

**BRAN: THE SLEEPING GUARDIAN - Barry Reilly ●**  
**PENDEEN HURRICANE ● INTO ALIGNMENT ● NEWS**  
**GULVAL'S LOST SITES ● DOWSING ● CASPN & LAN**  
**\*ALL PHOTOS NOW IN FULL COLOUR\***

**CONTENTS**

**Editorial** ..... p. 1  
**Dowsing News** ..... p. 2  
**CASPN & LAN** ..... p. 4  
**News: St.Nectan's Kieve & Carwynnen Quoit** ..... p. 5  
**Into Alignment** ..... p. 6  
**Missing Menhirs: 7 - Mulfra Hill menhir** ..... p. 7  
**Uncovering the Lizard: 6 - Traboe barrow** ..... p. 8  
**Prehistoric Parishes - Gulval's lost sites** ..... p. 9  
**In-Site: Chysauster settlement** ..... p.12  
**Bran - the sleeping guardian - Barry Reilly** ..... p.14  
**Wells Corner** ..... p.19  
**The Pendeen Hurricane - Rory Te'Tigo** ..... p.20  
**Book Reviews** ..... p.22  
**20 years ago: radioactive water** ..... p.24

*Apologies for no Penwith Pagan Moot column due to indisposition of Eve Benney.*

*Articles [c] MM & authors. Thanks to Andy Norfolk for front cover artwork.*

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# Meyn Mamvro

## STONES OF OUR MOTHERLAND

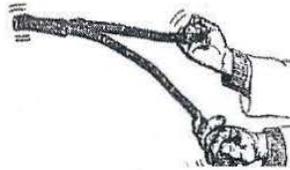
EARTH ENERGIES \* ANCIENT STONES \* SACRED SITES \* PAGANISM \* LEYPATHS  
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It was with sadness that MM heard of the death of Tony Blackman earlier this year. Tony was President of the Cornwall Archaeological Society, and known to many MM readers. He was the first non-professional archaeologist to be invited to be President of the CAS, and as is often the case with those who 'think outside the box', Tony came up with some original ideas about some of the megalithic sites, most notably his discovery of 'Propped Stones', a type of megalithic site that was first identified by him, and written up by him for MM in 2002 [MM49 p.8-11]. Tony was always open to alternative views, and the last time many of us saw him was when he came on a West Cornwall Dowsing day on Rosewall Hill in Spring 2011, and identified a 'View Frame' rock [see MM76 p.3]. Our sympathies go to his widow Dot, and all his colleagues in the archaeological world.

MM has always had close links with the archaeological 'establishment' in Cornwall, something that has been mutually beneficial, and which culminated in an invitation to your editor to contribute a piece on 'earth mysteries' to *Cornish Archaeology* 50th anniversary volume (published in 2011 and reviewed on page 22 of this MM). But MM also wears other hats: it has a strong conservation of sites ideology (MM editor Cheryl Traffon is also chair of CASPN & LAN), and a clear spiritual orientation, with an emphasis in its articles on the possible spiritual beliefs of the prehistoric peoples. 20 years ago, I wrote up some of these ideas and research for a book *Pagan Cornwall: Land of the Goddess*, which much to my amazement, subsequently went through 5 reprints and sold over 5000 copies! It has been very encouraging to find so many people interested in these ideas, and now 20 years later, I felt it was time to re-visit the book. So for the last few months I have been re-writing and revising it, and it is shortly to be re-issued with new colour photographs throughout. There has been much new research over those 20 years, and I hope that those of you who invest in the new edition will still find much to enjoy.

*The cover price of MM rises from this issue to £2.90, and the annual subscription to £9.90. We regret the need to do this, but since the last increase three years ago, the cost of materials and postage have regularly gone up, with a very sharp postage rise this year. MM very much depends on its regular readers and subscribers and we hope that readers will still feel that the magazine represents good value for money. MM will continue to provide good quality original articles and news items, with a generous amount of colour photographs, and we hope that in this day of instant Internet information, there is still a place for a special interest magazine like MM.*

## DOWSING NEWS



In September 2011 **West Cornwall Dowzers** went dowsing down the Lizard peninsula. In the morning they went to *Drytree barrows* [featured in *MM77 p.6-7*] and felt that all three mounds (NW, NE & SE) had originally formed a cemetery complex, which was later marked by the putting up of the standing stone in the centre of them. In the afternoon they visited the *Three Brothers of Grugwith* monument [featured in *MM73 p.20-21*]. An E-W alignment of small stones that lay immediately to the north of the monument (that



*Alignment of 3 fallen stones running south from the Three Brothers of Grugwith*

had been uncovered by a LAN clear-up the previous month), were confirmed as having been deliberately placed there, and part of the monument. To the south of the monument in the bracken and gorse they also discovered a N-S line of 3 free-standing triangular stones that had fallen, the outlier being 12ft long [photo above]. These dowsed as having part of the complex, which is beginning to look like a very interesting ritual site.

Also in Autumn 2011, a new kid appeared on the block! John Moss, Director of the British Society of Dowzers, moved to St. Just and began a series of dowsing courses at Treviscoe (Trencrom), home of Ba Miller, wife of the late much-respected dowser Hamish. This led to the formation of the **Trencrom Dowzers**, who held their first meetings in Sept & Oct at Sennen Village Hall. They planned to organise events and fieldtrips, which started with a talk by Dr. Patrick MacManaway (former President of BSD) about earth energies used in gardening and animal husbandry. The talk was also given to **Tamar Dowzers** near Callington in November, and John Moss himself gave them a talk in December to mark their 10th anniversary of the founding of the Group.

Finally 2011 finished in December with a **West Cornwall Dowzers** day at *Lesingey Round*. This site, newly acquired by CASPN [see *MM76 p.6*] revealed a few of its secrets, including 6 major energy lines entering and leaving the Hill Fort, two of which crossed at a spot just off centre of the Round. The site dowsed as having been in use from about 400 BCE - 400 CE, when there were 4 huts built within the ramparts, and had been used simply as a peaceful settlement, with no other use for ritual or major gathering. After abandonment, the site was re-occupied briefly in the 10thC, when a wooden pallisade was built inside the ramparts. Later that day, the dowzers were joined by local resident Kenny Price, who had done some interesting research on the ley lines running through the site.

2012 started with an illustrated talk to **Trencrom Dowzers** at Sennen by MM editor Cheryl Traffon on *Megalithic Mysteries of Cornwall*. There was a full house, and some interesting feedback afterwards, showing that a whole lot of newly-fledged dowzers were eager to 'get out in the field' and discover earth energies for themselves. Later in the month, West Cornwall Dowzers member Andy Norfolk appeared on BBC tv's 'Country Tracks' programme at the Mên-an-Tol, where he talked about the meaning of the site, and got the presenter to try dowsing for the site of the former stone circle there, and the location of the missing stones. It was an impressive performance and gave a very positive slant to dowsing. In February, professional water dowser Aaron Bray came to **Trencrom Dowzers** to give a workshop on water dowsing, followed by some field work at the Merry Maidens, and later in the month **Tamar Dowzers** had an indoor day, looking at various aspects of dowsing.

On the same day, **West Cornwall Dowzers** returned to *Tregonning Hill*, previously visited by CEMG in August 2006 [see MM62 p.2 & MM67 p.15]. At that time a processional way between Tregonning and the neighbouring hill of Godolphin was discovered. There is also a strong energy line going to Kus Skewes farm at Nancegollan, and the Mary line comes sweeping in from St. Michael's Mount and Germoe Church & Chair around the seaward side of Tregonning Hill on its way to Godolphin Church, Crowan Church, Black Rock and Crowan Beacon, sites all visited by WCD over the years. On this day, the Group dowsed around the lower flanks of the hill, and then made their way to the summit, where a powerful spiral line going in and coming out of the hill was discovered.

In March, the **West Cornwall Dowzers** went for the first time for them to *Boscawen-ûn stone circle*. A good turn out of people went firstly to Creeg Tol rocky outcrop above the circle, where an energy line was found crossing the site on the way to and from St. Buryan church, which was visually apparent on the skyline. The Giant's Footprint and Rory Te'Tigo's small stone circle were also investigated. From this point a distinctive standing stone was observed to



the east, and when the group went to investigate they found it had been a menhir that had been cut down and now re-used as a gatepost stone. They then moved on to the main stone circle, where the Mary line was identified, which comes in here from Alsia well and deflects off at an angle on its way to The Blind Fiddler standing stone. Some people dowsed around the perimeter of the circle and found alternate clockwise and anticlockwise bands of energy around each stone, while others focussed on the centre stone, which dowsed as having always been at its current leaning angle. Everyone felt that the energies of the circle were very welcoming that day and took them to another level of consciousness.

*OS maps showing the path of the Michael and Mary lines through Cornwall and beyond are once again available, direct from [www.penwithpress.co.uk](http://www.penwithpress.co.uk)*



## C.A.S.P.N & LAN NEWS ROUND-UP

*Cornish Ancient Sites Protection Network*



The 6th annual **Pathways to the Past** weekend for FOCAS members and others takes place this year as usual on the last weekend in May (May 26th-27th). As always there is a great programme of walks and talks amongst the ancient landscape of West Penwith. On the Saturday morning there is a *Walk through time* around the Sancreed area with **Barry Reilly**, and in the afternoon a guided walk *Sacred sites and settlements* around the Lanyon & Bosiliack areas with **David Giddings**. The evening brings an illustrated talk by **Paul Bonnington** on *Hunter-gatherer communities*, and there is another talk on Sunday morning with **Cheryl Straffon** on *Stories in ancient stones*. The afternoon sees a guided walk with **Adrian Rodda** to Pendeen & Boscaswell fogous and other sites, and the weekend finishes off with a chat by **Andy Jones** on *Recent excavations and finds*. Full details can be found on the CASPN website, or by phoning 01736-787186.

Meanwhile CASPN has continued its work looking after the sites, with monthly clear-ups in West Penwith, and with LAN on the Lizard peninsula. It is good to know that there is a group of enthusiasts prepared to give time and effort every month to caring for the sites, and without them CASPN/LAN couldn't do any of its good work. So far this year, CASPN has cleared up at Sancreed well (Jan), Madron well (Feb), where they removed large funeral floral tribute constructions of plastic, which looked most inappropriate, Lesingey Round (Mar), which CASPN now own as well as manage, and Treen entrance graves & courtyard houses (Apr). Down on the Lizard, LAN returned to Traboe Barrow (Jan), which is featured on p.8 of this MM, Kynance Gate (Feb & Mar), where they are uncovering the final overgrown hut in the southern settlement, and Drytree Barrow (Apr) where they have now finished clearing the large NE barrow and tidying up the area around the standing stone. Future clear-up dates are given on Noticeboard on the back page. *CASP now has a Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/groups](http://www.facebook.com/groups) - search for C.A.S.P.N*

### **CORNISH ANCIENT SITES PROTECTION NETWORK [CASP]**

**CASP Address:** Whitewaves, Boscaswell Village, Pendeen, Penzance, TR19 7EP

**Web site:** [www.cornishancientsites.com](http://www.cornishancientsites.com) **E-mail:** [secretary@cornishancientsites.com](mailto:secretary@cornishancientsites.com)

### **FRIENDS OF CORNWALL'S ANCIENT SITES [FOCAS]**

**To join FOCAS** (£8/year waged- £5 unwaged) tel: FOCAS Administrator Eve Benney 01736-793876 or e-mail [focas@cornishancientsites.com](mailto:focas@cornishancientsites.com), visit CASPN web site for downloadable application form, or write to: 24 Queen Street, St.Just, Penzance TR19 7JW

**Adopt-a-Site scheme:** e-mail: [focas@cornishancientsites.com](mailto:focas@cornishancientsites.com)

**Sites Clear-Ups:** Dave Munday 01736-787230 e-mail: [dave@cornishancientsites.com](mailto:dave@cornishancientsites.com)

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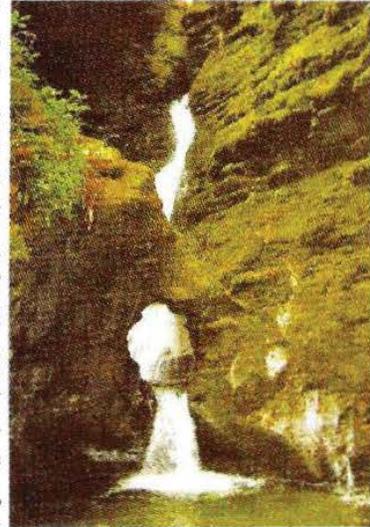
**LIZARD ANCIENT SITES NETWORK [LAN]** via CASPN address (above)

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## **NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS ST.NECTAN'S KIEVE FINDS NEW OWNER**

Soon after the feature '20 Years Ago' was published in the last issue of MM77 on St..Nectan's Kieve (waterfall), the final sentence "we haven't heard the last of it" proved to be all too prescient. After the death of Jean Litton last year, her husband Barry put the site up for auction, which elicited several interested bidders. One of these wanted to turn the site into a 'theme park', while another wanted to have it for their own private use and shut off public access. Fortunately, neither of these succeeded, and the site was bought earlier this year by Guy Mills, an international millionaire and owner of a business park in Yorkshire. He said that he was determined that the site should remain "a place of inward reflection and self-realisation for everyone to enjoy", and employed local man Loz Barker as Custodian of the 35 acre site and the waterfall. A three year plan has been instigated, which will see the site cleared and a new tearoom, gallery



and education centre built in a sympathetic way. The Meditation Room will also remain at present, though renovation will be needed. As before, a charge will be made to visit the Kieve, and it is hoped that the existing 10,000 visitors a year can be tripled. Loz Barker commented : "I have been visiting this Glen since I was a small boy and it is the most special place in the world to me. I am honoured and humbled at this responsibility". There has already been a Spring Equinox ritual at the site, which will continue to be available for use by groups for spiritual purposes. There is also a St Nectans Glen Facebook group page.

## **CARWYNNEN QUOIT READY FOR EXCAVATION**

The fallen dolmen, known as Carwynnen Quoit, at Pendarves near Camborne [SW6502 3723], purchased by the Sustainable Trust in 2008-9 [see MM70 p.6], has moved one step closer to restoration. Promises of Heritage Lottery money for excavation and restoration fell through, but Trustee Pip Richards persisted with applications, and now the go-ahead has been given for an excavation of the site in the Autumn this year, which would be the first step on the road to restoration, which is



the Trust's ultimate aim. The excavation will be undertaken by the Historic Environment Service of Cornwall Council, and if further funding can be obtained, restoration of the fallen capstone will follow. The chamber collapsed and the capstone fell in 1834, but photographs and drawings remain to show how it originally looked [see photo above].



## MISSING MENHIRS - CORNWALL'S LOST STONES

### 7: Mulfra Hill menhir

In March 2012, an extensive gorse fire burnt off a large part of Mulfra Hill in West Penwith, stopping just yards short of Mulfra Quoit [SW4518 3536]. The aerial photograph (right) shows the extent of the burning. Although devastating for the wildlife, the burn did have the effect of revealing stones that have been hidden under the gorse for many decades. One such stone was a fallen standing stone, first recorded by W.C.Borlase in 1872 [see *MM47* p.11]. With the aid of a GPS and a dowser, MM visited the area on March 20th and, amongst many other stones which were the remains of field walls and possible hut circles, identified the fallen stone at SW4518 3532, just south of Mulfra Quoit.

There was a strong energy line running between the Quoit and the fallen stone, which carried on south down the hill towards the location of a now lost standing stone at Lower Ninnes (marked on a 1696 atlas). Its original position was subsequently dowsed at 4523 3423, and its current location (buried as the foundation of a nearby Cornish hedge) dowsed at 4526 3424.

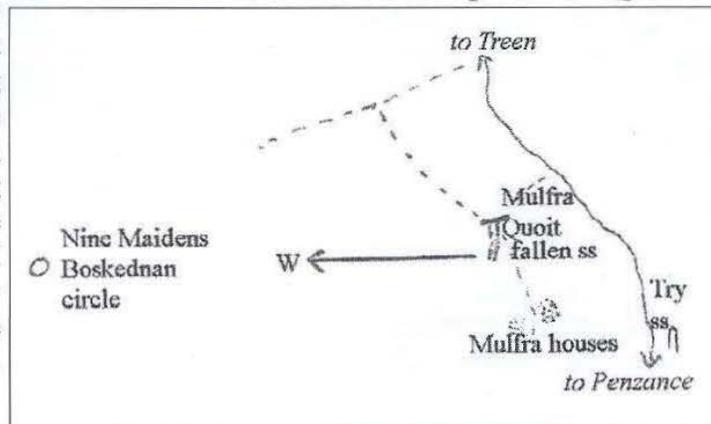
In addition, there was a clear visual alignment from the fallen standing stone to the Nine Maidens stone circle at Boskednan, silhouetted on the neighbouring hill to the west. Compass readings showed this to be a direct east-west alignment, which is an Equinox sunrise and sunset. The setting sun at Spring and Autumn equinoxes would have been seen to set over the circle from the standing stone, and the rising sun at the Equinoxes would have been seen to rise over the standing stone when viewed from the circle. And the day when MM discovered all this? It just happened to be the day of the Spring Equinox 2012! Synchronicity or what?!



Mulfra hill & Quoit - Mar 2012 © HE



Fallen standing stone and Quoit



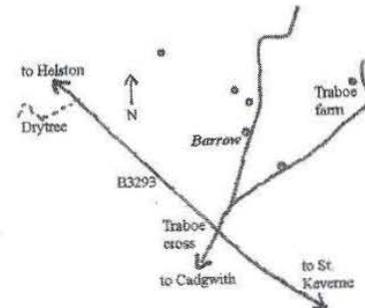
## UNCOVERING THE LIZARD

*The Lizard peninsula in Cornwall (the most southerly point in Britain) is far less well known than its neighbour West Penwith. It does not have the spectacular stone circles, cromlechs, entrance graves & courtyard houses of West Penwith, but its megalithic charms are more subtle and elusive. In recent years, LAN (Lizard Ancient Sites Network) has been organising clear-ups at various sites on the Lizard, and has uncovered and revealed many fascinating places. This series visits some of these places and shows what has been found.*



### 6: Traboe Barrow [SW7378 2109]

This barrow is one of a number clustered around the Traboe area of Goonhilly Downs, not far from the Drytree menhir and barrows, featured in MM77 p.6. The remains of some others can be found at 7396 2090, 7379 2126, 7372 2123, 7335 2153 & 7450 2076. This one, however, was the most prominent, lying beside a minor road heading northwards from Traboe Cross. Formerly completely covered in gorse, it was cleared by LAN in 2011, when it revealed a rather sad secret: a large trench had been cut all the way through the barrow from one side to the other, dividing the barrow into two halves. Apparently this was done by the army in World War II.



When the barrow was cleared, Radio Cornwall were present, and subsequently broadcast a feature about the Clear-up. This prompted a call to the radio station by a local man, Duggie Charlestown, who said that he remembered his uncle was the gardener for a Colonel Serocold, who died in the 1950s. Colonel Serocold had a cottage nearby at Rosuick Farm, and was something of an antiquarian, having supervised the re-erection of nearby Drytree menhir in 1928 [see MM77 p.6-7].

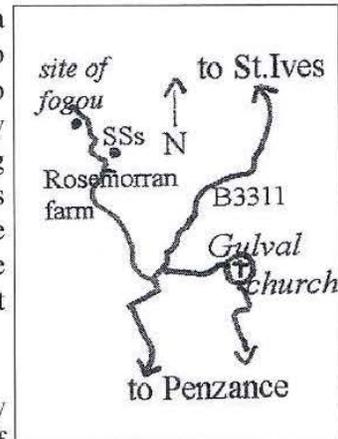


He also dug into local barrows "looking for treasure", and Duggie said that his uncle would assist him! Duggie said that his uncle remembered that Serocold had found a sword during one of his digs at one of these Traboe barrows, but this is uncorroborated. This may be a garbled memory of a Bronze Age copper alloy leaf shaped sword that was found in the 1920s not far away at Carnpessack near St. Keverne (now on display in the RCM in Truro). On the other hand, Serocold's 'sword' may be another find altogether, which has subsequently disappeared. These Lizard barrows have many secrets if only they could tell them.

## PREHISTORIC PARISHES - GULVAL'S LOST SITES

*A new occasional series looking at lesser-known sites of Cornwall's parishes*

Gulval parish (now part of Madron parish) lies but a stone's throw north of Penzance, just off the B3311 road to St.Ives. Today it functions chiefly as an overspill village to Penzance, and on the surface, seems to be lacking in any notable antiquities. But this is an illusion, as a little searching can reward the seeker with a number of very interesting sites from all ages and periods, from the Neolithic and the Bronze Age right up to the medieval period. Some of these sites have been lost or destroyed, and others are in unexpected places, but all provide a glimpse into the past in this surprising parish.



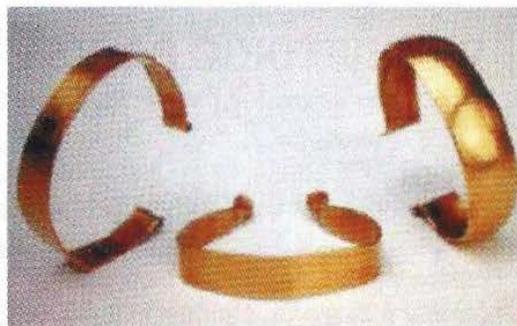
Early occupation here may be deduced from the evidence of a Neolithic or Early Bronze Age standing stone, that is now incorporated into the wall of a lane that leads off the B3311 to Rosemorran Farm and on to Noongallas Farm. Just past the entrance to Rosemorran Farm, the stone may be seen at a bend in the wall (at SW4753 3254 - photo left), showing that the wall was built around the stone. It is 3m (9ft 10in) high and projects above the top of the wall. The stone was listed by Vivien Russell in the *West Penwith Survey* (1971), but even she failed to notice that it has a twin! 15.4m (50ft) further north along the wall at SW4754 3256, a second menhir has been incorporated into it, 2.5m (8ft) high, and once again projecting above the top of the wall. These double stones can now be added to the corpus of such sites.

As well as these 2 standing stones, there is also evidence that Rosemorran was occupied in the Bronze Age from a hut circle at SW4665 3314, which lies within heathland and may be situated as part of a field system. In addition, three Bronze Age urns were found under a large stone in 1816 at approx. SW477 321, which were found to be full of burnt bones. They may have come from a cist burial, or they may have been located originally in a barrow that lay not too far away at approx. 4766 3260. This barrow was listed by Vivien Russell in the *West Penwith Survey*, and probably was the one illustrated by William Borlase in *Antiquities* (1769 - drawing above). All of this shows that Rosemorran dates back to earliest times.



*Fig. III. A Stone Barrow at Trelovel in Gulval*

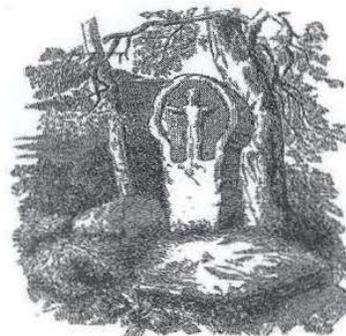
In 1987 three gold bracelets were discovered on Rosemorran Farm [see MM3 p.24] at approx SW474 328. These were later dated to the Middle Bronze Age (between 1000-600 BCE), and subsequently sold to a mystery buyer for £25,000. Replicas can be seen in the Royal Cornwall Museum. These may originally have come from the barrow previously mentioned, or from another different site (now lost). In addition, a bronze axe was found at Rosemorran (exact location unknown), and recorded by W.C.Borlase in the late 19thC [*Ancient Cornwall Vol 1 Pl 3*]. Fortunately this bronze axe survived, and is now on display in the Royal Cornwall Museum.



Rosemorran gold hoard

Moving forward in time, Rosemorran was the location of a recorded underground chamber, further up the road towards Noongarras just east of Polkinghorne farm at SW4749 3277. This structure was first mentioned and drawn by J.T.Blight in 1862, and described thus: "The Voe, Ogo or Fogo at Rosemorran 5' wide, 12' long and 8' deep covered with horizontal slabs and walled sides. Once much larger" It was then mentioned by Charles Henderson in 1914 in his *Notebook of Parochial Antiquities, II 37-39* in which he said: "About 400 yards from the farm (Rosemorran) close to the L side of the road are the remains of an artificial passage which originally extended right across the road. A traction engine, however, a few years ago, passing along the road broke through into and consequently blocked the greater part of the cave. What remains is roughly 10 yards in length though it does not appear to be an ancient fogou since the roof and walls are just formed with rubble and not with huge slabs of granite as is always the case in Neolithic (*sic.*) caves". In MM2 (1986) Dr. Alice Gilby wrote about how "many years ago" she was shown 'the tunnel' at Rosemorran which was called locally 'Dead Men's Holes', which was presumably the chamber, and so named from the nearby field called 'Deadman', which may be a derivation of Dodman, which is a name often associated with megalithic sites. There are no traces now of this structure at this location, so its provenance is now lost for ever.

However, still remaining at Rosemorran in the farmyard is an early Celtic cross at SW4765 3256. This stands on a hedge, and Andrew Langdon (*Stone Crosses in West Penwith, 1997*) suggests that it may originally have stood on the footpath that runs nearby (and incorporates a short stretch of road at this point) from Gulval Churchtown right across the moors to Zennor Churchtown in the north of the peninsula. This may be on the site of an even earlier sacred route, for the two standing stones previously mentioned lie on this ancient route.

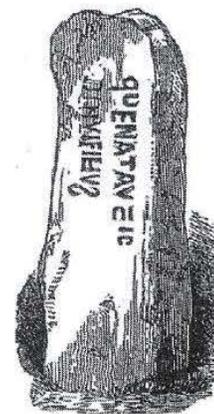


Rosemorran Cross, illustrated by J.T.Blight in 1856

This leads us to Gulval Church itself. This is an early church, with a structure that is predominantly 12th century, with later additions. That church probably stood on an even earlier Celtic foundation, for its original name was Lanisley, meaning “low church”, and Lans often denote earlier foundations. This is given confirmation, as the Church is surrounded by a circle of lanes, which probably indicate its original circular structure. The Church has an inscribed cross shaft, standing on the south side of the churchyard (SW4847 3174). It was discovered in 1885 in use as a quoin stone in the eastern wall of the chancel, and re-erected (upside down!) in its present position. The front face is divided into three panels, with a figure of eight plaitwork, and the letters VN and VI. The inscription is doubtless incomplete, and it is not possible to say what it originally was, but it probably dates from the Early Christian period.

There is another inscribed stone from this period not very far away near the footbridge in Barlowena Bottoms (Bleu Bridge), just off the minor road to Newmill (SW4766 3179). The stone is 1.7m (5.5ft) high, and has the lettering QVENATAVCI IC DINVI FILIVS (Quenataucus lies here, the son of Dinuus). We do not know who Quenataucus was, but his name is a Latinized version of an Irish name, showing the contact at this time between the Irish and Cornish people.

*Inscribed stone, illustrated by J.T.Blight in 1856*



Finally, we return to the Churchyard, and to the location of one of the most famed holy wells in West Penwith. This was the well of St.Gudwal, a 6th century Welsh saint, who lived with 80 monks on the island of Plecit before coming to Cornwall. He was very much one of the early Celtic saints in touch with nature, for it is reputed that he pulled a thorn from the foot of a wolf who had sought his aid. Alternatively, it has been suggested that originally the name was Welvela or Wolvela, a British chieftan, father of Riolbran, whose name is commemorated on the Mên Scryfa standing stone between Madron & Morvah. In either case, there was a chapel or oratory here dedicated to him, built over the well, which lay to SW of the church in a field that lies over the road. The well and oratory certainly predated the church, which was subsequently built at this sacred spot. The well existed up until the early 19th century, and was famed as an oracular place. People would go there to enquire after the health of absent friends: if they were alive and in health the waters would bubble up, but if dead they would remain motionless. The whereabouts of stolen cattle and lost goods could also be traced by means of its waters. Interestingly, up until the mid-18th century a woman acted as custodian of the well. According to the chronicler Hals, she understood the divine endowments of the waters as well as the needs of those who wished to invoke them. However, by 1749 she was dead, and with her passing, visits to the well declined. Thomas Quiller-Couch, writing in the late 19thC, described her as “the high priestess and dispenser of the virtues (of the well).” All trace of the oratory and well are now sadly gone, and only the history and shadow of this holy place still remain. Like so much of Gulval, the past lies still around but elusive and hard to find.



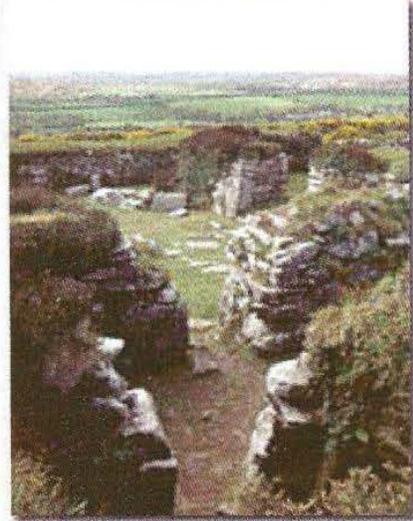
**IN-SITE**

The centre-page feature that focusses on one or two particular sites each time in depth.

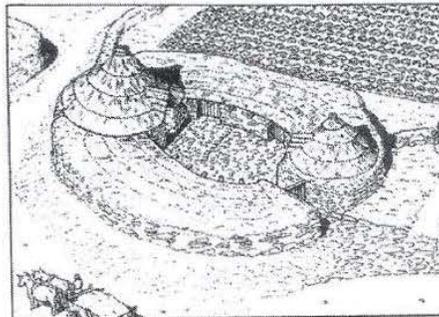
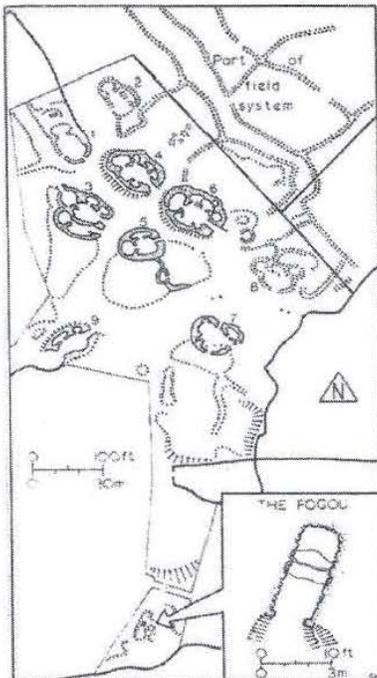
As a follow-on from the article on p.9-11, this one looks at perhaps the most well-known site in Gulval parish - **CHYSAUSTER**

Chysauster Courtyard House Settlement [SW472 350] is one of the best-preserved sites in Cornwall, and an excellent example of a prehistoric village. It is in the care of English Heritage, who make an entrance charge to the site. It is closed in winter, though occasionally open on selected days. To reach the site from Penzance, take the B3311 road towards St.Ives. After about 2 miles at Badger's Cross take a left hand fork and follow the road around to the car park at Chysauster. From here a path leads up to the site.

Courtyard House Settlements are a uniquely West Penwith form of dwelling, which began to appear at the beginning of the Iron Age (about 500 BCE) and continued to be occupied until the 4th-5th centuries CE (Romano-Cornish period). Although there was doubtless an earlier settlement (which may have been more extensive) at Chysauster, the village as

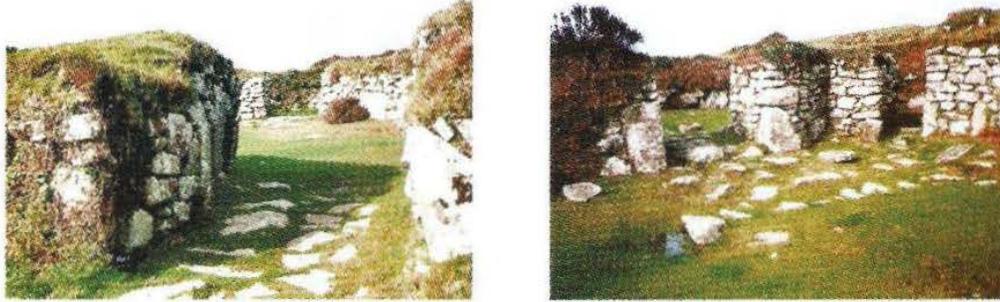


seen today probably dates from the later period of the 2nd-3rd centuries CE. There are eight houses remaining, forming two rows with a winding village street between them, and a ninth house to the SW. Although there are individual variations, each house consists of an entrance leading into a courtyard (which may have been unroofed) from which fans out a number of rooms, usually three. These consist of a round room (opposite the entrance), a long narrow room (to the right of the entrance) and sometimes a small round room as well.



*Plan of site & reconstruction of House (no.6)*

*[c] Craig Weatherhill*



*Remains of some of the houses in the settlement*

Five of the houses have been fully excavated, with the remaining walls standing from 0.6m (2ft) to 2.1m (6¾ft) high. Houses 4 & 6 on the plan are virtually perfect, lacking only the doors and conical thatch or turf roofs to their round living rooms. It is almost as if the inhabitants walked out only a few years ago. In many houses there are the signs of workshops, storerooms and stables attached. House 6 is the most elaborate, with no less than seven rooms surrounding the courtyard. In a number of the houses the socketed stone that held the main roof support post can still be seen in the living room, and some rooms, doorways and entrances are paved with rough granite slabs.

The bulk of the material excavated from the houses consisted of pottery, but there were also fragments of slate and a large number of water-worn pebbles, mostly of cream-coloured quartz, which had been brought to the village, and may have had ritual significance. In 2003 a tiny (2cm across) copper alloy spoon was discovered [photo right], a very rare find that helps to bring the people alive who lived at the site. It has been suggested that, by comparison with a similar spoon found at Newquay, that it may have been used for eating shellfish.

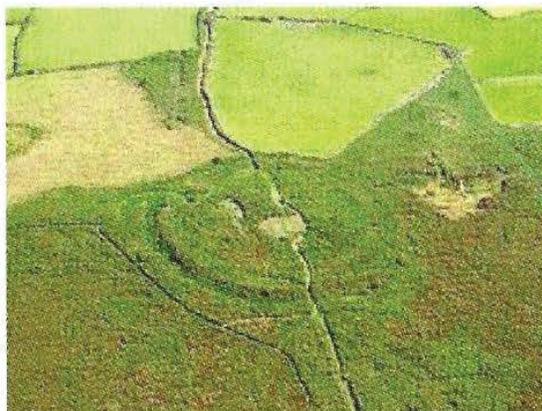


As at Carn Euny and other Courtyard House Settlements, there was a fogou that now lies to the south of the houses, but was originally contained within the settlement. It was recorded in 1861 as running for at least 15m (50ft) up the hill, but is now has only 4.6m (15ft) left, and is not accessible, having been sealed over by English Heritage. Apart from a partial dig by W.C.Borlase in 1873, it has never been properly excavated. Outside the settlement to the NE there was an extensive contemporary field system, but much of this was destroyed by the landowner in 1984. A rescue dig found remains of at least six Bronze Age hut circles from an earlier period. Also on the slopes above the village is a kerbed cairn, dating to 1800-1500 BCE (middle Bronze Age), which contained cremation urns and other grave goods, including an amber bead and quartz crystals. Perhaps the Iron Age peoples built their village here because of the presence of their ancestors at the site? At any rate, they were obviously farmers (and perhaps tin smelters) who lived a relatively prosperous and well-appointed lifestyle in this beautifully-constructed village.

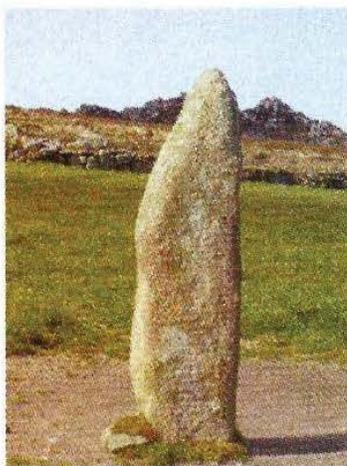
## BRAN - THE SLEEPING GUARDIAN

by Barry Reilly

The iron age hill fort of Caer Bran stands proudly on the summit of Brane Hill in the far west of Cornwall. It is well worth a visit, especially as it has recently been cleared of scrub and gorse, for it has excellent views in all directions. In the past it would have been an ideal place from which to keep watch over the surrounding countryside. Within the enclosing defensive ditch, there are three ring cairns which date back to the Bronze Age, thus indicating that Caer Bran was probably an important ritual site. The later Iron Age rampart, which was built with stone, was never completed for reasons that we may never know.



*Caer Bran hill fort [c] Cornwall Council*



*Mên Scryfa stone*

According to Craig Weatherhill, Caer Bran was first recorded in the 14thC as *Kear Bosvran*, which was middle Cornish for the “hill fort at Brane”. The name Brane is derived from Bran or Vran and it means either Raven or the old Celtic god Bran. Therefore it is most likely that the name Bran, as a place name, can be traced back to the Iron Age. As it happens, the 14thC is about the time that the tales of *The Mabinogion* first appeared in written form. These tales owe their origins to the fascinating world of Celtic myth. In one of these tales, we are introduced to Bran the Blessed, King of the Island of the Mighty. There are many indications that Bran is descended from an early British god and we shall deal with this aspect in greater depth, later on in this article. The name Bran can also be found locally as the name of a war-leader whose title is recorded on the Mên Scryfa inscribed stone. The inscription gives his name as *Rialobran*, which can be read as “The Royal Raven”. This inscription dates from the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6th CE and this puts it into the early Christian era, sometimes known as “The Age of Arthur”.

In this article I want to explore the various aspects of the name Bran, beginning with the Raven, then moving on to Bran the Blessed and finally the local warlord. I hope to convey a sense of connection with the mindset of our Celtic ancestors and to deepen our understanding of the way they lived and how they viewed the world in which they lived.

## The Raven

West Penwith is a place where ravens can be seen flying freely, often uttering their distinctive call. They are large birds, full of character, and they dominate any space by their sheer size and presence. They have a heightened, almost supernatural, awareness of being observed, and this, together with their intelligence, makes the raven a very formidable bird in the natural world. For the Iron Age Celts, as well as for the later Saxon and Viking warriors, the raven 'enjoyed' a rather sinister reputation, due in part to their presence on any battlefield, and in part to their black, unearthly appearance; but there is more to the raven than just the physical aspect.



Our Iron Age Celtic ancestors saw the world through different eyes to ours. They believed that the material world we live in represented just one level of existence. Beyond and within this world lies the Otherworld, the world of gods, spirits and of forces that could guide them and help them. Animals in their spirit forms could be used to take messages to and from the Otherworld; they could also act as guides or guardians to any who wished to undertake a spirit journey to the realms of the gods. A spirit animal could also serve as a guide on the final journey to the realms of the dead. The Iron Age Celts revered the raven as a bird of great importance - hence their practice of burying a raven with its wings outstretched, at the bottom of a shaft. The most likely explanation is that they believed that the raven's spirit would act as a messenger between this world and the Otherworld.

The early Irish myths and sagas, first written down in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, give us a fairly clear idea of how the Celts regarded the raven - with awe, respect and an element of fear; this was a bird to have on your side for it could not only be a powerful ally it could also be a cruel and vengeful enemy. In the myths, we are told how the god of light Lugh was warned of the coming of his Fomorian enemies by ravens, who also came to his assistance in the battle that followed, the second battle of Magh Tuiredh. However, the raven was not always so obliging. The Irish saga *The Tain* tells us how the hero, Cu Chulain, gained the enmity of the fearsome Badhbh, a triple-aspected goddess of war, who, together with her sisters Macha and Mor-Rioghain (collectively known as 'The Morrigan'), would fly over the heads of warriors in battle and give out terrible, blood curdling screams. In the Ulster Cycle we are told how she incites Cu Chulain to his final battle, knowing that he is going to die. A chilling description is given of how she shape-shifts into the form of a raven and waits to pick his corpse clean! This tale stresses how important it was for a warrior not to fall out with the spirit of raven. One way for the Celtic warrior to keep the raven on his side was to wear an emblem on some part of his armour to both act as a talisman to protect the wearer and to frighten the enemy. An extreme example of this is a battle helmet, found in Romania. This iron helmet, probably a cavalryman's, is fitted with a bronze raven, whose hinged wings would flap with the violent motion of a cavalry charge. This would at least distract and at best terrify any opponent of the 'Raven Warrior'.

Another aspect of the raven was its ability to fly over enemy lines and to be able to view the disposition of the enemy. Our ancestors believed that skilled individuals could shape-shift, take the form of a bird (usually a raven), in order to perform this task. Therefore any war-leader who had the gift of raven knowledge and who could rely on their backing in battle would have a considerable advantage over his foes, at least in the eyes of his followers!

During the third and second centuries BCE, the Greeks and Romans clashed with the Celts and had cause to regret it. Their careless disregard for their own lives and their terrifying appearance overwhelmed their opponents, who were used to a more orderly form of warfare. The warlord of the Celtic armies was known as 'Brennos', which was not a personal name but a title denoting 'Battle Lord.' Etymologically 'Brennos' is related to 'Bran' and its meaning in this context is 'Raven King'. Quite possibly the Battle Lord was regarded as being of semi-divine status and as having the raven god on his side. In the context of the supernatural otherworldly qualities of the raven it is worth noting that these abilities were usually possessed by women. In most of the ancient tales, it was generally accepted that men were more powerful and active than women in the everyday, material world. However, in the inner, otherworldly realms it was a different matter altogether. Here women reigned supreme. Therefore powerful figures like the Irish Morrigan, and her British descendant Morgan le Fey, display a quality to be found in woman that required them to be treated with great respect. These mythical, semi-divine and powerful archetypes could be called Raven women, and as Cu Chulain discovered to his cost it was best to keep them on your side.

### **Bran the Blessed**

Bran is often described as an old Celtic god, yet there is little contemporary evidence from Brythonic (Britonic-Welsh) sources to support this idea. The earliest reference that I have been able to find is in the old Welsh tale *Branwen Daughter of Llyr*. This tale, written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, tells the story of a Welsh king who was the ruler of 'The Island of the Mighty' (Britain). He had a sister named Branwen, which translates as White or Sacred Raven. Branwen agreed to marry Matholwch, King of Ireland, in order to secure a peace between the two nations. Unhappily the peace lasted for only a short time because word got back to Bran that his sister was being ill-treated and abused. To avenge this insult and to rescue his sister, he gathered together a large army and crossed the sea to Ireland. He was, we are told, a giant of a man and this was to stand him in good stead, as he was able to wade across the sea carrying his harpers on his back. In that manner they kept their instruments and their strings dry. When his army came to the River Shannon, they found that the Irish had retreated across it and had broken down all the bridges. With the words "Let him who is a chief be a bridge," Bran lay across



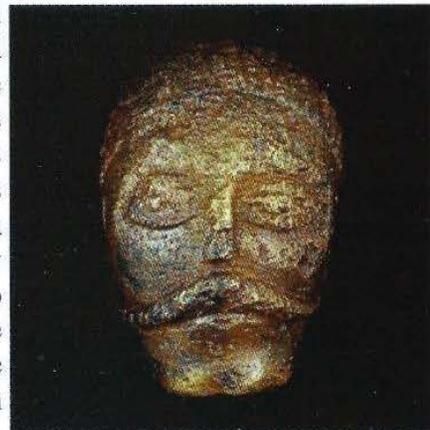
*Branwen by Christopher Williams [1915]*

the river and allowed his army to pass over him. Then followed a bloody battle, complicated by the Irish use of a cauldron of rebirth that could revive any dead warrior. When the battle was over all the British and Irish, save a few, were slaughtered. Bran himself was mortally wounded by a poisoned dart in the foot. He gave his seven surviving companions the order to cut off his head and take it back with them to Britain. This they did.

The head of Bran was eventually buried in a place called White Hill where it would act as a Protector and Guardian of Britain. Unfortunately, according to legend, Arthur (yes him!), decided that it was his job to be the Guardian of Britain and so he ordered Bran's head to be dug up and cast into the sea. This legend still carries some weight today, as the Tower of London stands on the site of White Hill and in the Tower are kept 'The Royal Ravens'. During the last war the ravens were killed or dispersed during a bombing raid. Winston Churchill, (who at one time had been a Druid and therefore knew his mythological history), ordered them to be replaced. It is a matter of historical fact that we were not invaded during the war (unless you count the Americans) and so the power of the legend holds true!!

### The Old Celtic God

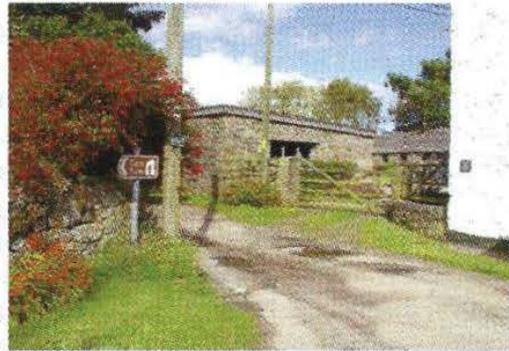
In the above story Bran, as an old Brythonic god of the Celts, has been so overlaid by the Medieval mind set that he has all but vanished under the weight of the subsequent writings. Therefore I can only speculate as to how the Iron Age Celts would have viewed him. His size shows that he was a god of great status, perhaps second only to the great sun god, Belinus. He was a warrior god, a war leader and his spirit would probably be invoked as an inspiration for any war lord about to lead a campaign against the foe. The theme of the severed head is a reference to the Celtic belief that the spirit lived on in the severed head and that the spirit in the severed head of a defeated enemy could be imprisoned and, if treated with respect and reverence, would actually work on one's behalf in the otherworld. After a battle, the victors would ride home with their grisly trophies which they would display in various prominent places. It is likely that a proportion of the heads would be dedicated to the goddess of battles, ie. The Morrigan, as a token of the fruits of victory and to give thanks for their assistance.



*Celtic Head from Witham, 2nd century BCE (British Museum)*

Bran was also seen as a bridge and I think that this was a bridge, or conduit, between this world and the otherworld. This would give him the status of a magician-king and his link with the supernatural qualities of the raven would make him a very powerful deity; one well worth invoking for his divine protection. In the later Christian version of his story, Bran is given the epithet 'The Blessed' as he was credited with bringing Christianity into Britain; a connection with a totally different otherworld altogether.

In Cornwall, there are many places named after Bran: Brane, Polbrean, Park-an-Vrane, Trevrane, to name but a few. Wales too has its share of Bran names: Cwmbran, Aber-bran and Castell Dinas Bran. This could indicate that Bran was seen as a divine protector of an area in the same way today that a parish is associated with a Christian saint. It is just possible that Bran was regarded as a divine guardian for the area of West Penwith in which Caer Bran is at the epicentre. David Giddings, a local archaeologist, told me about a previous vicar of St. Buryan who believed that St. Buriana was invented by the church in order to displace the popularity of Bran. This may or may not be true but it is a fact that the newly formed Christian church built on sacred places and sometimes incorporated and overlaid earlier beliefs and archetypes. (In fairness it should be noted that by doing this the church preserved a lot of the earlier traditions). Bran would have been a hard candidate for the Celtic church to take on board, so there could be some foundation for this idea. St. Buriana's feast day is on May 1<sup>st</sup>, the same day that is celebrated as Beltaine, the day of the sun god Bel, who was another prominent figure in this area.



*Brane End Farm and the path to Caer Bran*

It is more likely that Bran declined in stature because political and spiritual circumstances moved on. There are many similarities between the tales of Bran and Arthur. One is that Bran is the raven while Arthur is the Cornish version, the chough. It could also be that Arthur's revealing and disposing of Bran's head (known in the Triads as "one of the unfortunate disclosures") was a statement that Arthur, being a more acceptable figure to the thinking of the time, was a replacement as a semi-divine protector. As the wheel of time turned, Arthur too was to be replaced by "St. George of Merrie England". The concept of a warrior guardian still holds true today in the form of St. Michael, the patron saint of the French parachute regiment.

### **Rialobran, The Royal Raven**

In West Penwith, near the Mên-an Tol, is the Mên Scryfa, the inscribed stone. The stone is a Bronze Age menhir with a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century CE inscription dedicated to Rialobran, the Royal Raven. As we have seen this would have been a title and not a personal name. The legend of Rialobran is worthy of mention: an enemy from the East took the lands of West Penwith and made his base at Lescudjack Castle, overlooking Penzance. Rialobran, together with his warband met and fought this un-named foe. In the battle he lost his life but it is possible that he was the victor, albeit posthumously, because the monument was erected to his memory. This would indicate that 'The Ravens' won the day and held the field. For the hero, he lost his life but gained immortality and that for him would have been the ultimate prize.

In Wales there are mountains called Brenin Llwyd (The Grey King) and Y Brenin Nudd (The Mist King). These names give the mountains character and atmosphere. Welsh tradition has it that in the mountains of Snowdonia lies the secret burial place of King Arthur. This burial place is guarded by two great eagles, who in reality (?) are two shape-shifted Druids. This legend reflects the power that such places can have on the human mind and how they can act as an inspiration for the weaving of legend and mythology, all of which contribute to ancestral memory.

Caer Bran may not be the equal of Wales' mountains in height but it can certainly rival them for atmosphere. I live in a valley at the foot of Caer Bran and when the hill top is shrouded in mist I am aware of the awe that our ancestors felt towards these special places and I consider myself to be very fortunate to be able to share it with them. Although the hill-top has never been archaeologically excavated it would come as no surprise to me if a high status warrior's grave were to be discovered, for I have seen pairs of ravens circling the hill-top on more than one occasion. So you never know, it could just be .....

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And finally I would like to thank my own "Raven woman", Kate, for her perceptive comments.

## WELLS CORNER

*A new regular feature updating Cornwall's holy wells*



**Nanceglos Well** Local resident Kenny Price wrote to 'The Cornishman' newspaper earlier this year, saying that the holy well of Nanceglos, that stands outside Trengwainton Gardens near Penzance, was being desecrated, partly by residents arriving in a steady stream to wash their cars in its waters, and partly by local school teachers, who congregate there in breaktimes to have a smoke and throw their cigarette butts into the well. These just clog up the wellspring, until Kenny goes along to remove them. There was no response from the teachers or school, but CASPN wrote to the paper, expressing its support for Kenny's letter, and pointing out that wells such as these have always been of great importance to the local community, both as sources of water and for their healing powers, and hoping it would be treated with more respect in future.

**Facebook Group** There is a new Facebook 'Holywells of Cornwall' group page, set up by Baba Boom. As well as photos and conversation, it has videos of Baba's visits to various wells, including some lesser known ones. Join at [www.facebook.com/groups](http://www.facebook.com/groups).

## **THE PENDEEN HURRICANE - A VIOLENT EARTH ENERGY EVENT**

by **Rory Te'Tigo**

I came across a little booklet, called: "The Pendeen Hurricane", published in 1988 by Alan Rowell, Vicar of Pendeen. It commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of a very peculiar event, that happened in Pendeen, West Penwith, Cornwall, at 2.10am on the morning of Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 1938. Some people described it as lightning; a ball of fire; a whirlwind; a tornado; a hurricane; a bomb blast, or, even a rocket strike. It left a trail of destruction in the village and happened on a straight line that ran nearly west to east. On the upland moorlands, it left a footprint of devastation about three metres wide, twisting and uprooting mature gorse bushes. First sightings of the anomaly were by the lighthouse keepers at Pendeen Lighthouse. They described it as: "A ball of fire, with three tails, approaching over the sea from the direction of the Isles of Scilly." Men on nightshift at Geevor Tin Mine saw "the lightning" strike through the village like a ball of fire jumping from house to house.

The weather was quite usual for Pendeen: a fine foggy rain and a quite strong wind from the south-west. As soon as "The Thing" passed over, the wind increased to gale force, changing direction to north. There also was a thunderstorm lasting about half an hour. All the damage though was done during the initial seconds at the beginning. The people on the path of destruction reported that the noise of the thunderstorm was quiet, compared with the noise of the event, whilst people that lived only a few yards away either slept through the event or reported later that they had heard a noise they thought was caused by a motorcycle. The devastation caused included the destruction of a shed at Geevor Tin Mine; the demolishing of two chicken sheds; up-rooting of a tree; the taking down of roofs and chimneys of houses; and a new cast iron garden gate being bent. One report stated that a small dog woke up Mr. Oats on the morning of this, his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday with its whimpering outside his bedroom. The dog came up three times. At the third time the event struck, while Mr. Oats was tending to the dog. Due to the dog he most possibly escaped serious injury as pieces of glass came flying through the bedroom window hitting the wall opposite, and falling onto his bed.

Debris from this destruction was found eight miles away, and the damage to property reached all the way to a farm called Anjugwinack north of Ludgvan. The force of destruction was so enormous that it was difficult to remove roof slates wedged in a door and a telegraph pole. The destruction in Pendeen was so great that the next morning the bus could not get through on the main road and the people of Pendeen were lucky that no one was killed in the event. In the second half of the booklet the vicar unsuccessfully tries to explain what had happened. Finally he concludes that what happened does not fit into any previously described category and therefore he invents a new category "an Oatian Tornado", in honour of Mr. Oats, the gentleman that had been saved from injury by his dog.

If you trace the path of the ‘hurricane’ on the map, it seems to cut a swathe through several significant sites. From the path beside Pendeen Church it went over Chûn Downs, just to the north of Chûn Castle, through Lanyon Farm, then close to Carfury standing stone [4400 3400], which has the greatest number of leys passing through it than any other ancient site in West Penwith. It then goes through Crankan, near Newmill, the site of previous strange and anomalous events, including UFO sightings [see article *Crankan Wakes* in MM52 p.14-18 in which Raymond Cox suggests the area may be prone to fault lines of geopathic stress], before finally wreaking its destructive fury on Anjugwinack Farm, near Ludgvan. Not all the destruction caused by the ‘Hurricane’ took place on a straight line. The damage to the window in the Pendeen Church tower and to the vicarage were approx 100 metres wide of the otherwise straight track, and the farmstead of Anjugwinack is 900 metres wide of the straight line of damage. Even so, in a similar way to Pendeen, at Anjugwinack roofs and out-houses were damaged and broccoli was flung through bedroom windows. Maybe Pendeen Church and Vicarage were hit by debris that originated from the main path of destruction.

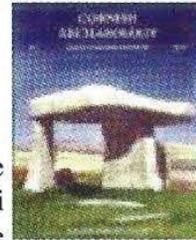
The whole story became even more interesting when I looked at my map of ley lines in West Penwith. There are four almost-parallel ley lines, each running nearly west to east, including one (no.3) through Pendeen:

- 1) 3-point ley: Men Scryfa [4268 3529] – tumulus[4329 3538] – Mulfra Quoit [4518 3536]
- 2) 6-point ley: Lower Boscaswell fogou [3767 3484] - Mên-an-tol [4264 3493] - Settlement [467 349] - Try standing stone [4597 3498] - Chysauster Settlement [472 350] - Castle-an-Dinas hill fort [485 350]
- 3) Pendeen line: Bosulow Trehyllis Settlement [409 342] - Settlement [480 344] - Whitecross Cross [5248 3439]
- 4) 4-point ley: Chûn Quoit [4023 3396] - Chûn Castle [405 339] - Carfury standing stone [4400 3400] - spring [4190 3406]

If we consider that the event took place along the third southerly of a system of four parallel ley lines we can come to a better conclusion of what happened, than inventing a totally new category of tornado. The “event” can be classed as a “Violent Earth Energy Event.” i.e. it was a sudden and violent release of energy much like an earthquake. But instead of tectonic energy, i.e. energy that had its origin in the movement of tectonic plates, it was a release of electro-magnetic energy that caused an iron wind of great force. At the same time, some tectonic energies may have been involved after all. Let’s remember that quartz, one of the main constituents of granite, can produce what is known as a piezoelectric effect - a sudden release of electric energy, produced when quartz crystals are put under a bending pressure. This can produce electric sparks. It is known that the whole tectonic plate of the British Isles is rising in the north and moving downwards in the south. This movement is most possibly not even, and therefore could lead to a bending pressure in West Cornwall that triggered a massive release of piezoelectric energy, or a violent earth energy event. But this is just another theory. In the meantime let’s hope that “Violent Earth Energy Events” like the one that hit Pendeen in 1938 will stay rare and will not happen again in our lifetime.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Cornish Archaeology**  
Golden Jubilee Volume (no.50, 2011)  
[Cornwall Archaeological Society]



The CAS celebrates 50 years of existence with this comprehensive volume of articles and reports. Editor Peter Rose has compiled a pot-pourri of useful, interesting and important work, encompassing a look back at the past and an overview of archaeology in Cornwall today. The volume begins with a beautiful photo of Boscawen-ûn stone circle, followed by an article by Professor Charles Thomas on how it all began, together with some memories from original members. This is followed by a section on “Archaeology in Cornwall: Recording, Conserving and Reconstructing the Past”, with contributions on the HER (Historic Environment Record), Aerial Survey Project, National Mapping Programme, Geophysical Survey, Portable Antiquities Scheme, Conservation work, Cornish museums and galleries, CAS excavations, and even the Time Team in Cornwall. The sub-section on Field Archaeology includes work on historic landscape studies, experiential archaeology, and even earth mysteries (by MM editor)! All this is very inclusive and wide-ranging, and gives an idea of the huge scope of interests and work undertaken by the CAS nowadays. From little acorns, truly a mighty tree has grown! The final section is an overview of “25 years of discovery and research” and this is perhaps the most useful for an up-to-date consideration of the meaning and significance of prehistoric and historic sites in Cornwall. The Neolithic and Bronze Age periods are especially interesting, as so much has been re-discovered and re-interpreted in the last quarter of a century, and Andy Jones and Henrietta Quinnell do a fine job of pulling all this information together. Altogether, this volume does the CAS great credit, and would be a fine addition to anyone’s bookshelves on Cornish archaeological books.

### **Recent Archaeological Work in South-Western Britain** **Ed. Susan Pearce** [BAR British Series 548, 2011]

This book is a *festschrift* to Henriette Quinnell on her 65th birthday, and an acknowledgement of her huge contribution and influence on the archaeology of Cornwall and Devon. Friends and colleagues have contributed a number of papers on interesting aspects of archaeology in the south-west, including MM contributor Paul Bonnington on “Earlier Bronze Age Cemetery Mounds and the Multiple Cremation Burial Rite in Western Britain” (with particular emphasis on Cornish barrows), Andy M. Jones on “The local character of the Early Bronze Age in the south-west peninsula”, Jacqueline Nowakowski on “Researching Bronze Age buildings in Cornwall”, and the late Tony Blackman on “Pseudo-Quoits to Propped Stones”. This in particular is a fitting memorial to his work and enthusiasms, as it is a more personal account than the other more scholarly papers, telling of his discoveries in the landscape of the class of monuments that have become known as Propped Stones [*first revealed by him in print in MM49 p.8-11*]. For anyone interested in current archaeological research in Cornwall, this book has much to be recommended.

**Mrs Darley's series by Carole Carlton [pub: Mirage Publishing]**

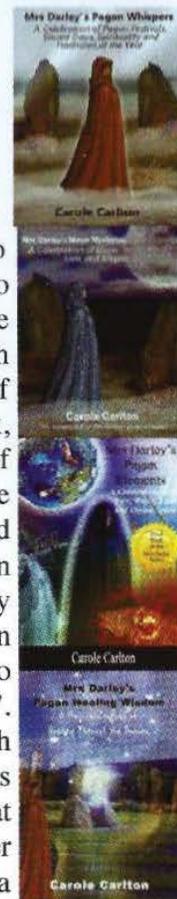
**1: Mrs Darley's Pagan Whispers** (2008, £7.99)

**2: Mrs Darley's Moon Mysteries** (2009, £7.99)

**3: Mrs Darley's Pagan Elements** (2010, £8.99)

**4: Mrs Darley's Pagan Healing Wisdom** (2011, £8.99)

The author of this series of books lives on Bodmin Moor, next to "Mrs Darley", who appears to be a traditional Cornish wise woman, who instructs Carole into many of the old mysteries. In Carole's own words, the books are "an eclectic mixture of history, myth and folklore, coupled with poetry and thought-provoking tales, which is my own personal way of acknowledging the sacred cycle of life, death and rebirth". The first book, *Mrs Darley's Pagan Whispers* introduces us to the rather enigmatic figure of "Mrs Darley" as follows: "Upon moving to Cornwall in 1991, I became bewitched by its enchanting timeless beauty, which captured my heart and holds me still. Brooding and mysterious, the south-eastern edge of Bodmin Moor provided the wild backdrop against which the introduction to my magical training and love of nature began. It was here, through the often bizarre, yet strangely compelling, guidance of Mrs Darley, that I began to experience my own connection to the universe, and to the forces of nature". The book then goes on around the Wheel of the Year, with a chapter for each of the eight festivals, that interweaves information about the festival's origins, history and myth, with poetry, suggestions for what to do at that time, and accounts of the activities observed by "Mrs Darley" and her friends, to which Carole is invited. It is a good 'primer' for anyone seeking a magical path based around the seasons and wheel of the year.



The second book *Mrs Darley's Moon Mysteries* follows the same format, but is built around the moon and all her phases, at different times of the year. There is in fact a great deal of very useful information in this book about the moon, which slips very easily into beguiling stories of "Mrs Darley" and her knowledge of folklore and magic. It also includes moon meditations, celebrations and dedications, and once again there is a great deal of information presented in a very easily-digestible way. The third book *Mrs Darley's Pagan Elements* is subtitled "A celebration of Air, Fire, Water and Divine Spirit", and is a somewhat longer book than the first two, with a great deal of information on everything associated with the 5 elements. Each element gets a chapter of its own, exploring the science, myth, stories, legends, astrology, and of course Mrs Darley's tales, of that element. Finally, the most recent book *Mrs Darley's Pagan Healing Wisdom* focusses more on "a magical journey of healing through the senses". "Mrs Darley" invites Carole to embark on a journey of healing through the five senses of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight. This is a book about natural healing, and the interconnectiveness of mind, body and spirit. The journey that Carole takes in the course of the book is much deeper and darker than the previous ones, and by the end it brings her to the beginning of her own work in complimentary medicine. All four books are quite compelling and very readable.

## 20 YEARS AGO

*Delving into the pages of MM from the past*

It was in issue no.18 (Summer 1992) that MM reported on a column in the *Peninsula Voice* magazine in which Branwen (Marina Boyd) wrote about water cures at Cornish holy wells, in the course of which she spoke about the possible healing effects of natural minerals in the waters. She was subsequently to write up this research for MM21 (p.6-9), and it still remains a fascinating idea. However, in the column Branwen also mentioned that the radiation levels in the water at Madron Well were twice as high as



*The radiation-rich waters of Madron well*

background and suggested that “low doses of radiation can be beneficial to health”. This provoked a furious response from Judith Cook, who described it as a “dangerously irresponsible statement”, and added that “low levels of radiation absorbed over a long period are often more damaging than one moderate dose”. MM then posed the question “So what is the truth of the matter?”, and went on to quote the suggestion from Paul Devereux in his book *Places of Power* that, although radiation is inherently harmful to living tissue, perhaps homeopathic doses of it could have curative effects. He quoted the case of Boulder Monato in the USA, where old gold and uranium mines were being used for giving sufferers of certain ailments strictly timed periods of exposure to the radon concentrations in the abandoned workings. He also pointed out that spas, such as Bath, which were regularly visited for health reasons, also have a high radioactive content. MM then went on to speculate that healing traditions became associated with wells and certain stones (such as the holed stone at the Mên-an-Tol) precisely because people received these short sharp bursts of radiation from them. The piece concluded: “So who is right? Are all levels of radiation dangerous, or is a little of what we fear good for us? No doubt the debate will continue.”

20 years on, the debate is still not really resolved, but the puzzling effects of high background radiation causing no ill effect on humans is now known as “the radiation paradox”. In some parts of the world, background radiation is much higher than average, sometimes hundreds of times higher. Cornwall is one of these areas, but others have also been noted in places as far apart as Iran, Brazil, India, Australia and China. In Ramsar in Iran for example a peak yearly dose of 260 mGy has been reported (the worldwide average background dose per person is 2.4 mSv, from both cosmic and human-caused radiation, so this is many thousands of times higher). And yet no increased ill effects have been experienced by residents. In fact, quite the contrary is true. Most of the radiation in the area comes from dissolved radium-226 in water of hot springs in the area. There are 9 of these hot springs with different concentrations of radioisotopes, and these are used as spas by locals and tourists. It really does seem that small amounts of radioactive water do you good!

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