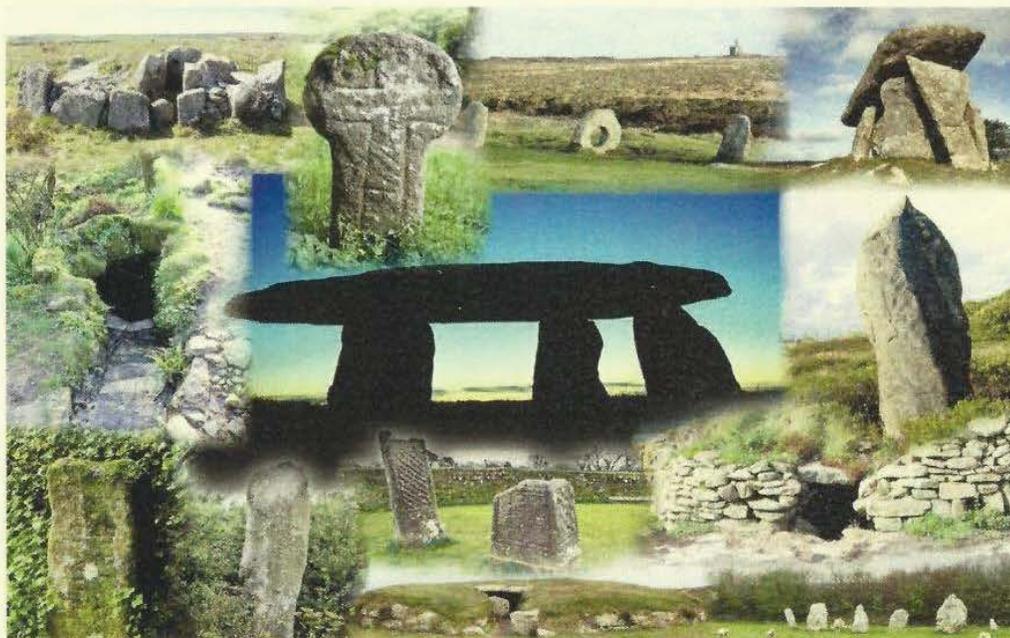


*CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF MEYN MAMVRO*



● KING ARTHURS HALL - Paul Broadhurst ●  
THE ST.JUST BULL ● CORNISH FOLKLORE ●  
DOWSING ● CASPN & LAN ● ANCIENT TRACKS  
**\*ALL PHOTOS NOW IN FULL COLOUR\***

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[+ 4 page supplement on Penwith map alignments by Palden Jenkins - Part 4]  
*Articles [c] MM & authors. Thanks to James Kitto for special front cover photography.*  
 Printed by Paul Williment of Brigid Design. E-mail: [brigid.design@mac.com](mailto:brigid.design@mac.com)  
 Meyn Mamvro address: **51 Carn Bosavern, St.Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX**  
**01736-787186** Website: [www.meynmamvro.co.uk](http://www.meynmamvro.co.uk) E-mail: [editor@meynmamvro.co.uk](mailto:editor@meynmamvro.co.uk)

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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**

And so, we have reached our 30th anniversary! It seems incredible now, that when Meyn Mamvro started in 1986 it would see out three decades. That first issue was a shot into the dark. I had no idea if there was an audience out there for it: remember that these were the early days for 'earth mysteries' and 'alternative archaeology' in Cornwall. True there were a few pioneers around: John Michell, whom I already knew, had been down to Cornwall to do his research on 'The Old Stones of Land's End'; Craig Weatherhill lived here and had brought out his 'Belerion' book on the sites in West Penwith about five years earlier; and I soon got to know Ian Cooke, who was doing his early research on the Cornish fogous, though he was yet to publish (in fact his work got its first airing in an early issue of MM). But those early pioneers were isolated and scattered individuals, and in those pre-internet and Facebook days, there was no identifiable 'community' of people with shared interests and contact. I was also keen to add another element into the mix: that of spirituality, both prehistoric and contemporary - something that was unheard of for alternative magazines, that were either strictly 'earth mysteries' or 'pagan'.

However, Meyn Mamvro obviously hit a nerve. It was the right idea at the right time, and, as they say, the rest is history. I like to think that over the last 30 years, I have kept true to my original intent: in the words of the editorial from the first issue "to produce a professional and polished magazine that can be read and enjoyed by outsider and insider, amateur and professional alike, and to bridge the worlds between sometimes separate interests and disciplines, allowing a great breadth of vision and creating an interaction of knowledge". This 30th anniversary of MM is no different to the previous 90 issues, including as it does regular columns on lesser-known sites, local dowsing activities, original articles found nowhere else (this time one on the St. Just Bull), and insights and investigations by well-known researchers in the field of 'earth mysteries' (this time an article by Paul Broadhurst on King Arthur's Hall). For this 30th anniversary issue, we also include an extended '20 years ago' column, featuring issues from 30, 20 and 10 years ago, while updating what has been found and discovered since then. All in all a pot pourri of news, features, articles and research, that will hopefully inform, stimulate and interest all our readers. Those readers have been the cornerstone to MM's continuing viability over the last 30 years. We have some that have come the full 30 years with us, some that have passed on to other places and other interests, and some who have joined us comparatively recently. We value and appreciate all of you, for without you there would have been no Meyn Mamvro beyond the first issue and no Meyn Mamvro thirty years later.

## DOWSING NEWS

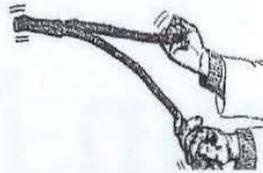


Image [c]  
Jean Hands

On the first weekend in April, the 10th anniversary get-together of **West Penwith Dowsers** on the *Isles of Scilly* was cancelled at the last moment. However a group of three members still went over, met with archaeologist Katharine Sawyer, and had a very interesting time visiting several 'new' sites that had been recently uncovered for the first time in decades by the Community Archaeology Group there [see *MM80* p.14-15]. These sites had never been dowsed before, and some fascinating results were made, with full details in the centre pages of this MM.

A month later it was May Day, and **Tamar Dowsers** visit at sunrise to *Kit Hill*, along with a phalanx of the Cornwall-based Wreckers Morris side. Not having dowsed at this site at Beltane before, Nigel Twinn chose the most prominent energy line to cross the area that the Morris sides would be using, and found that weaving around and within the alignment, the energy element of the line was about nine paces wide (at half width), albeit with the standard banded outlying lines stretching either side into the heather and the gorse. Almost as soon as they arrived the energy in the chosen line started to expand and reached over twenty paces for the half-width in no time. Nigel dowsed the reason for this, and found that about 45% was due to his interaction; about 35% was due to the arrival of the participants in the dancing; and the remaining 20% was due to the increasing, as yet unseen, presence of the rising sun. As time went by, the dancing got underway and the energy line expanded further - through 40 and 50 paces, and reaching close on 60 at its zenith. A recalculation of what was causing it gave a reading of around 20% for Nigel's participation; about 60% was being generated by the efforts of the dancers and their musicians; and the remaining 20% was contributed by the sun itself. Although this was not a spiritual event *per se*, Nigel felt that they were engaging with Gaia on some level and she was responding in kind.



*May Day sunrise on Kit Hill*

A week later on Sunday 8th it was International Dowsing Weekend, and as in previous years, **Trencrom Dowsers** met at Carn Lês Boel, near Land's End, with John Watts to dowsing the Michael and Mary energy lines streaming in and out on this beautiful headland and the 'before and after' effects. In the afternoon, they met to 'Sing the Lines' with Danu Fox, on Trencrom Hill, where the Athena line crosses the hill on its way to St.Michael's Mount, node point for all the Athena, Apollo, Michael and Mary lines.

*Dowsing events from the rest of summer 2016 will be included in the next issue of MM.*

### **Pip Richards 1951 - 2016**

Pip Richards, founder and director of the Sustainable Trust, who were responsible for the recent re-erection of Carwynnen Quoit, sadly passed away in May this year, aged 65. She had been ill for some time, but nevertheless her death came as a shock to many people. Pip studied textile design, fine art and management at the University of Leeds and from 1974-80 was a Design Assistant at Yorkshire Television. She subsequently moved to Cornwall and found a property on the Clowance Estate where she raised a family with her partner. In 1990, with the aid of the Dandelion Trust, she purchased 40 acres of neighbouring land and in 2001 founded the Sustainable Trust to manage the woodland, known as Crenver Grove. She was a passionate environmentalist and a great supporter of Friends of the Earth all her life. In 2009, thanks to grants obtained by Pip from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Trust purchased nearby land where the ruins of Carwynnen Quoit lay. A programme of excavations and events followed, and Pip was able to see the realisation of her dream when the Quoit was restored in the summer of 2014. Pip was also a founder member of the West Cornwall Dowsers, and regularly attended its events until illness forced her to give up. Bart O'Farrell of WCD commented: "We will miss her as a sunny, cheerful dowsing companion, and also a staunch friend to the Cornwall dowsing community". Pip was buried in the corner of the quoit field at the end of a moving ceremony accompanied by poems, violin and her favourite music by George Harrison. Pip's legacy will live on with Carwynnen Quoit and all the other projects she was so selflessly involved.



## **Penwith Press**

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Founded by Hamish Miller in the 1990s, Penwith Press is still based in west Cornwall but now includes titles by some of the best dowsing and earth mysteries' researchers of this generation: Grahame Gardner, Billy Gawn, Nigel Twinn, David Leesley, Sig Lonegren, Christopher Strong and Palden Jenkins, as well as Hamish Miller's own perennial favourites and his DVDs produced by Tim Walter.

We also stock the energy current maps for the great dowsing journeys based on the books: "Sun and the Serpent", (Carn Lês Boel in Cornwall to Hopton in Norfolk) and "Dance of the Dragon", (Skelligs in Ireland, through Cornwall and away across Europe)

Visit [www.penwithpress.co.uk](http://www.penwithpress.co.uk) for more information and the on-line shop or email [jill@penwithpress.co.uk](mailto:jill@penwithpress.co.uk)

## SPRING INTO SUMMER 2016

Good Friday was early this year (March 25th) for the 11th year of the revived tradition of visiting **Fenton Bebibell** for the annual clear-up of the well and baptising of dollies. However, those who came were rewarded with a lovely sunny day, and a great family atmosphere as a record number of adults and children turned up for the event, giving a flavour of how it must have been in days past when the whole community came together to visit this well on this day. Instead of an orderly dunking of dollies into the well, there was general mayhem as the children all enthusiastically dipped their dolls into the well, which was looking lovely and clear and the water flowing well. The gathering finished with the usual blessing and libation of Cornish mead and cold crossed buns.

*Photo [c] Fuller Hughes*



Meanwhile, on the same day, and reviving the same custom, members of the Betwixt Moot met for their fourth year at **Figgy Dowdy's well** on Carn Marth near Redruth.

May Day eve was a lovely evening for the **Maypole Dance** at Bosavern Community Farm, now run by Andrew Corser, who took over from MM editor and organiser Cheryl Traffon a few years ago. However, May Day itself was wet and overcast, but in the afternoon the **Penwith Pagan Moot Beltane ritual** took place in the newly-constructed mud house at the farm with a procession led by the Beltane Lord and Lady; and in the evening there was a celebration at **The Seed of Life** at Treviscoe (Trencrom), led by Rachel Holder, who invited everyone to bring white Spring flowers for a ceremony at the stone circle, moving through the seasons of the wheel of the year, adding qualities to the bouquets inspired by the elements. The **Penzance May Horns** procession also took place as usual in the evening, with everyone dressed in their seasonal finery and sporting their horns, whistles and drums, accompanied by the Lady of May (Jo Kennedy). Re-introduced in 2009, this revival is now a regular event in the Beltane calendar. Because May 1st was on a Sunday, the **Padstow Obby Oss day** took place on the Bank Holiday Monday 2nd. It started out with rain, but by lunch time the weather had cleared and the sun came out for the rest of the day, as the two Osses weaved their way through the town and met up at the Maypole in the evening. The following Saturday, May 7th, it was the turn of **Helston Flora Day** with the dances and the energetic Hal-an-Tow to welcome in the summer.

The Summer Solstice saw the usual events in Cornwall: the **Midsummer Bonfires** on hilltops from Chapel Carn Brea in West Penwith to Kit Hill near Callington in the east, organised by the Old Cornwall Societies. There were solstice celebrations at the **The Seed of Life**, and Penzance enjoyed Golowan week, with a splendidly colourful and sunny **Mazey Day** on the Saturday.



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

*Cornish Ancient Sites Protection Network*



The 10<sup>th</sup> annual year of walks and talks was another successful weekend, with good weather and a great turnout of people. It began on **Saturday May 28<sup>th</sup>** with a guided walk by **Cheryl Traffon & Lana Jarvis** entitled *Vounder Gogglas: an ancient traders' track*. The walk went from Sancreed Beacon with its two hilltop barrows and continued to Caer Bran hillfort, and then down to Chapel Euny wells, before returning via Grumbla. Nearly 50 people came on the walk, with a similar number for the afternoon walk by **David Giddings** entitled *Round and about the Little Lookout Tor*. Starting from the end of Bosiliack lane, David led people to the Nine Maidens barrow and stone circle and then up to Little Galva to view the recently-discovered propped stone and view frame, then a scramble down to Bosporthenis settlement and Beehive Hut. Due to an indisposition, Paul Bonnington had to cancel his planned evening talk, but **Michelle Brown**, Professor of Medieval Studies, ably stepped into the breach to give a lively illustrated talk on *Protohistoric to Historic: Iron Age and Early Medieval Monuments in West Penwith*.

On the morning of **Sunday May 29<sup>th</sup>** there was a talk by archaeologist and mining expert **Adam Sharpe**, entitled *Mining in Cornwall*, which gave an excellent overview of 4000 years of mining. This was followed in the afternoon by regular presenter **Adrian Rodda** whose poem-walk this year was entitled *In the footsteps of Giants*, which went from Morvah churchtown by a circuitous route up Chûn Downs to the Quoit and the Castle. Along the way Adrian read his new poem about the legendary Tom the Tinker and the giant Denbras. In the evening, the weekend concluded with the informal get-together at the North Inn at Pendeen, where over a pint, **Palden Jenkins** showed his map of alignments in West Penwith and spoke of *The geomantic network in West Penwith*. His talk was far-ranging and really engaged everyone with ideas, suggestions, thoughts and speculations. An excellent finale to what was a most delightful and interesting weekend of walks and talks,

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

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

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

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/groups](http://www.facebook.com/groups) [search for C.A.S.P.N & Lizard Ancient Sites]

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

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

**Report damage at sites:** Tel: 01736-787186 or 01736-787522

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

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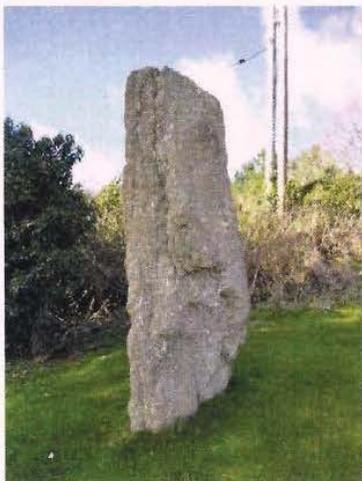
**Sites Clear-Ups:** Tel: 01736-787186 e-mail: [info@cornishancientsites.com](mailto:info@cornishancientsites.com)

## ANCIENT TRACKS

### 11: Castallack Carn

*A series that looks at some pathways to ancient sites in West Penwith that may be the tracks where our ancestors walked. Many of the old tracks exist as the old churchway paths connecting settlements to the parish churches, but parts of them, especially those with tall hedges may define old estate boundaries or are older than those. These deeply sunken tracks, especially those that pass or go to ancient sites, are the essence and heart of this time-worn land.*

An ancient track goes over Castallack Carn (on the plateau above Lamorna) from the small hamlet of Castallack to where it meets the B3315 road. This track runs past two ancient sites, both on its north side. At SW4482 2541 there are the remains of an Iron Age Round, first described by Halliwell in 1847, but subsequently largely destroyed, with only a portion of one of the walls now remaining. But to the west of this, there is a little-known Bronze Age menhir at SW4474 2537, reached by a narrow path leading off the main track, just before the track starts going downhill. This menhir was recorded by Henderson in 1914 [*Notebooks of Parochial Antiquities*, II 72] and photographed by John Michell in 1974 [*The Old Stones of Lands End*] by which time it was already beginning to become overgrown. It measures 1.5m high, 0.46m wide and 0.38m thick, tapering towards the top, and is still visible today, though it is overgrown by ivy and surrounded by vegetation [photo right].



The stone stands on a number of alignments plotted on the new Palden Jenkins Google map:

#21 to The Pipers & Boskenna Gate cross #62 to Brea barrow #112 to Treryn Dinas cliff castle & the Runnel stone.

Recently, MM reader Linda King went to look for the stone, and following the track down to the B3315, she found a tall menhir, presumably modern, standing on the lawn of a house called The Haven [photo left]. There seems to be something about this ancient track that attracts megalithic aficionados of all kinds!

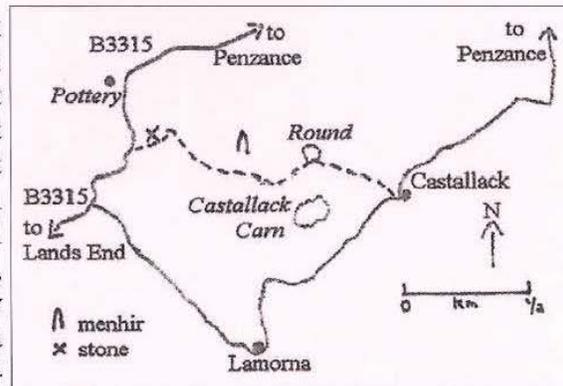


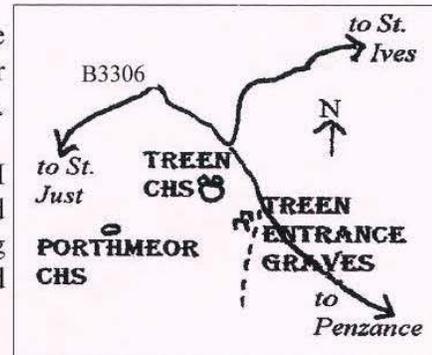
Photo [c] Raymond Cox

## HOME SWEET ANCIENT HOME

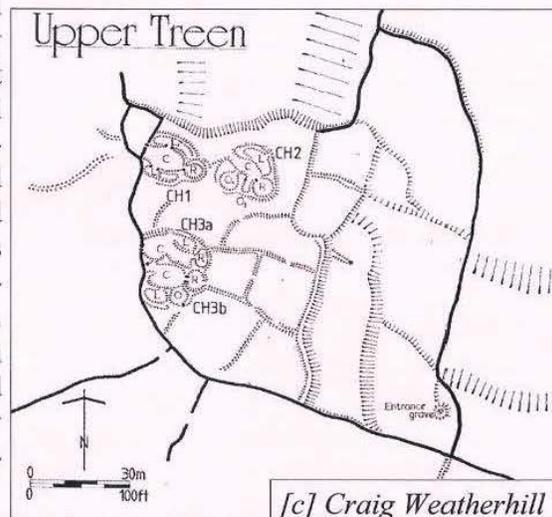
### WHERE OUR ANCESTORS LIVED: 12 - Treen

This is the third of three Courtyard House settlements, all lying in close proximity to each other along the north coastal strip of the West Penwith moors. From west to east they are:

Bosigran at SW423 371 & 428 370 [featured in MM 90], Porthmeor at SW434 371 [featured in MM89] and Treen at SW437 372. Treen lies on a gentle north facing slope and consists of three well-preserved courtyard houses, with the third being unusually complex.



The first of the three [CH1] has a well defined round room, but with grassy overgrown walls; and the second [CH2], just to the east, has quite visible round and oval rooms. The third [CH3] is the largest structure, with two courtyard houses conjoined [CH3a & CH3b], both with courtyards, round rooms and long rooms. All the three houses are westerly facing, unlike most other settlements that have easterly facing entrances. However, the round room and oval room in CH3b also have back doors, with the round room leading out into a small contemporary field, or garden plot. There is also a well-developed field system nearby.



At the site itself no fogou has been found - unlike Porthmeor nearby (and possibly at Bosigran, Trevean and Bosulow Trehylls settlements further west). However, a short distance to the SE of the settlement lies the Treen chambered tombs, dating from a much earlier period. The inhabitants of the settlement would have been very aware of them, and of the spirits of their own ancestors guarding and watching over the land where they lived.



Photo [c] Paul Blades

This is the final site for this feature on ancient settlements. The other two large CH settlements, Carn Euny & Chysauster have been covered in MM67 & MM78 respectively.

## THE ST. JUST BULL

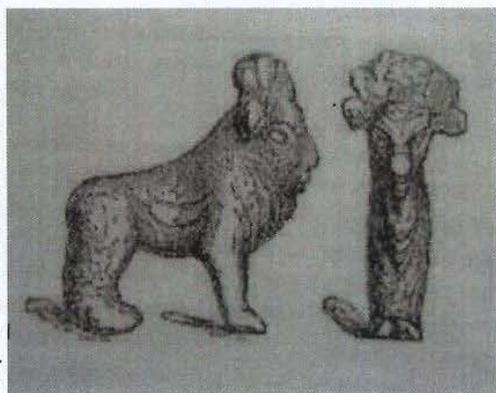
by Alan Crutch

Sitting quietly in the Egyptian Room at the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro is a small somewhat corroded bronze bull that has spent most of its life in Penwith and whose story, like so much else from this region, is still something of a mystery. The bull was reputedly found in January 1832 in the vicarage grounds in St Just by a workman who had dismantled a stone hedge, presumably as part of the extension and alterations to the vicarage by the Rev John Buller. The town tripled in population in the 1830's and this was a time of considerable new building work in the town. In R D Penhallurick's book *Tin in Antiquity* it is reported this workman was digging a trench for subsequent planting when he struck several large stones which turned out to be part of an ancient built structure believed to have been burnt down because of the considerable amount of ash inside. Within the ashes he found a small bronze bull a little less than 2 inches tall and 2 inches wide which he took home where it remained until his death.



*St. Just bronze bull  
[c] Royal Cornwall Museum*

His widow sold the bull to the local parish tithe collector who showed it to the Rev Buller who seems to have been something of a local antiquarian. Whether the buyer alerted him to the fact that it had been removed from his vicarage land is not recorded. The bull did though shortly afterwards became the subject of much discussion between the vicar and other local antiquarians. The vicar believed it to be Greek whereas the others argued it to be Phoenician and evidence of a Bronze Age tin trade with this part of Cornwall. Soon thereafter the Royal Cornwall Institute became involved. They too could not agree and, via the Duke of Northumberland's connections, the little bull found its way to the British Museum in around 1849. This stimulated a lengthy paper written by a Mr S Birch in the 25<sup>th</sup> Journal of the Archaeological Institute under the title 'Observations on a bronze figure of a bull found in Cornwall'. He noted: "At the feet were small pins or plugs to affix it to a stand or base, either a pedestal or the top of a small standard of which it may have been the decoration.... On the head is a disc apparently divided into 6 portions and on the right side of the body....is engraved the lunar crescent".



*Drawing by Birch in mid 19thC*

The article is lengthy but any Phoenician connection is firmly dismissed with the words: “The fact of no object that can be satisfactorily identified with the Phoenicians having yet been found in Britain and the legitimate doubts as to the direct maritime commerce between Tyre and the coast of the Cassiterides would create considerable caution in receiving a newly found monument as of Phoenician origin”. The author then identifies the type of horns and general shape of the bull as Egyptian and describes what was then known of the Apis Bull cult in Egypt. The mythology is complex but, in essence, what I believe he is saying is that a bull with a sun disc and feathers on its head was then thought to represent the male and female aspects of Osiris. The bull represents the male and the feathers (of a vulture!) represent the female aspects with the solar disc indicating the God’s divinity. He also reports that crescents were inscribed on the side of bulls dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and Apis Bulls were first shown on coins issued in Alexandria in 93 AD in the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Hadrian being Emperor in Rome. The Cornish bull was therefore attributed by Mr Birch on behalf of the Museum as Roman from the Empire period to where the Apis cult had migrated from Egypt via Greece “by one of its votaries both fanatic and mendicant, who hovered around the legions of the Empire and the villages of the provinces”.

To say the opinion was not well received is something of an understatement. One Dr Barham presented a paper to the Cornish Institute stating, in effect, that we know better. In his words: “The members of the Institution’s interest in this Cornish Antiquity must naturally be stronger than that of strangers to the county”! The arguments in support of the Cornish maritime connections with the Phoenicians were set out at length in the article while the bull remained silently in its new home in the museum at Truro. Local interest, however, seems to have remained strong and was expressed again by another vicar of St Just who wrote to the Truro museum in the 1920’s with the suggestion that in view of better knowledge of the Phoenicians and their extensive trading network that had been discovered since the 1850’s, the bull may well have been brought to St Just by a follower of the Mithras bull cult engaged in buying tin in the locality. Dutifully the museum sent the bull to the British Museum again, who replied with a letter from their expert saying they were of the view that the bull was Romano-Egyptian from the period of Hadrian and this is the attribution given to the bull today.

I have used the internet to look at photos of hundreds of Apis bulls that reside in various museums across the world. The St Just bull is different from almost all of them. Generally the sun disc is circular and clearly identifiable. The only similar one I have found is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art where it is also attributed to 1-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE workmanship. However, there seems to be no crescent on the Los Angeles bull, but from a photo recently supplied to me by the British Museum it seems there is not one on the St. Just bull either! Obviously Birch’s drawing was fanciful in that respect.



*Bull from Los Angeles Museum*

What intrigues me is what was the bull doing in St Just and why was it found in a pile of ash inside a stone structure, if, indeed, this story is true? Is it possible that the bull formed part of the grave goods of a Bronze Age or later burial and was intimately connected in some way with the deceased, or was it a ritual deposit unconnected with burial? If neither why was it just abandoned as it seems it was just lying in ash and could have been retrieved or picked up by anyone if the theory of the original building burning down is correct?

I understand the claim there may have been a direct Phoenician maritime trading connection with Cornwall is now discredited. The Bronze age tin trade with the Mediterranean is now thought to have been across the English Channel, then via an overland route through France to the Mediterranean possibly from St Michaels Mount. But there certainly was early trade in tin from Cornwall as evidenced by the discovery of Cornish tin in some of the most iconic Continental items produced in both the Bronze and Iron ages (like the Nebra Sky disc [*see MM79 p.5*] and the Gundestrup cauldron [*see MM66 p.16 and note below*]). So the presence of someone from the Mediterranean regions (including Phoenicians) in Penwith in the Bronze Age is still quite possible (although I admit it is hard to see how the bull might be evidence of this!) By and large the Roman Empire seems to have obtained its tin from Spain until the supplies ran out after 200 AD. The Empire's tin trade with Cornwall seems to have grown extensively in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE (the wealth arising from which may explain the sudden appearance of the Courtyard Houses in Penwith at around this time). Maybe the bull was in the possession of a buyer from that period? It is even possible that it had been traded with a local Courtyard House occupier for tin!

I am still investigating but it is interesting to note that the bull still seems to exert an effect on St Just. Local artist Kurt Jackson has, in the last few years, been inspired to make a very attractive sculpture of the bull. He mined some of his own tin from Cot Valley (with permission from the Duchy of Cornwall and Natural England) to create his own copy of the bull, which may be seen at [www.kurtjackson.com](http://www.kurtjackson.com).

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2. 'Observations on a bronze figure of a bull found in Cornwall' S Birch 25<sup>th</sup> Journal of the Archaeological Society
3. Abstract Dr C Barnham from the Journal of the Royal Cornish Institute 7<sup>th</sup> November 1850
4. Correspondence from file at Royal Cornwall Museum/Library

### Note

The Gundestrup cauldron is composed almost entirely of silver, but there is also a substantial amount of gold for the gilding, tin for the solder and glass for the figures' eyes. Recent research has shown that all of the samples of tin soldering are consistent in lead-isotope composition with tin ingots from Cornwall. The tin used for soldering the plates and bowl together, as well as in the glass eyes, is very uniform in its high purity.

## TREWERN - Another menhir with breast carvings?

Following on from the discovery of possible breast carvings on Boscawen-ûn centre stone by Tom Goskar [see *MM90 p.20*] researcher Paul Blades believes that he has found something similar on the Trewern standing stone, which stands on a farm of that name north of Newbridge in West Penwith [SW4320 3208]. He says: "I had a look at the stone, with Tom Goskar's findings in mind, and low and behold on its north western side there are very clear manmade carved 'breasts'. They are identical to the clearest one at Boscawen-ûn, but this time there is one above the other not side by side, Between them but to the west (making a triangle) is another 'cup' with a little 'breast' inside it and a ring around it [all shown by the purple arrows in the photo]. The north eastern side also has something breastlike, but larger and lower".

The HER entry for the stone says: "The stone is of granite with protruding nodules of black tourmaline and white quartz which, it is suggested, have been artificially enhanced to seem more prominent". MM asked Ann Preston-Jones of Historic England (Cornwall) for her impressions and she said: "Paul Blades' excellent photos capture the stone and carvings really well. I have to say I find it hard to believe that these represent breasts when the carvings are so far apart and non-horizontal, but I'll leave it to the experts to decide about that!" Perhaps Tom Goskar can be persuaded to try photogrammetry on it?



*Trewern stone - showing nodules*

## ANOTHER CUPMARKED STONE IDENTIFIED

Following on from the feature on Rock Art in *MM90*, another prehistoric cupmarked stone has come to MM's attention:-

**Treganhoe** [SW4312 2941]. A small cup-marked stone was discovered on the edge of Drift Reservoir by Simon Camm in July 2010, when the waters were low after a period of low rainfall. Evidently this area was visited in the Mesolithic period, as a number of finds (arrowhead, scraper, blades and flakes) were found here in 1989. To the south of this location there is a holed stone at 4340 2881, and south of this the Drift standing stones.



## ‘NEW’ SITES ON THE SCILLIES DOWSED

The Community Archaeology Group (CAG) on the Isles of Scilly, led by archaeologists Katharine Sawyer and Charlie Johns, have been doing excellent work clearing some of the prehistoric sites that have not seen the light of day for decades [see *MM89 p.14-15*]. On a recent visit by some West Penwith dowsers, some of these sites were visited and dowsed, probably for the first time, with some interesting results.

The first site visited was on the island of Gugh, where CAG had recently cleared an entrance grave on the top of Carn Valla [SV8886 0847]. This was just uphill from Obadiah’s Barrow [SV8880 0853], but with magnificent views from its higher point. The mound was 7.3m in diameter, and was surrounded by good sized kerbstones. The broken stones of the entrance grave were still in place, but no entrance itself could be discerned. However, dowsing revealed that it originally faced NE, midsummer solstice sunrise, which meant it may have been paired with Obadiah’s Barrow, whose entrance also faced NE. Perhaps two different groups would come to each barrow, or perhaps they moved across the landscape from one to the other at the summer solstice. There was also an interesting configuration of stones on the south side of the monument at the top of a steep slope which dowsed as the original walkway entrance to the site. The site was certainly ‘humming’ with energy, and an 8-fold radial of lines were dowsed, with each spoke going to a different site or significant rock on the islands. This is similar to the energy pattern found at Bants Carn on St.Marys during a recent visit by Jonnie Taylor [see *MM89 p.20*].



*Carn Valla entrance grave on Gugh*

Because of the incoming tide, there was no time to re-visit the stone rows on the other side of the island, that CEMG had visited in 2001. At the time, these had been defined by the archaeologists as stone walls, and it was a major part of that visit to discover that they looked far more like stone rows to us than stone walls. Andy Norfolk wrote an article about this at the time entitled “Scillonian stone rows on Gugh: smoke and mirrors” [*MM47 p.16-20*], and there the matter remained and was largely forgotten - except by your MM editor! We met up with Katharine Sawyer on our visit this time, and were astounded to learn that she too believed that they were stone rows and not stone walls! So upon our return we contacted the archaeologist Sandy Gerrard, who by coincidence had just set up a web site showing all the stone rows identified in Britain [at [www.stonerows.wordpress.com](http://www.stonerows.wordpress.com)]. He was very interested, and Katharine has promised to let him have full details of the ones on Gugh. No other stone rows have been identified on the Scillies (except for the anomalous feature on the beach of St.Martins, that paradoxically may itself be a field wall!), so this would be a real discovery for the islands, and a vindication of our finds in 2001. Everything that goes around comes around again eventually!

On our final day, we confined ourselves to St. Marys and the Halangy Down area, where a little-known entrance grave had recently been uncovered by CAG. This lay at the bottom of the Downs at SV9096 1241, and was like the little sister of the main Bants Carn entrance grave at the top of the slope [at SV9100 1231]. Although in a more ruined state, the 10m diameter mound could clearly be seen, merging into an apparent lychet on its uphill side. The passageway, covered by 2 capstones, was intact and was a good 5m long, and like Bants Carn it too was orientated NE-SW. Dowsing here produced some very interesting results. Both dowsers had a strong reaction that Bants Carn on the hill above had been used primarily for male burials, while this Halangy Down one was used for female burials. Also, originally we know that the much later (Romano-Celtic period) Bants Carn courtyard house village settlement had originally been on the flat ground below this entrance grave, but that when the sea began to rise in the early centuries CE and inundate the site, it was moved further up the slope *inbetween* the 2 entrance graves to where it now stands. Dowsing revealed that this was done deliberately, as the area between the two entrance graves was perceived to be ‘hallowed ground’ sacred to the ancestors who had built the two entrance graves. The inhabitants of the settlement would have been enclosed on both the northern and southern sides with the entrance graves of their ancestors.



[Above] Halangy Downs entrance grave  
[Below] The entrance grave (bottom left)  
with the Settlement (centre right) and  
Bants Carn entrance grave (centre top)

Finally, we went to visit the Halangy Downs menhir nearby at SV9109 1254, which is not listed in Gary Robinson’s ‘complete’ list of menhirs in *The Prehistoric Island Landscape of Scilly* [BAR, 2007], but does have an HER entry. It was in a field to the north at the bottom of the Downs, dominated by a very tall mast on the hill above, a strange juxtaposition of the very old and the relatively new. It was an attractively shaped stone, measuring nearly 2m high and up to 1m wide. As the crow flies, it is not far from the Long Rock menhir on Macfarland Down [at SV9136 1240], and an energy line was dowsed running between the two menhirs. It provided a fitting end to an interesting visit of discoveries on these magical isles.



## KING ARTHUR'S HALL - GATEWAY TO THE STARS

by Paul Broadhurst

In recent issues of Meyn Mamvro various ideas about the purpose of the enigmatic Neolithic or Bronze Age structure known as King Arthur's Hall, or King Arthur's Hunting Lodge as it is also known, have been suggested.\* Set in a remote part of windswept Bodmin Moor close to a couple of ruined stone circles, its splendid isolation and unique features set it apart from other sites and give it a tantalizing air of the mysterious. So far no-one seems to have come up with a reasonable explanation of why it is there or what it may have been built for. Questions hang over it like a fog of moorland mist. Was it an animal pound? Was it once roofed over? Why is it rectangular when prehistoric people invariably laid out their buildings in the round? Perhaps the most perplexing question of all is why was it built above a natural spring, which often makes it look something like a Neolithic paddling pool?



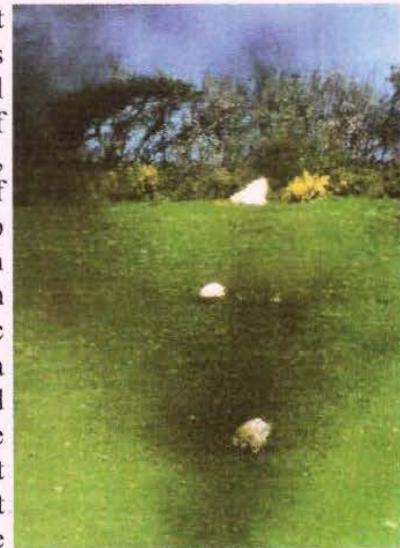
This stone-lined enclosure, banked up with soil on the outside, has intrigued me ever since I first came across it some forty years ago and, like everyone else, wondered what on earth it was for. Suggestions of a prosaic use seemed inadequate, and couldn't explain the uncanny feeling of the place, for this site has a powerful atmosphere. It was only whilst researching the book *The Secret Land*, which explores the connection between the mythology and monuments of Cornwall and ancient starlore that I believe we finally found out why it had been constructed some 5000 or so years ago. If we are right, its original purpose was far from the ordinary with every facet of its design and setting chosen with great care. According to our research, it was nothing less than a precision scientific instrument.

The clue to its true function is surely in its orientation, set out along a north/south axial alignment, which must be fundamental to its original use. Despite its ruinous state, it points almost exactly towards True North as one enters through the 'gateway' stones positioned in the south-west corner. Another clue is in the name, even though the King Arthur of popular tradition is said to have lived during the Dark Ages, many thousands of years after it was built. Why, I asked myself, are so many Neolithic monuments on Bodmin Moor named after Britain's legendary hero? This is another of those questions that has puzzled me down the years. Only when realizing that the name *Arthur*, in the old Cornish/Brythonic language, meant *Great Bear*, did I begin to understand something of the mystery, and that the Arthurian mythos was far older than popularly supposed.

- See for example 'Decoding King Arthur's Hall' MM88 p.12-16, and 'King Arthur's Hall: the dowsers perspective' MM89 p.9-11

To anyone who has ever gazed up at the sky on a clear night the famous seven stars of the Great Bear constellation, or Ursa Major, are amongst the most striking and easily recognisable of all. They endlessly circle the celestial pole, today marked by Polaris in the tail of the Little Bear, Ursa Minor, whose shape is amazingly similar to its mythological parent. Because of the significance of these two constellations to those who lived their lives under the canopy of the stars, they accrued a powerful body of myth as heavenly guardians and guides to those both on land or sea. As the ultimate symbols of order and cosmic harmony, never straying from their course, there is much evidence to show that they gave rise to a widespread tradition of Bear-Kings whose function was to bring this heavenly order down to earth. Because of this, these kings adopted the title *Arthur*, or *Great Bear*. This idea, which I believe is fundamental to understanding the mystery behind the myth of King Arthur, is explored more fully in *The Secret Land*, where Tintagel, Arthur's legendary birthplace, is shown to be a place uniquely associated with the Great Bear constellation.

The name King Arthur's Hall speaks of this ancient polar tradition and, I would suggest, explains why it is aligned towards the very centre of the heavens, the celestial pole. Is there any other evidence to support this train of thought? Coincidentally, a local farmer near Boscastle, Kevin Gibbs, had told me over a pint in the pub of a row of three white quartz boulders running up the side of a steep valley near St Juliot's Church which could be seen from miles away [*photo right*]. On investigation with Robin Heath, the astronomer and surveyor of megalithic landscapes, we found that the topmost one, shaped like a giant arrowhead pointing towards the sky, had toppled from its original position. We also noted that being made of white spar they would have been especially visible at night. Checking their azimuth showed that, although at least one had definitely been displaced, they pointed in the general direction of True North.

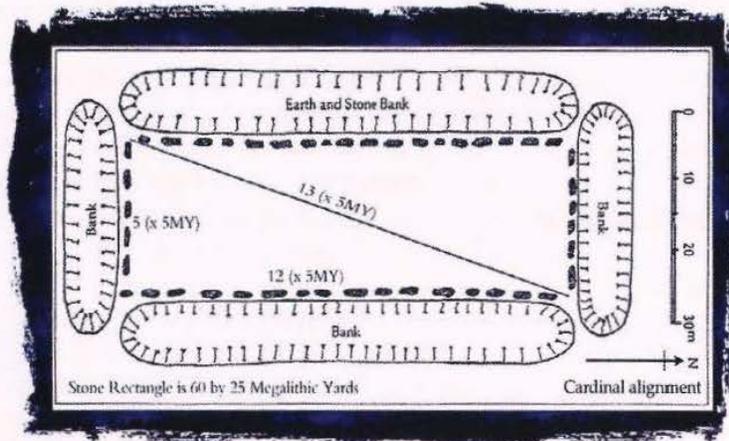


*Row of quartz boulders*

Normally the circumpolar stars of the Great Bear never rise or set on the horizon because they are so high in the sky, but here, because of the steepness of the slope, the stones could have acted as a primitive telescope to define where the stars of the Bear touched the Earth, surely something that would have been of astronomical and perhaps mythological significance. Further confirmation that we may have been on to something was revealed when we checked their longitude – it was, at  $4^{\circ} 38' 16''$  W, almost exactly the same as King Arthur's Hall, many miles distant. This could of course be a coincidence, but then we found that when projected further south down into Cornwall there were at least two other significant ancient sites located exactly on the same north/south alignment: Old Cardinham Castle, a hilltop fort, and Druid's Hill at Boconnoc, with its 20 foot high granite cross and eight radiating pathways like a Wheel of the Year. It began to look as though this north/south axis was an ancient meridian, and that King Arthur's Hall may originally have been built as an early observatory.

With all this in mind we set off for King Arthur's Hall on a cold windy day with theodolite and other heavy surveying paraphernalia so that Robin could undertake a survey of the site to see what might reveal itself. A couple of hours later, with hands frozen by the biting wind, he had all the data he needed, and his conclusions were striking.

The inner megalithic wall of upright stones, he found, were set out in the 'Pythagorean' proportions of a 5:12 rectangle and had been built according to the ancient measure of the megalithic yard (2.72 feet), a unit found throughout ancient sites in Britain. When a diagonal was drawn from corner to corner, this rectangle was thus constr-



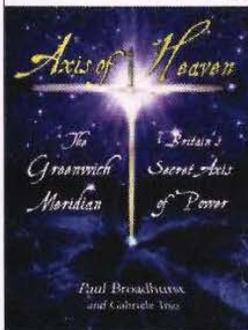
Survey by Robin Heath [c] Broadhurst & Heath

ucted of two 5:12:13 triangles. This was exactly the same ratio employed by the builders of the original bluestone rectangle laid out at Stonehenge, the so-called 'station stones'. The 5:12:13 ratio is notable because it has encrypted within it much crucial astronomical information, including the 'sacred marriage' of the soli-lunar cycles of 12 and 13 months. This simple geometry, known to have been employed by ancient astronomers, is easily laid out using a knotted rope and can be used, amongst other things, as an eclipse predictor, unlocking the secrets of motion of the Sun and Moon. Here at King Arthur's Hall this knowledge was set in stone.

At last, we felt, we were coming closer to understanding why King Arthur's Hall may have been built. According to our findings it was an early observatory whose very proportions were encoded with important astronomical data, with the name echoing its function. But there was one last tantalising piece of the puzzle remaining. Why was it full of water? Like other observatories, it set a meridian or polar axis in the landscape and, in an age before telescopes, we realised the builders had used a simple but amazingly accurate method for observing the transit of stars as they passed across it, giving insights into the size and rotation of the Earth. A tried and tested way of measuring these transits without optical aids in antiquity was to set a vertical pole aligned to True North in a pool of water. In this way the exact moment of any star's transit across the meridian could be verified not only in the sky but by its reflection. This sky-mirror gave far greater accuracy than employing a 'pole' set in the earth as an earthly counterpart of the cosmic axis. In effect it created a type of early reflecting telescope. The pool was set deeply in the ground and surrounded by a raised bank, which would have created a level horizon (essential for observing the rising and setting of stars) as well as minimising the effect of ripples on the pool created by strong winds.

The result of our investigations revealed that King Arthur's Hall was nothing less than a sophisticated prehistoric observatory, built by astronomer/surveyors who had a profound understanding of the cosmos in which they lived. They also, it seems, had the intelligence to encode this knowledge in what we today call mythology, which is full of cosmological references, especially to King Arthur, or the Great Bear. It is this constellation and its circumpolar neighbours, which include the Little Bear, Arcturus the Bear-keeper and Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown, which symbolise cosmic order in the heavens and eternally revolve around the centre of the original Round Table of the Stars – the celestial vault of the awe-inspiring night sky which so transfixed our distant ancestors.

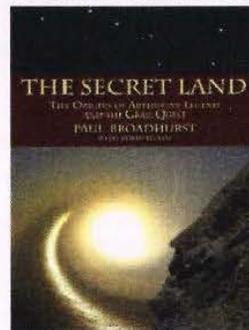
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## WELLS CORNER

*A regular feature on Cornwall's holy wells*

### Garry Wells [SX4185 4880]

On the Holy Wells of Cornwall Facebook page, Mark Camp posted an interesting reference by Robert Hunt in *Popular Romances of the West of England* to a legend about Saint German, who was hounded out of his church by an angry mob and fled to the cliffs on Rame Head in SE Cornwall. His tears of grief formed a holy well, and shortly afterwards the mob followed him with stones, causing him to be transported by a heavenly chariot to other lands, where his good deeds were better appreciated! The location of this holy well on the peninsula is not known, but Mark Camp suggests it could be Garry Wells on the west side of Rame Head, above and behind a boggy pool with a small wooden bridge. The stone at the well's entrance has 'UBIQUE' carved on it, Latin for 'everywhere' [*photo above*]. Craig Weatherhill suggests that 'Gary' might be a corruption of Germanus, or Saint German himself, so this is a good candidate for St. German's well, formed by his tears as he ran from the angry mob.



## CORNISH FOLKLORE

*A new column by folklorist Alex Langstone*



**Looe Island** was once central to the illicit operations of local smugglers and is home to some little known folklore and legend. The island was originally called St Michael's Island, and an ancient chapel once stood at its summit. The folklore of the isle suggests romantic tales of lost caves and a secret tunnel linking it to the mainland. Some years ago sisters Roselyn and Evelyn Atkins, famous owner-residents of the island, received an astonishing letter from a clergyman in Cumbria explaining that he was in possession of what appeared to be a genuine treasure map, with a clear 'X' marking the spot. He sent the map to the Atkins sisters and for years they kept the map, eventually deciding to try to dowse the spot. They did receive some powerful indications that something was buried there and when excavated a large stone was found buried at the spot. Maybe the stone itself is the real treasure?



*Dowsing the buried stone on the Island*

On the 15th of September 1900 *The Cornish Times* reported that '*Remarkable discoveries at Looe Island*' had been made, giving a description of the findings and promising a full detailed article in the next issue, but no such report ever appeared - fuelling conspiracy theorists and treasure hunters curiosity in what, if anything, was actually found beneath the ancient islands rocky shores. The original report that appeared in the newspaper told the story of two young men who had become excited and intrigued with stories of smuggling and treasure whilst on holiday in Looe. Having nothing to occupy their time, these two gentlemen (Mr R. Lawson and Mr F.A. Somers) gained permission to visit the island to investigate further. What they allegedly found was described at the time as astonishing. Hidden deep underneath the island was a huge cave and shortly after this initial discovery an adjoining one was discovered, which was described as resembling the celebrated Etruscan caves at Clusia in central Italy.

The investigators quickly suspected that they had accidentally stumbled on a discovery unknown to even the old smugglers themselves and it was decided to make further excavations, where the most remarkable results were obtained, according to the newspaper report of the time. Lawson and Somers went on to describe what they had found in more detail. At a distance of about 18ft below the surface, Looe Island was nothing but an extensive ramification of caves. Everything pointed towards the fact that these caves were originally above the ground as many of the larger ones - of which there were said to be dozens - were built of brick, similar to that used on the Hannafore Estate and probably obtained from the same source. They were evidently very ancient, probably prehistoric structures, several having collapsed over their long history. The style of their 'architecture' was said to be that of a very early pre-mesopelagic or Etruscan design (around 800BCE). The last paragraph of The Cornish Times article stated that further important developments were expected, and that the excavations and finds would be thrown open to the public, and that a follow up, more detailed article was to be produced in the next edition of the paper. However, this never materialised, and nothing was ever heard of these extravagant claims again. It is a complete mystery and one that has entered the folkloric records of the island's mysterious past.

The island has its own ghost stories too, though these may have been invented by the smugglers to keep the people of Looe town away. One of the ghosts is that of a dark-skinned man, seen wandering the island with blood covering his face. One of the houses on the island is reputed to be haunted by an aristocratic gentleman with grey hair and beautiful hands with very long fingers, which materialises from an ominous blue glowing light. This apparition was first documented in the mid nineteenth century and first appeared after a local dressmaker was visiting and had spent the day sitting on an old seat on the top of the island. The seat was backed by furze and had a wonderful view. However, whilst sitting there sewing, she had some very strange sensations of restlessness and unease. Some years later a skeleton was unearthed by the seat. It was the remains of a tall man with long fingers. Many visitors have reported witnessing a glowing blue light, which manifests after dark and glows eerily before suddenly disappearing, as if it was never really there. The ecclesiastical history of the island has a persistent legend that Joseph of Arimathea visited with the young Jesus. It is said that Joseph left Jesus on the small beach whilst he traded with Cornish Tin Merchants on the mainland. It is highly likely that this legend came from the monks at Glastonbury Abbey, as the island was in its possession from 1144 to 1289, and a similar story is told of Jesus and Joseph visiting there.

*Photograph of Looe island [c] [www.looe.org](http://www.looe.org)*

*Next time: The folklore of Tintagel.*

*For more Cornish Folklore see Facebook page moderated by Alex.*

## PROFESSOR CHARLES THOMAS 26/4/1928 - 7/4/2016

Professor Charles Thomas, probably Cornwall's greatest archaeologist, has died, aged 87. Born in Camborne, he was educated at Winchester College and Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and received a Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology from the University of London. From 1957 to 1967 he was Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh; from 1967 to 1971 he was Professor of Archaeology at the University of Leicester; and from 1970-1973 he was President of the Council for British



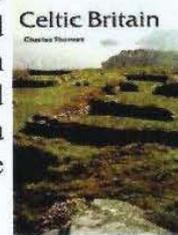
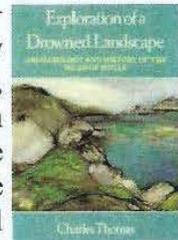
Archaeology. He returned to Cornwall, where he founded and established the Institute of Cornish Studies and launched and edited its journal *Cornish Studies*. He was President of the Cornwall Archaeological Society from 1984-88, and became an Emeritus Professor of the University of Exeter in 1993. Amongst his archaeological work, he was Director of Excavations at Gwithian from 1949-1963, and Tintagel churchyard in 1990. He was the author of a number of important archaeological books, including *Explorations of a drowned landscape* on the Isles of Scilly (which first postulated the idea of a Goddess of the islands \*Sillina), and *Shall these mute stones speak?* on inscribed stones. In recent years he was Patron of the Carwynnen Quoit project, which crowned a lifetime of achievements.

As well as his academic standing, he also had time for amateur and alternative archaeology, and was a friend to *Meyn Mamvro* from its beginning, contributing several articles over the years, and being a firm subscriber throughout. His contributions to the magazine included: 'Tintagel's Sacred Site' [no.13 p4-5]; Guide to Inscribed Stones [no.19 p11-14, no.20 p11-14]; The Boslow Stone [no.30 p.10-11]; Arthur? What Arthur?! [no.38 p8-9]; and Carwynnen Quoit: not a tomb but a temple? [no.85 p.11], each of them original and thought-provoking articles. His interest in 'alternative' ideas is also shown by a talk that he gave to the Cornish Earth Mysteries Group in 1991 entitled 'Holes in Space & other Fortean items - selected reminiscences of a field archaeologist'.

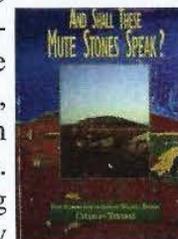
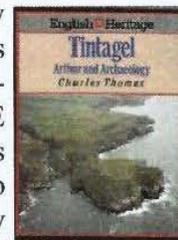
On a personal level, I [CS] met up with him on a number of occasions over the years, and always came away from those encounters with a feeling of being liked and valued by him. From time to time I would receive a phone call, usually after the publication of the latest issue of MM, when he would comment - often quite forcibly! - on something that had caught his attention or piqued his interest. Only last year, he was instrumental in putting me in touch with his brother Nick Thomas, who helped us with information and research into Rosemergy's lost stone circle [see MM89 p.3]. He was an extremely intelligent and personable man, who always retained a strong sense of his Cornishness. He leaves his wife, the novelist Jessica Mann, and two sons and two daughters, and will be very much missed by all who knew him from all walks of life.

## CHARLES THOMAS: 30+ years of innovative research

Charles Thomas' canon of principal published work spans some 30+ years, coinciding with the duration of *Meyn Mamvro*. There were some early rather limited publications about early Christianity in Britain and Ireland, including a Guide to Christian sites in West Penwith (1974), but it was in 1985 that a major publisher (Batsford) brought out his influential work on the Isles of Scilly: *Explorations of a Drowned Landscape*. Until this point, there had been nothing like this published on the islands: it was an archaeological work, that also included research from geology, folklore and language, to present a complete and vivid picture of the development of these 'blessed isles'. Furthermore, it went beyond conventional research to show how in Romano-Celtic times, the islands had been on an active sea route, centered on the off-island of Nor-Nour, where a Goddess called, perhaps \*Sil, \*Silla or \*Sillina, would have been worshipped. The connection of that to the Goddess Sulis (Minerva) at Bath was also suggested.



The next year (1986) saw another important book published by Charles. *Celtic Britain* was his contribution to the series 'Ancient Peoples and Places', edited by Glyn Daniel, and it was a scholarly, yet very accessible, account of Britain between the departure of the Romans around 400CE and the establishment of the English kingdoms in the late 7th century. As befitted a good Cornishman, Charles devoted a large section of the book to 'Early Cornwall' and the Kings of Dumnonia, material that was not readily available elsewhere. This included a look at Tintagel, a subject that was to occupy him for the next decade as he led an excavation of Tintagel churchyard from 1990 onwards, and published a guide book for English Heritage entitled *Tintagel: Arthur and Archaeology* in 1993. Of course, being Charles, it was much more than a guidebook, as it examined the historical information and myth about the site, and made some original and creative suggestions. These included an idea that the natural feature on the plateau, known as King Arthur's Footprint, could have been used as an inauguration site for the early kings of Cornwall. Charles' expertise in Tintagel came to the foreground again in 1999, when English Heritage found a slate at the site with the word 'Artognov' scratched on it and announced that it was connected to the name 'Arthur'. Charles was furious and wrote a scathing article for MM in which he said that Artognou and Arthur were no more connected than George, Geronimo and Geraldine might have been!



In the 1990s Charles became more interested in Dark Age (post-Roman) inscribed stones and published his magnum opus on the subject: *And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?* (1994). This was followed by *Silent in the Shroud: a 7thC inscription from Wales* (1999), and then *Christian Celts: cracking the code of 'Dark Age' tombstones* (2003) which left many archaeologists perplexed and puzzled. As always, Charles was ahead of the game, and will always be remembered for his original ideas and creative research.

## 10 YEARS AGO

### *Delving into the pages of MM from the past*

The 20th anniversary issue of Meyn Mamvro [no.61 - Autumn 2006] had a supplement celebrating 20 years of MM, and articles on the Mesolithic period ('Hunter-Gatherer Stations in West Penwith' by Rory Te'Tigo) and the Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods. Recent research by archaeologists was beginning to reveal that these prehistoric peoples constructed their sites in relationship to significant hills and tors and landscape features, and that these places would have been seen as places of the ancestors and a focus for ceremonial activities. This of course was something that MM had been espousing for the previous 20 years, but it was good to see the archaeologists finally 'getting on board'!

Examples given in this issue included an excavation on Stannon Downs china clay area, where Andy Jones and other archaeologists found that the area had begun to be cleared of woodland in the early Neolithic period, punctuated by clearings, perhaps linked to pathways. Finds of flints and pottery sherds indicated that there was at least seasonal activity here, and it was suggested that at times communities would congregate at Rough Tor enclosure for ceremonial activity. Because it had become a sacred place, a stone circle was built there towards the end of the period.



*Stannon stone circle*

Another example was from an excavation at Roche Rock, where ritual deposits were found, including pottery, flints, quartz stones and a quern. Dick Cole & Andy Jones suggested that they were placed there as offerings to the spirits or deities, which were felt to reside in the rock. The Rock itself may have been thought to have the profile of a stone head, resembling the statues of Easter Island. They added: "People are likely to have regarded the landscape as being the creation of spirits, gods or ancestors, and it is likely that stories, myths and legends would have grown up around landscape features. Places such as Roche Rock were perceived as powerful liminal points, where spirits or beings from other worlds could affect the lives and well-being of the community". The ubiquity of hazelnuts in the ritual pits suggested that the Rock may have been visited around Harvest time, perhaps as they say "by elders, or ritual specialists, to venerate the spirits of the Rock".



*Roche Rock*

## 20 YEARS AGO

*Delving into the pages of MM from the past*

A new type of megalithic site was reported in MM30 (Spring/Summer 1996). First called a 'pseudo-quoit', and later a 'propped stone', the first one was identified at Leskernick Hill on Bodmin Moor by archaeologist Peter Herring. It consisted of a flat stone about 2.5 metres (8 ft) across at its widest point, sloping downwards and held up with 2 boulders placed underneath. It sat on a flat outcrop of rock on the top of the rise of the hill on the NE side of Bodmin Moor at SX1827 8019.



Leskernick Hill was a sacred landscape to Neolithic and Bronze Age peoples, with the remains of an extensive settlement on the slopes of the hill, and the site of two stone circles and a stone row below. The propped stone would have been an important part of that ceremonial landscape, and Peter Herring and others noticed that a long low grassy mound about 1 mile away to the SW (at SX1903 7955) would have been a perfect place to have watched the summer solstice sun set into the notch of the propped stone.



[above] Leskernick propped stone © MM  
[below] midsummer sunset © Chris Tilley

He passed the details of the site over to the Royal Greenwich Observatory in London, requesting that they check whether in fact this could have been observed in the prehistoric past. Some time later they replied with their findings: that a person standing on the long cairn would have seen the sun set in a perfect hemisphere behind the stone in 3700 BCE, a date that fits with the building of many monuments in the Neolithic period.

Once this propped stone had been identified, CAS President Tony Blackman enthusiastically took up the idea and, with his Young Archaeologists Club, started to look for more such stones on Bodmin Moor. In an article in MM49 (Autumn 2002), he identified others on Kilmar Tor, Roughtor, and Twelve Mens Moor, as well as one on Carn Galva in West Penwith. He further observed that many of these stones had been purposely constructed to provide viewpoints or viewframes over neighbouring hills and tors. Later, the amateur archaeologist Roger Farnworth also started investigating propped stones and viewframes, and together with Peter Herring, found a propped stone on Carburrow Tor (called the Cannon Stone) with a framed view of Brown Willy and Rough Tor [see MM85 p.19]. Propped stones have now generally been accepted by archaeologists, since the discovery of that first one on Leskernick Hill some twenty years ago.

## 30 YEARS AGO

*Delving into the pages of MM from the past*

In the first issue of *Meyn Mamvro* the Pipers Tune column, which was to be a regular p.24 feature of miscellaneous news items that did not fit in elsewhere [now revived on ibc], had an interesting piece on the radioactive properties of stone circles in Cornwall. It said: “*The Ley Hunter* magazine no.100 featured an article on Radiation at megalithic sites which dealt with Alan Bleakley’s geigerteller readings on the Cornish environment and ancient sites. Background radiation was, as might be expected in this ‘granite kingdom’, approximately double that of other areas outside Cornwall, and readings within a fogou were as high as 80/90 minute compared with background (again not unexpected because of the enclosed granitic environment). At some stone circles something unexpected happened though. Within the Nine Maidens, some readings were much **less** (than half) than that of background, others equal or higher to background. At Stannon Circle on Bodmin Moor he got almost a totally negative reading (almost an impossibility), but at the Merry Maidens he obtained a peak much higher than anything in the environment. Don Robins (author of *Circles of Silence*) on a visit to the same site in June 1985 found that the geiger readings approximately halved when brought a few feet within the ring of stones. The difference in these results is a measure of the difficulties inherent in measuring sites: they seem to vary according to the time of day and season. I geiger-checked all West Penwith stone circles and found no radiation anomalies, except for the quartz stone at Boscawen-ûn and the Duloe stone circle near Liskeard, which had a not-unexpected lower count. But it needs a much more thorough programme of research”.

That programme of research came with the Dragon Project, initiated by Paul Devereux, which the Cornish Earth Mysteries Group participated in, and which was reported in Paul’s book *Places of Power* [1990] and in my book *Megalithic Mysteries of Cornwall* [2004]. Some sites with enclosed spaces, such as Quoits and Wells, had very high radiation readings, but stone circles often had the reverse readings. The Merry Maidens circle was checked on at least four occasions, and, with one exception (given



*Paul & Charla Devereux at Maidens*

above), was found to be lower than average in the circle. Don Robins checked the site again in 1985 and found that the readings halved when he moved inside the circle, and in 1988 the site was checked twice by the CEMG, and a small, but significant, fall from background was recorded. The readings have never been satisfactorily explained, but theories include the notion that the creation of a ring of stones produced some kind of ‘ring of power’ that circulated around the stones and absorbed the natural radiation as well, leaving the centre of the circle free from radiation and acting as a kind of ‘sanctuary’ area. If ancient peoples were aware of this in some way, it may be that the circles were built as places of protection.

## THE PIPER'S TUNE

**Reading the Hurlers** is a community geo-archaeology project that has been awarded two years of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will be run by Saltash U3A with help from Cornwall Archaeology Society. By undertaking a geological survey of the moor's granite resources, and by producing a profile of the area's granite, the project will aim to identify the sources of granite, from which the standing stones of the Hurlers were quarried. The project will also carry out an archaeological excavation of the possible fourth circle, to the north of the existing 3 circles. The excavation will take place between the 13th - 17th September, overseen by James Gossip, Director of Excavations at Cornwall Archaeological Society. More information from the Facebook page 'Reading the Hurlers'.

**Andy Norfolk** has set up a page on Google Maps to locate and list holy wells in Cornwall. It shows extant wells in green, dubious ones in orange and sites of former wells in red. Anyone who is logged in to Google Maps can view them, and also add in ones that they themselves know. This is a tremendous resource and can be accessed at [www.google.com/maps/CornishHolyWells](http://www.google.com/maps/CornishHolyWells).

**Roy Goutté** has been given permission by Historic England to excavate and clear the fallen and buried stones of Leskernick stone circles on Bodmin Moor, along with the stone row running between them. Roy has previously done work on King Arthur's Hall [see MM88 & 89] and Louden circle on the moor, and will once again work with TimeSeekers, a small team of experienced clearance volunteers.

**EXCHANGE MAGAZINES.** Northern Earth, Touchstone, Society of Ley Hunters, Network of Ley Hunters, RILKO, Quest, Pagan Dawn, Goddess Alive! Details in MM89.  
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# Thoughts and Observations

## About the Map of Penwith Ancient Sites and Alignments

by *Palden Jenkins* - Part 4  
[www.ancientpenwith.org](http://www.ancientpenwith.org)

### Clustering [continued]

Remarkably, St Michael's Mount, Trencrom Hill and St Ives Head all sit in a dead straight line – and these are *hills*, not human constructions. Something must have existed at Pen Dinas ('castle head') which subsequent Christian occupation removed or covered. Elsewhere on the peninsula, whatever sites there were at Pendeen Watch (another Pen Dinas) and Cape Cornwall were also obliterated by subsequent developments.



*Pen Dinas at St Ives*

Also noticeable, given the density of sites in Penwith, is the area of land in and around modern-day Penzance, together with the countryside east of it toward St Erth, both of which are relatively empty of ancient sites. In ancient times this area was probably quite densely forested. Yet much of West Penwith was originally forested, particularly in the south, so the presence of tree-cover, probably being thinned out in the Iron Age and afterwards, might well not be the factor determining this relative emptiness. If we work on the basis that Penwith serves as a complete magical landscape, then it is possible that ancient Penwithians considered the area of today's Penzance not to be part of it, or that sites there have been removed or covered over. The only known sites are Lescudjak hill camp, a round at the site of Penwith college and the old cross, once at Greenmarket but now at Penlee museum. The 'holy headland' (Pen Sans) in Penzance, on which St Mary's church sits, was another. This relative paucity of sites is peculiar because St Michael's Mount, just over the bay, is a key location in the geomantic system of West Penwith. But then, geomancy and earth mysteries are not easy territory for anyone seeking neat, simple answers!

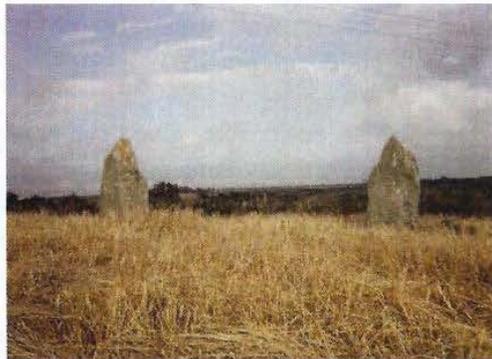
As a speculative exercise, I have identified sub-groupings of ancient sites and areas which might be regarded as the territories of different extended families or tribes. These become visible on the map if you go to the very bottom of the list of sites and alignments on the lefthand side of the map, ticking the box that says 'Notional Tribal Areas' – and they will appear. These areas identify ten groupings (though I suspect John Michell might have preferred twelve!). From north to south, they are Zennor, Chysauster, Bodrifty, Boskednan, Chun, Tregeseal, Boscawen-un, Sennen, Kemyel and Merry Maidens. They are simply notional, reflecting geographic patterns of sites and settlements on the map more than they reflect known history.

### Double menhirs

Penwith has a number of double menhirs, all of them within 20-100m each other, clearly erected as double menhirs – they're not just close by chance. They are all in the southern conglomeration – implying that this was a geomantic style the builders of the southern system considered important. The southern sites certainly do have differences of style to the northern ones – these two sectors of Penwith were built and run by different people with marginally different ideas, and living in different landscapes. A few observations about double menhirs are due here.

First, in some cases most alignments seem to go to just one of the menhirs (such as at Redhouse and Chyenal). In the case of the Pipers, part of the Merry Maidens complex, local alignments within that complex go to Pipers SW while wider alignments to the rest of Penwith go to Pipers NE. Each of the two menhirs thus had a different purpose. Presumably this has something to do with polarity – up-down or in-out.

Second, some alignments seem to pass *between* these paired menhirs without hitting them exactly – in one or two cases quite obliquely. This is troublesome inasmuch as it confronts our normal accuracy rules, yet surely there must be some significance to it. Examples are found at Redhouse, Drift *[photo right]*, Bunkers Hill and Boscawen Ros.



*Drift menhirs - alignment passes between the stones*

Third, on the map, the orientation of these paired menhirs is marked in small green lines (zoom in to see them). I have not researched this yet, but presumably these alignments are astronomical or topographical. Whatever the purpose of these double menhirs, they are quite unique to the southern part of West Penwith, and their purpose remains enigmatic.

Fourth, at Carn Les Boel there is a pair of menhirs, one of them a propped stone underpinned by some smaller stones that lift it slightly off the ground, and the other fallen, which constitute a double menhirs, but probably of a different kind. They clearly act as an energy-gateway to the carn itself (and you definitely feel you're crossing a threshold when you walk between them).

### Geometry and pattern

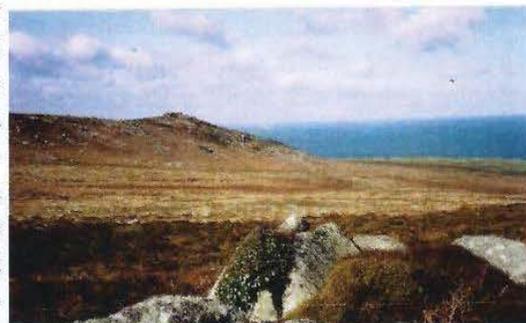
I am no great expert in geometry – concerning angles between certain alignments, or even triangles with proportional sides. To our modern way of thinking, which thinks in boxes and seeks pattern and consistency, there seems to be little or no neat geometry to the system of alignments in West Penwith. But there are a few noticeable patterns.

**Parallel alignments.** One example is #124 (Pendeen Watch to Nare Head) and #90 The Brisons to Pendennis Point/Nare Head), two long-distance lines starting on the Penwith coast and progressing eastwards into Cornwall, oriented just north of east. Then there is #54, a substantial alignment that runs exactly parallel to the Michael Line, except it runs from Cape Cornwall through Pen Dinas (St Ives Head) to St Agnes Head (coastward of the St Agnes Beacon), and possibly further. I get the feeling these parallel lines are intentional, though I have no idea why.

**Symmetries.** Some backbone alignments emanating from major nodes such as St Michael's Mount, Lanyon Quoit, Trencrom Hill and Gurnard's Head show an angular splay suggesting a certain symmetry or order. The angles are not actually uniform or simple though, but they do have a certain orderliness to them. From most other nodes the spread of radials is more apparently haphazard. Perhaps a geomancer with an eye for such things might pick this up and run with it.

**Quoits.** As mentioned before, the quoits in the northern sector of Penwith are connected by three-point alignments, with one further site between them. These alignments seem to be deliberately and specifically established to connect the quoits, as a 'sub-circuit' in the wider system of alignments. The quoits were early sites, so these alignments, with the intermediary sites on them, might be older than most other alignments in the area, or amongst the first layer of alignments. In the case of Chûn Castle, the quoit alignment passing through it, as well as the proximity of Chûn Quoit, would suggest that it is older than the Iron Age hill camp it is often seen to be. This is an example of how geomancy can confirm things that archaeologists suspect but they lack sufficient evidence to prove their suspicions.

**Hills.** It's common that alignments pass over hills at a variety of points (such as at Sancreed Beacon or Chapel Carn Brea), not just at one summit point, though on some hills with a definite hilltop site (such as at Bartinney Castle), they do pass through one point. Carn Galva is narrow and emphatic when seen from Nine Maidens, but when seen from Watch Croft south-westwards or Zennor Hill north-eastwards it is a long serpent hill with two or three humps. So, in one direction there is a clear profile for alignments to align with, but in the other there are a range of crossing points. The same applies at Cape Cornwall. Alignments seem to pass over the hill at different places, though they definitely hit the hill, at least half way up or higher. At Gurnards Head, St Ives Head and Godolphin Hill there seem to be distinctly two spots where alignments meet. I'm inclined to accept this as given rather than regard it as an inaccuracy. Yet at St Michael's Mount, the alignments seem to be very exact.



*Carn Galva seen from the south*

**Locational issues.** So, it looks as if the whole landscape of Penwith has a kind of logic to it. Other factors such as underground water and energy, astronomical or geographical variables come into play in the location of ancient sites, but alignment-oriented geomancy plays a key part in this locational engineering. It all seems to knit together somehow – not as neatly, simply or geometric as we might like it to be, but there indeed is order there. Every ancient site is located where it is for a reason – it’s not just fanciful or haphazard – and with this map we’re moving an inch closer to understanding what that reason and system of thinking is, by contemplating this matter of *network*. In ancient times Penwith must have been an interesting place for megalithic people from other parts of Britain and Europe to visit, by dint of the density of its sites and the number of principles, quirks and idiosyncrasies that seem to be demonstrated in this mini-region. While it is a peninsula, it has some of the characteristics of an island.

**Questionmarks.** Questionmarks have been inserted on the map at places where there seems to be an exact multiple intersection of alignments and there is no known ancient site there. These points might or might not yield new locations for sites, now destroyed, but they are worth investigating. There are plenty of multiple intersection near-misses, but when they are exact we’re confronted with a case either of intention or of ‘interesting chance’.

**Archaeological layers.** Aside from wanton destruction of ancient sites by landowners, there’s also the problem of the recycling of sites and materials, which can obscure former sites. This comes up in urban areas and villages – is there more underneath Penzance or St Just than we know about? But it also concerns old churches and early Christian crosses, as well as some iron age ‘hillforts’, which are located on top of old sites. This is very much the case for ancient sites in an area where I sometimes work in Palestine – for example, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is a recycled Apollo temple from the Alexandrian Greek period which itself sits atop a goddess temple of the Canaanite period. There are remains going back to 8000 BCE in Bethlehem, and at least three times as many cultural layers to the Holy Land’s history than Britain has – though Britain is still quite impressive by global standards.

Nevertheless, many old Christian crosses and churches in Penwith fit neatly into the alignments system, such as the four crosses that are part of the Merry Maidens complex, the cross at Crows-an-Wra, or the churches at St Buryan, Pen Sans and Sancreed. This raises the question of whether they sit atop or replace earlier sites or whether their masonic builders knew of and adhered to similar locational principles to those of the megalith builders, locating them on fresh sites, or both. St Buryan and Gulval churches seem to be located inside earlier rounds.

I hope this mapping project is helpful, encouraging further research here in Cornwall and also in other parts of megalithic NW Europe and the wider world.



*Crows-an-Wra*