and so were likely to chose an unfrequented spot unused by other people.

Fowey (Fawi) as a town and port started with the original name of "Langurtho-by-Fawi" with the silting up of Lostwithiel as a port, as ships increased in size post 1000 C.E (A.D), which points to Langurtho being the main original pre-Christian 'hutcircle' of farmers and foragers in the area. The two most likely sacred sites in the area are on the hilltop, near Springs, both above "Lankelli" (= 'sacred grove') and Liskerrow (= 'the halls by the springs, or of the Goddess Ker'). Both of these sites are situated on the offshoots of the prehistorical Ridgeway trade route from Padstow to Fowey, that became the "Saints Way" when migrant Christian anchorites followed the much more ancient trackway. This trackway could be thousands of years old - a route that splays out, at the Fowey end, like rope fraying, to a series of suitable landing places from the sea, the main one at Caffamill, the other two being where we now find the Town Quay and Readymoney beach. Caffamill was the main trading point.

The town centre of Fowey grew around the Cobbs Well spring that had originally supplied the holy cell of St.Fimbarr, giving rise to a larger church, a late development well into the Christian era. The original fishing settlement was at Readymoney (whatever that was originally called), connected with Lankelli and Langurthou by Lover's Lane, now a bridge path of the right width for mules and horses. Any holy sites had to be linked to the (B3269) ridge route. Route B, the medieval packhorse road from Fowey to Lostwithiel arose out of the silting up of the lower port of Lostwithiel, so as to connect it more directly with the new port of Fowey (post 1000 C.E), and Route C (the A3082) was built this century. It would be futile to look for Goddess or other pagan sites along these roads, unless they coincide with older tracks.

Looking at the map, we find two other significant clues to pagan sacred sites in place names on the peninsula:

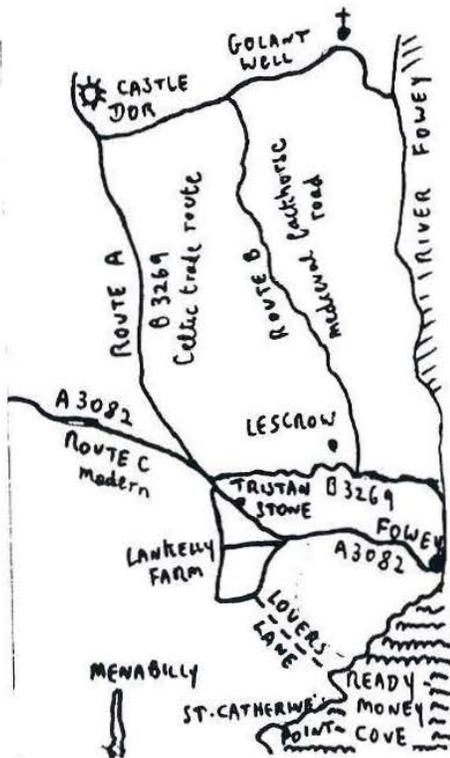
- (1) MENA-BILLY ("Mena" = stones, standing stones? stone circles?)
- (2) COVINGTON WOODS on St.Catherine's point at the end of Lover's Lane from Lankelli via Readymoney, and onto the end of the headland itself. This name has two possible sources:-

(a) cove (?) - unlikely, unless it is a Saxon name, Cove being from Norse & Saxon, while the Cornish for cove is 'Porth'; or

(b) Coven, a wiccan circle. A sacred site is possible on the headland, above the sea, as a grove of trees, an ideal position to do the rituals of the moon, with the wide sweep of the stars clear over the ocean, a place also suitable for reverence for Mara, the sea Mother Goddess. The fishing settlement of Readymoney could well be an afterthought, postdating the original purpose of the track, to take devotees to Goddess rituals at the headland. As a landing stage, windswept Readymoney, less protected from gales than Caffamill, was superfluous. Was this then the original pre-Christian purpose of 'Lover's Lane', as leading down from the sacred groves of Lankelli and the settlement of Langurthou? Of course, the lane would also serve practical purposes too.

This is purely theoretical, but the atmosphere feels right on the headland for such purposes: the view from its crown points towards the moon, Orion and Sirius over the south-eastern skyline. Any sites in menabilly Estate may have been linked with Polkerris and the western side of the peninsula - to each settlement area its own sites, as each parish now has its own church?

[c] David Allen Stringer



Lovers Lane



### THE GODDESS TOUR OF CORNWALL

For the last 2 years in Summer 93 & 94, a group of a couple of dozen or so women have undertaken a journey around the sacred sites of England, Wales and Cornwall to discover the Goddess in the landscape. The tours were organised by singer/songwriter Julie Felix, and MM editor Cheryl Straffon was tour guide in Cornwall. The tour started at Rocky Valley near Tintagel, and here we walked down the valley to the ancient mazes carved in the rock walls. The maze was a symbol of the journey into the inner self, an appropriate motif for the start of the inner spiritual journey of the tour.

From here we drove on down to the magical land of West Penwith, an ancient landscape, wild and elemental in places, with sites to be approached with respect and treated with care. Here we connected with their pulse, and moved with their flow. Here we visited places potent with women's energy: Sancreed Well, the entrance into the womb of Mother Earth where we did a blessing and welcoming ritual; Carn Euny Courtyard House settlement where we quietly meditated and chanted in the Beehive Hut, the women's voices powerfully filling the circular space; the Merry Maidens stone circle where priestesses of the moon goddess may have danced, and where the present-day women also danced a spiral dance; Madron Well where we hung pieces of cloth on the trees, honouring the Goddess and her powers; and the Mên-an-Tol where we crawled through the holed stone, chanting "She changes everything She touches, and everything She touches changes" helped through the symbolic birth canal first time by Katherine, a midwife from Oregon. One evening we went to Boscawen-un stone circle, and danced amid the stones as a rainbow arched across the skies after a sudden downpour. Finally, before leaving Cornwall, we visited Women's Land and walked a landscape maze to the accompaniment of chanting and drumming, linking together the end of the tour with the beginning. As night fell on the last evening, we held a candlelit ceremony inside the body of the Goddess herself at Boleigh Fogou.

Here the murmuring, chanting voices of the women flowed throughout the fogou, and a very deep connection with the earth and each other was made. The group snaked its way out of the fogou and up the lane to quietly and peacefully disappear into the darkness and out of Cornwall.



## GODDESS SITES IN CORNWALL

At first glance, Cornwall would appear to be bereft of sites relating to the Goddess: no Goddess figurines have been found here, such as in other parts of Old Europe from the Paleolithic/Neolithic, or even in other parts of Gaul and Britain from Romano-Celtic times; no place names or natural features of the Goddesses such as Caltech, Bride, or Anu have been discovered; no stories or mythic cycles involving Goddesses have survived. However, what Cornwall does have is a wealth of legend and folklore, much of it recorded very late (18th & 19th centuries) - if we scratch its surface, we can find a bedrock of ancient belief underneath.

### STONE CIRCLES

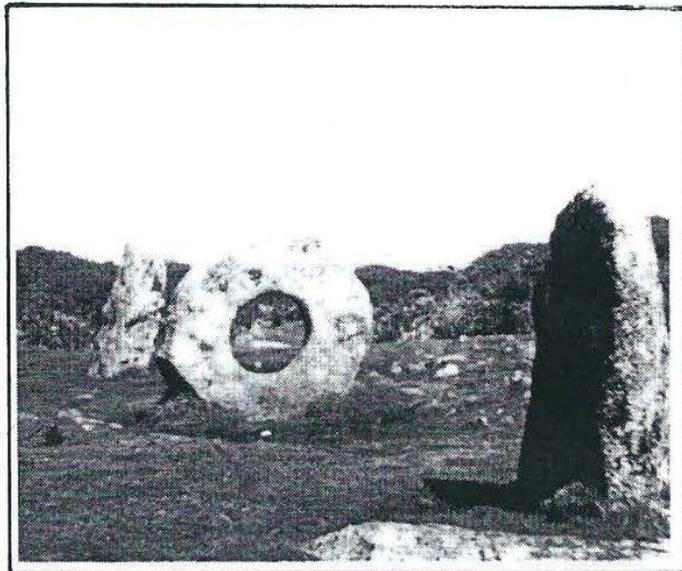
To ancient peoples, the earth was a living being, and every rock, animal tree, flower and fruit imbued with the same spirit that flowed through women and men. She was also an aspect of the Goddess, their mother who nurtured and sustained the tribe and as such she was treated with care and reverence. This meant that the people were not only concerned with their immediate homes and ritual monuments: they were also very aware of the shape and form of the land and the relationship of the sites to the land. For example, the Merry Maidens stone circle near Lamorna (SW4327 2451) is positioned so that the twin hills of Chapel Carn Brea and Bartinney are highlighted to the north-west. Both these hills are famed 'holy hill' sites. Chapel Carn Brea has a Bronze Age entrance grave near its summit and formerly a chapel was built there, constructed on the earlier pagan site. Bartinney is the "hill of fire" where midsummer bonfires were lit, an act of sympathetic magic designed to encourage the sun (which was originally a Goddess) to continue shining during the waning months of the year. Something similar may be apparent at other stone circles such as the Nine Maidens near Wendron (SW6831 3653) which faces the twin hills of Carn Brea and Carn-menellis, the latter forming a Spring/Autumn Equinox sunrise alignment.

Most stone circles in West Cornwall are known as the Nine Maidens or Merry Maidens, or in Cornish "dans maen" (dancing stones). This may be a folkloric memory of the original use of stones by dancing women (perhaps priestesses) who celebrated festivals there in honour of the moon Goddess. Many circles have 19 stones, this being a significant number to our ancestors who built the sites to observe and celebrate the passage of the moon throughout the skies on a 18.6 (or 19 to the nearest) cycle.



HOLED STONES

Holed stones have traditions associated with them of healing. At the Mên-an-Tol stone near Madron (SW4264 3493) [now thought to be part of a stone circle] children were passed through the stone 3 or 9 times widdershins (against the sun) in order to cure rickets or back problems. The Tolvan Stone near Gweek (SW7063 2770) performed a similar function. These stones have often been thought of as yonic stones of cundulini energy or the remains of entrance graves into the womb



of mother earth. There are also examples of lines of holed stones at Tregeseal near St. Just (SW3895 3255) and near the Merry Maidens (SW4277 2421 - 4365 2489) at which, it has been suggested, women and children may have formed lines in order to pass a psychic or spiritual 'charge' which had been raised by chanting, trance or meditation.

FOGOUS

Fogous are unique to Cornwall, but may be a later Iron Age version of the 'burial' chambers constructed in the earlier Neolithic/Bronze Ages. All these structures may be based on the ancestral memories of the people whose Paleolithic forbears lived in caves, where they celebrated the Goddess (many figurines have been found in or near such caves). The Cornish fogous are orientated to face the first rays of the rising (or setting) midsummer sun, and in addition some have folklore associated with them indicative of Goddess tradition.

Boleigh fogou (SW4370 2520)

[illustrated right]

has a legend of "Duffy and the Devil", in which a coven of witches is observed holding their sabbat in the fogou. The witches had assumed the form of a hare, an animal that was traditionally sacred to the moon goddess

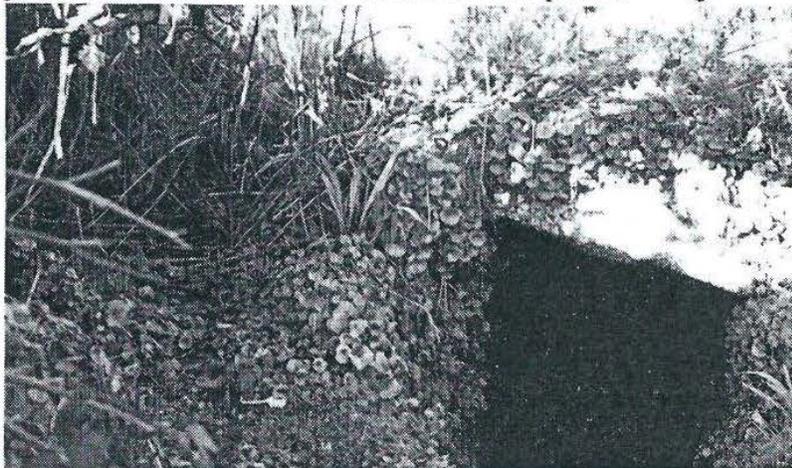


And Pendeen fogou (SW3837 3553) has a legend of a woman in white with a red rose in her mouth who appears in the entrance on Christmas morning. She comes from Ireland and portends death to anyone who sees her. She could be a folk memory of an Earth Goddess or Moon Goddess (in white) worshipped at the site, the red rose representing her menstruating or fertility aspect. Fogous were powerful sites of the Mother of the Earth.

WELLS

It seems likely that ancient peoples used wells for the purposes of healing and divination as a means of integrating people with the Goddess, understood as the spirit of the universe that inhabited everything. Later the Goddess-spirit would have been interpreted as actual spirits - fairies or piskies that inhabited the wells, and finally re-christened after saints to whom their sanctity was transferred. Even as late as the 18th & 19th centuries, the wells were visited by young maidens who would drop pins in the waters, and were looked after by local well-guardians or 'wise-women', a very late survival of the priestesses of the Goddess. Clouties or jowds (pieces of cloth) would be hung at the wells (and are still done today) as a means of asking the spirit of the site to cure illnesses and pains. ↓

Some wells contain more traces of Goddess-lore than others. Madron Well (SW4465 3280), which had a strong healing tradition, may have originally been named after the Goddess Modron (through the Welsh Madrun); St Warma's Well on St Agnes, Scilly (SW8804 0778) may be associated



with a Goddess of the Sea; Fenton Luna well at Padstow (SW9150 7550) means "well of the moon", the well at Roche Rock (SW9910 5950) is supposed to ebb and flow with the tide, and the well at Holywell Bay, Newquay (SW7640 6020) is actually in a cave, a powerful primitive pagan place. Two other wells are named after Goddesses: the peaceful well in the churchyard at Whitstone in N.Cornwall (SS2630 9850) has a carving of St. Anne in a niche at the back which looks like the face of the Goddess Anu herself; and St. Bridget's Well at Landue (SX3500 7962) was named after the Goddess Bride. In places like this many have found that the Goddess is still alive, looking after her sacred springs as she has done for thousands of years.

SAINTS AND MERMAIDS

Many of the Celtic saints may have originally been Goddesses, such as St. Agnes, St. Buryana, St. Newlyna, St. Columb, and St. Senara. The legends associated with these women hint of pagan origins. For example St. Senara was flung into a cask on the sea, and later founded the church at Zennor (SW4540 3850). This spot is associated with mermaid legends [carving from church on right], and these Cornish legends of mermaids or 'merrymaids' may be memories of sea-goddesses. Other Cornish legends, like Tristan & Iseult, may be about Goddesses of the Land, and witches tales recall Goddess origins.



Information from "Pagan Cornwall: Land of the Goddess" (MM Pubs., 1993)

PAGAN CORNWALL - LAND OF THE GODDESS CHERYL STRAFFON

"There aren't that many good books about Cornwall and those that are, are lacking in vitality, verve and the elan that comes from a person who knows what they are talking about. Cheryl Straffon is just such an author. The book is written in an easy-to-understand style by Cheryl, who is no stranger to paganism, and the editor of the well-respected Cornish pagan magazine Meyn Mamvro. Her introduction, and the gentle unfolding of the Goddess mysteries within the pages of the book not only show to the reader the sacred sites of the Goddess, but the ancestral birthplace where women discovered the Goddess within herself. Highly recommended!" [Touchwood].

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# spirit paths in cornwall

by PAUL DEVEREUX

In the simplest analysis, churchways were essentially medieval communications between a church and the outlying farmsteads in the parish. They were also "death roads" or "corpse ways" in that the dead would be carried in walking funerals from a farmstead to be buried in the churchyard. There are, however, elements about some churchways that suggests they may be remnants of deeper-rooted landscape features that may have been pre-Christian: the line of a churchway may be unusually straight, it may extend through the church and on to prehistoric sites, it may have folklore or mythic associations.

We can see all these elements illustrated in Cornwall, a county especially rich in churchway remnants. Not only do sections of paths survive, but even where they have disappeared a granite stile or a "pathway" field-name can still tell of the former route of a churchway. Also, nearly all of the abundant old crosses of Cornwall mark the course of churchways (where the crosses still stand in their original positions, that is). They were often the stations where a funeral party would stop and sing specific hymns. It is oral folklore amongst the older inhabitants of West Penwith to call such churchways "coffin lines". (This idea of the "line" in the folk mind is possibly significant, for it hints at a sense of an alignment rather than just a physical feature like a common trackway).

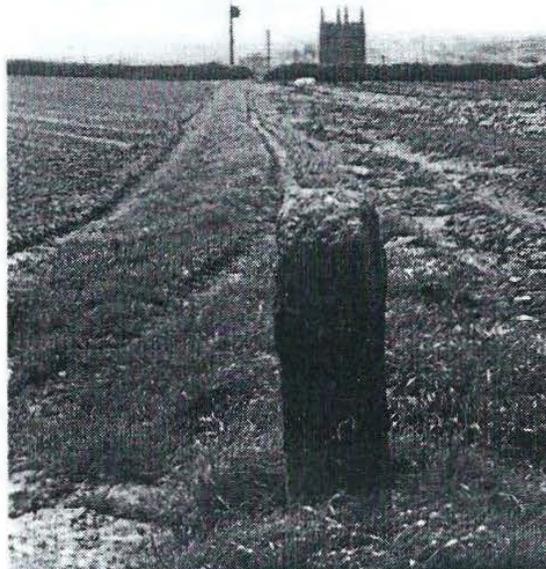
Delightful old Chapel Street in Penzance marks a segment of the line of a churchpath which led from the main church in the town (St Mary's, on the site of an older chapel), on the Pen Sanz or Holy Headland itself, to Madron Church a mile and half to the northwest. Beyond Madron, a half-mile-long straight length of churchway can be picked up along the same alignment, which extended even further passes through the Neolithic dolmen of Lanyon Quoit. Such a line, marked by segments of road and track, and passing through two old churches and a prehistoric megalith, is indeed remarkably similar to a Watkins ley!



Bottrell recounts a legend associated with Brea Vean in which a changeling is placed under a stile on a churchway for the fairies to replace with the real baby overnight. This hints at unexpected pagan associations with the churchway (or stiles), for the fairies certainly weren't Christian.

Craig Weatherhill [in 'The Ley Hunter 118'] traces in detail a churchway that leads from near St Ives through Zennor, Morvah and Pendeen. He notes that it in fact passes three parish churches, avoiding each one! It is, however, associated with the earlier wayside crosses, suggesting that it emerges out of the Celtic twilight when the pagan traditions were dying but still extant and the Christian ones just beginning to take over but not dominant. Weatherhill further notes that the route seems to have a distinct association with witchcraft, also a possible indication that the route was significant to older religions and beliefs than Christianity. Indeed, Zennor is strongly marked in folklore as a centre of witch activity. In Trewey, next to Zennor, a witch transformed herself into a hare in order to get food from St Ives, five miles away, for her husband's dinner; the route she took was the same as the church-way. (There is even a hamlet called Wicca on the line!)

One of the most atmospheric churchways is the segment that aligns straight to St Levan's church (SW381222) from the hamlet of Rospletha (SW383224), and is marked by two crosses. It is a mythic route, for St Levan was said to be in the habit of following a particular path from the hamlet of Bodellan (SW382231) to his chapel, below which he used to fish. His route, "St Levan's Path", changes direction at Rospletha to align directly to the church. Rospletha is a "mythologised" location: one Sunday a woman called Johanna rebuked St Levan for going fishing on the Sabbath. The path legend states that "the grass grows greener wherever the good priest trod than in any other part of the fields through which the footpath passes". When one walks down this saintly path to the church, there is another cross and a coffin-shaped stone where it crosses the churchyard boundary - the path is clearly a "coffin line"!



That such paths could have marked ancient routes for untold generations is indicated by the conservatism revealed in the old Cornish saying: "Never carry a corpse to church by a new road". St Levan's church is itself old, its building materials said to have been brought to the site by supernatural means (probably along a churchway route, in fact). The pre-Christian significance of the site may have been invested in a curious split boulder to be found in the churchyard. Legend has Christianised it as St Levan's Stone: it is said St Levan split the boulder with a blow from his fist, foretelling that when a pack horse could pass through the cleft with full panniers, it would be the end of the world. The good news is that the crack is still far too narrow for this!

St Levan's Path is a small-scale example of a "mythic route". Cornish folklore yields many more examples, large and small, for legend does not only define specific events and locations, it can identify specific links between places. Such mythic routes are remarkably akin to the "dream journey routes" or "songlines" that the Australian Aborigines follow at certain times, tracing the journeys of the Dreamtime creation heroes. These Dreamtime beings are remarkably similar to the giants, and the saints-as-giants, that figure in Cornish folklore.

The giant Bolster could stand with one foot on St Agnes Beacon (SW709506) and the other on Carn Brea (SW 685406). These two hills are six miles apart. Another legend says that Bolster and the giant who lived on Carn Brea threw rocks at one another. A third mythological link between the two places is supplied by the Giant's Head or Face Rock (SW 687409) on Carn Brea which when viewed from the west resembles a face staring out towards the coast and St Agnes Beacon. The giants of Trencrom Hill (SW 518362) and St Michael's Mount (SW 515300) used to play "bob-buttons": the Mount was the "bob" on which granite slabs were placed to serve as "buttons", and Trencrom was the "mit" or the spot from which the throw was made. Another legend says that the giants of Trencrom and the Mount had only one cobbling hammer between them, so to share it they threw it to one another. A giant who lived at the hill fort of Warbstow Bury (SX202908) was killed by a tool thrown at him by the giant of Launceston Castle.

During a stay at St Keverne's hermitage on the Lizard peninsula, St Just stole a rare cup from his host. He ran off back towards his hermitage in St Just, via Breage (SW 619284), with St Keverne in hot pursuit throwing ironstone boulders at him. These dropped by the roadside between Breage and Germoe, where St Just also flung down his ill-gotten gain in order to better make his escape. When at home the delinquent St Just (SW 372315) used to throw rocks at St Sennen (SW 357255) who threw rocks back in retaliation. On one occasion the rocks collided in mid air, fused together and fell near Bosavern (SW 370304).

The Devil, or alternatively the Bucca, flew from Paul Hill (SW 465271) to Tolcarne (SW 461293) above Newlyn, where he turned the fishermen's nets into stone. The ghost of a drowned woman appearing as a ball of light used to travel nightly from Chair Ladder (SW 365217) to the hamlet of Raftra (SW 376233). Finally, Pee Tregeer, who was able to see a fa'ry at Penzance market due to her illicit use of a greenish ointment, took a very specific route back from Penzance to Pendeen; not the "nearest route", but instead via Castle Horneck, Boslow, and the Gump near Carn Kenidjack (where she was piskey-led and encountered amongst other things little folk with a goblet in the shape of a poppy capsule - an opium reference?).

Most of these mythic routes or connections are presented in the form of flying or throwing actions, thus a straight or direct route is implied. Even where three or more locations are specified on a land journey, there is often a "broad-band" directness. These kind of legends draw the "songlines" across the mythic landscape of the Cornish dreamtime.

*Article [c] Paul Devereux (from "Myths & Legends of Cornwall" by Craig Weatherhill & Paul Devereux - Sigma Press, 1994). See p22 & 23.*

# haunted highways

by CHERYL STRAFFON

As well as the Mythic Routes and Coffin Lines in Cornwall given by Paul Devereux in the previous article, there are many tales of strange and ghostly sightings occurring on old tracks and roads in the County, many of which feature movement in straight lines. These may well be connected to the whole area of ancient ghost roads or spirit paths, so they repay recounting in this context. Most of these reports are eye-witness accounts.

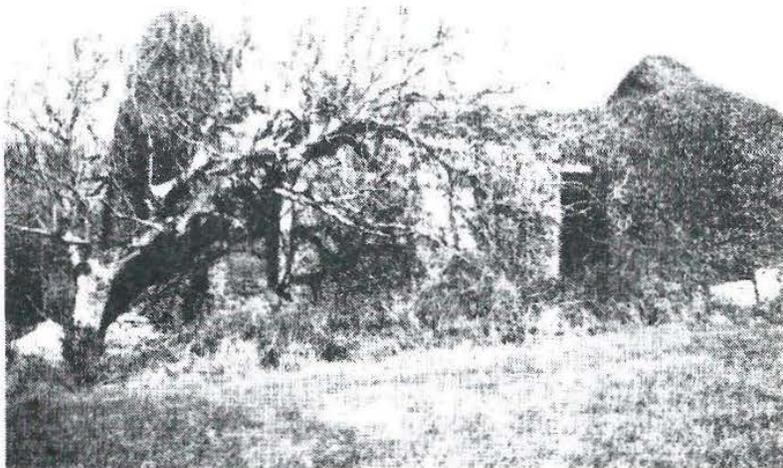
Firstly, hoof beats which are associated with specific old straight tracks. Jack Benny of Ventongimps near Perranporth was working in a meadow one afternoon in early summer when he heard the sound of a horse's hoof beats galloping along what is locally called the Church Road. The hoofbeats stopped suddenly and there was no sign of any animal. Similarly at Jamaica Inn on the old coach road that ran from Launceston to Bodmin midnight hoofbeats have been heard, and the figure of a man on a horseback has been seen outside the Inn. The Molesworth Arms Wadebridge, another original coaching inn, has the same sighting. Chyoone farmhouse at Tregeseal near St. Just has also been the scene of phantom hoofbeats and the rumble of an unseen coach. The track of the phantom coach and horses follows an old turnpike road. And a phantom coach and horses is said to drive through Penryn just before Christmas (the old Winter Solstice).

Ghostly sightings on old tracks and roads include the following: Donald Holder and his wife Sheila were driving from Bodmin to Fowey late one evening, and just before Fowey Cross Donald braked violently to avoid a figure on the road coming from Fowey. The figure just vanished. The publisher Michael Williams was driving along the Bodmin-Camelford road when he saw a cyclist coming in the opposite direction. The cyclist, who was wearing clothes from an earlier period, also disappeared. Another woman on a bicycle who disappeared was seen by Mary King who was taking her dog for a walk up a steep hill on the Tehidy road. A blacksmith who lived at the ancient Castle Dore near Fowey in the early part of this century saw the ghost of Squire Kendall (who had died 20 years before) walking along the road to Lostwithiel. And one of the most interesting cases is of the faceless monk-like ghost (only about 3½ft tall) who has appeared to several people in Little Petherick on a piece of old road that was part of the old Priest's Path (Saints Way) that stretched from Padstow to Bodmin. Alan Sandry saw it on 5 separate occasions.

Related to this, are the sightings of ghostly figures that appear to be travelling old paths that have been superseded by modern roads. The ghost of a woman called Dorothy Dinglet has been seen walking across a field near Launceston called Higher Brown Quartils, and the path where the ghost walked was known as Dorothy Dinglet's path. The ghost of William Penvoun, the vicar of Poundstock, who was murdered on St. John's Day 1357 (Midsummer Solstice) has been seen walking down the path to the church from the top churchyard gate. In addition, at nearby Penfound Manor the ghost of Kate Penfound is supposed to appear on the hour of midnight each 26th April (close to Beltane). There is a legend of a tunnel or semi-

underground passage that once linked Penfound Manor with Poundstock Church, a mile and a quarter away, and legends of underground passages are often folk memories of ancient ghost paths or ley lines. And, when I formerly lived in the Tamar Valley, I was driving back from Gunnislake one evening when I saw a line of miners with old-fashioned miners' hats crossing the road ahead of me and disappearing into the hedge. Some years later, the self-same phenomena at the same place was reported in the local paper by another woman, and the following week 2 other women wrote in to report the same occurrence. The miners may have been following an old trackway which is not now there.

There are also three very interesting animal sightings that hint of the geomantic significance of ancient paths. Firstly, a ghostly white hare is reputed to run from Talland to Looe and there vanish at the door of the Jolly Sailor Inn. She is supposed to be the spirit of a girl who killed herself, and the whole legend may hark back to a pre-Christian spirit path, hares being traditionally an animal sacred to the Goddess. Secondly, at the old Dog and Dragon restaurant at Porthtowan a spectral dog has been seen, mostly on May Eve (Beltane). There is an old legend here that a dragon used to haunt the neighbourhood until seen off one May Eve by a dog. Again, we have a pre-Christian legend, dragons originally representing the telluric currents of the earth. And finally at the old ruined chapel that lies hidden near Tregertan between Zennor and Wicca on the old Zennor churchway or coffin path, an eerie fox-like creature was seen on top of the walls one afternoon by author Mary Williams. Craig Weatherhill comments: "It is this stretch of path which most strongly retains a sense of otherworldliness, which is instantly felt by anyone walking its route" (TLH 118).



All these occurrences are significant sightings of spirits and ghosts related specifically to stretches of road or old straight trackways. They may be memories of ancient spirit paths or ghost roads, that become triggered once again in certain circumstances to certain people with paranormal abilities. If you have had such an experience and would like to share it with others, please let Meyn Mamvro know. We still have much to learn about this intriguing subject. [CS]

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Supernatural Search in Cornwall" - Michael Williams; "Ghosts of Cornwall" - Peter Underwood; "Supernatural in Cornwall" - Michael Williams [Bossiney].

## MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF CORNWALL

by **Craig Weatherhill & Paul Devereux** (Sigma, 1994 £6.95)

This new book is a comprehensive compilation of Cornish folklore and legend, crammed full of nuggets of information, accurate and sound in its insights into the significance of the meanings behind the myths. There is interesting material to be gleaned from every chapter: some highlights are as follows—

Ch 1: The Giants tells of the famous Giants of the Cornish cliff castles and hill forts, which may be either a memory of the Iron Age chieftans, or else a faint echo of earlier Gods and Goddesses, for example the giant and giantess of St. Michael's Mount, whose Cornish names may suggest plants, the giant Cormoran meaning "blackberry giant" and Cormelian "clover giant". Could it be that each were nature-spirits or even gods of nature? Also Jack the Hammer has many similarities with the Celtic god Lugh.

Ch 2: The Races of Faerie looks at the individual faerie folk in Cornwall. [1] There were 2 sorts of piskie, the rather quaint mischievous folk from East Cornwall and the altogether more wild and elemental spirit of the west [2] The little people (pobel vean) of pre-Christian origin and dwelt on the moors of the west where their revels were seen on Hallan Eve (Samhain). Some could shape-shift into animal form (Celtic echoes here) and descriptions of their dress resemble clothing worn by Celtic nobility. [3] The Spriggans who were a goblin race confined to the ancient landscape of the Land's End peninsula, where they guarded the treasure of the giants. [4] The Knockers who inhabited the mines. [5] Bucca, who was a sea-spirit, perhaps even the folk-memory of an ancient sea-god for whom fish from the catch were left on the shore in many ports.

Ch 3: The Saints is an alphabetical listing of Cornwall's legendary saints, many of them the 24 "children" of Brechan a Welsh chieftan of Irish descent. Many ancient Celtic myths lie embedded in the stories, such as St. Endellion who lived solely on the milk of a cow; St. Gwinear and St. Wylloc both of whom were beheaded; and Gerant whose body was placed in a golden ship with silver oars. Other saints (e.g. St. Kea & St. Neot) are connected with or related to King Arthur, or have stories hinting at their mythological or supernatural nature (St. Petroc who removed a splinter from a dragon's eye).

Ch 4: Church Legends. Most Cornish churches have extremely ancient origins. St. Buryan has an oval 'lan' developed from an earlier Iron Age enclosure. Legends about their building and the moving of their stones hint at pre-Christian origins. Some of the rectors were exorcists who used occult symbols – Parson Woods of Ladock had an ebony walking stick with a pentacle and other mystic signs engraved on it.

Ch 5: Legends of the Mines. Some of the old mines contained supernatural inhabitants. At Wheal Vor the appearance of a white hare or rabbit would forewarn of a fatal accident, and ghosts of dead miners haunted other mines. Some mines are very old, possibly prehistoric in origin, such as Ding Dong and Ballowall. Evidence of ancient tin-smelting has been found in Chûn Castle and elsewhere.

Ch 6: Mystery Lights looks at strange lights (or faery lights) seen at sites such as The Gump, Carn Kenidjack and Ballowall Barrow, all near St. Just. Some lights warned of impending disaster (e.g, St Ives Head & Trevilley Cliff near Land's End), or were connected to the supernatural (e.g Madge Figgy's witchcraft lights). Such lights have been seen into modern times, at Bossiney Mound, Boscastle, St. Austell & Ruan Major. These mystery lights, or "earth-lights", may be an unexplained natural phenomena, occurring in localised regions of geographical faulting.

Ch 7: Legends of Arthur. Stories of Arthur's birth are set at Tintagel. Gorlois was Duke of Cornwall - his name may mean "grey man", or even perhaps "green man". His wife was Igraine whom Uther Pendragon ("Head of the Dragon") lusted after and by trickery gained entry to her bed, conceiving Arthur. Many other places in Cornwall are associated with his name. The Grail Knights met at St. Nectan's Kieve before setting out on the Quest - a pagan myth of the descent into the Underworld by a hero in order to restore fertility and life to a barren winter world.

Ch 8: Witchcraft. The parishes of Zennor & St. Levan were particularly noted for their witches: in Zennor they would meet up at Burnt Downs (near Eagles Nest) on Midsummer Eve. At Boscastle they would gather at sailing times to "sell the wind". There were 3 sorts of white witches: the Charmers, who did simple healing spells; the Wise Men or Women, to whom people went if they thought they were under an evil spell; and the pellars or Conjurers, who worked magic and ritual.

Ch 9: Ghosts and Demons. Generally 2 categories: "bucca-gwidn", the harmless benign ghost, and "bucca-du", the malevolent one. Famous ghosts and spirits include Tregeagle, and Nancy Trenoweth & Frank Lanyon; and there are famous "ghost-layers" or vicars who exorcised them. In East Cornwall ghostly hounds were called "lane-dogs", and were thought to be the spirits of dead men. In West Cornwall there are legends of the devil on Carn Kenidjack and at Boleigh fogou near Lamorna.

Ch 10: Sacred Waters. Natural wells and springs were sought after for their powers which came from the Mother herself. Wells were attended by women well-versed in their healing and oracular properties, such attendants recalling the well-priestesses of old. Cloths (called "jowds") were hung on the nearby trees. The pagan power of Madron Well was so strong that Christianity could not adopt it, but instead built the Baptistry nearby. Other wells have interesting customs: for example at Venton Bebibell in West Penwith (which means "well of the little people") children would perform the curious ritual of taking their dolls to be baptised on Good Friday.

Ch 11: Lost Lands. As well as Lyonesse (which may originally have meant "Island of the God Lugh") there are other stories of lost lands in Cornwall. At Penhale Sands local legend tells of a great city called Langarrow which was covered by sand. There is another tradition of a buried town called Conetconia at Gwithian. Both places had early churches that were buried by sand and revealed in the 19thC when the sand-dunes shifted. There are also traces of Neolithic submerged forests at Bude, the Camel, St. Columb Porth, Perranporth, Helford, Maenporth, Restronguet, Gerrans Bay, Fowey & Looe.



## BOOK REVIEWS

**"ANGELS & GODDESSES: Celtic Christianity & Paganism in Ancient Britain".**  
**Michael Howard** [Capall Bann Publishing, 1994 - £9.95].

This is an important and extremely useful book about the process of interaction, conflict and assimilation between early paganism and Celtic Christianity. It concentrates on the period from the 3rd Century C.E onwards, particularly in the Celtic lands of Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, and shows how a particular version of Christianity, owing much to its pagan roots, existed in these lands long before the coming of Roman Christianity to England, and ultimately the whole of Britain. It examines the relationship between the saints and the kings, some of whom were pagan, and how early Celtic Christianity dealt with the Goddess-element still remaining in Celtic lore and sites. Michael Howard produces probably the best pagan magazine around ("The Cauldron"), and this book shows the same commendable attention to detail and research. Highly recommended to all who are interested in this period of interface between paganism and Christianity.

**"STONE CROSSES IN MID CORNWALL"** - Andrew Langdon [Federation of Old Cornwall Societies ISBN 0902660217, 1994 - £4.95].

From the same early Christian period, comes this guide to all the extant Celtic crosses between the Roseland/St.Agnes and Lostwithiel. This is the second volume of the series, the first being on the crosses of North Cornwall [reviewed in MM20], and it follows the same format, with over 100 crosses listed and illustrated. An invaluable reference book on any Cornish shelf, and buying it helps to ensure that future volumes on the rest of Cornwall can also be produced.

**"AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD"** - John Michell [Thames & Hudson, £14.95]. An original book about the omphalos or ritual centres that existed in most ancient lands. There is much valuable information and speculation on the Northern Isles, Man and Ireland, but the section on Cornwall is unfortunately not very convincing. Michell does not include the actual omphalos of Cornwall which was at Lanivet (see MM22) the research for which obviously came too late for him to include, but instead chooses to focus on Sancreed Church in West Penwith, with not much corroboratory evidence. He also says there is no record of a St.Creed, but there is record of St.Credan (indeed his effigy with his pig is carved over the door of the church), and the significance of this with Sancreed is explored in "Pagan Cornwall:Land of the Goddess" p.75. Nevertheless, despite the Cornish bit, a fascinating book.

**"NAENIA CORNUBIAE - THE CROMLECHS AND TUMULI OF CORNWALL"** - William Copeland Borlase [Llanerch, 1994 - £9.95]. A facsimile reprint of the 1872 book, with many useful drawings and pieces of information.

**"SHAMANISM AND THE MYSTERY LINES"** - Paul Devereux [Quantum, 1992 £7.95]

For all interested in the article by Paul Devereux on Mythic Routes and Spirit Paths on p15-17 of this MM, this book is the full account of spirit lines and roads of the dead from all over the world. Along with "Myths and Legends of Cornwall" and many other similar books, it can be obtained direct from Empress Bookservice, Box 92, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2XL. Send stamped SAE for full lists and other details.

## The Pipers Tune

Preliminary results of the archaeological excavation at the A30 Indian Queens-Fraddon by-pass scheme have now been published [in *Cornish Archaeology* 32]. The most interesting finding was probably the Bronze Age Little Gaverigan Barrow (SW9248 5911). It was discovered that prior to the creation of the mound, the site was already a sacred space defined by a regular circular ditch 33 metres in diameter and a stony bank inside. There was a central, perhaps ceremonial, pavement of quartz stones, which is similar to that found when the Hurlers central stone circle on Bodmin Moor was excavated. This enclosed area seems to have been in use for a considerable period of time before the Barrow was built. The symbolic importance of the ditch appears to have been reinforced during the subsequent remodelling of the site when a number of pits and post holes were dug on its north side. The CAU suggest that the two larger pits may have been the sockets for stone menhirs or large timber posts - "perhaps with a totemic function."

The enclosure was then deliberately abandoned, the stone bank levelled, and a turf mound built in the centre of the enclosure. A pit on the periphery of the mound contained the upper half of an urn - the CAU suggest that it might represent a votive offering or symbolic event. Nearby there was the Highgate Ritual Enclosure, an unusual segmented ditch enclosure and some pits with a cup-marked slate nearby which may have been part of the same ceremonial landscape. Altogether, a most interesting ritual centre.

County Archaeologist Nick Johnson was featured in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* in March this year, entitled: "We're ploughing up our history". The piece began: "Standing on the top of the southernmost hill in England (sic), Nicholas Johnson ... tries to make sense of the Cornish landscape below us. 'This landscape' he explains, 'has been disassembled'. He means that 6 years ago you could stand here and look down on field boundaries dating back two millennia. Archaeologists could 'read' this scene and draw conclusions about farming methods and social structure. Now? Farmers going about their ordinary business have tidied up the land... and the evidence has gone. 'If you look at this landscape as a skeleton, all the bones were once together and you could recognise it. Now every second rib has gone, so the land is very difficult to read'."

The article continues: "We get into the car and easily find other examples of ruined history. At Chysauster, near Penzance, the remains of an Iron Age village perch above open country ... a social pattern written upon the landscape. But now, 'the modern fields have encroached... and all the field patterns have been bulldozed'. These are just a few examples and we could have gone on driving all week." The article goes on to feature the work of the Council for British Archaeology, and makes a plea for more care about our rapidly disappearing ancient landscape, vanishing at a rate archaeologists describe as 'terrifying' - agriculture, forestry, mining, roadbuilding are all to blame. The answer lies in better grants for conservation, better control of tree planting, and a review of planning law before it is all too late.

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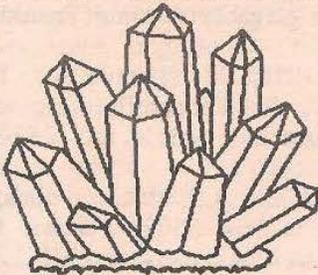
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