

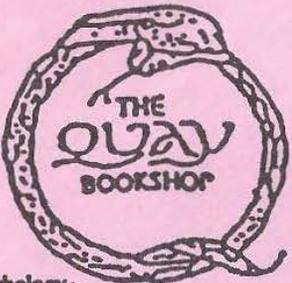


**MAYTIME CELEBRATIONS IN CORNWALL ●  
STRANGE SOUNDS & LIGHTS ● TIN MINING  
MANAGING THE SITES ● NEWS & REVIEWS**

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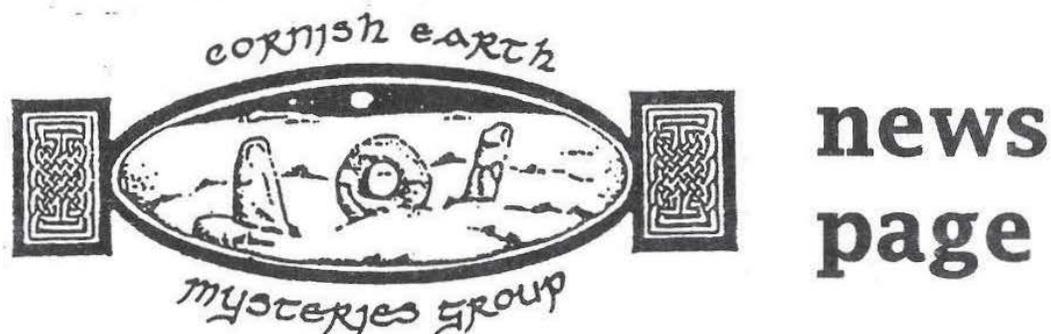
# Meyn Mamvro

## STONES OF OUR MOTHERLAND

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

Word reaches us in West Cornwall that the forces are gathering in preparation for the Total Eclipse of the Sun in August 1999! Rumour has it (on good authority) that tickets are already being sold for mega-raves at the ancient sites to take place on and around the Eclipse, which is only 100% visible on a line stretching across West Penwith to Falmouth. Disturbing news indeed, and one more aspect for the authorities to worry about. Already there is much apprehension and worry about the anticipated half a million or so visitors, expected to converge on west Cornwall for 11.11 am on August 11th 1999 for this once in a lifetime event (the next one in Britain will not be until 2090 nearly 100 years into the future). Already it is being described by the County planners as "anticipated mayhem", "a recipe for disaster", "like waiting for a meteorite to hit", "a crisis in the making" and "a massive strain on local resources". Amongst the problems identified by Cornwall's Emergency Planning Officer Steve Winston are how will ambulances be able to get along the congested roads, and how can archaeological sites be protected against New Age eclipse rituals. There is also the problem over accomodation, and MM has heard from several readers who are trying to book for August 1999 without success, as most accomodation has now been pre-booked. At a Conference held at Truro there was talk of tent cities springing up to deal with the situation. For those MM readers who are either living here, or have arranged to come down, and would like to meet up with others, Carn Bosavern, just outside St. Just where MM is published will be one of the key hilltop viewing points, so perhaps anyone who would like to could gather there for a MM Readers Grand Eclipse Gathering!

Meanwhile, back to the summer of 1998, there are some splendid events planned by the Earth Mysteries Group, including the 10th anniversary Maypole Dance and Three Wells Walk (full details on back page). Other events include Bodellan Gardens, the Well-Sprung Walk, Lesser-known sites of West Penwith, and Holywell Bay well. Coincidentally, nearly all of them feature wells, tying-in nicely with a new MM publication *Fentyow Kernow - In Search of Cornwall's Holy Wells*, a moderately priced paperback that nevertheless features 125 of the best wells, with maps, photographs (including a colour cover), directions and full location details. Full details and an order form are included with this MM, or may be obtained from the MM address. There is also a new Cornish Women's Wells Group starting up this summer, and a Women's Earth Mysteries Group has also recently started up in the mid-Cornwall area. It is good to see so many people coming together in their love of the earth and the ancient sites. We just need to make sure that they don't all swamp them in August 1999!



The 8th annual series of talks transferred to the Queens Hotel in Penzance while the Acorn is being refurbished. It was perhaps fortunate it did so, as the 3 talks in Jan-Mar 1998 attracted huge numbers of people, sometimes as many as 120+ for individual presentations. Starting the ball rolling in January was a rare appearance by **Hamish Miller**, who, in a talk entitled "The Earth Responds", made the first presentation of new dowsing research by Paul Broadhurst and himself on the international lines (dubbed the Apollo and Athena lines) linking up sacred sites in Europe. Extensively illustrated with slides of many little-known sites, he took the audience on a fascinating journey through Europe, showing how the key power sites were often to be found in unexpected places. The whole talk, including the accounts of their adventures gaining access to the classical sites in Greece, well deserved the enthusiastic audience appreciation that it received.

In February we were visited by well-known writer and workshop facilitator **Caitlin Matthews** who gave a most original talk on "The Spells of Women: the sacred and magical rôle of the ninefold Celtic sisterhood". Starting with a beautifully-performed song, Caitlin went on to reveal some unfamiliar material from classical authors and Celtic legend about the recurrence of the motif of 9 priestesses or druidesses. She also recounted for the first time a translation of a Romano-Celtic curse tablet by the ex-member of an early coven of women celibrants of the Goddess, and finally brought the story up to date by telling of some oral traditions that had been passed down to contemporary women of her acquaintance. A capacity audience sat 'spell-bound' for this presentation.

Finally, to round the season off in March, local village witch **Cassandra Latham** gave a tour de force with a talk entitled "The work of the 20th century witch in West Penwith". Opening her heart to the audience (that was vast by anyone's standards!) she spoke honestly and amusingly about the path that had led her to becoming a contemporary witch, the rôle of the Ancestors or Old Ones in directing her life, the national publicity she received when she became a pagan hospital chaplain, and the kind of requests she received for help when she became Britain's first officially self-employed witch! She spoke with feeling about the witches who had gone before and their treatment in *The Burning Times*, and the audience, who was fascinated and intrigued by her talk, asked many many questions afterwards about all sorts of witchery matters. It was an excellent end to a first-rate season of talks, and the CEMG intends to keep the standard going next Autumn & Winter with another fine season of presentations.

## SACRED SITES NETWORK GROUP

The new Sacred Sites Network Group has had 2 meetings in January and March when eight representatives from official and alternative organisations and groups came together to look at ways of protecting some of the ancient sites. The meeting included John Brookes from the National Trust, Ann Preston-Jones from the Cornwall Archaeological Unit/English Heritage, Mike Rosendale the Penwith Countryside Officer, and Ivan Smith from the Bolitho Estate, who were joined by Cassandra Latham from the Pagan Federation, Andy Norfolk from the CEMG, Barry Reilly from OBOD (Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids), and Cheryl Traffon from *Meyn Mamvro*. The meetings discussed 3 main sites in West Penwith: Boscawen-ûn stone circle, and Sancreed & Madron wells, and looked at some of the potential problems of the 1999 total eclipse.

At **Boscawen-ûn** a Countryside Stewardship Agreement is being set up with the tenant farmer, which will provide a framework around future management of the site. There will not be any dramatic changes there, more a low level of grazing and stock-proofing in the area surrounding the site, the suppression of bracken and the encouragement of heathers. A Guardianship Scheme for the circle was also suggested, with someone being appointed to keep a watching brief on the site. Coincidentally, this was put to the test almost immediately afterwards, when a traveller set up his bender in the gorse next to the site, which was an intrusive presence. Andy Norfolk & Barry Reilly went to have a word with him, and he agreed to move on at the next new moon.

At **Sancreed Well** there were 3 main issues affecting the site. Firstly, the land leading up to the site has become a mess partly because the fence has been cut and broken and the cattle have got in. A Countryside Stewardship Scheme is going to be put into operation, which will involve creating stock-proof boundary hedges and walls, and clearing out some of the bushes which have become intrusive and unsightly. Secondly, because of objections by the owners of the land Mr & Mrs Hosking about over-use by groups of visitors to the well at all hours of the day and night (!), it is hoped that a new permissive path can be created direct to the well from a neighbouring field. Thirdly, the dangerous state of the immediate approach to the well, where the large stone on the ground has cracked, is to be repaired to make access to the well safer.

Discussion about **Madron Well** centered on the insensitive signposting to the site, the tatty nature of the approach to the Baptistry, the heavy-handed annual cutting-back of the trees by the Methodists, and the problems over drainage at the Well itself. It was felt that a balance should be struck between tidying up the site without excessive alteration and "urbanisation" of the area. A further site visit will consider doing some investigation of the surrounding drainage to see if things can be gently improved.

Finally, the CAU report that they hope to do some erosion improvement at the Mên-an-Tol, and have received a grant from English Heritage & the County Environmental Trust for excavation and restoration of Carwynnen Quoit [see MM25 & 26].

# READERS WRITE



## STRANGE SOUNDS - AND LIGHTS

"With reference to Andy Norfolk's article on 'The Hummadruz' in MM35, I thought I would let you know of our experience. On the afternoon of the earthquake in West Cornwall (Nov 10th 1996) Kate and I went for a walk up on to Caer Bran. We were quite near to the part where the quarry curves round when we heard this 'buzzing' or 'humming' sound coming from the gorse bushes, about a yard away from us. We walked towards it to see what was causing it and the sound moved way, about another yard. Again, we walked towards it and again it moved away. I wondered if it was anything to do with electricity, as the sound resembled that produced by the 1930s movies, just at the point where Frankenstein's monster is being revived, but I could see no electrical equipment of any sort around. Not wishing to go into the gorse bushes any further, we gave up and concluded that it was a large group of very shy grasshoppers!"

*Barry & Kate Reilly, Sancreed.*

"I was looking forward to exploring Warleggan Church, as I had read the article in MM32 describing the bizarre lifestyle of the Rev. Densham. We had had an inspiring day which saw us take in Roche Rock, the Hurlers, St. Cleer and the Dozmary Pool. However, nothing could prepare me for what I was about to experience at Warleggan. We walked up the hill to the Church and a sense of apprehension descended upon us. As I entered the Church I immediately experienced the crushing effect of the atmosphere of the place. To begin with I thought I was going to faint, although I was feeling perfectly well and alert, but I could not understand the rushing noise in my ears. I swallowed hard, expecting my ears to pop, but still the noise persisted. The sound was almost electronic in a way - as though there was a motor boat droning away under the floor. As I looked around the church, I remember feeling a sense that something powerful was present there with us - it was a most disarming experience. Still this noise persisted and apparently only I could hear it - and it was so loud. I found it incredible that people had written in the visitors' book comments describing the Church as 'beautiful and peaceful' - it was anything but to me! I was relieved to get outside, and noticed at once that the noise in my ears stopped! I have since read about the phenomenon known as 'the singing' or Hummadruz. Paul Broadhurst mentions it in his book *Secret Shrines* and says that it can occur on moors and in old churches. I would be most interested to know if anyone else has experienced it at Warleggan before, and what it signifies. Is it earth energy or the past events at the Church which triggered off this Hummadruz?"

*Sue Aston, Solihull.*



"I have been hearing this humming noise since childhood, growing up in the far west of Penwith. It is one of those mysterious phenomena of which I have always been aware, but never tried to analyse, any more than the tappings and clicks heard in houses in which I have lived. I believe that hearing the Hummadruz can defy logical explanations and just "is", as if the Otherworld, at times, on a still summer day or a moonlit night, unfolds its boundaries and entices us with a subliminal experience from another dimension. Personally, I have usually found that hearing these strange noises are synonymous with some significant spiritual encounter"

*Jean Harris, Hayle.*

"I thought I'd clarify something about the 'earth-light' sighting reported on p.24 of MM34. The report gives the impression that a light came down from the sky and settled in a field near Zennor. I investigated the case with Dave Gillham, on behalf of the Cornwall UFO Research Group, and it became apparent from the interviews we conducted with the witnesses that the light in the sky and the one on the ground might have been separate objects. A local couple saw the lights at 11.30pm while returning home from visiting friends on May 23rd 1997. They actually saw the first object whilst saying goodbye to their friends, and described it as a bright white light making angular movements like a kite, about 500 to 1000ft up in the night sky. The woman said, as they started driving home the light dropped down in a straight line, and as it started to go over a hill to the south of Zennor, she noticed a bright blue light down in a field near the village. Her husband said that the light seemed to come down in an area near where the blue light was and he stopped watching it to look at the blue light. He felt the lights were connected and possibly interacting with each other, but then said that at no point did he see both lights at the same time.

They then drove toward the blue light, thinking there might have been an accident, then as they approached the field by Gear Farm (pictured in MM34) the woman said she saw a "horrendous blue light" between two flat stones on the ground "which made a welding light look like a candle!" The light lit up the inside of the van and was so intense it shone through her hands and gave her an instant headache. As they passed by, she briefly noticed a cream-coloured 3ft x 2ft oval object or figure, moving 'up' onto a low hedge in the foreground. Her husband, who was driving, thought he saw a dark 3-4ft high black outline, which was "not a solid mass" against the hedge in front of the blue light. He also noticed two orange/red and blue lights further back in the field. The couple panicked and sped off, with the car lights dipped because they were afraid the lights might follow them, so we don't know how they actually left the field.

CUFORG would love to hear from any MM readers who might have seen strange goings-on that night, or indeed at any other time, since Penwith seems to be something of a magnet for weirdness! (surely it couldn't be anything to do with the people who live there?!). Personally, I think the more groups like ours connect and exchange information, the more we learn about these mysteries"

*Dionne Jones, Truro.*

*CUFORG meets every month in Truro and may be contacted on 01872-276381.*



## EARLY TIN-MINING IN CORNWALL

*The last tin mine in Europe, South Crofty near Redruth, closed in March 1998, bringing to an end 4000 or so years of tin-mining in Cornwall. In this article Marion K. Pearce looks back to the prehistoric search for tin in the south-west.*

Tin is a vital element, used as a strengthening metal with copper to make the alloy bronze, from which the Bronze Ages were named. Tin ore is normally found in granite outcrops, such as Land's End, Carnmenellis, St. Austell Moor and Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. It is reasonable to presume that, together with Dartmoor, these would have been the main tin mining areas in the Bronze Age. In fact, until this century, this area of Cornwall and Dartmoor was a principle source of tin and copper in the world.

Tin is usually present in its natural state as tin ore or cassiterite. Cassiterite is a chemically stable, heavy and durable mineral, usually stained brown to black by iron impurities in the rock. There is a rarer tin mineral from which the ore can be obtained called stannite, which weathers to a form of tin oxide known as 'wood-tin'. Heavy weathering and erosion causes the granite from which the tin ore is obtained to wear away and the cassiterite often settles into the base of a stream. These are known as 'tin-streams', and are thought to have been a basis for obtaining tin in the Bronze Ages. The streaming took place at deep levels, where pebbles made of cassiterite were dug out from the earth. A cache of such stream tin was discovered at a Bronze Age settlement at Trevisker Round, near St. Eval. This cache consisted of grey-brown pebbles of stream cassiterite, 10 to 15 mm in diameter, which would have been ideal for smelting to tin.

It is interesting that although in this country tin was normally only a 10% proportion of bronze, the rest being made of copper, in Saxony and Bohemia white bronzes have been found containing up to 27% proportion of tin. There were probably ancient tin routes where tin and other valuables for trade would have been sent from Cornwall to traders in Ireland and Europe. A route from Harlyn Bay, near Padstow, on the north coast of Cornwall, to the sea south of St. Austell has been considered to be one route, linking Ireland to Brittany and the Continent. Another would have probably been in West Cornwall, where from Kenidjack Castle tin and copper were mined, and then carried along the Tinner's Way route to St. Ives Bay and/or Mounts Bay. Many archaeological artefacts from the Bronze Age have been found in tin streams supporting this theory. At Harlyn Bay two gold lunulae (crescent-shaped ornaments worn on the chest or round the neck) have been found. An almost identical decorated gold lunula has been found at Bourbriac in Brittany. It is thought that they were both produced by the same craftsman, suggesting there was a trade route between the two areas. Other bronze objects found in tin streams all over Cornwall, such as daggers, axes, pins and brooches may be evidence of votive offerings made to the Earth Goddess by Bronze Age peoples. Tin, which is rarely found, would have made Cornwall a relatively important place in the Bronze Age. Sad it is that this is no longer the case at the end of 20thC.

*As we go to press negotiations are under way by a consortium to try and buy South Crofty. If they succeed, perhaps this may not be the end of the story of tin in Cornwall.*

## **NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS**

### **THE SEARCH FOR ATLANTIS COMES TO SCILLY**

Led by Professor Viatcheslav Koudriavstev, Director of the Russian Institute of Meta-history, Moscow scientists believe they have pinpointed the sunken ruins of the mythical island of Atlantis about 100 miles off Land's End. They are basing their research on a reinterpretation of classical Greek texts about the lost land that may have sunk between the waves 10,000 years ago. Although there have been many different suggestions about the location of the fabled island over the centuries, the Scillies are of course much more associated locally with the Lost Land of Lyonesse. However, a 20 strong team, who are supported by the Russian Academy of Sciences, are to dive during June this year at Little Sole Bank, an undersea hill in the Celtic Shelf, a low-lying plain located to the south-west of the islands before the Atlantic plummets to the depths of the ocean. They will be using high-resolution sonars, underwater video cameras, magnetometers, and a remote operated undersea vehicle. Matt Lethbridge, an ex-coxwain for the Scillies lifeboat commented: "The Celtic Shelf is full of wonders. I've seen things that I've never told people because they would think me mad. There may be an Atlantis out there".

### **DID THE CELTS EVER EXIST?**

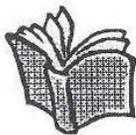
Meanwhile, not only does Atlantis have mythical status but it seems the Celts may have too! Professor Malcolm Chapman recently caused a storm in Cornwall by casting doubt on whether the Celts ever existed as a cultural group. He was featured in a BBC2 programme along with local Druids and pagans who refuted his claims. Now a group of academics have said (in *Antiquity* journal) that celtic culture in Cornwall and other Celtic lands is a "historical fantasy", invented in the 18th century. Their argument was rejected by Dr. Philip Payton, Director of the Institute of Cornish Studies, who claimed there was a "tinge of Celtic hostility" among some English academics.

### **PADSTOW'S DARKIE DAYS TRIGGER RACE RUMPUS**

As well as the Obby Oss, Padstow has another less well-known folk custom, that has now caused a storm of protest. On Boxing and New Year's days, Padstow inhabitants 'black-up' and sing old songs to collect for charity. This 'Darkie Day' is supposed to date from the slave trade 200 years ago when slave ships sheltered from storms in the Camel estuary and their shackled "cargo" of black slaves were temporarily allowed ashore where they would supposedly sing and dance. This year James Whale of Talk Radio described Padstow people as "racist rednecks" and was supported by MP Bernie Grant who added that it was evil and offensive to black people. Local people hit back saying it was "a harmless bit of fun" and the critics were "politically correct zealots living in cities" whose words were "a disgraceful slur on Padstow people".

### **ROW OVER KING ATHELSTAN SURFACES OVER 1000 YEARS LATER!**

In Bodmin a historical exhibition in the Town Museum which depicted the Anglo-Saxon King Athelstan (925-940) as a "benevolent ruler of Cornwall" angered local historian John Angarrack who said that the king was a "medieval Hitler". Philip Payton agreed: "Clearly in one sense, he was an English aggressor who wanted to dominate Cornwall".

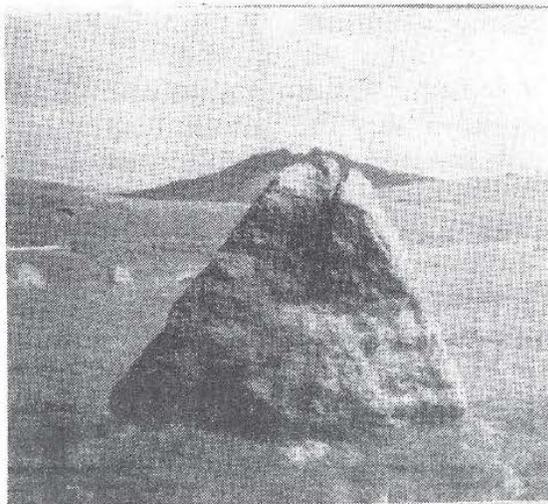


## TERENCE MEADEN'S CORNISH DIARY

*Staying on Bodmin Moor, we accompany author and researcher Terence Meaden on his continuing trip to visit some of the megalithic sites of west and north Cornwall.*

*Saturday 26th April.* I decided to go to the **TRIPPET STONES** on Bodmin Moor (SX131 750). There, every megalith was surrounded by a moat of rainwater, each a deep small lake. The weather was poor, so I ignored the nearby Stripple Stones, which were visible on the ridge to the north, because of the overcast sky, and moved on towards Camelford to search for the **STANNON STONE CIRCLE** (SX126 800). I lost a lot of time taking wrong lanes, but eventually as I got near it became easier and I arrived at 2pm. Cloud was obscuring Rough Tor and its prominent vulvar notch, and there was intermittent drizzle with bursts of heavy rain. One delight was hearing the cuckoo, the first time that year - and at this altitude! True, the bird was in a combe below, in the direction of St. Breward, and the sound was carrying well. Eventually I had five seconds of sunshine during which I photographed the great Triangle Stone which is certainly the Goddess stone of this large-diameter circle. The azimuth to Rough Tor is  $69^\circ$  east of north, which Cheryl's booklet on Bodmin Moor says is the local Beltane alignment. The triangle is recognised by all scholars of primitive symbolism and the early religions (to say nothing of living Hindus, Tantrics, pagan Gypsies, etc) as a primordial female image. Everywhere in Neolithic Britain it is a prominent lithic symbol which appears too in megalithic religious art and pottery, sometimes with, sometimes instead of, its homologue, the female lozenge.

Shortly afterwards, I discovered another triangular stone, a bigger one, lying flat, some 60 metres/yds SSE of the former. This stone is longer and seemingly of considerable importance, having fallen in the direction of Rough Tor which it must have been facing. From this position the vulvar gap is at  $67^\circ$  true. The difference of two degrees is equivalent to a solar calendar difference of three to four days. That is, the sun rises through the cleft earlier when observed from the second triangle. That is nearer the Beltane dates to which we are accustomed, and closer to the date of 6th May used by Norman Lockyer a century ago for his many Beltane calculations.



Despite the weather - although after some hesitation - I began marching to the Loudon Hill stone circle, and then to **FERNACRE** (SX144 799). The weather improved, and I had a minute's sunshine and no further rain. The low clouds lifted and the skylarks rose overhead full of song. I could see all the hill tops at last: the jagged peak of Rough Tor sharp and clear, the rounder, double summit of Brown Willy close and inviting. Many stones of the circle were surrounded by rings of water. I shared the stones with a herd of inquisitive cattle who surrounded me when I was not looking.

When crossing the brook on the way back, I observed a piece of granite the shape of a lozenge lying in the water by the bridge. So I paused long enough to find two more lozenge-shaped chunks of granite. I cast them into the gurgling stream as votives to the spring-water Goddess of old, that whoever passes next will see them there: three lozenges for the Triple Goddess in which the stone-circle peoples so fervently believed, and to whom they raised the magaliths we enjoy so much, yet which remain impenetrable to those who ignore the evidence and deny the old religion its rightful place in prehistory.

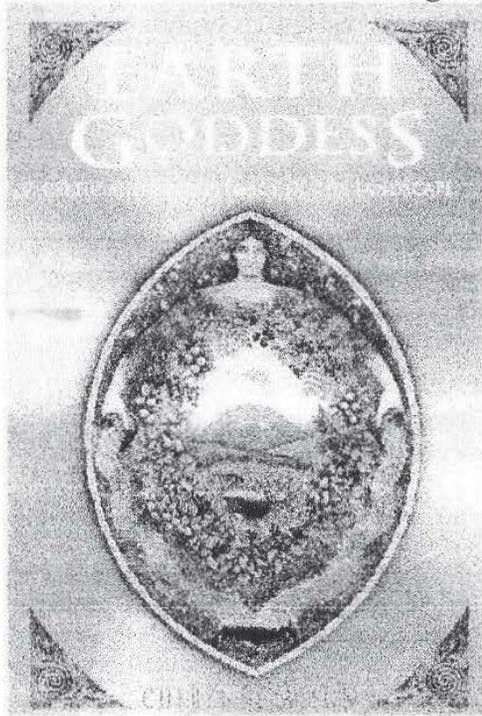
It was 5.30pm when I got back to the car alongside the Stannon Stones. A cow with enormously long horns, remindful of the aurochs of the Neolithic, was at the circle, and Bodmin ponies were grazing by the car. I left a few minutes later, and headed for the A30 and an easy drive of 2½ hours back home to Bradford-on-Avon. And so as the enlightening journey ended, I began preparing for the next.

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## THE EARTH GODDESS

### Celtic and Pagan legacy of the Landscape

*Some reviews of the new book by  
CHERYL STRAFFON*

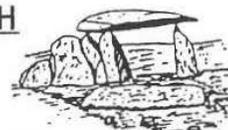


"An attractive and valuable book which redresses the balance between those who deny and those who overstate the role of the Goddess in past & present" *Northern Earth*  
 "A well-recommended book by an authority on the subject" *Celtic Connections*  
 "It is an impressive piece of research work - and the Gazetteer is so valuable one wants to weep with gratitude" *MRRN Newsletter*  
 "Her scholarly research on the history, myth and folklore of each goddess and site, and her account of the continuity of goddess celebration, are inspiring" *Wood and Water*  
 "A vast array of mythological, folklore, documentary and landscape clues have been assembled, all of which make the book far superior to other writers" *3rd Stone*  
 £16.99 Available from all good booksellers

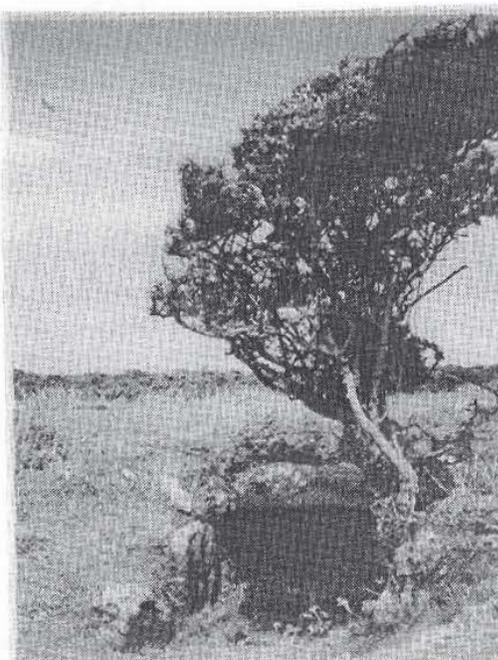
## LESSER-KNOWN SITES IN WEST PENWITH

WEST AREA (2)

by RAYMOND COX



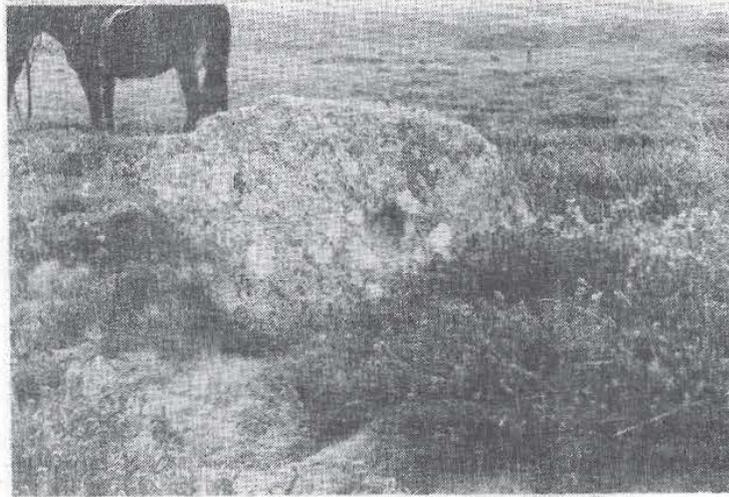
Sometimes there are pleasant surprises in finding an ancient site for the first time, especially if one has been led to believe it is difficult to find and possibly almost hidden in vegetation. Thus it was joyful to spot the Tregeseal Chambered Tomb (SW381 322) in its fine and distinct embankment in a clear grassy field, and with a somewhat stunning ring of bluebells around it. The elation of finding this tomb came after an awkward trek, accompanied on this occasion by your editor, through tall gorse and bramble and through the wrong field initially. From the lane look for a gap in the hedge to the right of both a field border and a shed, and look up to the field to see a solitary hawthorn tree, which is on the tomb's embankment.



There is here an easy appreciation and sense of a complete mound, and part of the kerb is visible. The mound is, in fact, oval - 41ft (12.5m) by 31ft (9.4m) and up to 4½ft (1.4m) high. The chamber is 11ft (3.3m) long and 4ft (1.2m) wide, facing southeast. In 1879 W.C.Borlase's finds included broken pottery and bones, and another interesting find was a cist placed behind the inner end of the chamber, containing a large Bronze Age urn. Obviously it had been placed at a later time, and is evidence of usage of such tombs extending beyond their original period. In this sloping and elevated position there are views towards St. Just, and the site is also on a noteworthy alignment which includes the Ballowall Barrow on the coast at Carn Glouce, Tregeseal Stone Circle, an enclosure at 427 336, Brunnion Carn Cross (almost) and a well on the west side of Tren crom Hill! It is easy to be cynical about alignments which join sites of widely spaced periods of time, and, of course, in a narrow peninsula such as that of Land's End, the likelihood of features being aligned so closely is increased. Nevertheless if certain energies, subtle or otherwise, might determine the placement of any ancient constructions, such alignments are not necessarily to be ruled out as of no consequence.

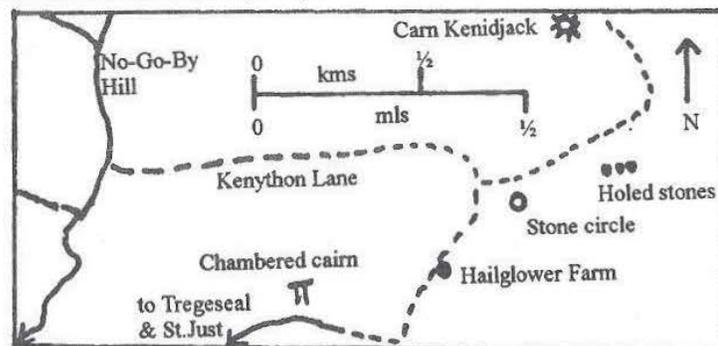
One of the most mysterious of the ancient features in West Penwith is the holed stones. The best and largest is the well-known Mên-an-Tol, but there are a number of others, including one near the Merry Maidens stone circle, and others built into hedges or gateposts and some with unknown whereabouts.

The Tregeseal Holed Stones (SW390 325) seem even more mysterious in a strange often uncanny landscape on the common below the baleful atmosphere of Carn Kenidjack, and in a neighbourhood filled with old sites and missing ones: the Tregeseal stonecircles (extant and gone); barrows; enclosures;



and other features of stone, making up a complex of sites which may have been linked in the far past, whether or not we see the remnants of some kind of ceremonial site. Although the Mên-an-Tol is well-known for its legend of being a healing and fertility stone, no such legend is known to apply at Tregeseal. But they do seem to be ancient, and very likely Bronze Age. The four stones, close to a barrow, and not far from the stone circle, are in a line and are 3-4½ft high with 3" diameter holes. Three are standing, but one is broken and now fallen. A fifth stone, which was also broken but now cemented, sits some yards away to the NW, and yet a sixth stands uphill at some distance to the NE which adds to the mystery, as this one is drilled through and is straight-edged (thus not very old), where the others are bevelled and suggest a beaten-through, and more imprecise, work. The hole in the sixth is, anyway, much larger, about 7" diameter. Until some years ago all the stones were recumbent but were re-erected by local farmer Egbert Rowe. He must have had an interest in doing this and perhaps indeed recognised that they were an example of an old ritual site of some kind.

This atmospheric land below Carn Kenidjack is a remarkably lonely place, self-contained and sometimes ominously brooding, especially if one comes upon it from the farmland to the south. It is worth exploring for both this ambience and for the old sites. If you go there to see the stone circle seek out the holed stones also and soak up their own peculiar and unusual mystery.



## Maytime Celebrations in Cornwall

This Spring marks the 10th anniversary of the Maypole Dance and the Three Wells Walk in West Penwith, both built on pre-existing Maytime traditions in Cornwall. To celebrate this, the next 10 pages of this MM will feature a number of articles on the folklore, legends, myths and history associated with this special time of the year.

### THE MAY GAMES & RITUALS OF CORNWALL

by Kelvin I. Jones

The month of May was once a most important time in the English calendar when all manner of rituals were performed to welcome in the fresh life of the Spring and banish winter. In Cornwall, as elsewhere in the British Isles, these Games survived (and some still do even today) right up until the late 19th century. We find records of them far back in recorded history, but what is also interesting is that from the 1500s they were synonymous with what were referred to as the 'Robin Hood Games'.

The earliest account of the May Day Games comes from a Saxon writer called Layamon and is to be found in the *Brut* or *Chronicle of Britain*. This account was probably written in the 12thC and it gives a vivid picture of feasting and the giving of gifts between tribal leaders. There is also a wonderful account in a sermon preached by Bishop Latimer in 1549 of how he came across a village on his way to London only to find the May Day Games going on at full pace there. The Games continued to flourish through Tudor times. In Edward Hall's *Chronicles* written in 1516 there is an account of how Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon travelled to Shooter's Hill near Greenwich to witness the May celebrations. The power and continuance of this festival was still felt 200 years later in 1736 when the vicar of Stowe in Gloucestershire condemned it as a "relic of paganism".

Nowhere were the Games more fervently followed in the western counties than in Cornwall. Although many records of such rituals were destroyed prior to the Restoration, May Day rituals have survived in greater number even until this day. In Goulding's *Records of Blanchminster's Charity*, for example, we find an account of the Games held at Stratton, near Bude, in the mid-16thC. Here it is recorded:-

- 1535. It rec. of Greby which was callyd Robyn Hode & of hys felows xijs. iiijd.
- 1536. It rec. of John Mares & of hys company yt playd Robyn Hodode xxxvijs. iiijd.
- 1537. It rec. of Mathe Rose & Margaret Martyn for the wode of Robyn Hode is howse.

The house referred to here is probably the temporary "bower" which was put up for Robin and his outlaws. The play would have taken place on May Day, the six characters represented being five in number, but sometimes six, namely Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Little John, Friar Tuck, the fool and the minstrel. Their dress and equipment, including bows and arrows, were all provided for by the parish. Interestingly, at St. Columb Major

the list of parish goods for 1585 includes "v coates for dancers, a Fryer's coate, 24 dansing bells, a Streamer of Red Moccado and locram, six yards of white wollen clothe." The bells were provided for the Morris dancers, who were invariably mentioned in these early accounts.



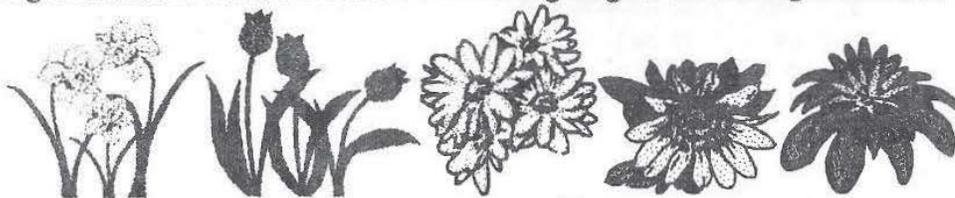
One of the most remarkable survivals in modern day Cornwall of the Robin Hood Games can be seen in the Helston Furry dance. It is no coincidence that this May celebration is also referred to as the 'Flora Day'. Although various authorities have dismissed this title as an invention of the 18thC and described it as a reference to the Roman Goddess Flora, its significance becomes clearer when one considers the importance of the Queen of May, who was, along with the King, of equal importance. Maid Marian still appears in the ancient Hal An Tow, performed now very early in the day by the students of Helston School. The Queen of May was of course a representation of the Goddess Flora, a deity of Spring. There is evidence to suggest that Cornwall was probably affected by Roman rule; however, 'Flora' is clearly much older and probably originates from the Celtic Flower Bride. The Hal An Tow is the most pagan survival of the Helston Furry Dance and its song, an interesting collection of odd scraps of verse, contains various references to the Robin Hood characters and Maytime activities.

That Flora Day follows the May Day Games can be seen in the activities of the townsfolk who even in the last century proceeded into the country soon after sunrise on May 8th to deck themselves with May boughs. On their return the youth of the town led the inaugural dance, followed by young men crowned with flowers in the form of wreaths. In the last century it was customary for each village in Cornwall to select a May Queen who wore a white gown and a garland of flowers. She had to be a virgin who was chosen by her fellow villagers. She was carried in the procession on an improvised throne. It was also common for young girls to wear white dresses and to carry small maypoles which were decorated with fresh flowers. Another custom was for young girls to take straw dolls to one of the many healing wells and baptise them. The latter custom is probably a link with the worship of Bridget, one of the ancient goddesses of Ireland who was associated with fertility, poetry and metalcraft.

The reference in the parish records to the costumes being paid for by the church demonstrates how totally these pagan rituals were absorbed into the rural way of life in Cornwall. According to Stubbs, the Puritan writer, the May Day company, up to a hundred strong, would proceed to the "church and churchyard, their pipes piping, their drummers drumming, their hobby horses and other monsters skirmishing among the rout." They would then enter the church, even if there were a service in operation, and wind their way out into the churchyard. This has immediate parallels with the Helston Furry Dance where the dances, even to this day, wind in and out of private houses.

In Cornwall, the traditions of May Day were once universally followed throughout the county. Writing a century ago in *Hone's Everyday Book* a commentator describes the eve of May 1st and how, as midnight arrived, gangs of young people in Penzance would gather at an inn and then go through the streets playing fiddles and banging drums. They would then proceed to various farms in the neighbourhood where they were given a beverage called junket which they would eat with sugar and cream, followed by tea and heavy cake! When the feasting had concluded, there then followed dancing. When all this was finally finished, the parties then set about gathering the 'may'. While some of the company went into the woods and cut down the boughs of the sycamore trees, others would prepare the 'May music'. A hollow pipe was made from the bark of a tree and a hole was cut into it, thus creating a whistle. When this was done, at 5am or 6am, the groups would again assemble and blow their whistles until the time came for them to begin their employments.

One of the most remarkable survivals from the Robin Hood May Games is the figure of Maid Marian or the May Queen. In Cornwall the goddess of the flowers was venerated in a number of ways, Many of the rites, like that of the May Queen, are symbolic of the joy of spring's revival after the death of vegetation in winter. In Cornwall the tradition of the May Queen being carried as part of a procession lingered as late as the late 19thC: in some places in West Cornwall the Queen of May was represented by a doll or two dolls which were carried by young girls in a basket or cradle with flowers from house to house. The holy wells were also visited during the first few weeks of May when children visited 'May doll day'. A detailed report of such a ceremony was recorded in the Times newspaper for May 10th 1927. the reporter notes that the dolls were richly dressed and placed in baskets of flowers, and added that "this was doubtless with reference to the Blessed Virgin, patroness of the month of May". Here of course the reporter mistakenly assumes the ancient goddess to be the mother of Christ. In Cornwall the May dolls were made of straw and often carried in circles entwined with flowers such as cowslips. Primroses and other wild flowers were struck together and the blossoms scattered in thanksgiving for the coming of summer.



Perhaps the most important ritual was that of the maypole dancing. The Maypole was once of great height, and although by the beginning of the 20thC it had been discontinued in Cornish towns and villages, it was once given great respect. In the records of Penzance Town Corporation we find numerous references in the accounts connected with the keeping up of the custom of Maypole dancing. In north-east Cornwall maypoles belonging to rival villages would be the subject of kidnapping. Arthur Pascoe writing in the journal of the Old Cornwall Society (vol 1.no.12) describes the complex rituals surrounding the guarding of the maypoles in the parish of St. Neot in the 1930s, and in E Cornwall the custom continues to this day



There are a number of mummers' plays which are recorded in the folklore of Cornwall, some of whose forms and dialogue have been recorded. The first mummers' play to have been recorded was once played before Henry VIII in 1494. The Robin Hood or May Games were popular in England at this period and it seems clear that mumming and the rituals of May were inextricably connected. In the mummers' plays the theme of the god who is slain and rises again is enacted. Various characters emerge from the mumming plays but the god figure is clearly recognisable as Jack in the Green, or Robin Hood - the archetypal spirit of the wild wood. One of the oldest mummers' plays in Cornwall comes from Stithians. The characters here are: Jack, the Doctor, Lord Nelson and Jacky Sweep. The more familiar characters of St. George and the Turkish Knight who fight a mock battle are a late mediaeval intrusion and probably date from the medieval romances. However Jack is considerably older than either of these figures and symbolises the summer and the Wild Wood. He is indeed Robin Goodfellow, or Robin Artison, the latter being a name given to the Lord of the Wild Wood by a number of women interrogated during the middle ages for the "offence" of witchcraft. This mythological figure is, if you like, the Green Man or Green Knight of the old medieval poem. There is, in addition, an unnamed player in the Stithians play who represents winter. It is quite likely that in the verses of the Hal an Tow performed at Helston on May 8th we have the last remaining vestiges of an even earlier mummer's play which would have figured Robin Hood and Maid Marian. It is no coincidence that in the modern version of the Hal and Tow we see the Devil and St. George. These figures were probably a much later addition and can be linked to the gradual Christianisation of what was once a much older pagan ritual.

*Adapted from "Robin Hood in Cornwall: the May Games & May Rituals of Cornwall" (Oakmagic Publications, 1997)*

## THE MAYPOLE DANCE

by Cheryl Straffon

Beltane is a busy time in Cornwall. For many of us it begins on the eve of May Day on CarnBosavern in St. Just where MM is published. This Carn overlooking St. Just and the westerly ocean is a fine high point with some open land, where 10 years ago in 1987, the first Maypole Dance was revived/ started anew.



My idea in doing this was to create a genuine community event. Maypole dances have over the years become the province of schools and public performances. The catalyst for me was seeing a report of the annual Maypole Dance at St. Marys on the Isles of Scilly. The report was accompanied by a photograph showing the girls and boys in their best attire with a big notice in front of the maypole which read "Spectators keep out"! This seemed to me a negation of everything that the May Pole celebration should be about. It was originally a dance for the whole village to take part in, to welcome in the summer with music and joy and feasting. And so, in that first year, we were given a tall tree that we decorated with ribbons, we borrowed a large tent where we could put food and drink, invited the local musicians of St. Just to come and join us, mentioned it to all our friends, and waited with baited breath.

Ten years later, the Maypole Dance has become an important part of the lives of many people in West Penwith who come together to celebrate the coming of Summer at sunset on May Day eve. Sometimes we have had thick mist or mizzle, sometimes a glorious sunset! 50 to 60 people regularly attend, and although in the early days they needed some gentle persuasion to throw off their inhibitions, nowadays there is a queue for the dances. The musicians always faithfully arrive (though we are usually on tenterhooks until they do). Even though they don't get paid (though we take a collection) they do it for the love of the event. It attracts a wide variety of people: pagans and non-pagans, the old and the young, from Grandmothers to babes in arms, all come to share in the food, the conversation, the music and the dancing. Later there is usually a bonfire, with some improvised drumming and jumping over the embers of the Beltane fire. Many help with the organisation or just taking part. Radio Cornwall came to do a feature on us one year. A local man videos it all for us every year so we have a permanent record. But what really matters is the people who come, who dance and celebrate with joy, and love an age-old tradition that is still alive in late 20thC Cornwall.

## **"IN THE MERRY MORNING OF MAY" - PADSTOW'S MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS**

by John Negus & Alexandra Lobban

Padstow is a small village on the north coast of Cornwall. It is a fishing village, a working harbour; home to the now-famous Mr. Stein and his fish restaurant. It is a place of narrow streets, weaving their way between whitewashed houses, up from the harbour to the inevitable housing estates. The Sun shines in Padstow. In our memory of the many times that we have visited the peaceful old town, clustered about the harbour, the sun is always shining, even at midnight. For most of the year Padstow is a peaceful place to live and work, or a quaint place to visit, depending on your origins. However, Padstow hides an open secret that many have come to relish. For once a year the Osses are lured from their stables and are danced around the town to the joy of the inhabitants and the delight of the visitors. One of the most endearing things about the Obby Oss day is that it belongs to the people of Padstow. Remember this if you are going to Padstow to see the Osses dance.

And if you are going, go early, for as in ancient times, the day starts with sunset of what we would call the day before. And if you do not want to sleep rough, book early, for your chances of finding accommodation in the village are slim. Let us assume that you have arrived in the late afternoon of the day before. Take a walk around as the sun sets, and you will find two things that are not normally there: one, a garish funfare at the harbour, and the other, an open space set a little back from the harbour, surrounded by shops and surrounding a May Pole. This is not your average ten-foot high candyfloss painted stick but is a May Pole of significance. Perhaps this will be your first indication that the day coming is not just a children's game but a fully grown-up celebration.

Evening turns your night as you eat your dinner. When you have eaten your fill and drunk the wine of life, you emerge into a street transformed. For whilst you were inside something truly magical has occurred. The Greenwood has come into the village and lines the streets. Find your way to the Golden Lion - just follow the noise. Be warned from this point on. Padstow is not a place for claustrophobics or those in a hurry to be served! But the night is still young, and as you join in the throng, you will hear the minstrels. Snatches of tunes, songs of the land and sea, songs of the sun and moon, of the love of a lady and the love of the chase. And you will hear bars snatched from THE song. Insidiously the song will take over. The beat of the drum and the accompaniment of the accordion, for that is the way it seems to us, will creep into your brain. You will hear it constantly, in several variations, for the next 24 hours. And later, maybe much later, you will find yourself humming or singing it without realising what you are doing. And then the pub bursts out into the street and you are swept up and carried out with the musicians. The procession to the May Pole has begun, and with it, the song begins in earnest: "Unite and unite and let us all unite, for summer is a-come unto day, And whither we are going, we will all unite, in the Merry Morning of May."

As we said before, Padstow is a place of narrow streets, so the crowd presses close And the drum beats echo and travel. It will not be long before you realise that there is more than one procession winding its way to the May Pole. The discordance of the two drumbeats lends an eerie, otherworldly, quality to the sound. On and on to the May Pole. As you approach the square, something happens. Perhaps the very stones of the buildings have absorbed the song over the generations. It seems as if the whole world is vibrating to the beat of the songs. Perhaps you have not realised it, but as the processions have approached each other, the discordance has decreased. The songs merge and become one. There is a moment, just as the two processions enter the square, when the beat synchronises with the beat of your heart, it lifts you up, and carries you away from everything but the song. Then there is harmony between the two processions and the song is everything. It seems as if the whole world, ours and who knows how many others, are wrapped up, united in the song. And then it stops. The silence is total, an incredible, expectant hush. Then the night song is sung. You have to be there. No words can describe the emotional response to the bizarre, seemingly meaningless words. But the message is older than words; it is in the sound of the song, in the vibration of the voices. It is a call to the summer. If you have never believed in the power of Magic, go to Padstow and join in the song. Then we go a-visiting. The crowd breaks up into small groups of musicians and singers, perhaps with a couple of visitors tagging along. We move off and serenade certain houses. We do not know how or why this house is chosen rather than that. Perhaps there is a reason, perhaps not. But it has been a long day, so we leave the revellers and withdraw to our room, joining perhaps with other couples throughout Padstow as they "unite and unite and let us all unite".

You will know what day it is and where you are before you open your eyes. The beat of the drums is all pervasive. You expect a hangover, but it does not happen. There is magic in the air! Out of your bed! Your host has been up for hours; they have had their champagne breakfast with their friends and are keen to be in the streets. Out, out in to the throng. The branches of sycamore are everywhere, the green of their leaves contrasting with the multicoloured bunting and flags overhead. And below, the white clad local people sporting cowslips and red or blue sashes. You have probably missed the children's dance. If not, then you were up early to see the youngsters dance their small Osses about the harbour at the break of day. It has always seemed to us, in these days of youth fashions in 'coolness', remarkable that the youngsters of Padstow, from babes in arms to the end of the teens, are equally committed and dedicated to their heritage as any adult. What do they get out of it, why do they do it? Perhaps Padstow has retained something that most others have lost. May they ever be so blessed.

By now you will have discovered by the increasing density of the crowd where the first adult Oss is going to appear. This is the Blue Oss. This is not the place to discuss the rivalry or the reasons for the two Osses. Suffice to say there are two, each with its own followers and traditions. The Blue Oss, which you are now awaiting, is the younger His dance will take him through the village and around the outskirts. The Red Oss stays in the old part of the town. Come twice, follow both, see which one speaks to you.



A great cheer goes up and in a swirl of black skirt the Oss emerges, teased out of his stable by the dancer with the funny bag on a stick. The rules are simple: if the Oss is coming at you, get out of the way, or risk injury, or worse if he catches you under his skirt! It is clearly a great honour to be the teaser and, we suspect, a greater honour to dance the Oss, although both are physically exhausting. The dancers will change many times over the course of the day, but the dance remains the same. This time we will let the Blue Oss go on its way and return to the Golden Lion to see the Red Oss emerge. The expectation mounts and, then, there he is blazing his way into the street, sweeping all before him. All the time the song continues, sung mostly by the locals who have known it all their lives. Join in the song if you will, but as for the dance, remember that you are a visitor only. On and on through the narrow streets, the song and the dance passing on from one person to another but never stopping. Up the lanes, away from the harbour until you reach the 'big house' at Prideaux Place. The Oss is greeted by the squire, who himself joins in the dance. The Oss is lost to view as he enters the big house. Who knows what goes on inside: strange and ancient rituals, or a well-deserved drink and sit down for the dancers? Best not to ask. Then we are off again. Weaving our way back downhill, back to the Golden Lion for lunch.

Lunch over, and the dancers, notably more refreshed, take up the song again. It had never completely stopped. And out he comes again, chasing the maidens through the streets, teased on, encouraged, dodged. But we cannot keep up, it has been a long day, and so we depart, leaving the Oss still dancing. We have never seen the last dance. We do not think we want to. For us the Oss will dance on until the next year when we will return to Padstow. It seems a long time to wait until the beginning of the next May. And sometimes throughout the year Padstow is forgotten, and the cares of the world seem so important. And then, as if from far away, sneaking around the corners of the mind, will come the beat of a drum, the tune of the accordion and the sound of Cornish voices singing "Unite and unite and let us all unite...". And even in the darkest days of the winter of our cares, we know that the song goes on and soon the Sun will shine.

## HOW OLD IS THE OBBY OSS?

by Cheryl Traffon

Padstow's Obby Oss is a unique beast, though as there are now two of them (the Red Oss or Original Oss, and the Blue Oss or Temperance Oss which was added around the turn of the 20thC) they are perhaps an early example of genetic cloning! The Oss, consisting as it does of a steel hoop covered in black material with a conical shaped mask or headdress, is different from other hobby horses elsewhere in England, who are much less fearsome creatures, including the Minehead horse who also comes out on May 1st, and who may be originally derived from the Padstow model. What makes the Padstow Obby Oss (not Hobby Horse) so unique is the fierce and dramatic headdress, which was probably a late addition (from about 1840) introduced by someone who had seen similar masks in Africa. Donald Rawe<sup>1</sup> suggests that this may have been a certain Signior Brintano who brought the mask from one of his voyages abroad.

Undoubtedly the Oss's appearance has changed and metamorphosed over the years. But how far back does it go? This is not some academic question, but actually encapsulates a fervent on-going debate about the supposed antiquity or otherwise of some of our folk customs. Some historians, notably Ronald Hutton<sup>2</sup>, have argued that most if not all of these festivals and customs were Victorian inventions and not examples of continuity from ancient pagan times once popularly believed. Padstow's Obby Oss has become a *cause celebre* in this respect. Hutton claims that the earliest mention of the Oss was in 1803 and that none of the 17th or 18th century descriptions of Cornwall refer to the "horses". In *The Earth Goddess*<sup>3</sup> I suggested that reference to the Oss in fact goes back as far as 1346-7, but this was strongly criticised by the post-Huttonite Bob Trubshaw in a review in *At The Edge*, who believes that the Oss is probably no older than the 19thC. However, Trubshaw makes the same fundamental mistake as Hutton, and that is to assume that the first written reference to something is the date in which it started. Festivals and customs could have existed for hundreds or thousands of years before being recorded, especially in remote and inaccessible places like Cornwall. This is no less likely an hypothesis than assuming that because there is no prior mention of the Oss before 1803 it has to have started about that time.

In fact we do have reference to a hobby horse several centuries before 1803. In the old Cornish drama *Bewnans Meriasek* (written in 1502) the following lines occur:- "Me a be dhe'n Hobyhors ha'y gowetha", which means 'I will pay out the Hobbyhorse and its pair (of men)'. Andy Norfolk has pointed out<sup>4</sup> that this was unlikely to have been an isolated example. "There were hobby horses in Cornwall, apparently known as

<sup>1</sup> Donald Rawe *Padstow's Obby Oss* (Lodenek Press, 1971)

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Hutton *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Basil Blackwell, 1991) p.181.

<sup>3</sup> Cheryl Traffon *The Earth Goddess: Celtic & Pagan legacy of the Land* (Blandford, 1997) p.77.

<sup>4</sup> Andy Norfolk *Pioneering Hobby Horses* (At The Edge no.4 Dec 96) p.35

Penglas or Grey-Head, one of which was described by R.Edmonds in 1862<sup>5</sup> as having a horse's head and neck made of wood with snapping jaws, while the horse was covered with coarse cloth or hide." Penglaze has recently been revived and re-introduced as part of the Golowan/Mazey Day midsummer celebrations in Penzance, but this too may have had a much earlier incarnation. As Craig Weatherhill has shown<sup>6</sup>, when the Spaniards burnt Paul Church in 1595, their commander reported that the church contained an effigy of a horse "carved in wood, greatly embellished and serving as an idol worshipped by the people". This may not have been an Obby Oss as such, but it obviously is related to it in some way, if only as evidence of a possible long-lasting Epona cult in Cornwall.

So, we can certainly find reference to hobby horses long before the 19thC, but what is the evidence for the early date of 1346-7? This in fact comes from an interesting reference by Thurstan Peter who gave a lecture in 1912 to the Royal Institution of Cornwall<sup>7</sup> on the subject of the Obby Oss. Peter, a folklore collector, said that some 60 or so years earlier a certain Francis Docton, a tailor of Padstow, informed his workman that to his knowledge the Oss had first appeared in Padstow during the seige of Calais (which took place in 1346-7), when a French vessel had sailed into the town and was frightened off by the appearance of the Oss on the cliffs. Now, although this is certainly not first-hand evidence, it nevertheless could be argued that what we have here is a continuity of folk memory and oral tradition down through generations of Padstow's inhabitants. Donald Rawe, the local expert on the Obby Oss, certainly agrees with this.

So how old is the Obby Oss? Some in Padstow might say "as old as 'ee do feel"! When all the references have been sorted and silted and argued over, what remains is the power of the Oss itself. Hutton says that it "furnishes no good evidence for the nature of pagan Celtic religion". But then, a man who goes to Padstow on May Day and spends his time asking "the more literary of the townspeople" where they had first heard about the meaning of the festival is perhaps no good guide to the power of the Oss! Whether it can be traced back to Celtic or prehistoric times we shall perhaps never know, unless some long-forgotten document happens to turn up. There may be no incontrovertible evidence for what Kelvin Jones has described as "a Celtic festival of great antiquity", and "the only European pagan festival to have survived in its present form"<sup>8</sup>, but when one is standing there with the Oss swaying past and the hypnotic drums and chanting rising and falling in the May air, such debates seem very arid and irrelevant to the experience of the Oss!

*Due to the Maytime Celebrations in Cornwall feature, several articles have been held over to the next issue, including Part 2 of Traces of the Goddess Sillina.*

<sup>5</sup> R.C.Edmonds *The Land's End District* 1862.

<sup>6</sup> Craig Weatherhill *Epona's Children* (Meyn Mamvro no.33) p.15.

<sup>7</sup> Reprinted as Thurstan Peter *The Cornish Obby Oss* (Oakmagic Publications, 1997)

<sup>8</sup> Kelvin I. Jones Introduction to Thurstan Peter *The Cornish Obby Oss* (op.cit).

## BOOK REVIEWS

Two books consisting of large-format glossy photographs of ancient sites in Britain have recently been published. The most sumptuous of the two is *Prehistoric Britain from the Air* with text by Janet & Colin Bord and photographs by Jason Hawkes (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £25). Its 'coffee-table book' appearance belies the excellent content inside. Its photographs are nothing short of superb, covering as they do a wide variety of ancient sites in England, Scotland & Wales, with a fair smattering of ones in Cornwall, particularly West Penwith. Places like the Mên-an-Tol, Carn Glûze, Carn Euny, Boscawen-un, Chysauster, the Merry Maidens, Lanyon Quoit, and the Hurlers are viewed within the landscape they now occupy and are seen in a sometimes new and different way from the air. The text is, as one might expect from the Bords, interesting and relevant, and the whole book a visual treat.

The Mên-an-Tol, as seen from ground level, also graces the cover of the second book *Landscapes of Legend: a photographic journey through the secret heart of Britain* with text by John Matthews and photographs by Michael J. Stead (Blandford, £20). The pictures include other Cornish sites such as the Merry Maidens, Tintagel Castle, St. Michael's Mount, and other more unusual choices like the Mên Gurtha, Trereen Dinas and St. Piran's Cross on Penhale Sands; and the text focuses on the legends associated with the sites. There are some errors, which show that the author is not very familiar with Cornwall, such as saying the Merry Maidens has 28 stones(!), at one point placing Kenfig Pool in Cornwall instead of Wales, and not knowing that the Mên-an-Tol is part of a stone circle. These kind of things betray sloppy research and detract from what looks on the surface to be a slick and professional product.

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From one end of the book market to the other, from the colour gift books to the small, often self-published books and booklets, that nevertheless often contain a wealth of local information and research not available in the glossy books. Firstly, Cornish crosses expert **Andrew Langdon** has reached the far west of the county with the latest in his Cornish Cross Series. Like the first three booklets in this series (North, Mid, East Cornwall) *Stone Crosses in West Penwith* (Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, £6.45 ISBN: 0 902660 25 X) Andrew surveys every cross in the area, giving each its location, provenance, description and photograph. The final volume covering West Cornwall is due to be published in Nov 1999, completing the series. Local research at its very best. Another local writer and publisher is the prolific **Kelvin I. Jones** [Oakmagic Pubs.] who has produced a large number of inexpensively-produced and moderately-priced booklets on Cornish folklore. The latest include reprints of Canon Doble's series of pamphlets on the Cornish Saints *Senan, (Se)Levan* (£2.50 each), and *St.Nectan, St.Keyne & the children of Brychan* (£3.95); *Seven Cornish Witches* (£3.95), featuring famous Cornish 'wise-women' from the past and present, including Cassandra Latham of St.Buryan; and a reprint of the Cornish romance of *Tristan and Iseult* by H.Jenner & T.Peter (£3). Finally, *The Salmon of Knowledge: Reflections on Celtic Myth & Folklore* by **Brendan McMahon**, is published by Dalriada Celtic Heritage Trust, 2 Brathwic Place, Brodick, Isle of Arran KA27 8BN (£3.50 ISBN: 09520971 3 3), Brendan's name may be familiar to MM readers as he contributed an article on a Cornish Shaman for MM28, and this booklet also contains a deal of Cornish material covering giants, miners, and sea god/esses, interestingly interpreted. Recommended.

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## OAKMAGIC PUBLICATIONS

Publishers of West Country Folklore  
Distributors of Goddess Cards.



### NEW PUBLICATIONS

**SEVEN CORNISH WITCHES** - Kelvin Jones £3.95  
**ST.SENAN** - Gilbert Doble £2.50  
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**CORNISH FEASTS & FOLKLORE** - Margaret Courtney - £12.95  
**TRISTAN AND ISEULT** - Henry Jenner & Thurston Peter - £3.00  
**A STUDY OF CHALDEAN ROOTS IN THE ANCIENT CORNISH LANGUAGE**  
 (with observations on the early tin trade) -Sherlock Holmes (1898) - £3.50

For full illustrated catalogue, send SAE (A5).

OAKMAGIC PUBLICATIONS,  
K & D Jones,  
2 South Place Folly,  
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## THE PIPERS TUNE

West Penwith was featured in a recent edition of the *Western Morning News* paper. An article on the "magic, myth and legend" of the area featured an interview with 'Ian' a former Anglican ordinand, now a local "witch". He said that "We believe the Earth is sacred and that we are part of the Earth and part of Nature. Christians believe in a linear history - we believe history is like a wheel which turns". He said that stone circles can be brought back to life and their energies reactivated by someone who knows how. The new Bishop of Truro Bill Ind commented: "You hear rumours that paganism is prevalent in West Penwith, but I've never encountered anyone there who claims to practise it"! Well, he wouldn't would he!

Craig Weatherhill was also interviewed for the feature. "What you have got in Penwith is a very ancient landscape with field patterns dating back to prehistoric times. When you have got that landscape a lot of other things survive with it. The beliefs of prehistoric peoples pass on to other generations." Coincidentally Craig has himself been embroiled in an acrimonious argument about Cornish place names that has caused him to resign his Bardship of the Cornish Gorseth. Villages and towns in Penwith are to be given bi-lingual signs, but Craig says that some of the spellings being proposed are historically unattestable. "Place names and their history and development are archaeological monuments and should be as sacrosanct as any of the quoits and stone circles". The Cornish Language Fellowship and Board disagreed with some of his names and have changed them much to his anger.

## FAIR EXCHANGE

*Wood and Water* is one of the longest-running small magazines, and one that has always featured an interesting range of articles that encompass pagan spirituality and the Goddess. Recent issues have included a couple of articles by MM editor Cheryl Straffon & Caeia March on little-known Goddess sites on Crete, cave paintings, the Rollright Stones, news & book reviews. It's well worth supporting them.



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Speaking of the Rollright stones, there is now an organisation The Rollright Trust responsible for the stones, and they produce a regular magazine on matters of megalithic interest. The 1st edition includes an article on Earthquakes at Boscawen-un Circle, and future editions will include a piece on protection of Cornish sites by Andy Norfolk, and an interpretation of the meaning of the Rollrights legend by Cheryl Straffon. To become a Friend of the Rollright Stones and/or receive the magazine *The Right Times* write to them at PO Box 333, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 8XA.

**EXCHANGE MAGAZINES**

Prices are for annual subscriptions  
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PO Box 333, Banbury, Oxon..£10 [£2.50]

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Rd, London W10 5FP .....£6 [£3]

SOURCE (holy wells) New editors &  
address:- Syn y Mor, 96 Terrace Rd,  
Mount Pleasant, Swansea SA1 6HU...£10

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Palmer's Green, London N13 5DY.....£8

**MEYN MAMVRO** is available on annual subscription - 3 issues £6.00 (inc p&xp)  
from:-51 CARN BOSAVERN, ST.JUST, PENZANCE, CORNWALL TR19 7QX.  
MM37 due Sept 98 will include sacred landscapes, Sillina, wells and Rame Head.

Most back numbers are now sold out, but photocopies can be done as a special service to  
subscribers and regular readers upon request at £1.90 each.

**CELTIC/ARTHURIAN**

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THE SILVER WHEEL - PO Box 12, Earl  
Shilton, Leics LE9 7ZZ .....£7.50 [£2]

PAGAN PEN - Cornish paganism. 2  
Albert St, Penzance TR18 2LR.....£2.25

THE DRAGON CHRONICLE - PO Box  
3369, London SW6 6JW.....£7 [£2]

**OVERSEAS**

POWER TRIPS - Travel Guide to Mother  
Earth's Sacred Places. Feb/Mar edition  
includes articles on Boscawen-un and a  
shamanic journey to another dimension at  
that site. Subscription details from:-  
Cedar Cottage Media Inc, 502-6282  
Kathleen Avenue, Burnaby, BC Canada  
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<http://www.cedarcottage.com/power>

**NOTICEBOARD**

ISSN: 0966-5897

**BELTANE CELEBRATIONS 1998**

*Thurs Apr 30th* - 10th annual Maypole Dance & feast at Carn Bosavern, St. Just. Meet 6.30pm onwards. Details: 01736-787186.

*Fri May 1st* - Obby Oss day at Padstow. Details: 01841-533449.

*Sat May 2nd* - Beltane celebrations at Harmony Pottery, Scorrier, Redruth. Details: Geraldine 01209-890581.

*Sun May 3rd* - Three Wells Walk - details below.

*Fri May 8th* - Helston Flora Day. Details: 01326-565431.

**CORNISH EARTH MYSTERIES**

Summer activities and events:-

*Sun May 3rd* - 10th annual Three Wells Walk. Meet 10.30am Sancreed Church or 12.30pm Sancreed Well. Details: 01736-787186.

*Sun June 7th* - Dowsing St. Levan's Grave & walking his Mythic Pathway. Meet Bodellan, Porthcurno 11.00am.

*Sun July 5th* - Rory Te'Tigo's Well-Sprung Walk, visiting wells & springs in St. Just area. Meet outside Library by the replica Men-an-Tol 1.30pm. Cream tea at Bosavern House

*Sun Aug 2nd* - Lesser known sites of West Penwith - Carfury menhir, the Bosiliack stone, Boskendan Nine Maidens and Venton Bebibell well. Meet at 438 338 at 11.00am.

*Sun Sept 6th* - Holywell Cave and well. Meet Holywell Bay car park 11.00am

All members & visitors welcome. Details of all events from Andy Norfolk on 01209-831519.

**MIDSUMMER CELEBRATIONS**

*Sat June 20th* Harmony Pottery, Wheal Rose, Scorrier, Redruth. Details: 01209-890581.

**PENWITH PAGAN MOOT** Meets 2nd Tues each month at Dandelions, Penzance. Details: Andy 01209-831519

**KETTLES** Pagan Group. Meets 3rd Thurs each month at Stag pub in Liskeard. Details Amber 01752-848444

**TINNERS WAY WALK** across Penwith moors with Ian Cooke. *Sat June 13th* Meet St. Just car park 10am. Details: 01736-368282.

**ANTIQUITIES CIRCULAR WALK** with Ian Cooke. *Sat Aug 29th* Meet St. Just car park 10.30am. 01736-368282.

**WOMEN'S EARTH MYSTERIES GROUP** Meets monthly in the mid-Cornwall area. Details: Karen Westbrook 01726-883685.

**WOMEN'S WELLS GROUP** Day trips to visit & clean up wells. Details: Cheryl & Caeia 01736-787186

**EARTH, HEALTH & MYSTIC FAYRES**

*Sun May 23rd* Guildhall St. Ives;

*Sun Aug 1st* St. John's Hall Penzance;

*Sun Aug 30th* Hall for Cornwall Truro

*Mon Aug 31st* Queens Hotel, Penzance. Details: 01736-330201.

**CAER** Lamorna, nr. Penzance Courses and workshops include: *June 9th-14th* Sacred Sites & Ceremonies - Jo May *Aug 12th-15th* The Witches Womb. Details: 01736-810530