

No.34

AUTUMN 1997

£1.70



meyn mamvro

ancient stones and sacred sites in cornwall



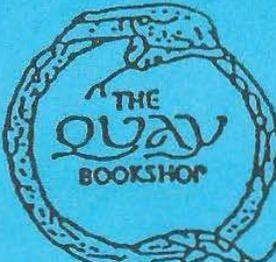
THREE-POINT ALIGNMENTS ● DRAGONS
CHAPEL IDNE ● STANDING STONES ●
LESSER-KNOWN SITES ● NEWS ● BOOKS

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<p style="text-align: center;">NOW INTO ITS 3rd PRINTING *****</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAGAN CORNWALL <i>land of the Goddess</i> by Cheryl Straffon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ISBN: 0 9518859 2 8</p> <p><i>120pp. Colour cover illustration and fully illustrated with many photos and artwork.</i> ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★</p> <p>Available in U.K from all good bookshops or direct from Meyn Mamvro Publications @ £9.95 (post free) & now in U.S.A from New Leaf Distribution, 401 Thornton Rd, Lithia Springs, Georgia GA3-0057, USA. ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★</p> <p><i>"Remarkable for its research and conviction, its theories are as stimulating as they are enlightening" [Western Morning News review].</i></p>		

Meyn Mamvro

STONES OF OUR MOTHERLAND

EARTH ENERGIES * ANCIENT STONES * SACRED SITES * PAGANISM * LEYPATHS
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The Summer began with the warmest April since 1949 in Cornwall, giving the 9th Annual May Day Eve maypole dance on Carn Bosavern an uncharacteristic balmy evening and a record turnout of over 50 people who came to enjoy the dancing, the music and the Beltane fire. The next day was of course the General Election, though as it coincided with May Day in Cornwall it was not without its ironies. At Padstow the feeling in the community was definitely that the election took second place to the Obby Oss, so much so that the location of the polling station had to be moved from its usual place in the town centre to the outskirts, due to the fact that it was also the place where the Blue Oss was stabled! And a week later on May 7th when all the new MPs were being sworn in at Westminster, the Lib.Dem. for the St Ives constituency Andrew George was absent, as he was playing the drum as always at the Hal-an-Tow at Helston's Furry Day! That is not suggest that Cornwall's problems are not important to be heard at Westminster - they are particularly acute down here - but governments come and go (and nothing much improves for Cornwall) but Beltane lasts for ever!

Meanwhile, a crisis seems to be growing over the famous Boscawen-un stone circle in West Penwith. Ann Preston-Jones, the sites officer with the CAU wrote to MM in the last issue warning about misuse of the sites, particularly with this one in mind as it seems to suffer more than most. Earlier this summer some person(s) had burnt something at the top of the centre stone, leaving an ugly black mark which might have cracked the stone, and now English Heritage/CAU's patience seems to be wearing out. There is a very real possibility that a decision might be taken to fence off the site to the public, which would be a dreadfully unfortunate outcome of such thoughtlessness. Andy Norfolk of the CEMG is trying to bring together all interested parties before such a step might be taken to see if anything can be done to protect the site without it being closed. Let us all hope that something positive can be achieved before it is too late.

Regular readers will notice a change of typeface and presentation for this MM due to computer upgrading at Meyn Mamvro. Hopefully it will now be clearer to read and more professional-looking. There will also be a moderate price rise from the next edition to £1.90/issue, £6 annual sub. This is the first price increase for 3 years, and it represents an average annual increase of less than 6p/year. We hope that you will continue to support us as magnificently as you have done in the past. It is really lovely to receive the support and encouragement that we often get from our readers, and to know that you love the sites and appreciate the magazine makes it all very worthwhile.

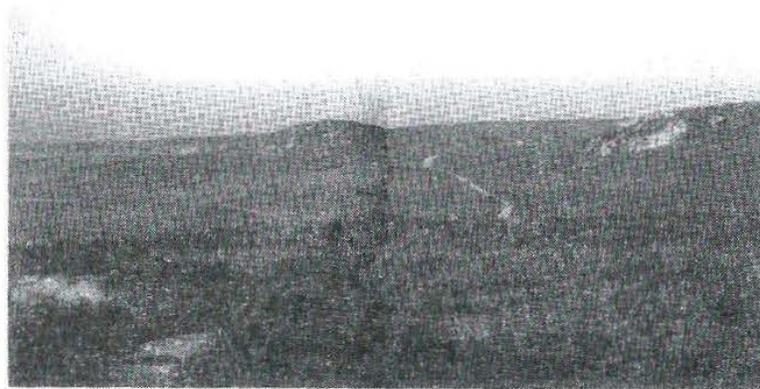


The 1997 summer season of outdoor visits started as usual in May with the 9th annual **Three Wells Walk**, which this year broke the mould for the first time by being overcast and dank. This resulted in only the first leg from Sancreed to Carn Euny wells and back to Sancreed well being walked by most people. However, a few brave souls did go on to do the second leg to Madron well, while about 18 others drove to Madron to complete the ceremony of placing the water in the well and doing the blessing.

The rest of the summer events were blessed with some fine weather. On a gloriously hot June day (about the only one for that month!) a record 35 people turned up for the visit to **Pendeen Fogou**. Ian Cooke came along as well and spoke about the meaning of the fogou, before the group retired to the nearby Manor Farm for a delicious Cornish cream tea! Afterwards, Ian led a walk to the neighbouring **Boscaswell fogou** remains, to round off a most enjoyable day (especially the cream tea!).

A month later on the first Sunday in July, another fine day saw about 18 turn up at Zennor for a walk up to **Zennor Quoit**, where the site and its alignments were discussed over a picnic lunch. From here, the group walked over to the remains of **Sperris Quoit** and then on to **Trendrine Hill & Barrow**. Along the way they had the opportunity to observe at first hand the effects of the huge gorse fires that had occurred in the area earlier in the year, which had spread over a 600 acre area, destroyed most of the vegetation, and had taken 120 fire fighters and 15 major pumping applications to finally put it out. Although the impact was initially devastating for the wildlife, it had had the effect of clearing the vegetation and revealing, perhaps for the first time in decades, a courtyard house settlement with its huts and rooms still intact.

Another surprise was in store when the group reached Trendrine Hill. A beautiful breast-shaped hill Trevalgan Hill was directly visible from the barrow, facing a NE direction (the midsummer solstice sunrise) [photo opposite], so that the positioning of the barrow at that point became apparent. To cap it all, a local woman Jean mentioned that the hill was known as **Buttermilk Hill**, a vernacular memory of its nurturing mother-earth aspect. Finally, on this magical day, on the way down a group of 3 at the back heard a strange inexplicable humming sound in the air, as they walked along the route of a ley line running from Trendrine Hill back towards Zennor Quoit and then to Boswens Menhir. The ley was first recorded in John Michell's *Old Stones of Lands End*, and the humming sound, called in Cornish the "Hummadrüz" has also been recorded elsewhere. A full article on the phenomenon by Andy Norfolk will be in the next MM.



Trevalgan Hill, or Buttermilk Hill, seen from Trendrine Barrow

Later in the month of July, MM reader, pagan sculptor Rory Te`Tigo organised an event not part of the CEMG programme, but of interest to many members. His **Well-Sprung Walk** on Sunday July 20th left from his replica Men-an-Tol sculpture outside St. Just Library for a round visit to 7 wells and 2 springs in the area, finishing with a cream tea at Carn Bosavern House. A couple of dozen people came for this interesting walk of discovery, and it is hoped to make this an annual event.

August saw the CEMG on a special away-day visit to **Ed Prynn's Megalithic Temple** at St. Merryn. Once again a couple of dozen people came for an unusual day that was full of interest and good fun. Eddie spoke about his collection of home-grown monuments, and of the people who came to visit them and the ceremonies they held there. The group tried their hands at dowsing the stones, and went down into the underground "fogou". Ed also spoke about the discovery on nearby Great Engolian Farm (SW865 694) of huge white crystalline rocks that seemed to him to be the remnants of an "earth temple", though this has not been accepted by the archaeologists. Finally "mystic Ed" donned his druidic robes for some drumming and dancing, which everyone else joined in as well. A day that was much appreciated and enjoyed by everyone.

The final session of the Summer events was a visit to some of the sites on the Lizard peninsula, including standing stones, a well, and a cave at the very tip of the Lizard (featured in MM27 p.6 "The Giant of the Lizard"). It completed a very successful season of site visits, before the new season of Autumn talks (see back page for details).

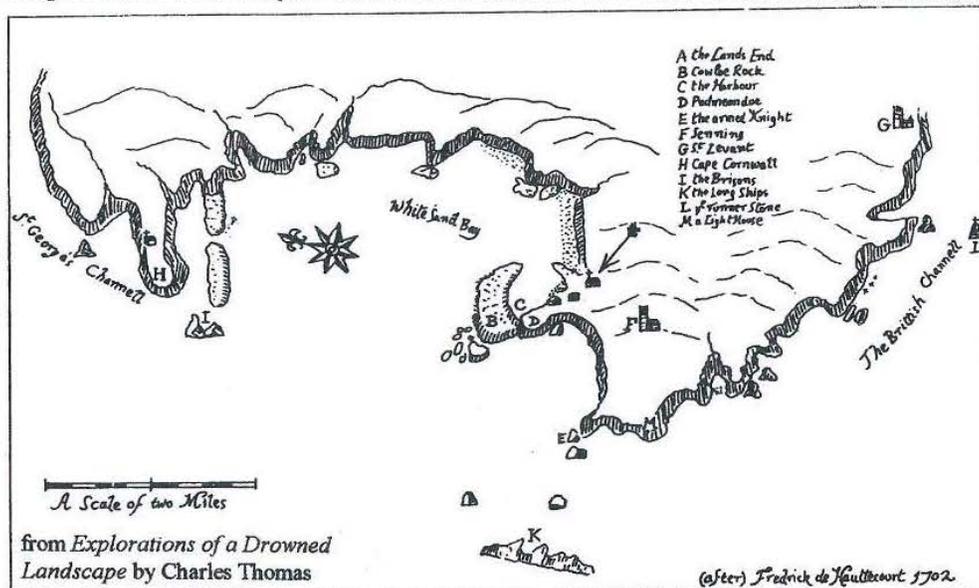
Boscawen'un-Management Group Andy Norfolk of the CEMG has been instrumental in setting up a meeting to try and deal with the problems at the site (see p.1) which will probably consist of Ann Preston-Jones of the CAU, the Penwith Countryside Officer, National Trust warden, a Bolitho Estate representative, Andy, Cassandra Lathen (Pagan Moot), Barry Reilly (Bardic Group), & MM editor Cheryl Traffon. More details later.

CHAPEL IDNE AND THE HOLY WELL

by *CHERYL STRAFFON*

In Sennen Cove there was formerly a chapel, Chapel Idne, and a holy well. Chapel Idne (probably from late Cornish, *idne* meaning 'narrow' or 'confined') stood, according to a plan by Frederick de Hauttecourt in 1702, at the southern end of Whitesands Bay, near to where the present day car park now lies. It was recorded by William Borlase in the 1740s, and was still in use in the mid 19th century, when Robert Hunt visited the place and collected a folk tale about it.¹ It was finally converted into a cottage, remains of which were not completely destroyed until 1946. Vivien Russell² placed it at SW3552 2632, which is on the slope just above the car park where the road swings round into Sennen Cove. The site is now occupied by a Victorian house and extension, whose basement has been liable to flooding from below with fresh water.³

Could this be the site of the holy well? It seems likely, if the well was actually in the chapel. Some holy wells were, but many more were not, the Christian chapel often being built a short distance away from the pagan well. The legend recorded by Hunt is very interesting in this respect. It occurs during the Arthurian tale of "The Battle of Vellan-Druchar". The Danes land at Gwenver Cove (an extension northwards of Whitesands Bay) from where they invade the Lands End peninsula. King Arthur, with nine other kings, comes to fight them and defeats them. The few sea-lords left in charge of the boats try to escape, but "a holy woman, whose name has not been preserved to us, 'brought home a west wind' by emptying the Holy Well against the hill, and sweeping the church from the door to the altar." This raises a storm and prevents the ships from leaving. Holy she may have been, but the old woman seems to have employed the techniques of witchcraft and pagan magic by emptying the well and ritually sweeping the chapel. Craig Weatherhill suggests⁴ that the site of the well may have been on the uphill side of the Old Success Inn, which would be across the modern road from the site of Chapel Idne. Either way, it would seem that the well was somewhere in this location.



Or was it? Charles Thomas has suggested⁵ that in Romano-Celtic times a beacon could have been lit on the high spot of Chapel Downs on St.Martins (Isles of Scilly), where there was also formerly a chapel, with another 'anti-vestaeum' at Land's End or possibly Cape Cornwall. These beacon sites may have been later Christianised with 'lighthouse chapels' built on them. They were tiny religious sites, charged with the upkeep of the beacon lights. No such chapel-site has been found at Land's End, but there are the ruins of St.Helen's Chapel in the lee of Cape Cornwall, and the site of Chapel Idne at Sennen. The problem is that both locations are too low (near sea-level) to have been effective beacon sites. But what if the beacon sites were not in the chapels themselves, but on the high ground above?

In the case of St.Helen's Chapel that could have been on Cape Cornwall, and in the case of Sennen on Escalls Cliff above. Unfortunately, Escalls Cliff is north-facing, and would not have been intervisible with the Scillies. To find the point where the Scillies are clearly seen from Sennen, one has to go half way back up the approach road, and then turn west into Maria's Lane. At the end, on Mayon Cliffs, are the remains of prehistoric burial cairns, and this would have been a good site for a beacon light, the Scillies being clearly visible on the horizon on a good day. Sennen Cove itself lies directly beneath, and was originally called Porth Goonhilly, a name that links it to the Scillies, for the Eastern Isles were originally called Goonhilly, and Porth Goonhilly was the harbour for embarking to go there.

Curiously, half way along Maria's Lane on the way to Mayon Cliffs, there *is* a well, Sarah's Well, that issues forth from the cliff and forms a little grotto in the cliffside garden of a cottage called Sarah's Well. This is unlikely to have been the site of Chapel Idne well - it really is too far from the chapel - but it is a curious coincidence nevertheless. We may remember the "old woman" who emptied the Holy Well against the cliffs, and the well certainly stands right up against the cliff. So who was Sarah? No-one locally seems to know. It would be pushing the interpretation too far to suggest that she was the "old woman" who performed the ritual magic at the well! But there are certainly some interesting possibilities here. One wonders how many of the thousands of holidaymakers who pour into Sennen Cove car park every summer ever stop to consider that this holiday playground may originally have been a most sacred place.

¹ Robert Hunt *Popular Romances of the West of England* (1865) p.305.

² Vivien Russell *West Penwith Survey* (1971) p.79

³ Pers.Comm. by Christine Holden, owner of the house.

⁴ Craig Weatherhill *Guide to Holy Wells* MM4 p.14.

⁵ Charles Thomas *Exploration of a Drowned Landscape* (1985) p.166-170.



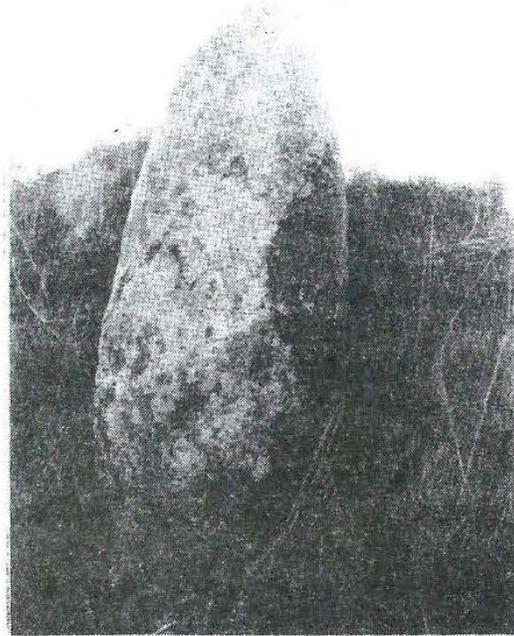
Sennen Cove looking towards Chapel Idne from Sarah's Well.

LOST AND FOUND Possible Menhir near Bosiliack Farm.

While on a walking holiday in West Penwith last summer, MM readers Steve Gardiner and Barrie Wright discovered what they think may be an unrecorded menhir.

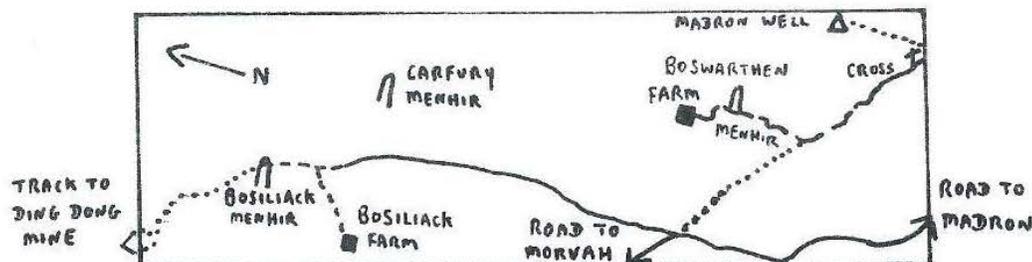
They take up the story as follows:-

"We decided to revisit our favourite standing stone at Carfury. For the first time we approached the stone from the north, using the track leading from Ding Dong mine. A few yards after the track veers from SE to S and becomes sunken, we found we were approaching a tall, beautifully smoothed oval stone set halfway up the western hedge to our right. We both immediately thought that the stone looked like a menhir, but is it? We could find no evidence that the stone served as a gatepost into the adjoining field, which now contains a SW Water plant. The key may lie in the age of the track itself - was it constructed when the Ding Dong mine was built or is it much more ancient? The track is significantly lower than either the base of the stone, or the fields to either side - does this mean that it is unlikely that the stone was in situ before the track was gouged out?"



On a very chilly New Year's Eve we returned, and made the following observations:- OS grid reference SW4369 3423; distance between track level and base of stone - 2ft; from base to top - 5ft 10in; width at widest point - 2ft 9in; diameter at widest point - 7ft 6in. A magnificent hawthorn stands in the hedge some 16ft away from the stone, and there is an entrance to Bosiliack Farm some 150yds further down. A sizeable recumbent stone is set low down in the eastern hedge, directly opposite the upright stone. Further interesting stones lie at the top of this hedge, and in the field beyond it.

The following make interesting alignments (1) Carfury menhir > Bosiliack menhir > the centre of the Men-an-Tol > a cairn at SW4190 3545 (a line almost due SE-NW); (2) Boswarthen cross > Boswarthen menhir > Bosiliack menhir > the two highest peaks of Carn Gulva (SSE-NNW). What do other readers think?

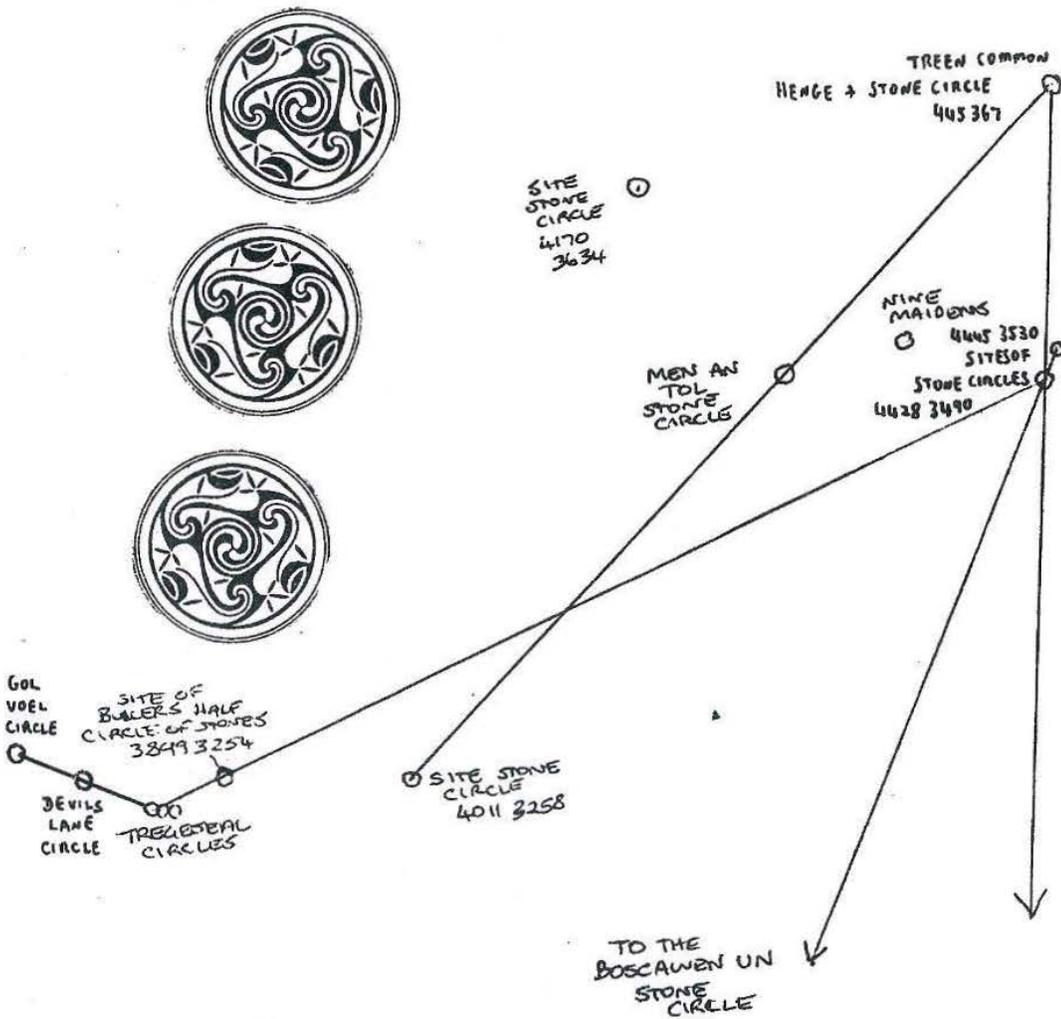


THREE-POINT ALIGNMENTS IN WEST PENWITH

by CHRIS JENKINS

In recent years the debate on Ley Lines has ground to a standstill. Although many researchers still accept that our prehistoric forebears did align ancient sites, no-one has come up with a convincing explanation as to how or why this was done. The intention of this article is to propose a solution to this enigma. To do this, the key to the solution is very simple; that only one site is considered at one time - i.e, standing stones or stone circles or burial chambers, etc., and that these sites align in threes.

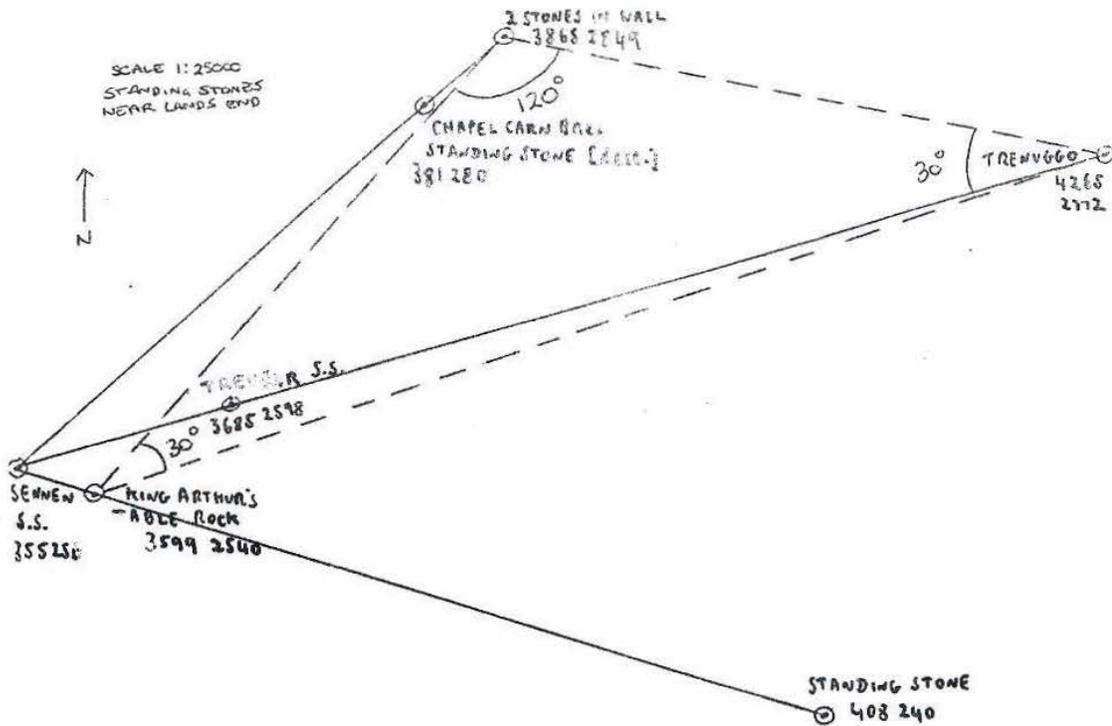
Taking stone circles to begin with: of the 12 definite and 2 possible sites in West Penwith, only 3 do not align in threes with any other. Undoubtedly, many sites have been destroyed, but using this system, we should eventually be able to predict where they would have been.

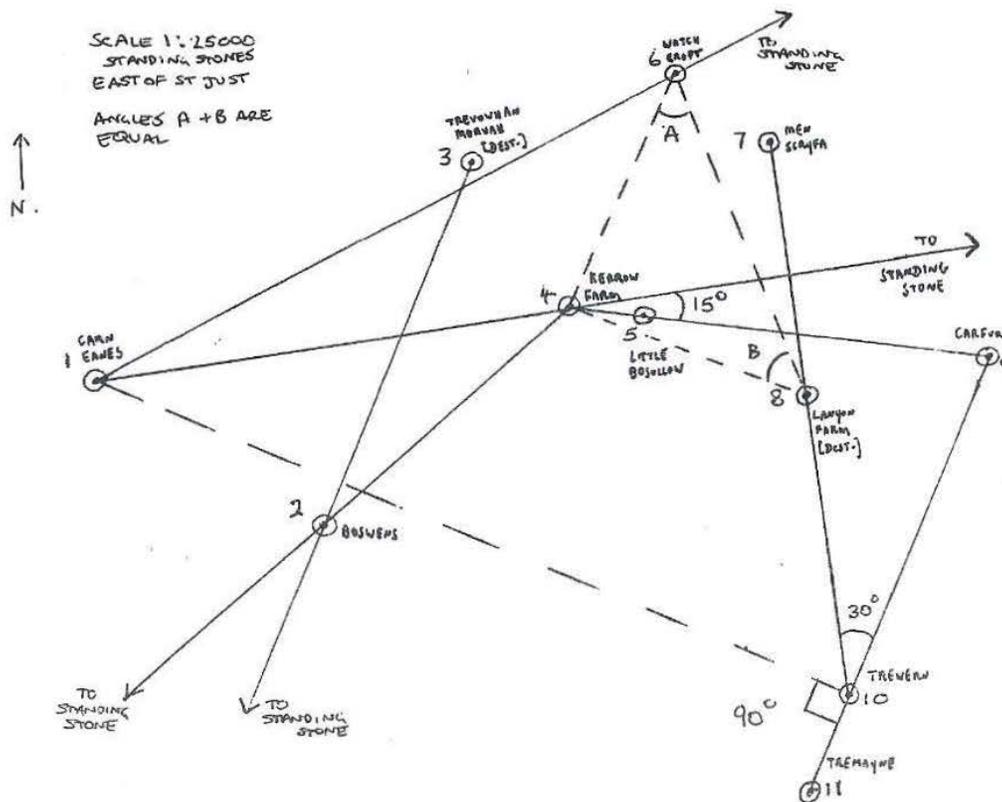


The Quoits and burial chambers of West Penwith show an even closer correlation to this model. There are 17 definite sites that link up in sets of threes:

- Morvah (403 356) - Porthmeor (438 371) - Trendrine Hill (477 308)
- Morvah (403 356) - Chun Quoit (402 340) - Brane Barrow (401 282)
- Ballowal Barrow (355 313) - Truthwall Common (389 326) - Mulfra Quoit (452 354)
- Ballowal Barrow (355 313) - Tregeseal (380 322) - West Lanyon Quoit (423 338)
- Portheras Common (391 333) - Truthwall Common (389 326) - Tregiffian (372 277)
- Tregeseal (380 322) - Chun Quoit (402 340) - Porthmeor (438 371)
- Truthwall Common (389 326) - Bosporthennis Quoit (436 366) - Pennance (448 375)
- Bosporthennis Quoit (436 366) - Bosiliack Barrow (431 342) - Lanyon Quoit (430 337)
- West Lanyon Quoit (423 338) - Bosiliack Barrow (431 342) - Mulfra Quoit (452 354)
- Pennance (448 375) - Bosiliack Barrow (431 342) - Brane Barrow (401 282)
- Bosiliack Barrow (431 342) - Zennor Quoit (469 380) - Sperris Quoit (471 382)

West Penwith had many standing stones and sacred rocks at one time, and even now many are still extant. I have so far plotted out about 90 or so sites, taken from previous editions of *Meyn Mamvro* and the *Sites & Monuments Record* for Cornwall. All of them show the same correlation in that they all line up in threes. Fig 2 (below) shows a fine example of the sort of geometry used to set out these stones. Equal angled triangles where two of the angles are equal have also been found around Banwell Moor in Somerset. Whoever set up these megaliths were adepts at geometrical puzzles.

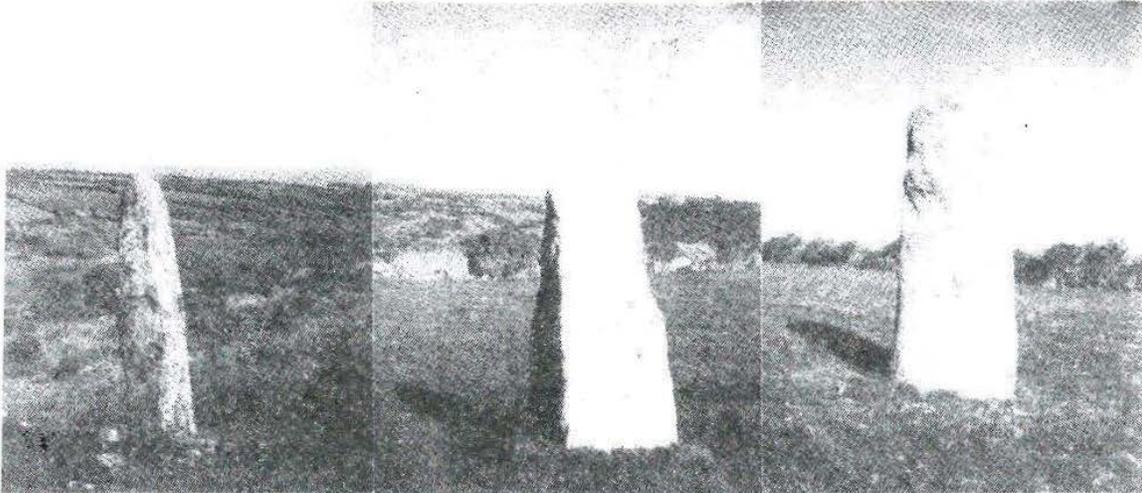




1)Carn Eanes 3860 3380 2)Boswens 4001 3290 3)Trevowhan 4089 3523(site of) 4)Kerrow Farm 4145 3425
 5)Little Bosollow 419 342(site of) 6)Watch Croft 4210 3566 7)Men Scryfa 4268 3529 8)Lanyon Farm 4292
 3373(site of) 9)Carfury 4400 3400 10)Trewern 4320 3208 11)Tremayne 4298 3136

Fig.3 (above) shows more of this geometry. Once again regular angles of 15' 30' 90' etc are being used to create equal angled triangles. Thus the distance between stone 4 to 8 = the distance between stone 4 to 6. We can continue the sequence thus:- 4-8 = 4-6, 8-5 = 8-9, 9-4 = 9-6. These equal angled triangles probably make a complete sequence if more stones are included, especially if the stones on Banwell Moor are anything to go by.

The advantage of this system is that we are not confused by the time sequence in which the sites were laid out. The examples given here are only a small part of the analysis which I have made both in this country and abroad, and early results show a consistency throughout. As to the 'why', that will take more time to answer. However, the use of geometry, proportion, and the number three leads to certain inescapable conclusions: that whoever was laying down these sites was ensuring that they conform to certain rules governing the creation of our universe based on the Trinity. All ancient peoples agreed that the number three was sacred: from the Druids to Pythagoras, from the Maya to the Madagascans, this was a universal basis for all. Indeed, Pythagoras argued that the number 2 was a principal of destruction and the antithesis of spirituality, which is perhaps why modern capitalism is so keen to use it.



3-point alignment (l to r) Carfury (440 340) Trewern (432 319) Tremayne (429 314)

From this, it is easy to see why ancient buildings based on divine proportion are so harmonious to the eye, whereas so many utilitarian modern buildings based on the number 2 are not. Therefore, one cannot put a megalith just anywhere. It needs to be placed in accordance with all the others, in proportion to its surrounding landscape. It is that exquisite sense of divine proportion which I am sure most readers have sensed at megaliths, but which they couldn't put a name to, that makes them powerful; a direct replication of the creation of the universe. • •



GRANNY'S ATTIC



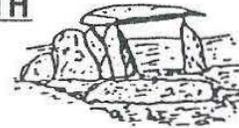
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LESSER-KNOWN SITES IN WEST PENWITH

CENTRAL AREA (2)

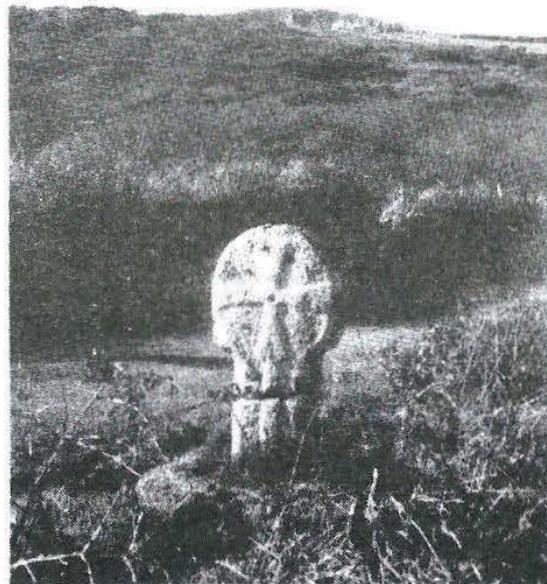
by RAYMOND COX



Deep in Madron parish in lonely places, yet not lost on moorland or far from roads or tracks, are two old Cornish crosses, memorable for their settings. More peaceful places could not be found. I saw them in the lush atmosphere of springtime enveloped in colour. Trengwainton Carn Cross (SW440 322) sits near the hedge just to the left of the track which leads off the road from Madron to Morvah. Turn left off the track towards the carn (which offers fine views over Mount's Bay). The cross is almost hidden just on the left and almost completely surrounded by colourful bushes, including a huge rhododendron and abundant gorse. It was perhaps the most sheltered, snug setting I have seen for a cross, with room for the small pathway through the bushes where it is immediately seen. A large stone base has the head of the cross cemented into it, the shaft having gone at some time. The whole is leaning somewhat to the right.

Boswarthen Cross (SW434 325) is on the right-hand side of the quiet no-through road which departs from the track to Madron Well, and towards the hamlet of Boswarthen. As with Trengwainton there is a cross on front and rear. Although the shaft has been broken, it is again the peace and beauty of this setting which attracts; the combination of the old cross with an enclosing array of flowers: bluebells, buttercups, sorrel, plantains, etc. and, behind, elder, gorse and other bushes.

Did these crosses really mark a trackway, or crossroad or boundary? Were they 'prayer stations' on the way, or, as J.T.Blight suggested for some crosses, set up on sites 'previously sacred to Druidic ceremonies'. Ian Cooke says that the route by Trengwainton Carn was that of an ancient road across the moors, whilst Boswarthen was on a churchways junction.



If you follow the track across Trengwainton Carn you eventually join a minor road that comes out at Newbridge. However, before then, a short distance along this road you come to one of the finest of the Iron Age Rounds in West Penwith - Trewern (SW433 319). The dimensions of this structure are 180ft (55m) by 150ft (46m). It has a single stone wall, part of which is thought not to be original. That part has two 'modern' gateways, one blocked up. A track leads to each entrance. The south-east entrance has both gate jamstones in place, one a tall 7ft stone, the other a block upon smaller stones.

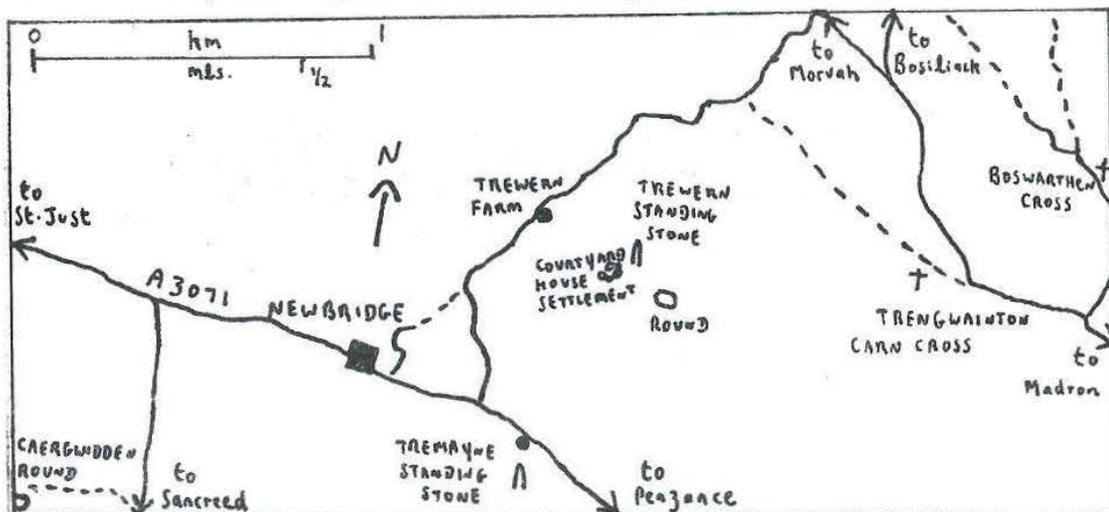
Rounds are late Iron Age, often enclosing hut circles. Smaller than hill forts, their purpose was in respect of wild animals or marauding humans, not defence from major aggression. I entered the Trewern Round and felt at once enclosed, which led to thoughts of those old people who used this place. Perhaps it was also used more recently as I heard from a local farmer that he thought a market of some kind used to take place here.

Just 600 yds away, behind Higher Trewern farmhouse are the remains of a Courtyard House Settlement (SW428 322). There is just one house that is recognisable and the remains of field systems and enclosures. The area bears comparison with the Round, being close, yet would be a later development. Furthermore, the Courtyard House was unique to West Penwith, whereas the Round was not. Ian Cooke (in *Mother and Sun*) discusses a possible, but doubtful fogou at this Courtyard House settlement.

Between the two sites, 100 yds from the Round, is a much older (Bronze Age) standing stone, 6ft tall (*photo on p.11*). It is one of two originally there in that field, the other having been destroyed. W.C.Borlase visited them in 1871, finding them just 10ft apart. John Michell, in *The Old Stones of Lands End* says that this stone is isolated between those of Sancreed, Paul and St.Buryan parishes to the south, and the monuments on the northern moors. However, only half a mile away to the south-east is the Tremayne standing stone (SW429 314) (*photo also on p.11*). As with Trewern, there was originally a pair, thus again emphasising the considerable number of pairs of stones in West Penwith. The older Dr.Borlase dug between them in 1752, as he did at Trewern, but although finding a pit, he found no remains.

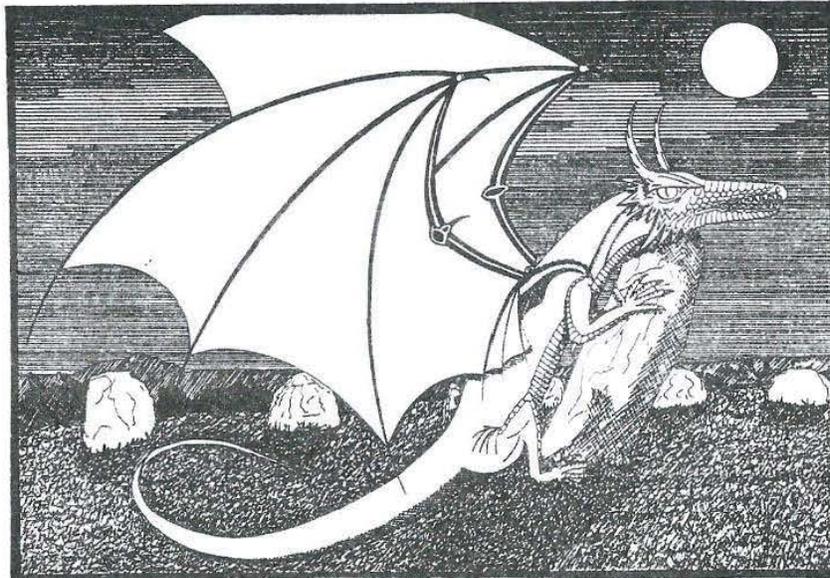
Finally, reached by a track leading off a line linking Newbridge with Sancreed, is another Round: Caergwidden Round (SW415 310). It originally measured 144ft x 110ft, but one side was removed. No external ditch remains now, but there is a stone wall that reaches 9ft high. There was supposed to have been some hut circles at this site, and a possible fogou here too, but that could have been a memory of the Round's entrance.

Memories..... how do they exist at these places? Are they somehow retained in these old stones and can we feel them? Can this be one explanation of the arcane atmospheres we encounter in such ancient places? There was nothing very special about the visit to this place, but, yet, even here something undefinable was registered.....



Cornish Dragon Lore

by ANDY NORFOLK



So, if you round up the usual suspects, what are Cornish dragons like? The typical dragon is an ancient, wise, huge reptile with four legs and wings and it breathes fire. It lives in a cave in a mountain where it guards treasure. It eats farm animals and people, but is persuaded to follow a diet by regular sacrifices of virgins, It is finally killed by an armoured knight who arrives just in time to rescue the local king's only daughter.

Wrong! The current picture of a dragon complete with wings, flaming breath and legs seems to date from mediaeval times at the earliest with a lot of help from the Victorians. The conception of a dragon is probably not European but derives from Japanese and Chinese ideas.¹ Fire breathing seems to be an Anglo-saxon addition to the stories. Most British legends are actually about giant worms or serpents, e.g. the Lambton Worm, and treasure doesn't seem to be an important part of the legends. These serpents don't generally breathe fire either, although they may have poisonous breath, or fangs, or be able to spit poison. They often live in, or very close to, water. At least one, the Bamburgh Worm, was a king's daughter under a transformational spell. Whilst some appear to have been killed by knights, many were killed or tamed by saints.

Dragons have however been guardians of treasure from ancient times, but this may be an esoteric treasure, as they were guardians of oracles, temples and sanctuaries. It appears that originally they also guarded the temple virgins against randy marauders! What were St.George and St.Michael really up to?

¹ Bill Griffiths *Meet the Dragon* (Heart of Albion Press, 1996)

Cornwall has its own special myths and legends, as you would expect of a Celtic land. Our Cornish dragons are enormous snakes rather than the modern idea of a four legged, winged and fire breathing monster. This could well be because our legends are ancient: many apparently date from about the 6th century. According to Roscarrock, who gathered together tales of the lives of dark-age saints in the early 17th century, St.Carantoc threw his altar into the Severn. Why? Anyway, it was found, in Wales, by King Arthur who tried to use it as a table, but everything put on it became cursed. St.Carantoc went to get it back and was asked by Arthur to deal with "a serpent which annoyed the country". St.Carantoc caught it with his stole and "led him like a Dogg to the court". Arthur's men would have killed it but St.Carantoc stopped them and "dismissed it alive, charging it to do noe more harm".²

Again according to Roscarrock, St.Samson of Dole crossed the Bristol channel in the opposite direction and performed miracles near Trigg in north Cornwall and then killed a huge serpent further into the Duchy. St.Petroc however seemed to be as sympathetic as St.Carantoc to dragons. In one version of his life, now in the Ducal library in Gotha, Germany, he helped a wounded dragon. Roscarrock says: "Yeah, his charity was so great that he did not onely manifeste it towardes his even Christians but allso on a very dragon who being in the desert, woounded in the right eye, lingered three days about his cell without doing harme in hope of helpe, he sprinkling him with water and dust mixed together and pluking out the wooden stake which stooke in his right eye, dismissed him cured."

In another version of his life in the National Library in Paris, retold by Canon Doble in the 1930s, St.Petroc catches - and releases - a dragon. The story goes that King Teudar had collected "various serpents and noxious worms" in a marshy lake into which he threw criminals - no chance of judicial review in those days! When Teudar died his son "forbade this kind of torment to be inflicted on men". The consequence was that the serpents ate each other until only one was left: "a horrible monster of enormous size who tore to pieces cattel and men in fearful fashion with his savage jaws". Petroc caught this dragon with his handkerchief, or girdle, and led it towards the sea. On the way he met the funeral of the prince's son, whom he brought back to life. Then he set the dragon free in the sea. There is a very similar tale about St.Paul of Leon catching a troublesome dragon in Brittany with his stole, and leading it like a dog to the sea where he set it free.



² Nicholas Roscarrock *Lives of the Saints* (Devon & Cornwall Record Society, ed.Nicholas Orme, 1992)

It was suggested to Doble by Athelstan Riley that the Padstow Obby Oss represented Petroc's dragon and that the Teazer, who dances in front of the Oss, is really St.Petroc. According to Riley, the encounter between the saint and the dragon took place on May-day and Treator Pool was probably the original marshy home of the serpents. Dragons seem to have generally lived in swamps: St.George, who came from 4th century CE Lydda, met his dragon in a swamp near Silne. The line in the Padstow Day-song sung whilst the Oss parades through Padstow on May-day about St.George out in his long boat was supposed by Riley to be about St.Petroc leading the dragon out to sea³. In the celebrations at Helston on Furry Day, on or about the 8th of May, there is a dragon now, although I don't know how long this character has been part of the "Hal an tow". Apparently in Victorian times there was a legend that this day was set aside to commemorate the victory of St.Michael over the devil⁴.

Halliwell tells a tale of a dragon which lived near Zennor by a "boldly rising carn" on the left-hand side of the road to St.Ives. This large serpent frightened the local residents so much by its "unearthly hiffing" (*sic*) that they were afraid to go to market. They finally got rid of it by setting fire to the furze, which either killed it or drove it away.. After this the hill was called the "Burning Mountain".⁵ Presumably the dragon was a bit puffed off!

Another tale is told about a joke by the people of Bodmin on emmets (=tourists or visitors, from the Cornish word for ants), in which they persuaded "over-credulous people" to fight with a Dragon lurking at Halgaver, about a mile from the town on the Lostwithiel road. The site was marked with a place called Dragon Pit, planted with fir trees.⁶

Finally, a dragon used to steal and eat sheep and cattle in the area around Mile Hill near Portreath. On the eve of May-day one year when the dragon was reaching for a sheep it was attacked by a huge white, spotted dog. The dog tore off the tip of the dragon's tail as the sun rose and the dragon fled towards the sea⁷. But what's this? Surely dragons are supposed to live on high hills. Most of the early Cornish legends are about dragons living in low lying places and which can obviously swim. This doesn't tie in too well with John Michell's ideas about dragon hills and chapels dedicated to St.George or St.Michael. This may be because such ideas post-date most of the Cornish dragon stories. It seems to me that the various dragons which were caught and then released in a more appropriate habitat by these environmentally friendly saints must be related to Morgowr. Our local sea monster is after all a giant serpent.

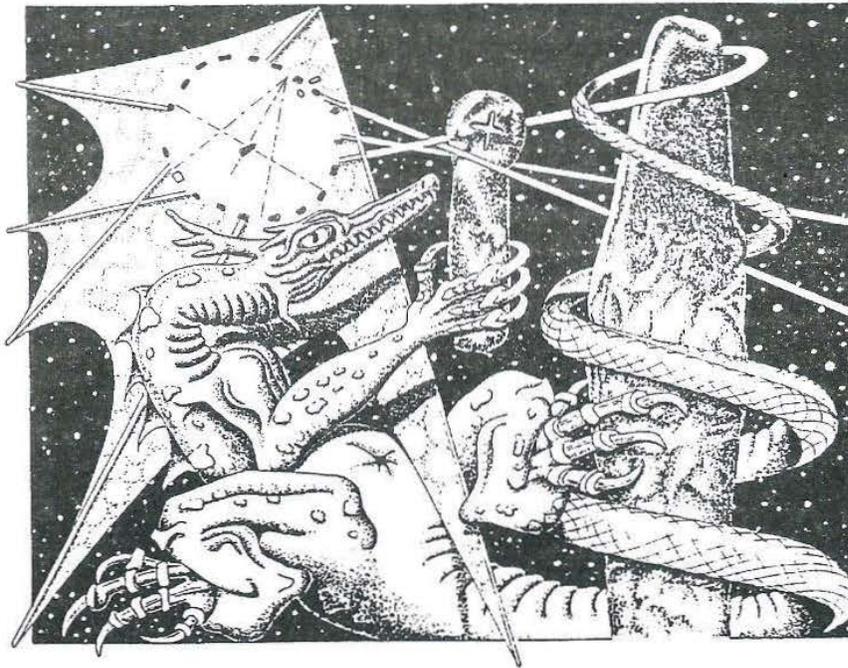
³ Donald R Rawe *Padstow's Obby Oss* (Lodenek Press, 1993)

⁴ M.A.Courtney *Folklore and Legends of Cornwall* (Cornwall Books, 1989)

⁵ J.O.Halliwell *Rambles in Western Cornwall* (1861)

⁶ Lake's *Parochial History of Cornwall* (1867, EP Publishing 1974)

⁷ Peter Underwood *Ghosts of Cornwall* (Bossiney Books, 1983)



The idea that the dragon represents the pre-Christian religion and/or matriarchy has been suggested by many authors. If this is true, so the argument goes, then the stories about saints who kill dragons are really about the triumph of Christianity/patriarchy. So - why in Cornish tales are the saints apparently sympathetic to the dragons? Does this represent a more tolerant attitude, or perhaps even a partnership, between those representing the old ways and the new? Does this reflect the differences between the early Celtic church and the Roman church? It does seem that the Celtic approach was vastly more respectful of native traditions. Why were the various dragons released into the sea? Perhaps this represents the emigrations of pagans to Ireland, or Brittany away from the invasion of Christian saints?

A similar argument goes that the dragon represents greed and other dark aspects of the personality. This is surely related to tales of dragons jealously guarding treasure. Since this is not apparently a feature of Cornish stories, the corollary idea that the victorious saint represents benevolence and bright aspects of the personality doesn't seem to apply in Cornwall. Another idea is that the dragon represents spirituality whilst the saint represents materialism. In this scenario the "standard" dragon tale appears to show the triumph of the mundane over the imaginatively creative. Again this explanation does not seem to fit the Cornish stories in which the dragons are usually shown some respect.

In earth mysteries the dragon is now often regarded as representing earth energies. The widespread acceptance of this idea probably only dates from John Michell's *The View over Atlantis* in which he brought the concepts of Feng Shui to

a wide audience. This is apparently a Chinese/Japanese concept applied to a Chinese/Japanese model of the dragon. It is however a useful way of picturing cthonic energies, and perceptions of these long predate Michell's books.

For example, in "Kim" published in 1901, Rudyard Kipling writes of "the mysterious earth currents which thrill the clay of our bodies". The depictions of saints apparently killing dragons can be reinterpreted as showing the manipulation of earth energies. This idea was part of Hamish Miller's talk at the 1996 "Cream Teas and Crops Circles" event at Withiel in which he showed a slide which he claimed showed a dragon being tickled with a spear. So perhaps our Cornish dragon legends are actually about geomants using earth energies for beneficial purposes.

There are darker echoes to these tales. It seems that King Teudar could have been making ritual sacrifices in the marshes. Many bodies dating from prehistoric times have now been retrieved from peat bogs in which not only the corpses but also evidence of ritual sacrifice have been preserved. This may also explain in part the Bodmin story. After all, why sacrifice a friend if you could sacrifice a stranger. By this reasoning our dragons represent an underworld god/dess who had to be placated by human sacrifice. If this is so then the restrained behaviour of the saints in the Cornish tales is even more remarkable.

Finally, the dragons may be Faery creatures. This may help to explain the Portreath story. Over-sized spotted dogs in British myths are usually white with red ears and come from *annown*, the Celtic otherworld. If this interpretation is correct then what on earth, or under it, is going on? A clue may be the Beltane date for the encounter and the defeat of the dragon at sun-rise. Can it be that the dragon represents winter, or the god of the waning year, while the dog is summer and perhaps the spring goddess? Is this tale a folk memory of a May-day celebration at Portreath?

To summarise, our Cornish legends about dragons are ancient. It seems our dragons are powerful and otherworldly creatures, which may represent an underworld god/dess to which human sacrifices may have been made, with links to celebrations at Beltane, but which early Christian saints treated kindly and with respect. They are probably close relatives of Morgowr and are linked to earth energies which are beneficial when treated properly.

Meanwhile dragons are still around and have been seen not that long ago. C.S.Lewis used to tell a tale that he had been discussing dragons with Tolkein in a Berkshire bar and that "the big workman who had sat silent and sucked his pipe all the evening, from his empty mug with gleaming eye glanced towards us: 'I seen 'em myself!' he said fiercely". And a final thought - did anybody see a do-gooder wandering about a marshy area near the sea by Mounts bay on the 10th November 1996 at about 9.30am using their hanky to lead a very odd looking dog? Perhaps they had something to do with the earth-quake?!

Artwork on p.14 by Barry Millard & on p.17 by Andy Norfolk, both past MM covers.

WIERD & WONDERFUL CORNWALL

An occasional column that features some of the eccentrics, mystics and modern-day witches who inhabit this unusual land of ours.

VILLAGE WOMAN IS NOW AN OFFICIAL WITCH!

Cassandra Latham - the "Witch of St.Buryan" is now a fully fledged "village witch" - and that's official! For Cassandra, who last year made the national headlines after she had been appointed the first-ever pagan contact for hospital patients in Cornwall who required a pagan chaplain, is now registered as a self-employed village witch. "I got the idea after doing a business start-up course, so I've opened a business account as a witch" she said. "I expect I'll have a lot of explaining to do when my tax forms are sent off!" Cassandra's services as a witch, casting healing spells and doing ceremonies, has made her so much in demand that she has been able to sign off the dole and make a living from her craft. She is a qualified counsellor who also reads Tarot cards and tells fortunes.

The Cornishman 27/3/97

SWW CALLS ON VICAR TO LIFT FIELD CURSE

South West Water, who wanted to lay a pipe across a field at Hariyn Bay near Padstow, have been forced to enlist the help of a vicar to lift an ancient curse on the land. In the 1830s the field was cursed by a local witch Mother Ivey, who put a spell on it after the local landowner ordered that unsold pilchards should be ploughed into the soil rather than be distributed to local starving people. Since then the field has always had a bad reputation, and there have been several events connected with it involving injury and death. In the 1960s a local wise woman Granny Taylor suggested that bandages over which she had rubbed her hands should be buried there to lift the curse. But to be on the safe side the field's owner Frank Hellyar called in the Rev. Robert Law to perform a ceremony so that the pipe-laying work could go ahead. SWW spokesman said "Apparently if the soil was disturbed in any way the curse could be activated again, so we agreed to call in a local priest to remove it".

Western Morning News 31/3/97

REPLICA MEN-AN-TOL CAUSES CONTROVERSY IN ST. JUST

A replica sculpture of the famous Men-an-Tol at Morvah which has been put up outside St. Just Library has not been without incident. Firstly, the Town Council objected to the text by sculptor Rory Te'Tigo, which encouraged people to crawl through the holed stone or place their heads in the humming stone in order to benefit from the "healing, communication and initiation properties". It was felt that this could lead people to believe that the replica stones had the same alleged healing properties as the revered pagan monument. Then the Free Church minister complained that the stones themselves, positioned outside the Library, were "too pagan", and the local vicar the Rev. David Leach preached against them and the "local pagan community" in the church on Sunday! Despite all this, the stones were put in place with great ceremony, filmed by local TV, and most people thought they were a great addition to the Town.

The Cornishman 7/97

BOOK REVIEWS

OAKMAGIC PUBLICATIONS continue to produce a plethora of booklets, consisting of reprints of works on Cornish folklore and legend that have been long unavailable, together with the research of the press's author **Kelvin I. Jones**. There have been over 15 new titles in 1997 alone, these including 2 volumes of *Cornwall's Legend Land* (£3.00 each), a reprint of a 1922 booklet issued by the Great Western Railway containing tales located in different parts of Cornwall designed to attract visitors to the Duchy; *Anne Jefferies and the Fairies* (£3.00), being an account of the remarkable 17th century Cornish clairvoyant and healer who had dealings with the fairy folk and was imprisoned; *The Cornish Obby Oss* (£3.00), a reprint of a 1912 booklet by Thurston Peters, which contains much valuable early information about Padstow's famous May Day festival; *Padstow's Faery Folk* (£3.50), the reprint of another 1912 booklet, this time a volume of fairy stories for young folk by Enys Tregarthen; *The Furry Dance* (£3.00) which comprises a selection of the earliest known references to Helston's spring festival; *Arthur's Lost Land* (£4.50) by J.C. Walters, a booklet published in 1906 about the legendary sites of north Cornwall including Tintagel and St. Nectan's Glen; and *Penzance Customs and Superstitions* (£3.00), which brings together most of the early stories about the midsummer celebrations and other local seasonal events. In addition there are 3 volumes by folklorist R.A. Courtney, who in 1912-1916 wrote about the pagan origins of holy hilltops, wells and crosses, a man well ahead of his time! These are entitled *The Hill and The Circle* (£3.95), *Cornwall's Holy Wells* (£3.00), & *The Cornish Cross* (£3.00). Finally, there is a reprint of J.C. Blight's exhaustive survey of the ancient crosses of west Cornwall *Blight's Cornish Crosses* (£5.00). Most of these volumes have line drawings and/or photographs, and are marvellous value for money.

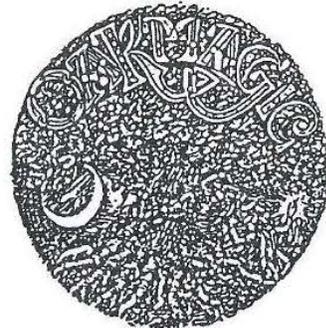
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Books on Celtic and pagan themes continue to roll off the presses. Four newish ones are worth a mention. *Celtic Connections* by **David James** (Blandford, £16.99) provides an overview of pre-Celtic and Celtic culture, history and traditions, and is a useful general introduction to the subject. Despite some unfortunate interpretations (for example, it really is not adequate to be writing in 1996 that Cornish fogous were “used mainly for storage purposes”), there is nevertheless a good deal of helpful information contained within. What enhances the book are the many beautiful colour photographs of sacred sites by **Simant Bostock**. *Celtic Women* by **Lyn Webster Wilde** (Blandford, £17.99) looks at the role of Celtic women from the evidence of stories, tales and folklore. Where it focuses on the Celtic period it is interesting and successful, though the re-telling of the Celtic legends I personally found rather jarring. However, where it attempts to apply the Celtic label to a selection of women from the 15th century to the present day it is much less convincing. Finally, two Celtic books by **Nigel Pennick**, both on Christian themes with pagan links. *The Celtic Cross* (Blandford, £16.99) is a thorough piece of research with a good section on Cornish crosses, making the links to other Celtic countries such as Wales & Brittany, and including a brief gazeteer of sites. *Celtic Saints* (Thorsons, £9.99) is a very nicely produced book, with some very useful information and a good guide to many of the saints from Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Cornwall. None of these four may be very original, but they are all worth having.

From Christian crosses to Christian churches. *English Church Dedications* by **Nicholas Orme** (University of Exeter Press, £9.95) is a most useful source book, particularly its Gazeteer of church dedications in Cornwall & Devon, which forms the bulk of the book. Professor Orme has been reported as saying that he believes the stories of saints' lives in Cornwall were modelled on real local people, probably pagan chieftans and men and women who had respect in their areas. He therefore approaches his subject as an “agnostic” and is thus able to do a superb literary detective job on uncovering the original saints' names that lie behind many of the church dedications. For example, his assertion that the St. Bridget of Sweden dedication at Morvah is as likely to be originally Bridget of Kildare confirms the argument made by CM and myself in the article “St. Bridget and her Chapels” (MM28 p.6-8). This is an excellent reference book for every Cornish researcher and scholar to have on their shelves.

Finally, if you have access to a computer, it is worth seeking out *Research in Geomancy 1990-1994* by **Jeremy Harte**, a bibliography of earth mysteries and related titles on floppy disk, for reading using any wordprocessor (Heart of Albion Press, 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough LE12 6UJ. Disk £5.95 + 80p p&p. Optional disk & print out £14.95 + £1.30 p&p). This is a trawl by Jeremy through a selection of relatively recent books and articles on various EM topics, together with his (sometimes idiosyncratic) comments. There is a separate section on Cornwall, in which MM's EM Guides get a mention, along with Paul Devereux & Craig Weatherhill's book on the myths and legends. It is thus quite selective, but overall makes for an entertaining and quite useful browse, with plenty of ideas for further (conventional book) reading. It all makes a change from surfing the internet! [CS]

Cerridwen's Cauldron



For this edition's feature, MM editor **CHERYL STRAFFON** writes of how ritual may have been performed in prehistoric times. Although a fiction, the reconstruction is based on current researches in archaeology, climatology, imagery, botany and astronomy

THE AGE IS ABOUT 5,000 YEARS AGO. The place is somewhere in the islands that were later to be named after the Goddess Britannia and the Goddess Eriu. The time is the darkest hour of the shortest day of the year. The night is cold, but the day has been warm and sunny, and the skies are usually clear. Across the slopes of the hills, cleared quite recently from the forests that formerly covered them, weaves a serpentine line of people bearing flaming torches, and the sound of a low murmuring chant can be heard. They approach a large mound standing on the flank of the hill, its breast-like shape reflecting the curves of the slopes of the neighbouring hills and vales. It is covered in white quartz fragments that glisten and gleam by the light of the torches. The people stop at the entrance to the mound and form a circle.

A fire is lit from wood brought to the site earlier, and as the chanting becomes louder, the dancing around the fire begins. The chant is an invocation to she who rules the skies, gives them warmth and light, brings their crops to fruition in the summer, and now appears but briefly in this dark black, slumbering time of winter. This is her shortest day: the 'measurers' of the tribe have worked this out over the years, just as they have used their menstrual cycles to work out the times of the moon and her phases. The chanting builds higher and higher, the dancing becomes wilder and wilder, and at a pre-arranged signal, some step aside and begin to prise open a stone blocking part of the entrance to the mound.

Into the chamber goes the one whose turn it is to carry some of the bones of those who have died over the year since this ceremony was last performed. She has already ingested some plants that grow locally to the site and is in a state of heightened awareness and altered consciousness. She places the bones with others already in the chamber, and calls softly to the ancestors who dwell within the mound and watch over the day-to-day lives of the people as they till their newly created fields and milk their recently domesticated cattle. She asks the ancestors for their help and guidance, their knowledge and wisdom, to learn what must be done for the future well-being of the tribe. Her spirit seems to leave her body and she feels she is flying across the land, looking down at the stone circle that the tribe is beginning to build in the valley below for ceremonies

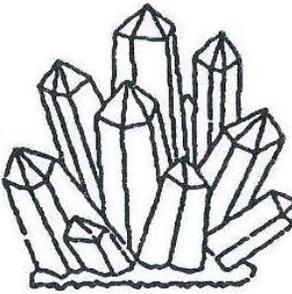
to connect with the moon on her 18.6 year cycle. She feels at once exhilarated and at peace with herself.

Her spirit returns to her body and she becomes aware that the chanting outside has reached a crescendo, and in a dramatic moment of death and rebirth the first rays of the newly risen sun enter the dark space of the mound and illuminate a number of spiral carvings on the walls of the inner sanctum. The images seem to be moving around and standing out from the walls, pulsing with a life of their own. She feels a huge sense of joy, and the joy of the celebrants outside is also palpable. The Goddess is alive – they have felt her and seen her and acknowledged her presence in their lives and her protection for their tribe. She is in every stone, every blade of grass, every drop of water, every ancient hill. She flows through them and they through her. She is them and they are her. And so the wheel of the year has turned, and they are alive and thriving. And so they give thanks to her.

Extract from "THE EARTH GODDESS: Celtic and Pagan Legacy of the Landscape" by Cheryl Straffon. Published September 1997 by Blandford (Cassells) ISBN: 071372644X. £16.99. The first part presents an overview of Goddess celebration from prehistoric ages up to recent times, and the second part is a detailed Gazetteer of sites throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Includes photographs and artwork. Available through all good bookshops or see the special offer leaflet enclosed with this MM.

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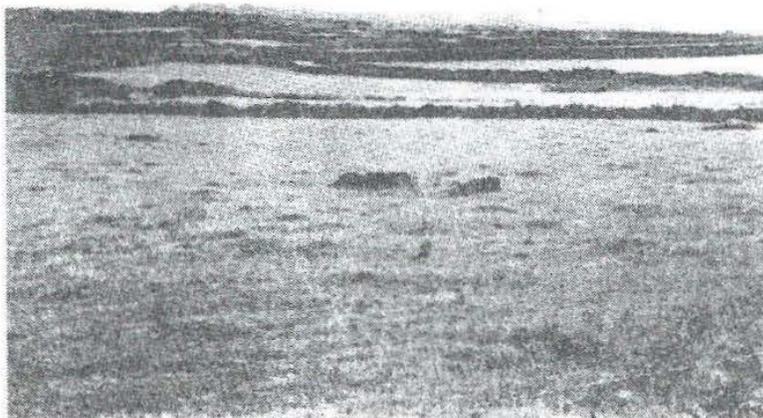
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THE PIPERS TUNE

A strange sighting of an "earth light" occurred earlier this summer in West Penwith. One evening at the end of June a local farmer and his wife were driving home late at night after seeing friends near Gurnards Head.



They noticed a very bright blue light in the sky which they said appeared to "dance" and to be leading them on. The woman described it as being eye-piercingly blue, "bluer than an arc-welding light", and they also saw a 3ft high egg-shape hovering in front of the light. They were both very frightened, and at one point the woman screamed. It finally came to rest above 2 stones in a field at Gear Farm (SW440 376 - picture above) where it hovered. The site is not in itself known to be significant, though there are many ancient sites, such as hut circles, cairns, settlements and standing stones in the vicinity. Paul Devereux has suggested in the past that such phenomena may be created by geophysical stress from fault lines in the earth and has called them "earth lights". If this is one such example, it was certainly a very dramatic one.

FAIR EXCHANGE

3rd Stone magazine under its new editorship of Neil Mortimer & Hilary Schrafft has become a vastly improved product, now focusing on matters of archaeological and earth mysteries interest alike. The research and photographic reproduction is excellent, and there is much in it that is very worth a subscription. MM gets a review in the current edition in which it says "MM's knowledge of local sites and traditions is superb". To return the compliment, we would say that 3rd Stone is equally as reliable and professional. Subscription details in the box opp.

INTERNET For those on the Internet, pages containing images of West Penwith standing stones may be found at <http://joshua.micronet.it/utenti/dmeozzi/HomEng.html>.

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Cardigan, Ceredigion, Wales£8 [£2]

QUEST - BCM-SCL Quest, London
WC1N 3XX.....£6 [£1.50]

THE SILVER WHEEL - PO Box 12,
Leicester LE9 7DN£7.50 [£2]

WHITE DRAGON - 103 Abbotswood
Close, Winyates Green, Redditch, Worcs
B98 0QF.....£8 [£2.25]

PHOENIX - 25 Rose Terrace, Moor View
Park, Newcastle-on-Tyne.....[£3.50]

GODDESS/FEMINIST(* = women only)
WOOD AND WATER- c/o 77 Parliament
Hill, London, NW3 2TH.....£5 [£1.25]

*MRRN (Matriarchy Research & Reclaim
Network) c/o Wesley House, 4 Wild
Court, London WC2B 5AU.....£6

*from the flames - Details from 42
Mapperley Rd, Nottingham NG3 5AS.

NOTICEBOARD

ISSN: 0966-5897

CORNISH EARTH MYSTERIES

Autumn talks at the Acorn in Penzance on the last Thursday each month @ 7.30pm.

Sept 25th Craig Weatherhill "The First and Last Wilderness"

Oct 30th Dr.Ken George "Ancient astronomy in Cornwall"

Nov 27th Jon Downes "Morgawr, the Owl Man and other Fortean animals"

Sat Dec 20th Meet at Chun Quoit @ 4pm for winter solstice sunset, followed by Celtic story-telling (indoors!). Bring food/ drink to share.

Membership details from CEMG, 3 Nanturras Row, Goldsithney, Penzance TR20 9HE, or ring Andy Norfolk on 01209-831519.

CUFORG (Cornwall UFO Group)

Meet on first Tuesday of every month at Richard Lander School in Truro. *Sat & Sun 20th/21st Sept* 10am-8pm UFO Conference Truro College Details: Dave Gillam, 24 Carrine Rd, Truro TR1 3XB. Tel: 01872-276381.

THE WELLBEING CENTRE Old School House, Churchtown, Illogan, Redruth Tel: 01209-842999

Sat Sept 21st Circle Dance Day to celebrate the bounty of nature and the balance of dark and light. 10.30am-4.30pm £7 (conces.£5). Tel: Jo Pacsoo 01209-212738.

PENWITH PAGAN MOOT at the Acorn in Penzance. *Tuesdays Sept 9th & Oct 14th.* Phone: 01736-810809.

HARMONY POTTERY celebrations *Sat Nov 1st* Samhain, at Wheal Rose, Scorrier, Redruth. Tel: 01209-890581.

RESEARCH AND ENLIGHTENMENT CENTRE King's Avenue, St.Austell. Tel: 01726-74843.

Regular monthly talks including:-

Weds Nov 19th 7.30pm Cheryl Straffon & Caeia March "The Earth and her Mysteries"

CORNWALL'S NEW AGE FESTIVAL

7th year at Ponsmere Hotel, Perranporth. *Fri Nov 21st - Sun Nov 23rd:* Stalls & talks. *Mon Nov 24th:* Workshops. Entrance £2/day (£1 Fri) - talks & workshops extra. Full programme (SAE) from 65 Porth Bean Rd, Newquay. (01637-873024).

CAER [Centre for Alternative Education & Research] Courses and workshops including *Sept 2nd-7th,* Sacred Sites & Ceremonies *Oct 3rd-5th* Movement in Sacred Sites & *Nov 7th-9th.* Fogou - a journey to the underworld. Details: 01736-810580.

CORNWALL ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Site visits *Sun Sept 14th* Holywell Bay *Sun Oct 19th* Fogous Details Les Douch 01872-272120